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Built Bodies:
Representations of Monstrous Transsexuality
in the Frankenstein Film, 1945-1975

by

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Abstract

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This thesis considers the relationship between representations of the Frankenstein's Monster on film and the transsexual identity to argue that they can be ontologically consolidated into the figure of the Monstrous transsexual: a constructed, hybrid being whose uncategorizability within conventionally rigid structures of sex and intolerable embodiment of incongruous "parts" renders them as simultaneously powerful with radical potential and vulnerable from ostracization, oppression, and hostility. By analyzing both Frankenstein films from the post-war era of 1945-1975 and the power dynamics of the gender clinics in which the modern understanding of transsexuality was established, this thesis demonstrates the ways in which their developments are mutually reinforcing, co-constituting, and intertwined, with the body of the Monster serving as the language through which transsexual subjectivities can be understood and articulated.

Introduction

It began in 1816 with the drowning of the Villa Diodati. Rain fell relentlessly from the sky that summer, smothering the quaint Swiss countryside in an impenetrable veil of water. Lightning, whenever it lashed out to cleave gashes in the black expanse of storm clouds above, was the only reprieve from the deep and torrential darkness. The hostility of the weather trapped the Villa Diodati's guests indoors for three days and nights straight. Inspired by their dreary circumstances, they took to reading stories of the supernatural and horrific—and then, later, writing their own. These guests were the poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, physician John William Polidori, and Byron's lover Claire Claremont. Also present was Shelley's betrothed, Mary, and her contribution to the contest held during this legendary storm over Lake Geneva would become one of the most famous and enduring works of fiction in the English language, a work with a fittingly legendary genesis in its own right. Her story was *Frankenstein*.

In the two hundred and some years since its first edition in 1818, *Frankenstein* has become accepted as “what many view as the first true work of science fiction” (Holmes 490; Aldis 52-53). Although the appreciative critical consensus on the novel is relatively recent (Hitchcock 272), it has maintained a monstrously powerful presence in popular culture ever since its publication, to where the original text is “the founding, but not necessarily the most influential”

version of itself (García 224). Its first dramatic adaptation, *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* by Richard Brimsley Peake, premiered merely five years into the novel's printed life. In 1910, the novel would be adapted to film for the first time by J. Searle Dawley for Edison Studios, and on the one-hundredth anniversary of the novel's revised 1831 edition, James Whale would create his own immortal version of the story for Universal. These films would hardly be the last of their kind, and the Monster's prolific cinematic afterlife largely transcends the novel outright in the popular imagination.

This persistence of *Frankenstein* in our culture for two centuries has afforded it the privilege of being a particularly pervasive point of reference for discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scientists have evoked the name of Frankenstein for ethical debates in eugenics, cybernetics, genetic engineering, and physician-assisted suicide, just to name a few fields (Pernick 97; Lehman-Wilzig; Rollin; Saunders). Comparisons to the Monster have also been “uttered without apology by political commentators, news reporters, and intellectual powerhouses” for generations to describe intolerable creations that include mismanaged governments, undesirable underclasses, weapons of mass destruction, and processed food (Hitchcock 306). To wit, it seems as if Frankenstein itself—both the original novel and the larger myth that includes its cinematic legacy—contains unlimited meanings and metaphors. Paul O’Flinn argues that “there is no such thing as *Frankenstein*, there are only *Frankensteins*, as the text is ceaselessly rewritten, reproduced, refilmed, and redesigned,” and that while the text “meant certain things in 1818 [it] meant and could be made to mean different things in 1931 and 1957” and so on, “irrespective of authorial ‘intention’” (22-23). Lester D. Friedman and Allison B. Kavey write that “generations of readers have discovered not only a home amid the luxuriant

materials embedded in Frankenstein but one that is comfortable and well-furnished...Every academic gets the Frankenstein [they want] to see” (12). Robert Horton arrives at a similar, broader sentiment: “each historical moment gets the Frankenstein it needs” (39).

With all of this in mind, it’s imperative when writing about Frankenstein to choose which Frankenstein one is writing about—which texts, which meanings, in which cultures, and in which periods of time. My endeavor here is no different. A focus must be chosen, and this is mine: I have selected a small canon of Frankenstein films from the post-World War II era, generously considered here to span from 1945 to the early 70s, to argue that the Monster—a stitched-together and scientific construction of a human(-like) form—is a medium for reflecting, representing, and reaffirming the the transsexual body as it was created and conceptualized in that timeframe. Two frameworks that have had an especially prolific relationship with Frankenstein have been feminist and queer theory, but these frameworks in isolation have their limits. They have primarily focused on the Monster as either *just* a woman (or generally “feminine”) or *just* homosexual (or generally “queer”). The figure of the Monstrous transsexual *triangulates*, as it were, both of these maligned identities into a single embodied horror while also uniquely engaging with the institutional powers that have historically defined transsexuality within strict, pathological parameters. If monsters exist to return and return and return across time, “each time to be read against contemporary social movements” such as “new subjectivities unfixed by binary gender” (Cohen 5), then the relationship between Frankenstein films and transsexuals in psychology, medicine, and pop culture reveals a conversation that is mediated through Monstrousness. It is a language that communicates prejudices and sympathies alike.

Whether as a triangulation, a synthesis, or merely an extension, I like to think of this transsexual reading of Frankenstein as part of the same project as the aforementioned feminist and queer readings that have so richly plumbed it for meaning already. Its unique potency within these frameworks can be attributed to the story's ability to "articulate (*or rather, embody*) areas of crisis in...identity [and] gender" (Badley 66, emphasis mine). Caroline Joan Picart wrote that the parameters of Monstrosity in the Frankenstein film specifically are "intrinsically tied up with anxieties about gender and technology" above all else (*Rebirths* 189). In her first book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler wondered "what sense can we make of a construction that cannot assume a human constructor prior to that construction?...To what extent does the body come into being in and through the mark(s) of gender?" (8). Three years later in *Bodies That Matter*, she would ask again, "if gender is a construction, must there be an 'I' or a 'we' who enacts or performs that construction?" (*Bodies* xvi). Her answers are in the Frankenstein myth. When interpreting Frankenstein stories, pernicious notions of gender as a construct are literalized: aberrant and Monstrous bodies, gender and all, are constructed in the truest and most tangible sense of the word by all-too-human and specifically motivated mad scientists. Female Monsters and the monstrous feminine in general have inspired a wealth of scholarship (Creed; Hawley; Baldick), but it's in the Frankenstein myth that this, too, is more evident than ever. The Frankenstein myth promises "the power to image and fashion women...in literal terms," and Stephanie Kiceluk warns that "in view of the ways our culture has conceived and dealt with women in the past, it is imperative that we pay close and ever-present attention to this power" (124). The transsexual body, which Sandy Stone described in her "Transsexual Manifesto" as a "meaning machine for

the production of ideal type” (164), enables us to assess both the literal and dramatic uses of this power in the post-war era.

Meanwhile, queer studies has published extensively on the “enduring, if not always consciously acknowledged, cultural motif” of homosexual monsters, and this motif reinforces “societal views of homosexuals as predatory, amoral, perverse, possessed of secret supernatural powers, [and] capable of—and very interested in—destroying ‘normal life’” (Morris). In this framework, the “monster is to ‘normality’ as homosexual is to heterosexual,” and even films without *explicit* homosexuality can still invoke this motif by *coding* their monsters and villains relative to (cis)heterosexual norms (Benshoff 1-2, 16). This categorical coding is observed by Jack Halberstam in *Skin Shows*, where he notes that contemporary monstrosity “seems to have stabilized into an amalgam of sex and gender” (5-6). This thesis will attempt to advance these theories of the “queer” Monster by specifying it, considering explicitly the relationship between representations of Frankenstein’s Monster on film and the discourses that controlled the meaning of transsexuality in its most formative, foundational years after World War II. In three pivotal decades after the war, Frankenstein films diversified following the conclusion of Universal Studios’ golden age franchise and the transsexual as we know it today was invented by psychologists, surgeons, and gender clinics. The production of Monsters and transsexuals during this post-war period occurred along very similar trajectories as more filmmakers and more sexologists began to confront both the idea and practical reality of a specifically constructed and particularly sexed being than ever before. These subjects are consolidated in the theoretical figure of the Monstrous transsexual: an artificial, aberrant, ostracized being whose existence is inextricable from medicine, surgery, and mad science. Frankenstein’s Monster, in its many

man-made forms, naturally resembles the transsexual in this way. Transsexuals, however, were not just *made*, but *Monsterized*—made *into* Monsters—deliberately, experimentally, and discursively.

Words, Words, Words

What are we talking about when we're talking about Frankenstein? What counts as a Frankenstein film? Which stories get to contribute to the Frankenstein myth? In *The Detached Retina*, Brian W. Aldiss defines “the essence of the story of Frankenstein...from many film, stage, and TV versions [as] Victor Frankenstein constructs a creature from corpses and then endows it with life, after which it runs amok” (57). While this is a concise summary of the most immediately recognizable adaptations of the source material, in specifying Victor Frankenstein by name and the raw material of corpses, he casts a narrow net which excludes not only any films with differently named scientists (even Universal's 1931 version, with Colin Clive as Dr. Henry Frankenstein), but also the numerous *mechanical* step-children of the novel: androids, replicants, and robots. It also excludes those Monsters that are constructed from either *never-living* parts, such as the clay-sculpted Jewish Golem, and those constructed from parts that *precede* life itself, such as the genetically engineered creation from *Splice* (2009). Furthermore, transsexuals are neither dead nor prenatal when they receive transitional health care, meaning that they are *already* alive while being “constructed” (though transition can be seen as a metaphorical “rebirth”). Given this, Aldiss' definition would *definitely* exclude them, but the

comparison to Frankenstein still stands. In *Second Skins*, Jay Prosser writes that “the stigmatization of transsexuals as not ‘real men’ and ‘real women’ [supposes] transsexuals as constructed in some more literal way than nontranssexuals—Frankensteins of modern technology’s experiments with sexual difference” (8-9). Prosser’s quotation serves as an extremely apt prelude to our future discussions, and also demonstrates the most eternal and egregious pitfall of discussing Shelley’s novel and its descendants: “Frankensteins.”

Any English student could tell you that “Frankenstein” refers to the doctor and not the Monster. However, films such as *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943) and *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957) confuse things somewhat. Besides, another smarter English student could retort about whether the Doctor is not, in fact, the *real* monster, given the catastrophic consequences of his hubris, immorality, and reckless playing of God. The assignment of the Frankenstein name to both the doctor and the Monster in equal measure has been deliberately *and* accidentally entrenched in pop culture through advertising campaigns, tricky titling, and poor memories in generations of moviegoers and readers alike.

For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of a Frankenstein story rests upon the distinction between these two integral characters. A Frankenstein story, to me, is simply any story containing both a “Doctor” and a “Monster.” The Doctor is the character that creates the Monster. The Monster is that which the Doctor creates. The Monster is usually made from either cadaverous or mechanical material, but not always. The Monster usually rebels against and tries to destroy the Doctor, but not always. The Doctor is usually horrified by their creation, but not always. The creator-creation relationship between these two are all that is necessary for consideration as a Frankenstein film, though of course not every single possible Frankenstein

film under this criteria is relevant to the purview of this thesis. Notice, too, the properness of these nouns, not just in this paragraph but in all of this introduction so far: while a *doctor* is any egghead in a lab coat and a *monster* could be anything from Bigfoot to Biollante, Doctors and Monsters—with capital letters—denote a creator and a creation, and *they* are what we’re talking about when we’re talking about Frankenstein.

Frankenstein is just one of the two core components of this thesis, however, which means that before we continue, we must also semantically clarify the ways in which this essay will talk about trans people. When attempting any kind of research into LGBTQ history, terminology that can largely be labeled as “outdated” is inevitable, especially in anything that you’d want to cite verbatim. Additionally, while the march of history tends to evolve older terms and introduce new ones to mainstream discourse, when writing retrospectively, the far more limited and often clinical, pathological language of the past doesn’t usually map to our modern terminology with perfect congruency. This issue is heightened by the simple removal of the prefix “trans-” from either transsexual or transgender; the difference between “sex” and “gender” didn’t even exist at a conceptual level for most of the twentieth century, and isn’t necessarily a settled debate today. Rather than perfectly distinct categories of identity or construction, with one being more or less inherently biological or psychological than the other, sex/gender theory considers them “mutually reinforcing and co-constitutive” (Plemons 9). Therefore, while either “transsexual” or “transgender” could theoretically be used to consolidate the historically volatile language that has generally included the same kinds of individuals—and while I consider them essentially interchangeable especially in this retrospective context, making the choice between them fairly arbitrary—I will primarily be using the former. “Transsexual” was the prevailing term during the

post-war period at the center of this thesis, and I'll be using it for the sake of convenience and consistency unless I am referring to or quoting the usage of other words for specific, stated reasons.

Admittedly, I'm going against the grain here. Perhaps the choice was already made by the fact that, if given any chance to introduce myself, I will say that I'm a *transsexual* woman, not transgender. "Transgender" has all but conclusively been canonized as the "right" term for people like myself at this point in history, but as the term was first anchoring itself into discourse, there were arguments that "transsexuality is neither synonymous with or merely another variety of transgenderism unless one chooses to view these phenomenon from the vantage point of the most reductionistic [sic] perspective possible" (Gabriel, "Shrinking" 41). To that end, perhaps my interchangeable use makes me guilty of that reductionist perspective, but the need for a broad term—any broad term—is dire in broad theses such as this. I could use "trans" alone, or perhaps "trans people," but "transsexual" affords certain linguistic benefits. It has a dual-utility as both a noun *and* an adjective and its double-s spelling makes it very lovely to read aloud—*transssssexuality*. With respect to my previous citation, "transgenderism" seems like an awkward and clunky trainwreck of syllables that ought to be entirely avoided in this work as well as all others. Additionally, I hold a personal belief that "transgender" is neither necessarily a more progressive, inclusive, nor evolved term than transsexual, given the equally constructed nature of both sex and gender that's aforementioned, but the alleged "outdatedness" of the term lends it a grittier, rawer, and more arresting effect that makes it very appropriate in discussions of the monstrous and abject. Its lingering connotations with the exclusively medical aspects of transition are similarly conducive for discussions of the Frankenstein's Monster

specifically, though I personally wouldn't say that such intervention is a *requirement* for identifying as transsexual. Sex and gender and any theoretical distinctions between them, as well as sexual *orientation* and any distinctions between sex and gender and *it*, are each "evolving historical, social, and political *concepts*, and medical and scientific definition is but *one* element in their social construction" (Irvine 230, emphasis mine). As Eric Plemons writes, "the practice of trans- surgery has gone on uninterrupted in the United States for six decades...not because surgery defines us as trans- people but because it is so very important to so many of our lives" (17). Ultimately, this choice is just a very functional preference for an umbrella term which is going to be used a *lot*.

Just who, exactly, and what kinds of people are included beneath the umbrella of transsexuality? When Leslie Feinberg uses "transgender" as an umbrella term, it encompasses

everyone who challenges the boundaries of sex and gender[,] those who reassign the sex they were labeled at birth, and those of us whose gender expression is considered inappropriate for our sex...Transvestites, transgenderists, bigenders, drag queens, drag kings, cross-dressers, masculine women, feminine men, intersexuals (people referred to in the past as 'hermaphrodites'), androgynes, cross-genders, shape-shifters, passing women, passing men, gender-benders, bender-blenders, bearded women, and women bodybuilders who have crossed the line of what is considered socially acceptable for a female body (*Warriors* x).

Feinberg clarifies that “there's a very real difference between the lives of transsexuals and those who are transgendered, but that's in the very literal sense of the word,” and that ultimately the identities included by either as an umbrella term “share more in common than [they] differ” (Gabriel, “Life and Times” 4-5). Similarly, Joanne Meyerowitz considers transsexuals as “a subset of ‘transgendered’ people, an umbrella term [which] includes, among others, some people who identify as ‘butch’ or masculine lesbians, as ‘fairies,’ ‘queens,’ or feminine gay men, and as heterosexual crossdressers”; she adds that these categories “are not hermetically sealed, and to a certain extent the boundaries are permeable” (10). The inclusion of cissexual gay and even cissexual straight identities and behaviors under this umbrella, despite homosexuality and transsexuality being far more widely understood as separate phenomena than they used to be, is because “heterosexuality is a major component of ‘normal’ gender expression” (Irvine 231). Any act or behavior that could be considered homosexual or cross-sex impinges upon the stability of gender, even if the actor is otherwise not “actually” transsexual in a stricter sense of the term. The broad overlap is perhaps best justified by Harry M. Benshoff’s definition of *queer*, another popular umbrella term, as not just “any people not explicitly defining themselves in ‘traditional’ heterosexual terms” but *also* an “inclusive, amorphous, and ambiguous contra-heterosexuality” (5). With these broad and inclusive foundations of our terminology going forward for both Frankenstein narratives and transsexuality throughout history, we can view Monsters and transsexuals alike as not so much inhabiting a single stable identity but as being complex, varied, and dynamic forces within society and popular culture.

Scope and Limitations

It is an unavoidable limitation that no single thesis on any given subject can practically cover every possible thing about that given subject in equal detail, or even at all. While monsters have been theorized to represent a wide variety of cultural fears, including perceptions of different marginalized identities, the scope of this thesis is purposefully limited to the specifically Frankensteinian Monstrous body as a transsexual analogue. This specific angle appealed to me due to their mutual association with ideas of construction and medical science. Moreover, the novel was of great personal significance to me as a transsexual woman early in my transition. The Monster gave me guidance and comfort, just as it did to the other transsexual writers that will be cited in Chapter I. In addition to the Monster's symbolism as a constructed body, its identity crisis in the wake of its revival, trying to understand who or what it is and why its body is so strange, was deeply resonant with me as someone who had only just realized that she wanted to be a woman. Embracing my own subjectivity in this thesis as a sieve for symbolism felt like a way of going deeper with those feelings than I have ever gone before, and the research that I've conducted on both transsexuality and monstrosity has only refined these feelings into something stronger and more precious than ever to me.

However, when dealing with such an evocative and sensitive subject as what (or who) is represented by the monstrous, I feel like it is insufficient to completely elide the other marginalized identities for which monsters have been argued to represent. It is worth briefly reviewing these arguments if only to iterate that "within the history of embodied deviance, monsters will always combine the markings of a *plurality of differences* even if certain forms of

difference are eclipsed momentarily by others” (Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 5). Monstrousness manifests as multitudes of meanings, and transsexuality is merely one of many.

In *Hideous Progeny: Disability, Eugenics, and Classic Horror Cinema*, Angela M. Smith observes a particular irony about horror scholarship, especially scholarship that takes the monster as its subject.

Scholarship has continued to see the monster in primarily gendered or sexual terms: as a figure for patriarchal constructs of women or for women victimized by patriarchy [or] the queer individual. Such interpretations create the odd situation in which analysis of a genre identified by its representation of aberrant bodies and by its embodied effect on viewers...has rarely considered the disabled individual as one of the Others connoted by the monstrous body...Bodily or mental difference is frequently seen to encode other kinds of difference but is rarely examined on its own terms (26-27).

Smith’s work is a critically important piece of scholarship in horror studies, and the eugenic ideology at the center of her disability framework “in which visible disability is a powerful sign of physiological and moral defect” renders the Monster a locus of myriad pathologies and prejudices, since “eugenics [itself] was a racist, classist, ethnocentric, sexist, and ableist discourse, and all of these elements find expression in classic horror films” (27). The Monstrous disabled and transsexual bodies find their synthesis in the way that intersexed persons were treated for most of the twentieth century; as Chapter II shall discuss, the eugenic surgical

“corrections” on intersex people and infants born with “ambiguous genitals” were invaluable to the development of adult sex reassignment surgery and the invention of gender itself.

A second approach to monstrosity studies that I would like to foreground here are theories of the racial monster. When it comes to *Frankenstein* specifically, H. L. Malchow argues that “Shelley's fictional creation parallels in many respects the racial stereotypes of [her] age” (92); Allan Lloyd Smith agrees that the original novel multifariously “positions the Creature within the relays of racial discourse...persistent throughout the eighteenth century” (210) and that “the narrative shape of the Creature’s account of himself is akin to that of the slave narrative” (212). In a more contemporary context, Michael G. Lacy “offer[s] the black Frankenstein framework as an analytical tool to examine, expose, and critique U.S. neoliberalism” (230) and several texts have used the Frankenstein myth to explicitly represent and engage with race, especially blackness. During the height of blaxploitation, *The Thing With Two Heads* (1972) and *Blackenstein* (1973) depicted black Monsters, and more recently, the 2018 comic book *Destroyer* by writer Victor LaVelle and artists Dietrich Smith and Joana LaFuente features a black Doctor who reanimates her son after he’s killed in a police shooting. As an oppressed, ostracized, and not-quite-human creation, an inherent kernel of racial metaphor exists in the Frankenstein myth just as one does for sex. Malchow writes that “in some sense the story of *Frankenstein* itself, the construction of the monster, is the fictional equivalent of the simultaneous construction of race and racial prejudice,” (128), a prefiguring of my earlier appropriation of gender “construction” per Butler and a demonstration of the Monster’s utility for articulating myriad marginalized identities.

On a more general level, monstrosity—lowercase m—can still evoke race conceptually, as on a very basic level monsters are “oftentimes associated in negative and damaging ways with ‘darkness’ and ‘blackness’” (potential). Ed Guerrero writes that as a result of the “difference or otherness in the form of monsters” that feature prominently in horror, science fiction, and fantasy, these genres possess “abundant racialized metaphors and allegories” (Guerrero 56-57). Curiously, though, the mixing of racial and gendered/sexualized frameworks in monstrosity theories is relatively rare except in the most general overviews, and occasionally they are related as seeming to be diametrically opposed. Benschoff writes that while monsters may exist or be made to exist as racial and ethnic Others, “*more frequently* they are constructed *primarily* as *sexual* Others (women, bisexuals, and homosexuals)” (4, emphasis mine). Halberstam concurs that “the monster, for various reasons, tends to show clearly the markings of deviant sexualities and gendering but *less clearly* the signs of class or race” (Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 4, emphasis mine). In *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film*, Adilifu Nama writes that “where others have chosen to privilege the social relations of...*gender* in their textual reading of [science fiction] cinema, I have *purposefully* privileged black racial formation” (5, emphasis mine), and Malchow’s analysis of *Frankenstein* concedes that though he has “emphasized the racial aspects of Frankenstein’s monster, other critics have pleaded for a class-based and gender-based reading” (130). Finally, Elizabeth Young even posits blackness and sex(ual) deviancy as two mutually exclusive readings of the Monster, arguing that the “threat” of the former “is so great” that it overrides the latter (427). The notion of such a distinct divide is not necessarily a fact of life, however, as much as it is just a practical limitation for any single scholarly work. It’s salient to recall C. Riley Snorton’s argument that “the condensation of transness into the category of

transgender is a racial narrative [and] blackness finds articulation within transness... Race and gender are inextricably linked yet irreconcilable and irreducible projects” (8).

Despite the singular scope of most theories of monstrosity, theories of monstrous sexuality and gender should generally be just as applicable in combination with theories of other monstrous Others. Multiple relationships to monstrosity compound upon themselves, and monsters are more monstrous than the sum of their parts. The formulation of transsexuality as an acceptable subject position, explained in Chapter II, occurred under exceptionally strict criteria of gender conformity—criteria that championed “the norms of white womanhood” and punitively excluded “gender variant bodies...made visible through nonwhiteness” (Skidmore 271), and the legacy of this exclusion is practically demonstrated by the way in which racial and transsexual marginalization are compounded: while all transsexuals experience anti-trans oppression, transsexuals “who are of color experience some of the worst treatment by police” and “arguably, are the most marginalized” (Gaynor 360-61). Race—as well as participation in sex work—remain significant variables in determining which transgender individuals are regularly subject to violence” (Halberstam, *Trans** 18). Poverty and whether one can access transition-related health care also reveals “an obvious insight into structural inequalities based on class, race, age, and (dis)ability, which may affect subjectivities in relation to bodily aesthetics” (Davy 57). As stated earlier, theorizing what (and who) is represented by monstrosity is an evocative and sensitive subject and a project that is not purely theoretical. We theorize these representations precisely because we have been made out as monsters by those who fear and despise us, and therefore we often find kinship with figures like the Frankenstein’s Monster who is chased out of town by villagers with torches and pitchforks. However, not all monsters are

created equally and some are more feared and more despised and for more reasons than others, even by other ostensible monster—recall how in *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), the eponymous Monster recoils in horror from her own would-be groom. It would be a disservice to those who are harmed most, by multiple axes of oppression, to leave this unsaid.

As previously stated, the singular focus on one framework or the other in scholarship usually emerges as a practical matter relative to the academic specialties of the scholar, such as in the cases of Benschhoff and Nama. If monsters truly are analyzed more frequently—perhaps too frequently—as primarily sexual Others as Benschhoff suggests, then this thesis cannot help but be guilty of widening the gap. Halberstam seems to defend this gap by asserting that “where sexuality becomes an identity, other ‘others’ become invisible and the multiple features of monstrosity seem to degenerate back into primeval sexual slime. Class, race, and nation are subsumed, in other words, within the monstrous sexual body” (Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 7). Yet even when the “monstrous sexual body” is selected as the specialty of this thesis, this too has its theoretical limits.

There is an observable scarcity of both lesbianism and transmasculinity in considerations of monstrous sexual Others. As far as lesbian monsters go, Gary Morris observed for the archived *GLBTQ Encyclopedia* that “lesbian monsters were less visible in cinema than their male counterparts” until around the 1970s (Morris). There were a few notable exceptions, such as the sapphically coded Marya Zaleska from *Dracula’s Daughter* (1936), and Barbara Jane Brickman foregrounds *Daughter of Dr. Jekyll* (1957) in an essay on “cryptolesbians” in 1950s exploitation films that “both caution against and brilliantly camp up a crudely imagined lavender menace” (357). By and large, however, Benschhoff agrees that “monsters which might be understood as

displaced lesbian figures occur far less frequently” in horror film than other sexual identities (Benshoff 7). While a single cause for this disparity is difficult to pinpoint, the all but required relegation of women to passive, morally upstanding roles in the genre during the Production Code era (LaSalle 190-91) certainly didn’t help.

Similarly, the significantly lower prominence of transmasculine subjects compared to transfeminine subjects in this research has a grounded explanation. Transsexual writers and specialists have largely agreed that it’s easier for trans men to “pass” as their sex, resulting in relative invisibility—literally and figuratively—in both cultural and clinical settings throughout much of history. Compared to trans women, trans men receiving hormonal treatment generally undergo more drastic sexed aesthetic changes, such as beard growth and voice deepening (Davy 59). Jamison Green, a trans man, writes that “transsexual men are able to integrate into mainstream society [and are] virtually undetectable in most social situations,” citing generous “cultural tolerance for a wide variety of adult male 'looks'” (499). The breadth of “looks” afforded to all men unfortunately cuts double against trans women, as there are significant “limitations of the [transfeminine] transition process in reversing some of the irreparable effects of prolonged exposure to testosterone,” and “people in our culture predominantly rely on male (rather than female) cues when determining the sex of other people” (Serano 60-61). Citing a 1978 study on the subject, Vivian K. Namaste writes that the “interpretation of sexed bodies [is] overwhelmingly skewed in favor of masculine referents,” including facial hair and the presence of a penis, which makes it “easier for females to pass as men than for males to pass as women” (145). This is compounded by the reality of what it means to “look like a woman” within rigid, patriarchal beauty standards. Enforced views of femininity as attractive, wearing make-up,

dressing flatteringly, being petite, etc. impose expensive and often time-consuming “investment strategies” on cis women but excessively so on trans women, whereas cis and trans men “require much less maintenance to turn their bodies into cultural ones” (Davy 115). Furthermore, as a consequence of clinical biases during the formative years of transsexual health care, transmasculine bodies are less subject to surgical fascination. Although many trans men desire and receive mastectomies to remove their breasts, vaginoplasty has long been considered inevitable and even diagnostically necessary for trans women in a way that phalloplasty has never quite been for trans men (Davy 118).

The observation of these inequities is not to say that trans men who see themselves as Monstrous are less valid or less entitled to their claim than trans women. As such a symbolically loaded figure, the Monster suits any transsexual body: it is an unnatural body “in a shape other than that in which it was born” (Stryker, “My Words” 237), and can therefore be read as not just transfeminine as well as transmasculine but even as both at the same time as an entirely un-sexable amalgam. The purpose of this thesis is to weld the lineage of Monsters on film to that of the transsexual in the post-war era, and all prevailing discourses of transsexuality but *especially* the discourses of the post-war era simply privileged the study and treatment of transfeminine subjects at the expense of transmasculine ones, even though contemporary statistics reveal roughly equal rates of transition between them (Serano 127; Meyerowitz 9). The new millennium has also seen a gradual increase in the prevalence of non-binary transsexual identities and sexes other than male or female, but what it means to “pass as non-binary” eludes consensus since there is no cissexual model to emulate, and androgyny is not necessarily the common goal. Although they are neither male nor female, some non-binary individuals still

undergo either masculinizing or feminizing hormone treatments, or pursue sexed body modifications such as mastectomies or facial feminization surgeries.

The sidelining of lesbians and transmasculine subjects from sexual scholarship and popular culture was and is neither accidental, neutral, nor necessarily in the best interests of transfeminine subjects. This thesis centers, but not isolates, readings of the Monster as transfeminine precisely because of the transfeminine body's uniquely appropriate prominence as a symbol of hysteria and panic. In her book *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, Julia Serano writes that the severe cultural and clinical emphasis on transfemininity is because "male expressions of femininity [are] more disturbing and potentially threatening to society than female expressions of masculinity" (127). She names this anxious prejudice, in which femininity in people perceived to be male is especially egregious, *effemimania*. While transmasculine people still "face discrimination for breaking gender norms," Serano writes that "their expressions of maleness or masculinity themselves are not targeted for ridicule—to do so would require one to question masculinity itself" (Serano 14). The ideology of this excessive emphasis on effeminacy was prefigured by Janice Irvine at least twenty years prior to its reification by Serano; in *Disorders of Desire*, Irvine observes that "male homosexuals, sissy boys, and male-to-female transsexuals are the prime targets for research and intervention [since] tomboyishness in girls arouses less cultural hostility than sissyness in boys [and] parents more readily bring cross-gender boys in for treatment" (240). Furthermore, many people who could be described as hating transsexuals could more accurately be described as just hating trans women. Janice Raymond's infamously yet incredibly influential polemic "Sappho by Surgery" from *The Transsexual Empire*, for example, "pays scant attention to female-to-male

individuals, because she cannot easily fit them into her schema” (Stryker and Whittle 131) except as “tokens” (Raymond 27)—that schema, by the way, being that transsexuals are a menacing conspiracy of the patriarchy to undermine and replace “real” women (and as a friendly heads-up, this will come up a lot). Pivotal literature on transsexuality, including both hateful screeds and foundational diagnostic criteria and studies, “referred almost exclusively to trans women” (Plemons 6) not arbitrarily or coincidentally, but as a direct consequence of effemimaniac prejudice.

The reach of effemimania was not just limited to discourses of transsexuality: fears of male femininity as uniquely pathological or socially degenerate have weighted all discourses of gender and sexual deviance since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. It has “conflate[d] gender expression, male homosexuality, and MTF transsexuality with one another, often treating them as though they were different symptoms of the same disease,” since it “specifically targets femininity rather than homosexuality or transsexuality as a whole” (Serano 129, 133). Effemimania is therefore not an exclusively homophobic or transphobic form of oppression. It is “first and foremost an expression of traditional sexism [in which] ‘male femininity’ [is] a greater concern than ‘female masculinity’” (Serano 133), or in other words, “explicit misogyny [in which] the desire to eradicate the ‘feminine’ in men is paramount” (Irvine 241). This perception of male femininity as a concern or a threat, and disproportionate institutional interest in controlling or containing it, is why transfemininity can be viewed as uniquely Monstrous, and the Monster can be read as appropriately transfeminine.

The permeable prejudice of effemimania is also why discretely dividing Monstrous representations of homosexuality, transsexuality, and womanhood in *Frankenstein* films is not so

easily done. These categories cannot be separated and considered individually any more than the parts of Frankenstein's Monster can. Serano accuses "oppositional sexism," the belief that male and female are the only two diametrically opposed and non-overlapping sexes, as "why bisexuals, lesbians, gays, transsexuals, and other transgender people—who may experience their genders and sexualities in very different ways—are so often confused or lumped into the same category (i.e., queer) by society at large" (13). The hegemony of oppositional sexism is also why transfemininity is considered "extra" monstrous, as trans women are "uniquely positioned at the intersection of multiple binary gender-based forms of prejudice: transphobia, cissexism, and misogyny" (Serano 12). In the body of the transfeminine Monster, referents of these prejudices combine and bleed into each other to form an abject, contra-heterosexual, contra-cissexual *thing* whose intolerability is untraceable to one original component over its others.

Chapter Proceedings

This thesis consists of two chapters. The first chapter, "The Ontology of the Monster," borrows its title from an essay by scholar Frank McConnell and serves as a necessary explanation of the Monstrous transsexual framework. It begins with a literature review of "monster theory" and the various definitions that philosophers, linguists, and historians have suggested for "monster" and "monstrousness," and the ways in which these definitions can be applied to Frankenstein narratives specifically. The chapter then proceeds with a review of the rich history of transsexual kinship with the Frankenstein's Monster on both a personal and

scholarly level to assess, extract, and consolidate the ways in which the Frankenstein myth gives animation to various forms of monstrous femininity, homosexuality, and of course, transsexuality. This chapter includes references and citations from the full history of the Frankenstein canon so that the full extent of Monstrous transsexuality can be demonstrated and argued. Once the necessary core concepts have been explicated and established, the second chapter will narrow its scope to the post-war period between roughly 1945-1975 to inform analyses of sixteen specific Frankenstein through the Monstrous transsexual framework.

Chapter II, “Frankenstein Created Woman,” begins by briefly summarizing the history of sexology prior to World War II and the slow, gradual developments through which transsexuality and homosexuality were conceptually pried apart. The critical historical context of the era—including its dramatic increase in the persecution and criminalization of homosexuality and cross-dressing—is related, followed by an overview of how transsexuality was “created” by psychologists, surgeons, and the press in the wake of Christine Jorgensen’s sensational debut in nationwide newspapers, a story that introduced all of America to transsexuality. The aforementioned film analyses are divided into two groups: the first group contains films that directly represent transition and transsexuality, and their contents and themes are drawn against the Frankensteinian overtones of the gender clinic, in which sexologists constructed and created their strict visions of perfect transsexual Monsters. The other group of films discussed in Chapter II are the “Bride narratives,” in which the Doctor creates a female Monster. The later years of the post-war era played host to the women’s liberation movement, and the “constructed women” featured in these Frankenstein films resembled a regressive antifeminist backlash to the

movement, the creator-creation relations of the transsexual gender clinic, and the worst nightmare of trans-exclusionary feminists themselves.

I

The Ontology of the Monster

“My form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance.”

—*Frankenstein* (Shelley 105).

Like pornography, a monster might just be something that we can't easily define but know when we see it...though “seeing” may not be as deductive as we think it is. Chewbacca, from *Star Wars*, is a strange-looking, oversized, hairy, and super-strong alien but we don't really consider him a monster despite looking “exactly like the sort of thing we would expect to find in a werewolf movie” (Carroll, “Humor” 149). Seeing also doesn't account for monsters that we can't see, like invisible men, or monsters that don't look out of the ordinary at all, like disguised body snatchers. The Frankenstein's Monster has ranged in appearance from a flat-headed, scarred, and bolt-necked brute in Boris Karloff to a physically pristine, blond-haired and blue-eyed bodybuilder in Peter Hinwood. Monstrousness is far less determined by a consistent

set of aesthetic criteria and far more by a physical, mental, and emotional gut instinct; a subconscious evaluation carried out in the fear centers of our brain. Rather than knowing a monster when you see it, you may not know it until you see it *as* one, and then *react* with appropriate fear. However, a monster can't *just* be that which merely scares us—after all, I'm scared of horses, but no one takes my warnings seriously that they'll kill us all some day.

The difficulty of deducing the ontology of the monster, and the inconsistency and arbitrariness of its signifiers, is perhaps why it's such an alluring subject for philosophers, linguists, and writers. The word *monster* itself derives from the Latin *monstrum*—"to show"—and, ergo, a *monster* should be that which *demonstrates* something. This etymological caveat is so fascinating and so useful to theories of monstrosity that almost any given work of scholarship on the subject is all but unable to resist mentioning it (Asma 13; Clayton 61; Cohen 4; McConnell 232; A. M. Smith 3; Stryker, "My Words" 240; Rudacille 59; me right here). Still, there are multiple ways to interpret this imperative that a monster should inherently demonstrate, reveal, or warn us of something through its existence. As a literal demonstration, a monster "exists to be looked at, shown off, viewed as in a circus sideshow" (Brooks 199), but Stephen T. Asma observes that monstrosity is as much of a moral term as it is a biological and theological one, as in the case of "monstrous behavior" and "history's greatest monsters" (7). As a moral demonstration, monsters are "figures of vice...examples of what not to do [that have historically] reinforced the necessity and naturalness of the terms and values against which they were opposed and subordinated" (Botting, Introduction 6-7).

The monster has also been defined as something which is or could be threatening to us. This interpretation casts the monster as "a creature or person who is dangerous to us," even if that

danger is not necessarily intentional, or an “unpredictable, uncontrollable force that cannot be reasoned with or persuaded” (Asma 13, 153). The danger that a monster poses does not need to be one of bodily harm, either. A monster that may rend you to pieces with sharp teeth or sheer strength is just as monstrous as one that is “cognitively threatening” or threatens “common knowledge” (Carroll, *Philosophy* 34). A monster can be cognitively threatening in several ways; for example, an indescribable eldritch abomination is purely and viscerally incomprehensible. The cognitively threatening monster may represent a frightening unknowability, or the limits of human understanding. Jacques Derrida makes two assertions about monsters: first that they are living beings, and second they are “that which appears for the first time and, consequently, is not yet recognized. A monster is a species for which we do not yet have a name” (386)—but what if there is no possible name to give? Monsters may be threatening not because they haven’t *yet* been classified, but because they *cannot* be classified, because they enact or embody an ontologically hostile “refusal to participate in the classificatory order of things” (Cohen 6). In this framework, monsters are things which “cannot be placed in any of the taxonomic schemes devised by the human mind to understand and to order nature” and therefore exceed even language itself (Brooks 218), constituting a “*non-categorizable* category” existing “to ensure the stability and continuity” of our preconceived notions and “systems of differentiation” (Botting, “Metaphors” 344, emphasis mine). In other words, a monster is what you call something when *any* other words would destroy your established understanding of both the world and its merciful limits.

The prolific scholarship within this framework conceives of monsters as formless, incomplete, interstitial, and amalgamated. Rather than always defying categorical description

completely, these monsters “often involve the mixture of what is normally distinct” (Carroll, *Philosophy* 32-33), exist as “something between categories” (Asma 40), or are “disturbing hybrids [with] externally incoherent bodies” (Cohen 6). Many of our most famous monsters are categorical crises; the vampire is both living and dead, the lycanthrope is both man and wolf (at different times), and classical monsters like sphinxes and griffins are several creatures (at the same time). As for what these categorical crises *demonstrate*, a creature “assembled from incongruous parts...demonstrates something supernatural, superhuman, and makes them beings that the gods speak through” (Rudacille 59). They can demonstrate the futility of “the assumptions inherent to our definitions of natural law and progression, as well as our relationship to life’s creations and endings” (Friedman and Kavey 3). During his lectures on power and pathology at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault argued that the “tautological intelligibility” of the monster reveals the difference between the normal and the abnormal (57).

Another aspect of the monster which has interested theoreticians has been its inherent intolerability. Donna Haraway writes that, on a cultural level, “monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations” (180). Beyond just posing a danger to us individually, there must be a violent refusal to accommodate monstrosity in society at large either out of hatred, disgust, or pity; thou shalt not suffer a monster to live. In Ancient Rome, “monstrous offspring represented a terrible economic and energy burden on the family, and if they should make it to adulthood they would be a burden on the state as well,” so infants with birth defects, physical and developmental disabilities, or ambiguous genitals (known at the time as hermaphrodites) were explicitly classified as monsters in Roman natural histories and usually drowned upon birth (Asma 40). This usage of “monster” or “monstrosity” not as pejorative but

as acceptable, specific, scientific terminology “for newborns with severe congenital malformations” persisted in various parts of the world as late as the start of the twentieth century (Pernick 17-18). Although these terms have thankfully been scrubbed from medical and scientific terminologies, “monstrous” and “monster” continue to be used to describe the intolerable, especially relative to “religious abominations” such as human sacrifice, corpse desecration, and “sexual immorality and perversion” (Creed 69). Other scholars spare the societal pretense and describe the monster in terms that, if applied to a person, would be simply insulting and cruel: the monster is “an ‘imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening,’ ‘disfigured,’ ‘a misshapen being,’ ‘a person of repulsively unnatural character’” (Zigarovich 264) and “in no conceivable system an object of desire” (Brooks 207).

Yet despite the vitriol reserved for monsters, we also fear that we may be monsters ourselves—“what is monstrosity, after all, if not the image of ourselves we have searched for and which, having once gazed upon it, we cannot ever forget?” (McConnell 232) Even descriptions of monsters as “a wretched parody of human form” (Foust 444) include the confession that it is, potentially or tangentially, *a* human form. The existence of Bigfoot and the eponymous *Creature From the Black Lagoon* (1954), for example, fascinate us because they tease us with the possibility of a “missing link” between man and something else. When the category that monsters assault through their existence is the category of humanity itself, then monstrousness refers to “boundary figures which adhere to neither the human nor the non-human sphere” (Lykke 76). The crisis that they induce will either confirm or disturb “our conceptions about what it means to be human” (Hawley 218). This relationship between humanity and monstrousness is not unidirectional, either—if we see ourselves in a monster, we may not only

see ourselves as monstrous but may alternatively and additionally see that *monstrousness may be more human* than we were previously comfortable acknowledging. This fear, this precious insistence on distinction between ourselves and the monstrous, supposes that whatever a monster demonstrates is spreadable almost like a contagion. A monster, and its proximity to humanity, demonstrates the “risk [of] becoming infected” and that its monstrousness “might transfer to us” (Horton 56). Caroline Joan Picart writes that “monsters are the liminal point of not only what we are not, but also what we are...they allow us imaginatively to excavate the depths of not only who we could be in relation to nature and divinity, but also who we are in relation to the demons that lurk within” (*Remaking* 6). Monsters are our own greatest and most terrifying potentials.

The extreme nature of monstrosity as it relates to our own selves is why monsters are also, despite or even because of how horrifying they may be, *attractive*. Although monstrosity is abject, there is a “fascinating, seductive aspect” to that which is abject (Creed 70). This attractive aspect is why there is a fascination *as well as* a distressfulness to category crises (Carroll, *Philosophy* 194). On the subject of monsters in fantasy texts, R.E. Foust writes that “the ‘monster’ is much more than...the clear-cut *feond mancynnes* [‘enemy of the people’] that its inchoate appearance and manifest malevolence misleadingly proclaim it to be,” and that “ambivalence is at the core of the ‘monstrous image’” (443), an ambivalence which enables feelings of identification, sympathy, and even attraction to the monster. I argue that attraction is *especially* enabled. When we confront the proximity of the monster to ourselves and to humanity, and when we negotiate the unsettling shifts in our understanding that this proximity activates, especially from a sexual dimension, we are not treating the monster as a purely reflective mirror. Instead, we are treating the monster as “the articulation of desire considered

aversive and largely disavowed” (Butler, “Autobiography” 38). The monster is not quite a mirror but an x-ray machine, showing us the things inside of ourselves that we spend our lives hoping to conceal—even the things that we *like*, but may not like *the fact that* we like.

This is why the sexual, attractive, and taboo vision of monstrosity is so enduring and powerful. Any “prohibitive law,” including what I would consider the “law” of what is human (tolerable) and what is monstrous (intolerable), “runs the risk of eroticizing the very practices that come under the scrutiny of [that] law” (Butler, *Bodies* 72). The aforementioned hermaphrodites of ancient Rome were killed because “their ambiguous, unclassifiable sexuality may have been simultaneously threatening...but also alluring and exciting [and] represented a dangerous freedom” (Asma 40). Perverted sex acts are chronicled alongside violent and blasphemous crimes in the canon of religious abominations, and the fear that we may be susceptible to monstrosity ourselves alludes to the repressed and secretive desires that may lurk within any given Id, closet, or internet browsing history. If the monster represents urges, desires, and sexual practices that cannot or must not be committed, then it is only through the monstrous body that they *may* be, and that we may *see* them, committed at all, and for all of our ostensible distrust and loathing of the monster, we also “envy its freedom, and perhaps its sublime despair” (Cohen 14, 16-17). This is why, according to Harry M. Benshoff, “monster movies (and the source material they draw upon) might be understood as being ‘about’ the eruption of some form of queer sexuality into the midst of a resolutely heterosexual milieu” (4). The emergence of the monster makes these forbidden desires corporeal in an abject but attractive form, and immediately threatening in both its capacity for physical rampage and undeniably

alluring thrall. There's a reason why movie monsters are far more popular and memorable than their victims.

The Monster and the Doctor

As rewarding and enriching as the depth of scholarship on monster theory is, we're really only concerned with one particular monster within this thesis—*the* Monster. As an amalgam of combined parts in many of its filmic appearances, it is certainly a disturbing hybrid. It is also usually depicted as strong and resilient, occasionally even quick and agile, and capable of killing others easily. Despite this, the Monster is a generally sympathetic creature, frequently seen as initially naive, childlike, and kind-hearted, but driven to violence by mistreatment from its creator and ignorant townsfolk. Judged primarily for its abject appearance, the Monster demonstrates the impulsiveness of human fear and the way that a creature's gentleness and genuine yearning for friendship and compassion can be eroded through society's knee-jerk refusal to accept that creature as deserving of it. As the Monster tells Victor in the original novel, "if any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them a hundred and a hundredfold; for that one creature's sake I would make peace with the whole kind" (Shelley 199). As an unnatural and artificial being borne by an unnatural and artificial procreative process, it instigates a crisis not only in our categorical distinctions of living and dead, but in what should and shouldn't be *allowed* to live. Additionally, whether or not it *is* human at all—or *could* be

human—frames the intense philosophical wrestling at both the heart of the novel and within its prolific legacy of adaptations.

This theme of creation and its consequences is the most critical and central of any Frankenstein story, since there isn't a Frankenstein story without it. A Doctor *must* create a Monster, however so. Speaking broadly, the name of the novel invokes “any product of experimentation that causes concern in crossing the borders of humanity and nature” (Botting, “Metaphors” 341). Lester D. Friedman and Allison B. Kavey write that that the “external intrusion into the biological process of procreation...evident in the majority of Frankenstein narratives” raises the question of whether *any* possible intrusion into that “natural” process should be considered unnatural, since “the products of those manipulations would not necessarily be afforded the status and rights generally granted to those beings society legally acknowledges as human” (62-63). Such a question applies not just to corpses sewn together but to genetically engineered children, clones, and sufficiently human-like robotic intelligence—in his proposal “The Constitutional Rights of Advanced Robots (and Human Beings),” R. George Wright remarks that the possibilities of artificial creation requires us to rethink “what must one be like in order to deserve a constitutional right?” (614). It is also worth noting that who and what counts as a person with officially recognized rights has varied in the past and varies even today among supposedly equally “natural” humans. Depending on the time and place, a slave is less legally human than their slave-owner, a prisoner less legally human than their guard, women less legally human than men, and the personhood denied to undocumented immigrants may be granted to corporations. In the case of the Monstrous transsexual, the right to be legally recognized as the sex you transition to, and whether your very existence is even legal at all, has been historically

variable. Ultimately, *Frankenstein* is a perpetually contemporary story about the (re)production, (re)creation, and (re)designing of life itself: a fable that forces us to think about what motivations may possess a Doctor to make the Monsters he does, what methods would or should (not) be available to him, and whether society would or should either accept the Monster or destroy it.

Many scholars have observed that the themes of creating life and reproduction in *Frankenstein* are heavily gendered. The novel's Promethean conflict is often interpreted as being between masculine technology and feminine nature (Badley 84; Rushing and Frenz 65), and Victor Frankenstein's endeavor as symbolic of an attempt "to rend the veil of this world with a willful and distinctively masculine violence" (Clayton 58). If the Doctor's desire to create life is distinctly violent and masculine, and the consequences inevitably destructive as a result, then the Frankenstein myth is a "critique [of] the masculine attempt at parthenogenesis or male self-birthing" (Picart, *Rebirths* 3). From this perspective, what makes Victor's creation of life unnatural and abominable is not necessarily the artificiality of the process or the ugliness of the creation, but the fact that it lacked the "naturalness" of female involvement. The promise of parthenogenesis is the removal of woman's necessity from the continuation of the species and possibly a way to *improve* on the unpredictability of "natural" creation. This dream of "depriving women of the exclusivity of the power to conceive" is "the alchemist's method, the patriarchal dream, the mad scientist's goal" and has antecedents in varying myths and fables about animated sculptures (Manguel 51). Anne K. Mellor, however, writes that these antecedents "depend on female participation or some form of divine intervention," and that the *entirely* man-made monster was a myth created by Mary Shelley single-handedly (38). The emphasis that the novel places on parthenogenesis "remains one of its most significant aspects" from a feminist position

(Friedman and Kavey 6), and many film adaptations perpetuate this emphasis as well, usually through the Doctor's prolonged neglect or avoidance of a betrothed love interest with whom he *could* and *should* be procreating "naturally" instead.

This aversion to female involvement in male procreation has another, gayer side to it. The homoeroticism of Frankensteinian parthenogenesis, in which a lonely male Doctor in a laboratory far away from the presence or involvement of any women works tirelessly to sculpt the body of a perfect but Monstrous man, has not gone unremarked upon by critics. As one scholar remarks, "readings of homosexuality...in Frankenstein are not hard to come by" (Eberle-Sinatra 187), and another describes "mad male homosexual science giving birth to a monster" as a "core idea" of Frankenstein that "can be found to a greater or lesser degree in almost every filmic adaptation" (Benshoff 18). Additionally, filmic adaptations of *Frankenstein* frequently feature the Doctor as not alone, but assisted by another man—stereotypically, a hunchbacked creep of some sort or a second Doctor. In these cases, the parthenogenetic myth is not merely a man creating life without a woman but a man creating life *with another man*. In any case, the creation of the Monster by the Doctor disarticulates the "heterosexual matrix of production" and represents a "new mode of fatherhood" (H. Weaver 292). The more consistent expression of homosexuality as an attraction between the Doctor and the Monster, then, encroaches on a litany of perversions. The bond between Doctor and Monster, creator and creation, evokes not just homosexual but also masturbatory and incestuous desires (Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 40; Eberle-Sinatra 187).

Although it's pervasive in the Frankenstein canon as subtext, this one-sided form of attraction in which the Monster is the custom-made object of the Doctor's desire is represented

explicitly in several notable features. Linda Williams observed that both horror and pornography are “body genres” (3) which may explain why they’re so particularly conducive to combining their strengths—consider the almost obligatory sex scene and naive nudity that precedes the intrusion of the killer in the slasher film. Additionally, the independent, exploitation, and pornographic film circuits “often provided a warmer haven for queer horror than mainstream cinema” (Morris, “Horror Movies”), perhaps because the horror genre itself already depends on fearsome and disgusting “depictions of transgression” that are “closely situated to our cultural anxiety around gay sex” (Felker-Martin). Combine this with the ways in which gay male communities “worship” specific body types, such as lean or muscular (Ambrosino), and the result is a rich history of pornographic Frankenstein films in which a male Monster is constructed as a sexual object for a male Doctor. These films began to appear as early as the 1960s with *Angelic Frankenstein* and *Hollow My Weanie, Frankenstein*. The former, directed by Bob Mizer and distributed by his Athletic Model’s Guild in 1964, is a “six minute gay short in which Frankenstein creates a perfect male who rebels when taught how to use a gun (Jones 60), and the AMG itself was part of the post-war “gay male proto-pornography industry” that used the pretense of fitness and physique to publish hot hunks (Benshoff 126). The Athletic Model’s Guild would also publish *How to Make an Athlete* and *Mad Scientist*, similarly Frankensteinian physique films (Benshoff and Griffin 114-15). *Hollow My Weanie, Frankenstein*, also known as *Frankenstein de Sade*, was a “gay porno movie in which Dr. Frankenstein and his hunchbacked assistant create a well-endowed Monster” (Jones 72); it was promoted as an “all-male version of a classic” alongside the similarly gay *Dracula and the Boys*, also known as *Does Dracula Really Suck...?*, in *The Los Angeles Free Press* (22) and *The Los Angeles Times* (IV 13). Later films

like Christian Ferrero's *Frankenstein* (2006) lay their cards on the table rather bluntly in their publicity blurbs:

An interesting twist on an age old thriller. The story of Frankenstein is well known. But did you know that Frankenstein's monster was well hung? Well, it's the truth—and there's a whole lot more you probably don't know that this film can educate you by. For instance, when choosing a particular subject for his experiments, the good Doctor looked for three things: virility, strength, and size of cock. Unlike popular myth, the monster was not created to terrorize village and countryside alike. Rather, his purpose was to be a sexual centerpiece for the doctor's good friend Count Dracula. Unfortunately, the monster has an opinion of his own and falls in love with a strapping young lad from the village.

All of these explicitly homosexual variations of Frankenstein center the motivations and actions of the Doctor. Since the Monster doesn't necessarily have a say in its own creation as a sexual object, the Doctor is almost exclusively the vector of any active desire.

This overview of the homoeroticism of Frankenstein has been in the service of laying the groundwork for a loose dichotomy that informs the theoretical construction of the Monstrous transsexual. Essentially, "Doctors are gay, Monsters are trans." While homosexual readings *can* apply to the Monster as well, the Monster is uniquely rich with transsexual interpretations due to its *embodied* monstrousness. Although there are unique fashion trends, manners of speech, and gestures associated with homosexuality, the homosexual *body* does not bear the visible indicators

of Monstrousness as openly, obviously, or deeply as the transsexual body does. Sexual orientation in and of itself is relatively invisible, but our gender and gender expression is “evident in the way we walk, the way we talk, the way we dress, the way we cut our hair,” et cetera (Rudacille 8). Additionally, the effects of hormones and surgeries *literally* and *physically* transform the transsexual body into something non-normative and distinctly Other from the cissexual body. You become a creation of medicine and a human being of unusual physicality. This is why the term “homosexual” has largely fallen out of clinical usage but “transsexual” (and “transgender”) remains more common: “transsexuals still are tethered in some way to medical technologies and services” in a way that cissexuals of any orientation are not (Halberstam, *Trans** 8). Even though not all transsexuals may take hormones or undergo surgeries, either by choice or due to a lack of access, most transsexuals *do* undergo or at least *desire* these treatments, and historically, that desire was required for the transsexual diagnosis in the first place.

Of course, the intolerably monstrous behavior of transsexuals that make them into targets can also be embodied by particularly flaming, cissexual homosexuals. Even with the early years of sexual science set aside, when they were literally not yet distinct as behavioral phenomena, the two identities remain commonly conflated—people who shout “faggot” from the window of a speeding truck don’t care that much which one you are. The reason for this more immediate and crude conflation is simple. Both cis-homosexual and transsexual people will sometimes, but not always, look to the clueless observer, or pitchfork-wielding villager, as the same thing: someone of one sex expressing or conducting themselves in a way too similar to another, e.g. a feminine-looking man or a masculine-looking woman. As Leslie Feinberg writes, “while not all

lesbian, gay, and bi people face trans oppression, all trans people experience anti-gay bigotry. To the bigots and bashers, all trans expression is ‘queer’” (*Warriors* 98). When someone, cissexual or transsexual, is attacked for gender expression, “bashers do not characteristically inquire as to the sexual identity of their potential victims,” and “assaults against men judged to be ‘effeminate’ or women deemed ‘masculine’ reveal the ways in which gender and sexuality are intertwined” (Namaste 140-41). The attempt to punish sexed deviance of any kind is the shared root of both homophobia and transphobia, and effemimania is the reason why these attempts are disproportionately made against gay men and transsexual women.

To apply this distinction to the Frankenstein narrative, this is why (usually male) Doctors, perhaps with the aid of another (usually male) Doctor, are more frequently and obviously coded as homosexuals than the (usually male) Monsters they create. Generally, homosexuality can be represented more through *doing* whereas transsexuality can be represented more through *being*. I do mean “doing” as a double entendre—without the possible result of reproduction, cissexual gay male culture “has, historically, been more open to the idea that [sex] might not always have a why, and that it doesn’t always need to,” a perceived hollow recklessness compared to more Puritan sexual ethics that “could perhaps explain the historic prejudice against gay people” (Ambrosino). When the Doctor is cast as a homosexual, the Monster becomes the *result*, the pregnancy carried to term, of his symbolically procreative actions. In addition to the explicit, more pornographic films discussed above, notable *non-explicit* but *coded* homosexual Doctors include those from *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957), and *Frankenstein* (1994).

A flaw that you may have already realized about this framework is that it seems to ignore whether women can be Doctors, and the female Doctor's heterosexual or sapphic potential. While there do exist some female Doctors in the Frankenstein canon, they're much rarer than their male counterparts (just like in real life—we'll break that glass ceiling one day, ladies!) and their motivations tend to be far more limited. Female doctors are most commonly seen either working alongside their husbands, as in *Flesh for Frankenstein* (1973) and *Splice* (2009), or continuing the work of their more-famous fathers in films such as *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* (1966), *Lady Frankenstein* (1971), and *Frankenstein Island* (1981). Alternatively, their procreative experiments are the result of a misplaced or misguided maternal instinct. In Jed Mercurio's *Frankenstein* (2007), "Victoria" is a Doctor whose biotechnological experiments are in the pursuit of curing her dying son's heart disease—experiments which inadvertently result in a Monster called the "universal xenograft." Additionally, even though it would be a significant stretch to call them proper Frankenstein stories even by our generous metric, the concept of women mothering something unnatural can be seen in films like *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *It's Alive* (1974), which feature the birth of the Antichrist and a mutant, respectively. Motherhood itself is an abject condition (Creed 72), and therefore doesn't usually need the extra *oomph* of horrific experimentation or parthenogenetic transgression to disconcert and disturb viewers of the horror film. As for sapphic Doctors, if female Doctors are already rare, then female Doctors creating female Monsters for their sexual gratification is *extremely* rare. The only instance encountered in my research was *Hell on Heels* (1999), a pornographic anthology film directed by Brad Armstrong which contains a Frankenstein-themed lesbian segment. Of exceptional note is Lucky McKee's 2002 film *May*, which features an

eponymous female Doctor who does *not* exist relative to a husband or father and creates a gruesome Monster of her own accord. May constructs her Monstrous companion because of a bleak and despairing loneliness as opposed to straight-forward horniness, but it's adjacent enough to this concept to warrant mention. Examples from outside the world of film would be Shelley Jackson's hypertext novel *Patchwork Girl* (1995), in which the female monster from *Frankenstein* survives its own destruction and becomes the lover of Mary Shelley herself, and Susana Cook's play *Dykenstein* (2003), in which the lesbian Dr. Dykenstein's experiment to create the "perfect dyke" goes awry when the Monster becomes a straight woman who demands a husband instead.

Given the scarcity of female Doctors and their proximity to traditional reproductive matrices whenever they *do* appear, the homoerotic framework that centers the Male Doctor remains dominant, for better or worse. And while the homosexual interpretations that scholars and filmmakers alike have derived from both the Doctor and the Monster are valid, especially given the non-exclusive signifier of gender non-conformity between the two, the dichotomy of "Doctors are gay, Monsters are trans" still holds. The Monster is supposed to be a perfect creation but comes out "wrong," and as much as it yearns to be recognized and accepted, it's hated and reviled instead primarily on the basis of its appearance or the nature of its construction, not the things it necessarily "does." Articulations of transsexuality as a physically changing, embodied, medically dependent, internal *and* external process, phenomenon, and *coming-into-being* are far, far more conducive to the Monster alone and not the Doctor.

In short, Monsters are clockable.

Lightning Strykes

More than a mere literary interpretation, there is an intuitive and genuine kinship between the Frankenstein's Monster and transsexuals. Queer viewers of horror films in general more frequently and readily relate to monsters and villains "because of their already disenfranchised location outside of the dominant culture" and their conflict with "the narrative's heterosexist agents" (Benshoff 37). Monsters also "serve as secondary bodies through which the possibilities of other genders [and] sexual practices...can be explored" (Cohen 18). However, since the Monster is "an exotic body with a difference, a distinct perversion from the tradition of desirable objects" (Brooks 199), it may resonate deeper with the transsexual experience of embodiment more than it can with the homosexual experience of attraction. Since the transsexual body falls outside of "certain sexed identifications," transsexuals are exiled to the "domain of abject beings" where "it is their very humanness that comes into question" (Butler, *Bodies* xiii, xvii). Popular, prejudiced representation of transsexuals as intolerable freaks and pathetic perverts contribute to the dehumanization of transsexuals and resemble the Monster's own treatment as a wretch, and the transsexual body itself is regularly construed not on its own terms but as "individual autonomy run amok [and] the injunction to self-transformation [taken] to dangerous extremes" (Meyerowitz 11).

In the Introduction to this thesis, I explained my own relationship to the Monster and its personal significance to me early in my transition. During this time, I serendipitously stumbled upon the ur-text of transsexual Monstrosity, Susan Stryker's "My Words to Victor

Frankenstein.” Its opening paragraph hit me like lightning, electrifying parts of myself that had hitherto been lifeless and unanimated:

The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born. In these circumstances, I find a deep affinity between myself as a transsexual woman and the monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Like the monster, I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment; like the monster’s as well, my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster, direct against the conditions in which I must struggle to exist. (237)

Stryker would not be the last transsexual to see themselves as m/Monstrous. Anson Koch-Rein writes that “when trans people are cast as less than human, the monster (and the creature from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in particular) is often the metaphor of choice” (qtd. in Zigarovich 264). Sonny Nordmarken, a trans man, writes about his transition that “my body is becoming more monstrous” (39), and boots potential, a “queer genderfreak transboygirl fagdyke,” also reflected on the power of monstrous transsexuality, writing that “my preoccupation with monsters has mutated into something that provides me with an index with which to enact my gender and transness...I became the monsters I used to watch.” Transsexual performer Lady Bunny remarks, “I completely identify with the character of the Frankenstein’s Monster. I wake up, put on make-up, and scare people” (Fox). So long as “non-trans genders are

seen as ‘normal,’ ‘natural,’ and ‘unquestionable,’ whereas transsexual genders are presumed to be ‘abnormal’ [and] ‘artificial’” (Serano 7-8), the tradition of Monstrous identification is likely to continue.

The greatest source of the Monster’s misery, and that which is most harrowingly relevant to transsexual subjectivity, is that in most of its appearances, it is acutely aware of the fact that it was *supposed* to be a “normal” human but possesses an “abnormal” body. This anguish is usually depicted in the Frankenstein film by a pivotal scene in which the Monster gazes upon its own reflection, then recoils in either horror or rage (McConnell 233). In *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), the Monster becomes distraught once it recognizes itself in a mirror for the first time. Then, with adamant and apprehensive curiosity, it drags its “brother,” Wolf Frankenstein, over to the mirror as well and realizes with horror just how different its body is from a “normal” one. This scene, like few others in the Frankenstein canon, articulates the trauma of gender dysphoria through the language of the Monster.

Gender dysphoria is, depending on whom you ask, either a requisite component of transsexual subjectivity or something that some transsexuals may experience and others may not. This is mostly because it depends on what is meant by “dysphoria.” If “dysphoria” refers only to the most core incongruence that a transsexual feels between their sex assigned at birth and the sex they want to live as, then all transsexuals have dysphoria in the same way that all fires have heat; it’s the reason why it’s there in the first place. The clinical definition of gender dysphoria, as it exists as a diagnosis in the fifth and most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, having supplanted previous trans-related diagnoses such as gender identity disorder and “transsexualism,” specifies that it refers to any *distress* that that

incongruence *may* cause, and “although *not all* individuals will experience distress as a result of such incongruence, many *are* distressed if the desired physical interventions by means of hormones and/or surgery are not available” (451, emphasis mine). The presence at all, intensity thereof, and most sensitive areas of dysphoria therefore vary wildly between one transsexual and another, and is often a very personal subject. Very generally speaking, when gender dysphoria does manifest, it’s frequently articulated as “being trapped in the wrong body” (Prosser 68; Halberstam, *Trans** 29), a trope which “position[s] the transperson as a victim of a cruel and aberrant nature” (Davy 52-53). One description of dysphoria, from a trans man interviewed by trans woman columnist Ana Valens, imagines dysphoria as sitting down in someone else’s parked car by accident—but “you can’t get out of the car because it’s going like 80 mph. And you’re not driving. Also, the car doesn’t have doors. You’re stuck in the car forever until you die” (“Dysphoria”).

When we watch the Frankenstein’s Monster struggle with its unnatural embodiment, as in *Son of Frankenstein*, it’s not just an existential horror. The reason the mirror and the reflection is so pivotal in the scene is because the Monster is seeing itself *as* a Monster, and therefore, *not* as the human it “should” be. When even the Monster itself recoils at its own reflection, it shares—for a moment—the same immediate loathing reserved for it by the mobs with torches and pitchforks. Although the Monster is frequently depicted as ugly, Monsters usually aren’t being stopped and questioned about the circumstances of their creation before being run out of town—no, whether obviously abject or beautiful yet artificial, Monsters are cruelly rejected by society because they exhibit “deviations from the human-defined norm” (Friedman and Kavey 206). This principle applies to transsexuals not just as a potential source of gender dysphoria but

also as influencing their reception by society at large, since the transsexual is expected to *pass* as their lived sex. The appearance of the transsexual and their body is unavoidably “intrinsic to people’s perception of their gender” (Davy 51), and in turn, “attributions of gender are the first step in our social interactions” in which unclear or conflicting gender referents can cause “acute anxiety...until [gender] can be ascertained” (Irvine 230). Consequently, transsexuals may carefully manage the presentation of their bodies in an effort to be perceived “correctly” by others. Passing is not necessarily about being “beautiful” or “ugly,” rather, it’s about fitting the “human-defined norm” of their lived sex. Although being conventionally attractive in one’s sex can certainly make passing in society easier, it’s not necessarily integral. Likewise, not passing does not rule out being attractive. “Attractiveness” can refer not just to a subject’s normative (or non-normative) beauty, but also to its potential provocation of *any* kind of fascination, interest, or fetishization. Usually though, the failure to pass, or refusal to attempt to pass, is almost invariably received as a uniquely abject form of ugliness. It’s not uncommon for non-passing trans women to joke, with a tinge of tragedy in their voice, about their propensity to “scare small children when [walking] down the street” (Plemons 14).

The reality of passing is that it is an unfair and oppressive construct that burdens transsexuals with the need to appear easily interpretable as their sex (and as will be discussed in Chapter II, passing was a requirement to be deemed worthy of transitional health care at all for decades). Monstrous transsexuals “inspire fear not due to an inherent evil, but rather as a direct result of failing to conform to an expected set of standards as to what a living thing should be and look like” (potential). The endeavor to pass “means having to hide your identity in fear, in order to live” and is principally a relatively recent product of oppression (Feinberg, *Warriors* 89).

Unfortunately, not only is “there severe social stigma associated with gender nonconformity [that] can be a substantial factor leading to gender dysphoria” (Horne and Fein 274), but the repeated denial of recognition of one’s lived sex can be devastatingly isolating and degrading. Additionally, especially for trans women, passing can be a binary metric. Trans women and trans men tend to be “read” in different ways (Rudacille xix), and a trans woman who does not pass is seen not only as being “actually” a man, but as being a man *trying and clearly failing* to be a woman. Like Felix returning to the cottage in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to out the Monster as monstrous to his blind father De Lacey, failing to pass can out oneself as transsexual. It reveals one’s Monstrosity.

We seem to live “in a culture which appears to arrange always and in every way for the annihilation of queers” (Butler, *Bodies* 84), and for this reason, whether one passes or not can be a matter of pure survival; if you pass, no one knows that you’re a queer deserving of annihilation. Caitlin C. Thompson writes that “to pass means everything...It means you can walk down the street and not get rocks or words thrown at you or someone’s fist in your mouth” (49). Transsexuals in the past were historically encouraged to go “stealth” if or once they passed, severing all of their contacts from their pre-transition lives and starting over somewhere new where no one would or could ever suspect them of Monstrosity. Of trans women specifically, “a great many people do indeed react to transsexuals as if they were depraved sexual perverts” (Gabriel, “Outspokenness” 5). Furthermore, because they are more likely to be clocked (recognized as transsexual) in general, trans women are disproportionately the targets of brutal hate crimes and sexual violence (Rudacille xx; Plemons 15), especially if they do not pursue surgical sex reassignment and “endur[e] the constant threat of discovery and exposure”

(Rudacille xxii). Transsexuals are like monsters in that if they don't inspire sympathy or medical attention, then they instead inspire "violence [or] the will for pure and simple suppression" (Foucault 56). More than just blind or impulsive hatred, violence against transsexuals constitutes a punitive policing of sexual distinction and acceptable gender expression (Namaste 136-37, Gressgård 541).

Even in its most "normal-looking" renditions, the Monster still requires an enormous amount of strenuous, if not calculated, effort to even *attempt* to pass as *actually* "normal" or desirable. In its most monstrous, it's characterized most of all by its desperate, inescapable, and abject wretchedness. For some transsexuals, especially trans women because of how dominant masculine referents are in the interpretation of sexed bodies (Namaste 145), the hopelessness of the Monster's plight painfully resonates.

Some bodies avail themselves of theories of gendered fluidity and flux, play and performance. Others do not. Some bodies bear signs of distinction that are so strong and so immediately recognizable in the social milieu in which they exist that no dress, no makeup, no mannerisms, no hormones, no deeply felt personal claims can effectively resignify them. In some cases the persons who inhabit such bodies take up their outsider status proudly and to great effect. They relish being physical catalysts for social change and for upsetting a normative gender system that divides and denigrates us all. Other people do not want to be the vanguard for changing the gender system in which they live. They want, like the overwhelming majority of people, to be simply and unquestionably recognized as the man or

woman they know themselves to be. But for some bodies this desire is nearly impossible to achieve. (Plemons 16-17)

In her words to Victor Frankenstein, Stryker would share a journal entry from a “22-year old pre-operative transsexual woman from Seattle, Filisa Vistima... ‘I wish I was anatomically “normal” so I could go swimming...But no, I’m a mutant, Frankenstein’s monster.’” Stryker would also share that Vistima ended her own life soon after writing it (239). Clearly, the comparison that transsexuals draw between themselves and the Monster is not necessarily an empowering one. We relate to the Monster in the first place, after all, precisely because we see in it our own, same vulnerabilities and trauma. Whether precariously passing or utterly unconcealable, all Monsters in the Frankenstein canon are victimized by oppression, ostracism, violence, dominance, and destruction at both the hands of their Doctors and the hysterical reactions of the public. The Monster “must be destroyed, in tale after tale, version after version,” and the sheer scale of often lethal violence against transsexuals, including suicide, haunts us with the possibility of a similarly “preordained conclusion” (McConnell 232). If the tragedy of the Monster is to yearn for love—or failing love, at least acceptance, and failing acceptance, at least tolerance—from the society into which it was thrown, a society “frightened by its very existence, horrified at his physical appearance, and bent on his destruction” (Friedman and Kavey 3), then is this not, too, the tragedy of the transsexual?

Classification Nightmares

Both the transsexual and the Monster are victims of a dramatic mass impulse within their society to destroy them, motivated by the ways in which they threaten established boundaries of acceptable gender expression and human variance. This distinction makes the Monster vulnerable but also makes it very powerful. The Monstrous transsexual possesses the immense and threatening revolutionary potential to compromise, destabilize, and destroy in kind the very classificatory systems that exist to designate it as Monstrous. As discussed earlier in this thesis, monstrosity is a label that is frequently applied to that which is deemed “unknowable,” whether by blending supposedly distinct categories or existing outside of them altogether—and in this way, the transsexual can often exist outside language. There is an “inability of language to represent the transgendered subject’s movement over time between stably gendered positions” (Stryker, “My Words” 241), which is partly why terminology for transsexuals has been so varied over time, and this inability is only exacerbated if one attempts to find language for movement between *unstably* gendered positions. Applying the descriptor of “transsexual” to any subject asterisks all other descriptors with artifice and unnaturalness as well, since transsexuals “are assumed to not exist; they are assumed to ‘actually’ be something else—something that can be known by viewing their bodies” (Nordmarken 40). At its most basic, the transsexual identity signifies that they were created as one thing but are now living as another, and this discrepancy is what can render them Monstrous.

Despite language’s inability to include transsexual subjectivity, we often force language’s hand through our “un-representability” and “push language itself to change” (H. Weaver 291). This is a double-edged sword. At its best, language can introduce new terms for transsexuals to

express and identify themselves, such as gender-neutral pronouns and neo-pronouns. Even existing words can be a boon, or even an awakening, to transsexuals the first time that they encounter them and understand there *is* language for what they are. In his book *Trans*: A Quick and Dirty History*, Jack Halberstam writes that “if I had known the term ‘transgender’ when I was a teenager in the 1970s, I’m sure I would have grabbed hold of it like a life jacket...but there were no such words in my world” (1), and in her memoir *Trans*, Juliet Jacques recalls feeling “inspired by Candy Darling, who’d lived as a woman and been in Andy Warhol’s films, [and] the African American and Latina queens who’d fought the racist and homophobic police [at] Stonewall,” but wondered at the time “what were the terms for them?” (14). She also writes about the first Smiths song that she ever heard, “What Difference Does It Make,” and how Morrissey’s lyrics about secrets were “giving [her] a language” for her transness for the first time (36). However, linguistic accommodations may not come at the behest, or in the best interests, of transsexuals. When Leslie Feinberg “came out into the drag bars of western New York and southern Ontario” in the 1960s, ze writes that “the only words used to describe us were cut and seared—yelled at us from the window of a screeching car, filled with potential bashers. There were no words we’d go out of our way to use that made us feel good about ourselves,” and unless language is “forged collectively, in the fiery heat of struggle”, then it risks being dominated and shaped by institutional and oppressive powers (*Warriors* ix). Transsexual language has been shaped extensively by the diagnostic and pathological purviews of psychiatry and sexology (Davy 4), and activists have “talked about the need...to reclaim the terms created for us by the medical establishment and come up with our own ways of framing our experiences” (Jacques 107-08). In any case, countless transsexuals have nevertheless “found themselves

stranded in unnameable realms of embodiment,” especially prior to the post-war period (Halberstam, *Trans** 4), on which the second chapter shall focus. No given domain of language may be exhaustive enough to fully accommodate transsexual subjectivity, which is paradoxically an intensely specific and personal experience as well as a broad coalition of generally similar people with similar cultural status and political interests.

This aspect of being resistant to names and definitions is integral to Monstrous transsexuality. Just as the best efforts of language throughout history have produced only approximate and pathological terms, if any at all, the Monster remains unnamed itself. Despite our proper-noun, capital-M usage of it here, it can’t be forgotten that “monster” is a generic term and has little usefulness as a name in and of itself. In the 1931 film directed by James Whale, not only is the Monster referred to in the opening credits as just that—“The Monster”—but Boris Karloff is excluded from the cast. Even the actor *playing* the Monster is no more than a “?”. The Monster has been variously described as a horror, a creature, a wretch, and a villain, but for the most part, the Monster “has never had a *name*...None of us knows, really, what to call him: knows, as it were, what name he would *choose* for himself, if he were given the choice” (McConnell 231, emphasis mine). Naming, not just of our identity but of ourselves, is of exceptional importance to transsexuals; recall again the Introduction and how I specified my personal preference to be a *transsexual* woman as opposed to a *transgender* one. Moreover, the disavowal and disuse of a “deadname” in favor of a new, chosen name is par the course for transition. The Monster has very occasionally had a name—oftentimes it’s “Adam,” as in the maligned blockbuster *I, Frankenstein* (2014), and in *The Bride* (1985) it’s given the name Viktor by its traveling companion Rinaldo, as a gesture of friendship. However, the “powerful nature”

of transsexual naming practices goes two ways. There is a power in naming oneself but there is *also* a power in the *refusal* to do so, and to remain in “the space of the unnameable” (Halberstam, *Trans** 3-4). Whether it exists in the unsettling and unnameable limbo of question marks or defies that limbo to claim a name of its own, the language which is used for *and* by the Monster to describe it(self) is extremely evocative of transsexual experiences.

The crisis of language incited by Monstrous transsexuality is equaled by its inherent categorical crisis. Noël Carroll specifically cites the demonically possessed Reagan from *The Exorcist* (1973) as “a compound sexual being,” and therefore monstrous, in *The Philosophy of Horror* (23). Per the framework he provides in this same book, the transsexual would be a “fusion” like the Frankenstein’s Monster.

One structure for the composition of horrific beings is fusion. On the simplest physical level, this often entails the construction of creatures that transgress categorical distinctions such as inside/outside, living/dead, insect/human, flesh/machine, and so on...A fusion figure is a composite that unites attributes held to be categorically distinct and/or at odds in the cultural scheme of things in unambiguously one, spatio-temporally discrete entity...The Frankenstein monster, especially as he is represented in the Universal Pictures’ movie cycle, [is] a fusion figure. For not only is it emphasized that he is made from distinct bodies, along with electrical attachments, but the series presents him as if he had different brains imposed upon him[.] (43-44)

The transsexual, through its mannerisms and other signifiers, *transgresses* distinct *sexual* categories of man/woman and hetero/homosexual. Given its varying, modular potential for hormonal and surgical intervention, the transsexual *certainly* “unites attributes” largely considered to be anatomically exclusive to one of two presupposed sexes, not to mention the sexed mannerisms and signifiers that it does and does not have, does and does not use. Trans writer Christine Beatty describes herself as “a classification nightmare” of conflicting sexed and sexual designations (33). Since transsexual embodiment is so intrinsically linked to “radical politics of transgression and the deconstruction of binaries,” the amalgamating of gendered and sexual signifiers threatens to “deconstruct and disrupt binary orders of gender” (Davy 50), which has been called a “breach” of expectations that threatens “what constitutes our reality” (Ekins and King 77). Nordmarken writes of his aforementioned Monstrous transsexual body that it “ruptures categories and threatens ideas of body normativity...breaking the binary meaning of beauty by being *monstrously* beautiful” (39, emphasis mine).

As a categorical crisis, the Monstrous transsexual is Monstrous as such because it lacks a clear, distinct, discrete, and singularly interpretable sexed identity. In his seven theses on monstrosity, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes that “the difficult project of constructing and maintaining gender identities elicits an array of anxious responses throughout culture,” (9) an anxiety which incites the label of monster against those who fail to construct or maintain them properly. Humanity itself is associated with clarity of gender—consequently, opaque or contradictory gender expression is associated with lacking humanity and the inhuman. The transsexual, therefore, is evocative of “a primordial fear of monstrosity [where it’s] perceived as not-quite-human” (Stryker, *History* 6); the transsexual represents “the limits of the human,” is

“likely to be perceived as less than human,” and transsexual bodies are feared as “monstrous arrangements of skin, flesh, social mores, pleasures, dangers, and wounds” (Gressgård 550). This, again, is why passing is defined so much more by conformity to acceptable norms than attractiveness alone. Passing is “the denial of mixture” (Stone 166), a hiding as much as possible of the contradictory sexed signifiers that would complicate any random person’s interpretation of you under varying levels of scrutiny. If one’s presentation denies such an interpretation, then the interpreter resorts to the label of monster. Returning again to Feinberg, ze recalls how the question ““Is that a boy or a girl?”” dogged hir throughout hir adolescence in *Transgender Warriors* (4), and in hir semi-autobiographical novel *Stone Butch Blues*, protagonist Jess Goldberg observes the way her body is “blending gender characteristics” while weaning herself off of testosterone, and the way her body is reacted to by other people.

I remembered what it was like to walk a gauntlet of strangers who stare—their eyes angry, confused, intrigued. Woman or man: they are outraged that I confuse them. The punishment will follow. The only recognition I can find in their eyes is that I am “other.” I am different. I will always be different. I will never be able to nestle my skin against the comfort of sameness. “How the hell should I know what it is?” the man behind the counter remarked to a customer as I walked away. The pronoun echoed in my ears. I had gone to being an it. Before, strangers had raged at me for being a woman who crossed a forbidden boundary. Now they really didn’t know what my sex was, and that was unimaginable, terrifying to

them. Woman or man—the bedrock crumbled beneath their feet as I passed by.
How the hell should I know what it is? (244)

Ultimately, the fear that society reserves for Monstrous transsexuals is not entirely unfounded. The entrenched norms and values of any given society are not physical stone but psychic glass: only as resilient as society's willingness to believe in and reinforce them, but inevitably fragile without constant and vigilant protection. As such a severe crisis of such significant ideological categories, the Monstrous transsexual has an extreme propensity to shatter that glass unless zealously suppressed. Despite the vulnerability of the Monstrous transsexual, it also possesses great strength. It has “enormous revolutionary potential” (Gabriel, “Outspokenness” 7) and no other societal group has as much power to resist and redefine gendered dogma, or to destabilize “the foundational presupposition of fixed genders upon which a politics of personal identity depends” (Stryker, “My Words” 237). These foundational presuppositions “do not allow for...mobility and simultaneity, but monstrosity does” (potential), and the unknowability of Monstrosity doesn't just elude gendered *definition* (Brooks 219) but imitates, exaggerates, performs, and sheds gender *itself* (Zigarovich 265). Monstrousness affords a transsexual the thrilling, intimidating power to “gender-fuck” and “gender-terrorize,” to *take* power in causing confusion and impairing categorizability in others (Nordmarken 40). Transsexuals today more than ever are rejecting “traditional male and female presentations” (Horne and Fein 274), and androgyny and nonconformity to the binary are being embraced as deliberate, desired aesthetics by male, female, and nonbinary transsexuals alike. Rather than a failure or shame, Monstrous embodiment can be as exciting and dangerous as a pair of steel-toe

combat boots, stomped extra hard on the ground with every step for emphasis. Transsexuals are, increasingly, heeding the *Monster's* words to Victor Frankenstein, delivered on the storm-battered cliffs of the Orkney Islands: beware, for we are fearless and therefore powerful.

The Monstrous (Trans)feminine

The Monstrous transsexual is monstrous because of its simultaneous fusion and evasion of conventional, binary sexed signifiers of male and female. However, this monstrousness may be rooted in femininity specifically—like the active ingredient in a prescription drug. Barbara Creed, in her reifying essay “Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine,” defines the eponymous concept as “what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, [and] abject” (67). She also emphasizes the central concept of the border to the construction of monstrousness, similar to other definitions that refer to being outside of or crossing categorically vital distinctions. Creed mentions that monsters can be made from the distinction between “those who take up their proper gender roles from those who do not” and “normal and abnormal sexual desire” (71), and through these transgressions the monstrous feminine evokes a litany of contradictions; female monsters “occupy the hybrid locus of being both powerful and vulnerable; compelling and repulsive; attractive and grotesque” (Picart, *Rebirths* 19) and are “both desirable and horrible” (Hawley 221). All of these transgressions and more are present in the Frankenstein narrative and are embodied by the Monstrous transsexual.

The unique abjection of femininity is both symbolic and cultural. Stephanie Kiceluk argues that “in the ‘patriarchal configurations’ of Western culture, the Cartesian duality of substance and spirit collapses when it comes to women, because, quite simply, women *are* their bodies” (123, emphasis mine). The oppressive emphasis not just on appearance, physicality, and the body of womanhood but on the subservient relation of these things to the whims of men explains why the acceptable “limits” of femininity are so starkly defined and its violators so harshly punished. The pervasive, almost finger-wagging reinforcement in our society of things that women should and should not look like, should and should not dare to be, and should and should not have for themselves are enduring patriarchal constructs, and if threatened enough by a woman monstrous enough, they may be defended with something far more violent than finger-wagging. Female gender roles are so steadfastly enforced because “the woman who oversteps [them] risks becoming a Scylla, Weird Sister, Lilith, Bertha Mason, or Gorgon” (Cohen 9). However, it bears repeating that while there is vulnerability in monstrosity, there is also power. The denial and suppression of an assumed inherent power of femininity is integral to conceptions—and hegemonic management—of the monstrous feminine, since feminine power undermines the construction of “universal man and his non-human others” (Lykke 78). The female body is figured, in and of itself, as “unspeakably monstrous—and in this monstrosity, unspeakably powerful” (Young 412), and the label of monster may apply to any woman who possesses “beauty, intelligence, and ambition” in such excess as to upset or subvert male dominance (Picart, *Rebirths* 19). Even monstrosity is considered male by default, which makes the female monster doubly monstrous: a “catastrophe of the catastrophe” and “disfiguration of a disfiguration” (Vine 256).

The only thing that may be more monstrous than the female monster is the *feminized* monster, that which is not originally female but has *become* female, or fused itself to femaleness. The body which is “banished” to monstrousness and abjection is not necessarily female, but it *is* feminine, “that is, it’s amorphous, indirect, impure, diffuse, multiple, [and] evasive” (Jackson). In a milieu wherein femininity is already so monstrous, so dangerous, and so disavowed, *transfemininity* exaggerates the threat. Transfemininity paradoxically represents all of the same abject potential of femininity in general while defying the normal category of femininity itself, producing a uniquely and especially artificial and suspect form of embodiment (Serano 5); it is the disfiguration *of* a disfiguration *of* a disfiguration. If the monstrous feminine can depict the “woman’s body [as] slashed and mutilated, not only to signify her own castrated state, but also the possibility of castration for the male” (Creed 74), then the monstrous transfeminine depicts this literally—trans women appear disproportionately within the horror genre “as abject beings” whose transgression of social boundaries and crossing, mixing, and evasion of gendered lines is meant to provoke repulsion (Holtz). Furthermore, the effemimaniac impulse that is so fearful of transfemininity does not entirely discriminate between the “slashed and mutilated” transsexual woman, the pre-operative or non-operative transsexual, and the effeminate but cissexual man, whether gay or straight. Effemimania frames all of these phenomena as varying intensities of “symptoms of the same disease,” the disease of excess femininity within a supposedly male body (Serano 129), resulting in a broad overlap of pathologized gender expression, homosexual attraction, and transsexual embodiment which may be pragmatically lumped together as “the monstrous sissy.”

Vito Russo opens his seminal book *The Celluloid Closet* with a bang: “Nobody likes a sissy...Even in a time of sexual revolution, when traditional roles are being examined and challenged every day, there is something about a man who acts like a woman that people find fundamentally distasteful.” He continues, explaining that representations of homosexuality have historically been rendered not through explicit sexual acts, but through male terms of who and what is and is not masculine (4). Given these terms of engagement, the Frankenstein’s Monster has already been read by various scholars as something of a sissy, if not as an outright transsexual. The Monster’s “fallen place in the world” has been called “comparable to the place of women” (Botting, *Making Monstrous* 110); its “position as the tortured male body[,] simultaneously dangerous and endangered” has been called “a position typically feminized” (Picart, *Rebirths* 191); its “excess of gender” has been described as containing “not merely the disavowed dimensions of manhood, but the unspeakable limits of femininity” (Butler, “Autobiography” 47-48); and its “role and very definition as the insistent object of visual inspection, with the inevitable hysterical reaction” has provoked Peter Brooks to ask whether the Monster is not *symbolically* a woman “seeking to escape from the feminine condition into recognition by the fraternity” (218). These readings represent the “persistent critical difficulty in describing not only Frankenstein’s creature but also his ‘monstrous’ gender” (Zigarovich 260), as the Monster’s weakness, marginalization, and anguish—in effect, emasculation—force the “monstrous taint” of femininity *onto* it. Similarly, femininity is “the source of the monstrous taint” for the gay or queer man who is monstrous “precisely because he embodies characteristics of the feminine” (Benshoff 6) regardless of whether he is a transitioning transsexual.

Despite their similarities, partial overlap, and bundled pathologization within effemimania, there are still significant differences between the sissy as a general category and the Monstrous transsexual. Russo's use of the sissy is intended to refer to a specific character archetype in classic, mostly Production Code era cinema that was used to not-so-subtly represent male homosexuality within strict censorship guidelines. Homosexuality and transsexuality were still not considered distinct phenomena for most of the Code era, and certain characteristics of the sissy, such as physical weakness and overintellectualism (Russo 31), are more commonly exhibited by effete Doctors than rampaging Monsters. Moreover, there is a lack of as much of an existential threat from the sissy because the sissy is *being* a sissy, it doesn't exist *as* a sissy—similar to the way that a (gay) Doctor *does* but the (trans) Monster *is*. If taken to mean a mere blending of gendered signifiers—a man acting like a woman—then the separate label of sissy is simply redundant within such a broad, umbrella usage of transsexual as utilized by this thesis. However, the sissy as an archetype—like the monstrous feminine as a theory, and the monstrous transfeminine as a corollary—demonstrates the ways in which femininity can be Othering and distinguishing for those who express or embody it, and provides context for feminized readings of ostensibly male characters like the Frankenstein's Monster. The Monstrous transsexual in any of these permutations is somewhat necessarily a sissy, and some sissies may likewise evoke the horror of Monstrous transsexuality. Yet all of this is only one side of the coin—it cannot be forgotten that the monstrous *feminine* applies also, and obviously, to the monstrous *female*.

Here comes the bride.

Gender is a Construct

What makes Frankenstein's Monster unique among all other monsters—and most uniquely appropriate for embodying Monstrous transsexuality—is its constructed nature. The social “constructs” of sex, gender, and sexuality are made into tangible things through the Doctor's literal act of construction and exaggerated by the Monster's myriad, intolerable differences. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the variant of the female Monster, more commonly known as the “Bride.” True to the ambiguousness of the Frankenstein name itself, it may be created for either the Monster as a mate or the Doctor as a possession. Male Monsters created for the (homo)sexual gratification of the Doctor may also be “Brides” in this sense, but it usually refers to a purposefully female creation. Since Bride characters experienced a significant surge in prominence within the Frankenstein canon during the post-war era and women's liberation movement, the ontology and significance of the Bride will be thoroughly revisited in Chapter II. However, it *is* worth noting now the ways in which the Bride—a “perfect” woman created from scratch by almost exclusively male Doctors—is often “deployed as an icon of artificial beauty and called upon in discussions of cosmetic surgery” (Hawley 228) and “translates the social construction of woman into an essentialist nightmare” (Young 411). Elspeth H. Brown writes that both models and transsexuals have been viewed as “Frankensteinian monsters, bringing together technology, artifice, and industry in the production of manufactured femininity” (262). When the female Monster is created, these Brides not only represent the *conceptual* construction

of the ideal “female,” but also the *literal* construction of a *living* woman who is intended to *embody* that ideal. It is the Monstrous transsexual in its purest and most potent form.

As a medical or psychological disease to be cured or social problem to be solved, intervention and treatment for transsexuals has historically been dominated by the “idealized and normatively defined endpoint [of] a stable gender, with the appropriate aesthetic expression of femininity or masculinity, which entails surgical correction” of any and all anomalies of sexed embodiment (Davy 29-30, 31). If transsexuality is so popularly viewed as being “trapped in the wrong body,” then it naturally follows that the best practice for treatment is to create the *right* body for the patient through scalpel, stitch, and pill. These surgical interventions—especially for trans women, since masculine “anomalies” of the body are so much more identifiable than feminine ones—require the cutting away and (re)construction of flesh into an acceptable female shape. The perceived necessity of the construction of a new sexed body, and the act of construction itself, was foundational to the first diagnostic criteria and treatment guidelines for female transsexuals, as doctors were concerned with resolving a “pathological incongruence between the mind and body,” and consequently the “form and mutability of the trans-body has remained at the center of its definitions” (Plemons 119). Although sex reassignment surgery is considered the ultimate procedure for transsexual care, facial feminization surgery has emerged in recent decades as another radical intervention for constructing the transfeminine body. Unlike SRS, FFS (re)constructs the part of the body that is constantly visible and integral to recognition in daily life, and given the immediate and subconscious way in which a face can be recognized and sexed, facial feminization is perhaps more than any other procedure grounded in subjective ideas of “what men and women look like and what must be done to move a person from one

category to the other,” and therefore, “is the physical manifestation of a particular way of understanding what a woman is” (Plemons 62, 155).

The argument that Monstrous transsexuals represent the surgical construction of an ideal female was articulated explicitly as early as 1978 by anti-trans radical feminist Mary Daly. Her incendiary salvo *Gyn/Ecology* conceptualizes “the Frankenstein Phenomenon” as a conspiracy through which the creation of transsexuals is a patriarchal plot against all “real” women. She calls doctors “creators of artificial life and manipulators of existing life” and describes trans women as “dead matter folded into ‘life-like’ imitations,” warning readers that “the science of womankind” practiced in the gender clinic is nothing more than “male mother-miming and necrophilia” that “ultimately points toward the total elimination of women.” Most hysterically of all, she writes that “transsexualism is an example of male surgical siring which invades the female world with...*cyborgs* which will be part flesh, part robot” (Daly 69-72, emphasis mine). Daly’s protégé, Janice Raymond, similarly suggested in *The Transsexual Empire* in 1979 that “transsexual laboratories” were the testing site for “whether or not it is possible for men to...create a new ‘breed’ of females” (140) and that “such clinics could become sex-role control centers, for deviant, nonfeminine females” (136). Raymond deploys fittingly monstrous descriptions against the transsexual, writing that the transsexual is a “boundary violator” and “synthetic hybrid” (108, 155), and asserts that trans women are so strong of category crises and so vehemently deceptive that their very *existence* is equitable to an act of rape (104). Far from a mere tirade or a fringe belief, *The Transsexual Empire* was “the definitive statement on transsexualism” at its time (Stone 154) and would remain “the best-known and most widely read and discussed book on transsexualism by an academician who is neither a physician nor a

transsexual person” until Joanne Meyerwitz’s *How Sex Changed* in 2002 (Rudacille 172).

Regarding the aesthetic construction of transsexuals, Raymond, too, suggests that therapists and surgeons deal with transsexuals “as manipulatable objects and reduc[e] them to the world of appearances” (145).

These views of transsexual bodies as surgically constructed and “mutable,” or as “manipulations of existing life” and “a new ‘breed’ created in a laboratory,” are what makes the Monstrous transsexual framework so apropos. The key thing to understand about the Frankenstein’s Monster and all of its descendants in pop culture is that it’s created not just through *any* process, but some kind of *unnatural* process—anything other than human sexual reproduction between a man and a woman as God intended. The Monster is very crucially *made*, not born, from purposefully arranged parts and built “from our scientific invention” (Szollosy 435). Here, the idea of the Monster as not only sculpted and reconstructed flesh but as a broader type of scientific invention—a *cyborg*—becomes intuitive. As discussed earlier, the Frankenstein myth casts a shadow over robotics, artificial intelligence, and genetic engineering; Frankenstein is “the touchstone for any text on the creation of wholly or partially artificial beings” (Fuller 21) and explicit reference in Ivan Asimov’s theory of the “Frankenstein complex.” Frankenstein films have largely kept pace with scientific advances, and over the last century, there was a gradual but observable shift in popularity between Monsters sewn from flesh and Monsters who have been programmed, wired, and spliced. Although the robotic bodies of *Westworld* (1973), *Blade Runner* (1982), and *Ex Machina* (2014) are welded together instead of stitched, and the children of *Embryo* (1975), *Godsend* (2004), and *Splice* (2009) are amalgams at the genetic

instead of the corporeal level, all of these variants are just as artificial, constructed, and *made* as even Boris Karloff's comparatively primitive bolt-necked brute from the 1930s.

This extension and evolution of Monstrosity to include cyborgs and robots is especially auspicious for representing transsexual embodiment. Nina Lykke writes that Frankenstein's Monster was not merely a prototype for successive, cybernetic Monsters in fiction, but "an early harbinger of the cyborg world of the late twentieth century," in which real-life cyborgs who "transgress forbidden borders are becoming more and more common, and their repression, conversely, less and less successful" (77). As Jennifer González writes, "imaginary representations of cyborgs take over when traditional bodies fail [and] a hybrid model of existence is required to encompass a new, complex, and contradictory lived experience," and the "cyborg body becomes the historical record of changes in human perception" (61). In this way, the cyborg becomes something of a barometric, hybridized figure for the changing thresholds of what separates humanity and technology, and by definition the latter's ability to sufficiently resemble the former. I argue that the transsexual *is* a cyborg—not symbolic of the cyborg or representative of the cyborg, *is* a cyborg—given that within the spectrum of transsexual embodiment, there are surgical, hormonal, and medical interventions which are only made possible through scientific invention and innovation. If transsexuals are Monstrous and the Monster is a cyborg, then the Monstrous transsexual is a cyborg as well.

The Monster's conflation with cyborgs and robots has not gone unopposed. Chris Baldick, for example, urges readers to remember that "although the monster is the result of what is formally a 'mechanical' assembly, once animated he is as unexpectedly human as he is unexpectedly ugly," and that reading the Monster "even allegorically as a machine... would mean

missing [its] most disturbing immediate significance” (“The Monster Speaks” 45). In this view, the organic nature of the Monster cannot be simply overlooked or ignored for the sake of convenience—but instead of asking whether Frankenstein’s Monster is or is not a robot or a cyborg, the more salient observation may be that what a robot or cyborg *is*, or *could* be, has evolved and advanced enough to render the distinction futile. Stryker’s words to Victor Frankenstein include her description of herself as someone who “achieves the similitude of a natural body only through an unnatural process,” (240), and transsexuals who medically or surgically transition are “locked into the health care system” in a way that no cissexual person is, despite not being “sick” per se (Rudacille 194-95). It’s the *uniqueness* of this relationship to medical science and the unnatural constructive processes *provided* by that relationship that renders the Monstrous transsexual as cybernetic: “perhaps the first truly molecular cyborg” (n1x). Additionally, “it is striking to note how often it is the woman who becomes the model of the perfect machine” in the science-fiction film (Doane 111), evoking both Daly and Raymond’s fears of constructed transsexual women and the Monstrously artificial feminine perfection of the Bride.

Something resembling this assertion has been made before. In *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender*, Bernice Hausman attributes “the advent of transsexualism” to “the development of certain medical technologies” (7), arguing that these developments themselves were central to “the emergence of the demand for sex change” and that “transsexualism *necessarily* depends upon a relation to developing medical discourses and practices” (3-4, emphasis mine). Dwight D. Billings and Thomas Urban also argue that “transsexualism is a socially constructed reality which only exists in and through medical

practice” (99). Hausman, Billings, and Urban aren’t *entirely* wrong. As already stated, there is in fact a *relationship* between transsexuals and the medical establishment involving the prescription of hormones, providing of diagnoses, and performance of surgical procedures; it is a relationship in which not all transsexuals participate, or participate to the same degree, but one which exists nonetheless. However, the persistent and prominent cultural fixation on this relationship at the expense of all other transsexual embodiment practices (a fixation of which these writers are guilty of perpetuating), “official” recognition of transsexuality being historically *dependent* on this relationship, and transsexuals’ lack of power in establishing the terms of this relationship reveal their arguments that the medical establishment created the phenomenon of transsexuality as tautological. It’s more accurate to say that these medical technologies made “the advent of transsexualism” *as defined by the developers and providers of these medical technologies* possible. Furthermore, due to the historically strict standards of eligibility for transsexual health care discussed at length in Chapter II, it was not by accident that this self-fulfilling framework was what literally and metaphorically shaped transsexuality in the twentieth century. It is only relatively recently that this definition has been resisted, reclaimed, and reshaped by transsexuals themselves.

The consideration of the Monstrous transsexual as a cyborg is not meant to specify a single range of medical and surgical transsexual embodiment as “necessary” or render transsexuals as nothing more than a conceptual creation of science in the way that Hausman, Billings, and Urban have. Like the monstrous sissy, it functions as simply another manifestation of the Monster, a manifestation whose creation is more obviously attuned to modern medicine and technology than others. Accordingly, the medico-surgical cyborg whose body is ever-evolving parallel to

innovations in transsexual health care, and becoming ever more Monstrous over time and into the future, is just one of many ways to represent the Monstrous transsexual and the unnatural circumstances of its creation.

Yet when I said earlier that the Monster has not been conflated with cyborgs unopposed, there was another dissenter worth citing: Donna Haraway, author of “The Cyborg Manifesto,” the most significant work of literature on the concept of the cyborg in modern times. She specifically describes the ways in which the Frankenstein’s Monster and the cyborg differ:

Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein’s monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden, that is, through the fabrication of the heterosexual male, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos. The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the Oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden: it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. (151)

Aw, rats. Pack it in, boys, she got us.

I kid. We’re not giving up that easily. Haraway’s distinction is not entirely airtight, as her interpretation of the Monster is rather myopic. If we spin our triangulation around, and instead of going from the transsexual to the Monster to the cyborg we work from the cyborg to the transsexual to the Monster, we can bring Haraway’s theories into the fold, too. While charting “transitions from the comfortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks” concomitant with late capitalism, she contrasts “biology as clinical practice” with “biology as

inscription,” “reproduction” with “replication,” and “sex” with “genetic engineering” (161). The ways in which transsexual embodiment, and its medically mediated or otherwise “unnatural” construction threatens the “organic family,” reflects these procreative transitions. Haraway also writes, in the manifesto’s most famous sentence, that “there is nothing about being ‘female’ that naturally binds women,” and that “ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families” (155, 162). She continues that “the cyborgs populating feminist science fiction make very problematic the statuses of man or woman[.] Cyborg monsters...define quite different political possibilities and limits from those proposed by the mundane fiction of Man and Woman” (178, 180). I assume that by now, reader, these shadows are starting to form a silhouette.

When Haraway suggests that “the cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world” (150), states that cyborgs “require regeneration, not rebirth,” and advocates for “the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender” (181), she may as well be calling down the lightning herself to raise the Monstrous transsexual from its slab. The cyborg that Haraway describes, intentionally or not, emphasizes a radical transsexual potential and frames perfectly the way that transsexuality can be the mediator between her cyborg and the Monster. Wolf Eichler observes that the Monster “has been patched together from different parts of different, unknown bodies, and in this respect he is the grotesque forerunner of present-day biotechnology, which creates beings from test tubes, frozen sperms, and surrogate mothers” (101-02). Are sex reassignment surgery, facial feminization surgery, and other transitional technologies which produce beings equally “patched together” by Doctors not included? Disagreeing with

Haraway's own distinction between the two, Jay Clayton writes that "both Shelley's creature and Haraway's cyborg are deeply embodied beings" and cites "body-altering drugs like...estrogen" and "people whose lives have been transformed by...sex-change operations" as successors of her cyborg vision (65-66). Monsters—especially female Monsters such as the Bride—possess "the ability to represent the post-human and to perform negotiations between the 'organic' and the 'inorganic'" on multiple levels (Hawley 228). When the Monster is both a cyborg and a transsexual, both a transsexual and a cyborg, it explodes into a monumental matrix of constructions, technologies, identities, dichotomies, and bodies, and as Frankenstein films over the last few decades have increasingly embraced artificial intelligence and androids as their Monsters, this approach in which the Monster, the cyborg, and the transsexual triangulate each other only becomes more germane.

Conclusion

What is the ontology of the Monstrous transsexual? The transsexual is Monstrous because it's amalgamated and hybridized, an unknowable and uninterpretable category crisis of the most visceral and intimate of humanity's preciously fragile ideological distinctions. It transgresses and defies the normative categories of man/woman through unnatural embodiment, whether it be achieved through incongruent gender expression, hormonal transformation, or surgical intervention. The transsexual is Monstrous because it is constructed, built with purpose and intention, to embody specific sexual ideals but in the process threatens the very sanctity of those

ideals; it is neither a man nor a woman but belongs to a monstrous approximation of gender for which we lack the words. The Monstrous transsexual is ostracized for that which makes it both vulnerable and powerful. It embodies the experiences of the pre-operative, post-operative, and non-operative; it embodies those who pass and those who don't; it embodies existential horror, fear, rage, dependency, dysphoria, artificiality, construction, the collapsing of categories, loneliness, longing, loathing, doubleness and nothingness and somethingness and everythingness; it embodies the experience of being a strange and fascinating and frightening new thing in the world, and feeling just as frightened yourself. The Monstrous transsexual is Monstrous because it *is* transsexual.

The very act of changing sex is monstrous. Prior to modern history, sex-changing as shapeshifting appeared frequently in diverse Pagan mythologies, in which gods and other powerful creatures could change their sex to disguise themselves, or change the sex of mortals as divine punishments or rewards (Gabriel, "Sex-Changes" 11). These myths, albeit ambivalently, framed the idea of physical sexual transition as not merely unnatural but *supernatural*. Now, transsexuality is monstrous because it threatens "the idea that gender categories are relatively fixed and that original gender assignments are correct" (Asma 270), an idea which undergirds a stubborn proportion of modern civilization.

The very *acts* of changing sex are Monstrous. At the conclusion of her words to Victor Frankenstein, Susan Stryker proclaims that "I am a transsexual, and *therefore* I am a monster...A creature, after all...is nothing other than a created being, a made thing" (240, emphasis mine). The assumed immutable correctness of sex as assigned at birth means that transsexuality, in the most frightened imaginations, consists of "the brutal mutilation of [the] healthy bodies [of]

‘normal’ men and women into unsexed or hermaphroditic monstrous others” (Prosser 81); persistent modern notions of bodily “wholeness” and corporeal “integrity” render transsexual body modifications especially intolerable (Gressgård 542). Transsexuals are not reanimated cadavers or silicon and circuitry, but we *are* constructions. We are purposefully built, shaped, and presented—rebuilt, reshaped, and represented—to embody certain sexed ideals inside and out, whether they are society’s, our Doctor’s, or our own. We undergo hormonal treatments and surgical procedures so that we may resemble as much as possible but never quite be that which we must assert ourselves as—the impossibility of saturated cissexual emulation is precisely what makes us Monstrous—but with or without these interventions, our appearance will always be very important to our reception, followed in importance by the circumstances of our creation. Although these surgical interventions are not “brutal mutilations,” they *are* surgeries. They are visceral, uncomfortable endeavors by their very nature. Eric Plemons, describing an observation of facial feminization surgery, writes that “skin, bones, and cartilage would be pushed, pulled, burred, sawed, cut, cracked, tucked, and sutured” (118), awestruck at the “well-controlled violence” inflicted by the surgeons’ instruments (131-32). Jack Halberstam, while describing his own top surgery, writes

[My Doctor and I] were building something in flesh, changing the architecture of my body forever. The procedure was not about building maleness into my body; it was about editing some part of the femaleness that currently defined me. I did not think I would awake as a new self, only that some of my bodily contours would shift in ways that gave me a different bodily abode” (Halberstam, *Trans** 23-24)

These medical interventions can alleviate dysphoria and even suicidal dysphoria, make it easier to pass, or simply make us happy, but they are not “necessary” in the same way that taking insulin for diabetes or undergoing surgery to repair a perforated lung is “necessary.” Those interventions have the goal of making a sick body well while keeping the body itself as unchanged or as close to “normal” as possible. The transsexual body is not normal. The transsexual body *does* change, internally and externally, medicinally and aesthetically, because to be transsexual is *to* change, to transgress and transform and transcend.

Much has already been said about how the transsexual resembles the Monster, but crucially, the Monster also resembles the transsexual. Although a transsexual character’s body can be represented on-screen in films explicitly “about” transsexuality by revealing its “sites of contradiction,” this blunt approach fails to capture the “fragmentary and internally contradictory...*experience* of being in a [trans] body” (Halberstam, *Trans** 89, emphasis mine). Film critics Willow Maclay and Caden Gardner—a trans woman and a trans man, respectively—discuss the subject in an installment of their conversational column “Body Talk” about body horror and transsexuality. Maclay writes that “literal texts so often miss the point” of transsexual embodiment, and that it’s “intellectually dishonest” to assume that “cinema as an artform [can’t] handle topics of a wider scale in different ways than direct representation.” Gardner adds that body horror films, however, “understand the frailties and fallibility of the human body [and] feel like the closest depiction to [trans] issues I can imagine on-screen even if it isn’t direct text, just shrouded in allegory.” More than any other genre, horror and its monstrous menagerie of abnormal and altered bodies provides “a language for imagining the self

in transformation, re-gendered, ungendered, and regenerated” (Badley 3). The “primal fear of bodily transformation” in these horror films is “rooted in the psychosexual, in puberty, in the animalistic ‘other’ and in loss of control of one’s own self” (Rogerson), with puberty especially being a traumatic period for any transsexual person as their body begins to solidify into a permanent, dysphoric form against their will—but the supposedly horrific transformations of the body horror film can also appear liberating, as trans writer Samwise Lastname describes in a post for the *Gender Terror* queer horror blog:

The creeping horror of watching your body mutate, transforming into something improper, inhuman, and wrong is something I think a lot of people with dysphoria can relate to. I knew that horror from my own adolescence. And I was afraid I’d know it again if I transitioned. What if hormones and surgeries only made me hate my body more? Buried deeper was another, quieter thought: What if it didn’t? What if it wasn’t horrific at all? What if I liked it? What if I was happy?...I related to the desire for a body that felt right, regardless of how ‘wrong’ other people might say it is.

The horror genre is so “rich in transgender stories” because it’s fundamentally concerned with the experience of unnatural embodiment that is ontological to transsexual subjectivity (Maclay and Gardner). The horror genre specializes in depictions of bodies in transformation, transition, dysphoria, euphoria, decay, and evolution, and there are “monstrous, abject, unnatural aspects of trans embodiment” (Zigarovich 267) that can only be meaningfully articulated by

these extreme and horrific representations. Transsexual kinship with these monstrous bodies is more than just intuitive—it's visceral and multitudinous, if not automatic. Frankenstein's Monster, in this sense, has always been a body horror: what is its patchwork flesh, revolting visage, perversion of the human form, and unspeakable artificiality if not body horror, made all the more horrific by the Monster's self-conscious despair at it all? The Monster suffers from a profound lack of control over its circumstances, body, and existence, and "the body as a vessel for chaos and the horror of that lack of control is a trans story" (Maclay and Gardner).

When the Doctor creates a Monster in the Frankenstein film, he does so with a particular goal in mind. He has a particular design that he hopes to bring to life, through a particular process, and plans to use his creation for a particular purpose, even if that purpose is just proving that his experiment was a success. Just as Doctors and Monsters have many forms in the Frankenstein canon, these processes and purposes are manifold, too. Whatever it is that makes the Monster monstrous—including the how and why of its creation—is what separates it from the realm of what is normal, acceptable, possible, male or female, and human. These categories, although *impermeable*, have not remained *immovable* throughout history, and the second chapter of this thesis shall vertically slice only a small section of that history to consider the construction of the Monster and the developing social, medical, psychological, and pop cultural discourses of transsexuality as intertwined stories. They evolve together, step by step, mutually reinforcing and reiterating each other's symbolic significance across generations.

The sheer variance and volume in Frankenstein films cited within this thesis brings to mind how few other characters have been so uninterruptedly dominant in popular culture. I wonder whether Frankenstein's Monster would have fallen into obscurity, never been adapted and never

been remembered, if Mary Shelley had not devoted to the creature the central chapters of her novel. There are few characters in fiction more wounded and wretched, yet more endearingly eloquent, than the Monster, and its relation of its own experiences in its own words immortalized both the novel and the character as tragedies. The Monster is aware of its own depth. Even in the cinematic adaptations where it does not speak, it becomes a figure that stares back out at us through the screen with its dun white eyes, pleading, seeking, trying to understand. We see it and it sees us, and we see each other. The Monstrous transsexual exists, and shall exist forever, so long as transsexuals such as myself return its gaze.

II

Frankenstein Created Woman

“Warning! The sexual transformation of a man into a woman will actually take place before your very eyes!”

—Tagline for *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971).

The United States of America’s entry into World War II is a very convenient reference point for the most significant paradigm shifts in both Frankenstein films and sexual science in the twentieth century. In the case of the former, Universal Studios’ juggernaut series of Frankenstein films, and indeed their entire golden age of horror, concluded in the war years. *Son of Frankenstein* in 1939 was the last of their monster movies to receive an “A” budget, and the studio’s wartime follow-ups—*Ghost of Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*, and *House of Frankenstein*—would all have smaller “B” budgets, as would the franchise’s final breath *House of Dracula*, which was pushed into theaters a few months after V-J Day in 1945.

When the Monster met Abbott and Costello in a comedy-horror picture three years later, it was officially curtains for Frankenstein and Universal's cadre of coffin-dwellers.

Although they had seemed to have been vanquished at last on the silver screen, the Universal monsters would live on as indisputable icons of horror. These frightening films were not merely popular attractions: they were artful pictures that colored their black-and-white monsters with an artful and tragic romanticism, a "sense that [they] were actually creatures with souls and human longings...these characters represented society's rejects who were trying to stake a claim in a world in which they had no place" (T. Weaver et al., *Universal* 4). This ambivalence towards monsters corresponded in many ways to the pre-war era's ambivalence towards homosexuals, treated much like the movie monster as something "simultaneously tolerated and oppressed[,] both as the object of thrilling titillation and as a social pariah" (Benshoff 38). Moreover, the homosexual and the movie monster were both inventions of these pre-war decades; the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was when sex and sexuality became serious, widespread subjects of scientific study for the first time. Urbanization, and its consolidation of diverse populations into small and dense areas, afforded massive leaps in the fields of statistics and sociology. With these leaps came "the intensification of the desire to classify, know, and define" more and more manifestations of human difference (Halberstam, *Trans** 6), and this was the endeavor in which homosexuality, heterosexuality, and their opposition was first canonized.

As previously discussed, "early sexological theories of homosexuality amalgamated sex and gender" (Irvine 243). Behavior and individuals which would be called transsexual by our modern language existed and were observed in these times, and a variety of terms were created to describe them such as "contrary sexual feeling," "homo mollis," "psychical hermaphroditism,"

and “eonism” among others (King 80). The one term that would prove the most widespread and enduring would be *inversion*. Coined by European sexologists, “inversion” was a term that encompassed a wide variety of “gender and sexual transgressions from the gender and heteronormative” (Davy 18) and described those “in whom gender identity and sexual instincts had been turned around” (Halberstam, *Trans** 4). The consolidation of homosexual and transsexual behavior within the label of inversion, fittingly, went both ways: although cross-sex identification was “subsumed...under the broader rubric of ‘inversion’ and associated...primarily with homosexuality” (Meyerowitz 14-15), the same framework viewed homosexuality as a symptom “rooted in gender abnormality” (Califia 58). What sexologists sought to classify and pathologize within the term “inversion” was ultimately *any* kind of deviation from cultural norms of masculinity and femininity and conventional gender roles, and any such deviation “was understood as both a cause and a symptom of homosexuality” (Benshoff 33). As a consequence of this classificatory fervor, scientists from various fields became preoccupied with studying possible “chemical, morphological, and psychological” causes of inverse behavior (Reumann 166), and endocrinological attempts “to locate the essence of sex, gender, and sexuality in the secretions of the gonads” became the early foundation for medical sexology (Meyerowitz 16). These pursuits led to both the discovery of sex hormones and the subsequent discovery that “male” and “female” sex hormones weren’t respectively exclusive. Revelations that men and women were not completely biologically distinct challenged the old paradigm and gave rise to a new prevailing wisdom of normal men and women possessing properly “balanced” sexual tendencies. This ideology is evident in the term “invert” itself, which implies an ideal, uninverted form of sexual sensibility by comparison. By the 1920s, these

discoveries were codified in the theory of human bisexuality, in which “all men strayed from the abstract pole of male, and all women strayed from the abstract pole of female,” and inverts and other sex-role deviants “simply strayed farther” (Meyerowitz 28). Human bisexuality conceded that femininity may exist on a latent biological or psychological level in normal, masculine men (and vice versa), which was a blow against pre-sexological gender essentialism, but it also pathologized inverse behavior such as homosexuality as the result of an internal sexual imbalance. These theories suggested that homosexuality was a deviation from one’s sex and sex role above all else, not just a simple preference in sexual partner, and cross-sex identification of any kind—cross-dressing or transsexuality—was considered its most extreme and dire symptom.

Despite the relative ambivalence with which homosexuality was treated in the 1920s and 1930s, American popular media and culture as a whole grew significantly more hostile towards sexual deviancy by the time the country entered World War II in 1941. The development of sexology in the previous decades had finally breached the periphery of the mainstream and public awareness of sexual deviancy was higher than ever before, “albeit in ways almost always obscurantist, punitive, and homophobic” (Benshoff 82). This spike in unwelcome awareness of homosexuality was partially a consequence of the war effort itself: the ideal soldier was a patriotic, red-blooded, *masculine* man, and draftees “dismissed as physically or psychologically unfit for service prompted concern about effeminacy” (Reumann 167). Additionally, the very nature of the draft and enlistment meant that more men were being shipped away from their families and wives and girlfriends to be in close proximity with other men for long periods of time. The behaviorist theories of sexual deviancy that were embraced in the previous decade would be wielded well by the psychiatrists tasked by the Armed Forces “to detect and discharge

homosexuals from their ranks,” and with the inversion model of sexual deviancy and effemimaniac prejudice guiding their work, suspected homosexuals were subjected to “a barrage of bizarre methodologies based on the assumption that a ‘true’ male homosexual always partook of passive, ‘female’ sexual pleasures” (Benshoff 110, 82-83).

The decades-long project of classifying, medicalizing, and studying sexuality would culminate shortly after the war with the explosive publication of the “Kinsey Report” by Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin in 1948. Their book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, was a study of unprecedented size and scope for its subject matter, detailing the sexual proclivities and histories of thousands of anonymous men. Although the study encompassed a vast array of male sexual behavior, the book’s most shocking and publicized findings were its groundbreaking statistics on homosexual activity (Reumann 165), which asserted that more than six percent of orgasms among its male subjects “were derived from homosexual contacts” and that “perhaps the major portion of the male population has at least some homosexual experience,” with one estimate for that portion being over a third of all men (Kinsey et al. 610, 623). The famous “Kinsey Scale” of sexual attraction introduced by the Report revealed that approximately 10% of its surveyed men were exclusively or near-exclusively homosexual (651), but Kinsey and his colleagues weren’t as concerned with sexual *identities* as they were with sexual *behaviors*, and they utilized heterosexual and homosexual not as nouns, but as adjectives. When they *did* discuss homosexuality a noun—or rather, a diagnosis—they considered it synonymous with transsexuality, inversion, and even intersexuality. The Report wrote that these terms “applied not merely to designate the nature of the partner involved in the sexual relation, but to emphasize *the general opinion that individuals engaging in homosexual activity are*

neither male nor female, but persons of mixed sex” (612, emphasis mine). However, this general opinion would be challenged by the Report’s findings that effeminacy in men (and masculinity in women) is not necessarily an accurate indicator of sexual preference. In other words, the authors observed that “inversion and homosexuality are two distinct and not always correlated types of behavior” (615). Kinsey and his colleagues were not the first sexologists to ever draw this distinction—Magnus Hirschfeld separated cross-dressing and cross-sex identification from obligate homosexual desire in his 1910 work *The Transvestites*, for example—but the publication of the Report made Kinsey and his colleagues the most *widely read* sexologists to draw this distinction, among both scientific and especially popular readerships. Additionally, rather than being unanimously accepted, the Report’s methodology and conclusions were eventually publicly questioned and criticized by the American Statistical Association (Cochran et al.), but nevertheless, the Report merely *presenting* these statistical findings in the first place was enough to seismically impact American culture, society, and sexual science for well over the next decade, as “commentators exploring the incidence and significance of homosexuality in the post-war United States continually evoked Kinsey’s findings” (Reumann 166). Ultimately, the data and conclusions comprising the Report kneecapped the old paradigm of inversion and human bisexuality, and a decoupled view of sexual orientation and (non)conformity to traditional masculinity or femininity prevailed in the post-war era (Benshoff 79). If the psychiatrists in the Armed Forces would have known this, then their attempts to root homosexuality out of the military a few years prior may have been a little less futile. The failure of the old paradigm during and after the war, though, had an unfortunate consequence: the newly proven “invisibility” of the homosexual made bigots very, *very* anxious.

The widespread realization that homosexuals weren't detectable through obvious, external stereotypes recast them as deceptive and duplicitous creatures. Of course, those that didn't conform to their sex—the ones that did “look gay”—were still as fair of game as ever for pathologization, abuse, and hostility; the new sexual paradigm didn't close the crosshairs, it simply widened them. Homosexuality was now an infiltrative specter which “haunted post-war discussions of American politics and culture,” and influential authorities of the era “often articulated the fear that modern American culture was becoming permeated” with sexual deviants (Reumann 166-67). To put it in terms familiar to the monster movie, the homosexual...(gasp)...*could be any one of us!* Since the Kinsey Report on male sexual behavior in 1948, and its follow-up on female sexual behavior in 1953, demonstrated that “all gay men weren't necessarily sissies and that all lesbians weren't necessarily butch...the newly discovered ‘invisibility ‘ or ‘passability’ of homosexuals only led to further hysteria” in straight society (Benshoff 123). This hysteria manifested as a “sex panic” in which laws against homosexuality and the measures taken to enforce those laws were implemented more intensely and widely than ever before.

Between the end of the war in 1946 and the sexual revolution and Stonewall Riot in 1969, arrests for same-sex intimacy and cross-dressing skyrocketed as “unprecedented investment in police stakeouts, raids, and dragnets yielded unprecedented numbers of arrests of gay people for consensual activities” (Eskridge Jr., 264). In addition to statutes such as three-article rules which allowed “for the arrest of anyone not wearing at least three articles of gender-appropriate clothing” (Lucero II; Feinberg, *Warriors* 8), twenty-nine states in America during this time either had or enacted broad “sexual psychopath laws” which authorized the indefinite hospitalization of

sex offenders, including homosexuals, so as to suppress the threat of pervasive perversion, and the people arrested and subjected to these laws numbered in the thousands upon thousands. These victims were overwhelmingly gay and bisexual men, and once arrested and hospitalized, they suffered “not only loss of liberty, but also were subject to medical experimentation and torture” (Eskridge Jr., 265). Increased criminalization of homosexuality went hand-in-hand with increased pathologization of homosexuality, and each reinforced the other’s apparent legitimacy. It was a threat much larger than itself, something that “articulat[ed] widespread fears and hopes [and] mirror[ed] broader concerns about American character” (Reumann 186) in the post-war era. The solidification of gender roles was fortified by the demonization of homosexuality and gender non-conformity (Kline 147), and homosexuality maintained strong associations and even synonymousness with psychopathy well into the 1960s (Benshoff and Griffin 134). Several psychiatrists of the post-war era believed that homosexuality not only could be but *must* be cured, or were at least “ready to exploit the idea of ‘curing’ homosexuality for profit” (Benshoff 124, King 84). The zeitgeist was captured most compactly in 1956 by psychoanalyst Edmund Bergler’s *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?*, which contained his convictions that homosexuality was a curable neurotic disease (7), support for the far reaching criminalization of homosexuality at the time (292), and an assortment of psychoanalytic profiles described by Kenneth Lewes as a “bestiary of homosexual monstrosities” (15).

Speaking of monstrosities, the ability of movie monsters to represent ostracized and misunderstood homosexuals was gradually subsumed after the war into a new trend of paranoia and invasion, and the compassion, empathy, and tinge of romanticism afforded to monsters in the golden age of horror “evaporated in the blazing heat of McCarthyism” (Benshoff 123). Unlike

Frankenstein's Monster or Dracula, who were undead or supernatural, the dominant stars of 1950s horror and sci-fi were completely alien (if not literally extraterrestrial) beasts and creatures, perhaps radioactive, with little connection or anatomical similarity to the human form or base humanity at all. The alternative, opposite model was the being that was *too* human, the infiltrating doppelganger that was legion, with the pod people from Don Seigel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* being the most famous. These "too human" monsters could easily be compared to concealed Communists among American society, but the infiltrative nature of these monsters rendered them equally apt as analogues for the "latent homosexual" that was discussed in Kinsey's findings, as both "harbor[ed] a secret essence that threaten[ed] social stability" (Reumann 182). These new monsters introduced a tension of whether it could "pass as human or not," with human representing the good and normal Us and not representing the bad and alien Them (Benshoff 128).

This tension escaped the silver screen and pervaded American society as homosexuals in cities across the country began to fear the threat of exposure and outing more than ever. Now that *anyone* could be homosexual, the danger that they might be suspected—especially if they let themselves slip up, if they don't *pass*—was more potent than ever. The possibility of not being able to pass as normal was especially intense for homosexuals with certain, shall we say, *inclinations*, or *urges*, or *compulsions*. Several words were available for what they *did* and what they *felt*, but the words for what they *were* were becoming strained. They did not merely cross-dress, they were not merely transvestites, they were not merely gay men—they didn't *want* to be men, they *weren't* men, and they felt an unignorable desire to somehow live as they felt themselves to be. Many of these inclinations, urges, and compulsions were corralled into the

reliably broad labels of homosexuality and inversion, but they would give way soon enough, and a new word, a new possibility, and a new *body* would be suddenly introduced by the front page of every newspaper in the country. And it would be nothing short of mad science.

Bombshells

There were many medical breakthroughs of the post-war era that made for especially appropriate comparisons to Frankenstein. The publication of double-helical DNA in 1953 “propelled world science in directions foreshadowed yet never foreseen in Mary Shelley’s day” (Hitchcock 264) and as the organ transplant became more safe, viable, and accessible than ever before, “commentators sometimes compared surgeons to the mad scientist and patients to the poor patched creature” (Jonsen 5). The licensing of oral birth control by the FDA in 1960 afforded women unprecedented reproductive and sexual freedom, and women using the pill would grow by approximately one million per year between then and the end of the decade (Bailey 105). Fearful authors wrote that the deleterious effects on society from such sexual agency “may be even more devastating than the nuclear bomb,” an argument that “seemed to be informed by a hysteria that sex without *why* would spell the end of civilization” (Ambrosino). These new technologies and procedures that appeared in the post-war era were the first steps in creating a modern, modular world in which the inevitabilities of human life and living were being ironed out and reduced to “opt-in” experiences. The discovery of the very structure of our genetics, the practicality of exchanging organs from one body to another, and the easier

suppression than ever before of actual reproduction from reproductive activity furthered science, sex, and society into the future with gargantuan, Glenn Strange-sized steps.

No breakthrough of the post-war era may have been more publicized, more groundbreaking, and more radically disconcerting than the news that with newly perfected surgical procedures and medical treatment, “American manhood, already under siege, could quite literally be undone and refashioned into its seeming opposite” (Stryker, Introduction viii). Society was suddenly threatened by a new kind of Monster-making, of human construction that beforehand had scarcely ever been entertained in people’s most fantastic dreams. Unlike plastic surgeries that sought to repair damage and heal wounds, this procedure was purposed to *reinvent* its subject, to explicitly transform them from their “normal” appearance. It was merely *one* procedure on *one* part of the body, not the total transmogrification that many may have feared, but when the papers were printed, it didn’t matter—the sensibilities were shocked and the walls were blown out with a wrecking ball. On December 1, 1952, America was informed that an ex-GI had been surgically transformed into a blonde beauty. Her name was Christine Jorgensen.

I have dispensed only precious little exaggeration in describing exactly how sensational Christine Jorgensen’s grand debut was to the readership of the *New York Daily News*, who broke the story, and all the papers that picked it up afterward. Her story was so astonishing that it “literally knocked the hydrogen bomb tests at Eniwetok off the front pages of America’s newspapers” (Hale xv). Prior to this fateful front page, transsexuality—as a distinct phenomenon from homosexuality—was just beginning to gain credence among medical professionals; transsexuals were slowly but now surely becoming understood as people who weren’t merely attracted to their same sex, but as people who “want[ed] to live in the opposite sex role” (Davy

18). It's necessary to note that at this time, sex-reassignment surgeries were not utterly unprecedented. The Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin developed and performed several procedures for transsexuals in the Weimar era "encompassing not only the removal of male sex organs but the creation of a vagina and labia" (Rudacille 44), but most of their records were destroyed by the Nazi Regime and their work was only survived by those who fled the country.

Christine, then, was hardly the first person to undergo successful sexual reassignment surgery, but the circumstances of her transition anchored it as the point at which such intervention for transsexuals became possible, feasible, and *known*. Her reveal "marked both the beginning of public awareness [of sex-change operations] in the United States, and the first step toward what would eventually become a major enterprise of medical sexologists" (Irvine 258). She "transformed the debate about the efficacy of providing hormones and gender-affirming surgeries to individuals who identified as a gender different from the one assigned to them at birth" (Beemyn 13). Again, Christine Jorgensen was *not* the first person to wish to live as a different sex, pursue surgical intervention for her sex, or even *receive* surgical intervention for her sex—in one way or another, *we have always been here*—but for the sheer publicity of her transition and the benchmark status she would achieve in both pop cultural and medical discourses, she may very well be considered "the first transsexual." The reports of her sex change were what "introduced many Americans to the concept of transsexuality" (Skidmore 270), and catapulted to superstar status, she "became the public symbol of the possibilities" of sex change (Bullough ix). These possibilities were "not only [for] those with cross-gendered feelings but [for] the meanings of sex, gender, and sexuality" for everyone, everywhere (Hale xv). For the next several years, to be transsexual meant that someone was or wanted to *be like*

Christine. The “Jorgensen” was gradually obsoleted: her first name was all that was necessary in headlines such as “Christine After Driver’s License” and “Ex-Man Christine’s Matrimony Delayed” (Hale xvii), since so strong was her fame that she entered an esteemed canon of mononyms, beside icons such as Colette, Elvis, and of course, both the Doctor and the Monster known as Frankenstein.

If Christine is “the first transsexual,” she is slightly late to what could be considered the invention of transsexuality itself. The first usage of the term can be traced to at least 1949, one year after the Kinsey Report and two years prior her grand debut. Sexologist David Cauldwell is largely credited with coining the term, which he used to diagnose a “psychopathic transsexual [sic]” that wrote to him seeking hormones and surgery. Interestingly, despite the effemimania that would come to overwhelmingly guide transsexual study and science and Christine’s transfeminine prominence, this patient in question (and perhaps the *actual* “first transsexual”) was a trans man. It’s also worth noting that Magnus Hirschfeld, ever the sexological pioneer, described “psychic transsexualism” decades prior in his 1923 article “The Intersexual Constitution” (Ekins and King, “Pioneers”; Stryker and Whittle 40), but Cauldwell’s usage was canonized if only by virtue of its timeliness. Additionally, and unlike Hirschfeld, Cauldwell spared little sympathy for the people whose condition he purportedly named. He strongly pathologized his case study subject and declared transsexuals to be “mentally unhealthy,” possessing “criminal and unsocial tendencies,” and arising from “a highly unfavorable childhood environment,” and he concluded his essay with the hope that “within a quarter of a century social education may serve as a preventative in all but a few cases” (41, 44). Although Cauldwell’s writing was in line with the more dominant behaviorist theories of sexology at the time,

biological and genetic theories of sexual deviance persisted into this era as well. Harry Benjamin, author of *The Transsexual Phenomenon* in 1966, was an endocrinologist by trade and this would influence his belief in a “biological explanation” of transsexuality in which “the genetic and endocrine constitution must provide a ‘fertile soil’” for the phenomenon (King 86; Benjamin 50).

Despite the increasing volume of medical scholarship and slow creep of more and more cases, neither behaviorist nor endocrinological explanations for transsexuality were enough on their own to justify any actual *intervention* for the increasing number of patients seeking surgery from doctors nationwide before and especially after Christine’s debut. Even if both the patient and the doctor were willing, almost all elective transsexual surgeries were criminalized in the United States under mayhem statutes which forbade doctors from “destroying healthy tissue” in ostensibly unnecessary procedures (Beemyn 16). Cauldwell himself wrote of how he explained to his case study patient that “it would be criminal for any surgeon to mutilate a pair of healthy breasts [or] castrate a woman with no disease of the ovaries or related glands and without any condition wherein castration might be beneficial” (42). Christine had fled to Denmark for her treatment precisely to get around these statutes, which were “the single greatest obstacle faced by every transsexual in America” for decades (Rudacille 116). With the threat of prosecution and disgrace hanging over otherwise willing surgeons’ heads, a defensive precedent was needed if they were going to be allowed to develop and perform sex reassignment surgeries on consenting and suitable adults.

In *The Biopolitics of Gender*, Jemima Repo pinpoints the liberating invention of *gender theory* to 1955—year three in a post-Jorgensen world—when John Hopkins University psychiatrists John Money and Joan and John Hampson, studying the psychosexual development

of intersex children who had had corrective surgery on their ambiguous genitals, “made the radical argument that psychological sex, renamed and retheorized as gender, was learned postnatally [and] such a strong determinant of role acquisition that it could even override biological variables of sex” (Repo 2). Money and his colleagues’ theories on how to “properly” sex and gender intersexed children, biologically and behaviorally, would provide the paradigm shift necessary to justify surgical and hormonal intervention in adult non-intersexual transsexuals (King 90). Money and his colleagues promoted sex-reassignment surgery for those whose “external genital morphology flagrantly contradicted...their gender role and orientation as boy or girl, man or woman” (qtd. in Rudacille 107), and their work “set several precedents for sex-reassignment of transsexuals” (Billings and Urban 101). It is vital to note that the forced reassignment procedures performed on intersexual infants and children should be identified as abuse: intersexual people have historically been “subjected, violently and often against their wills, to medical treatment for which they have not given informed consent, which in many cases is beyond their ability to provide because the surgery is performed in their infancy and early childhood” (O’Hartigan 26). That transsexuals’ access to care hinged upon the surgical interventions pushed by Money and his colleagues remains a “painful paradox” of biomedical history, in that “the same theory that created agony for the intersexual has helped make surgical and hormonal treatment for transsexual people more accessible” (Rudacille 113). Both intersexual and transsexual people suffer as casualties of “the same unreasonable and destructive myth” that there are only two fixed, rigid, impermeable sexes (O’Hartigan 27), and for good and ill, the collapsing of the two at this juncture ushered in a new reality: “the truth of sex was no

longer simply revealed by the body and confessed by the subject; it was learned through imprinting and constructed through surgery” (Repo 47).

So came the dawn of the transsexual. Throughout the decade, transsexualism would finally and fully emerge as a serious sexological phenomenon in America as clinicians, sexologists, psychiatrists, and surgeons “operationalized the emergent distinctions between bodily sex and social gender to define the transsexual as a person who experienced a mismatch between the two” (Plemons 6). Through this, the phenomenological differences between a transsexual and a “mere” homosexual or male cross-dresser became codified—at least in the medical literature, as the interchangeability of sexual deviants would persist for much longer in the popular press. However, it would be naive to interpret all of the era’s research and investment into transsexual health care as entirely sympathetic or in line with the best interests of transsexuals themselves. Bergler and Cauldwell’s writing is proof enough that those who study certain kinds of people may not and have not necessarily liked or respected them. All of these breakthroughs and headlines were occurring in the 1950s, after all, when gender roles were intensified and entrenched by the return of the male workforce, the creation of suburbia, and the advent of the nuclear family. Healthy, stable, safe coupling of bread-winning husbands and stay-at-home wives to mother the children was encouraged if not enforced as “the American ideal,” (Skidmore 272-73), and in this context, the not-so-ultimate motive of research into transsexual health care became “to understand and enhance heterosexual relationships...by seeking to understand the origins and development of masculine and feminine behavior and...explain gender ‘failures’” (Irvine 230).

Despite the radical, disruptive potential of their increased visibility and publicity, the opportunity to treat these “gender failures” became hair of the dog for mounting social anxiety about gender diversity. The initial shock that one *could* change sex at all was still potent, of course, but the terms of the newly invented transsexual would be set in the appurtenant establishment of the gender clinic, in which “sexologists offered the promise that gender,” that new and challenging counterpart to sex, “was subject to control and predictability” (Irvine 260). The trans women who were fortunate or persistent enough to receive treatment from these clinics did so on a provisional basis, and only to the extent of the patient assimilating to their desired gender as thoroughly as possible. The gender clinic was a tightly controlled, tyrannical laboratory in which what it “meant” to be a “woman” was formulated and forced in real time—if everyone who walked through those doors *wanted* to be a woman, *surely* there must be right and wrong ways to do it, where doing it right was a gender success and doing it wrong was a gender failure. According to Nina Lykke, “when gender and science are linked, the boundaries between human and non-human are challenged and the monstrous, invoked” (78), and from a certain point of view, the gender clinicians—who saw themselves as purely rational and scientific—were trying to *prevent* Monsters from walking the streets. Their processes for creating transsexual women from the patients they saw were so exhaustive, laborious, and uncompromisingly dedicated to assimilation because they deemed them necessary for preventing the alternative, which was—to their imagined horror—the possibility of Monstrously unpassable Frankenfaggots walking around. No: they would construct their Monsters perfect and beautiful, and they would be necessarily so.

Workshops of Filthy Creation

America's love affair—or more accurately, ambivalent fascination with—Christine Jorgensen eventually burned out, the way celebrity-through-novelty always does, but the lasting effects of her transition on both a generation of Americans and the burgeoning enterprise of transsexual health care would be twofold. First, coverage of Christine had impressed an understanding into American culture of transsexuality as “the outcome of surgical implementation and other medicalized treatments” (Snorton 141); second, her place in pop culture was cemented as “no more and no less than the man who had become a woman, and *a pretty good-looking* woman at that” (Rudacille 62, emphasis mine). The dramatic framing of her transition into a “blond beauty,” including widely circulated juxtapositions of before-and-after pictures, contributed to the suggestion that “her body had been completely transformed by the procedure” (Skidmore 273-75). Most stories at the time emphasized Christine's appearance (Hale xv; Skidmore 275) and her attractiveness was frequently drawn in disbelief against her service background as proof positive that even “the epitome of masculinity in post-World War II America” could be “reborn into...the symbol of 1950s White feminine sexiness” with the help of a good enough doctor (Beemyn 14). Yet she was more than just female: she was entirely *feminine*. Much to the delight of interviewers, Christine was docile, domestic, gracious, endlessly respectable, and crucially heterosexual (Skidmore 275-76; Stryker, *History* 47). Her thorough conformity to her sex role was neither on accident nor entirely just her natural personality; Christine told *The Washington Post* in 1970 that she was knowingly hypervigilant about her

femininity and how she “couldn't have a single masculine trait” (qtd. in Skidmore 276) if she was going to be taken seriously. However, in seeming to so effortlessly become a woman on all levels, physical and mental and emotional and sexual, she wound up compounding the burdensome expectations of heteropatriarchy for transsexuals everywhere the moment that the papers hit the pavement on December 1, 1952.

Gradually, Christine was far from the only transsexual in the papers and public, mayhem statutes were loosened, and transitional health care for Americans no longer required a trip to Denmark—though there were caveats. From the newly minted gender clinics for transsexuals emerged a diagnostic process for screening and selecting appropriate clients for sex reassignment surgery, or even the basic time and attention of a doctor. One could argue that it's logically acceptable that gender clinicians, even with the most generous permissions possible, couldn't have treated every single person who walked through the door. Despite advances, there were still significant risks and expenses involved, and the procedure itself was still quite taboo, and any given clinic could reasonably manage only a certain number of patients at a time—but these clinics were *not* generous. They did not try to be and they had no interest in doing so. These gender clinics locked the official diagnosis of transsexualism behind tightly discriminatory judgment with little more than stereotypes and Christine's assimilationist success story as their blueprint, refusing treatment to manifold clients who were lucky regardless if they could even be assessed in the first place.

The initial screening process for a transsexualism diagnosis consisted, more or less, of doctors deciding whether who they saw as a man in a dress in front of them could “really” be a woman or not. Gatekeepers within the gender clinics ran through intensive yet “highly

subjective” criteria (Davy 26) and “kept the number of transitioned transsexuals low by requiring them to conform to oppositional sexist ideals regarding gender” (Serano 122). Could the subject do make-up? Could the subject grow hair long? Could the subject sew and cook dinner? Could the subject be a good mother? Accordingly, adherence to heterosexuality was a compulsory aspect of transition—there could be no transfeminine lesbians (and although trans women dominated much of the clinics’ attention, transmasculine individuals were similarly held up to the expectation of “appropriate” sexual orientation and gender expression [Serano 122]). These assessments were dehumanizing, and many transsexuals at the time “knew that doctors often saw them as mentally ill, irritating, or hostile” (Meyerowitz 164), but endured it the best that they could so as not to squander their path to treatment. Even among the best-intentioned clinicians, “the covert function of the rigorous diagnostic process” was to enforce “a regularized version of transsexual personality, attitudes, and behavior,” and to amass and maintain for the clinical establishment control over who could be allowed to be transsexual and how (Irvine 262). In this system, “passivity” was synonymous with “passing” (Gabriel, “Outspokenness” 7) and the clinic a front for “a socially conservative attempt to maintain traditional gender,” with only a few patients “grudgingly permitted” to transition so long as they “did not trouble the gender binary” (Stryker, *History* 94). The codification of this diagnostic criteria consequently created “good” or “viable” and “bad” or “unviable” candidates for transition, but it wasn’t entirely rigid—it also created the methods for (re)making the latter into the former.

With the demeanor, behavior, and aspirations of transition candidates under such sharp scrutiny, the gender clinic became more than a place for simple surgery. The gender clinic became a “charm school” for hopeful transsexuals, a grooming facility in which the proper

embodiment of womanhood was not merely sought, but *taught*, and *enforced*. Since these candidates were “evaluated on the basis of their performance in the gender of choice,” transsexual attempts to meet clinical standards constituted “an actual instance of the apparatus of *production of gender*” (Stone 160); in other words, the observable *making* of a sexed identity. The exchange of expectations in the clinic was that prospective transsexuals would sufficiently conform to this explicitly constructed shape of gender and be rewarded with the necessary surgery to, as it was framed at the time, “really” become that gender. Obviously, not all transsexual women were innately “demure heterosexuals who wanted nothing more than a good man and a stable home,” but they also weren’t idiots, and they did their homework on these diagnostic criteria (Rudacille 130). They knew what clinicians wanted to hear and they knew the stakes of making sure they heard it. The result was the gradual proliferation of what transsexuals called “the con,” a surreptitious scheme in which they would both independently and corroboratively construct necessarily appropriate backstories for themselves that met all of the criteria that their doctors were looking for (Billings and Urban 109). The con threw into relief the rigidity of the clinic’s interest in creating only perfect transsexuals *and* demonstrated the rebelliousness of the creations that they were exhausting every avenue to control.

This excessive attention to behavior and demeanor was only half the battle for transsexuals seeking surgery, however, and the remainder was far less flexible or compromising. Before hearing even a single word of the patient’s experiences or consulting their history, clinicians would judge whether they were suitable for transitional health care or not through a highly scientific and objective judgment process known as “callin’ em as they sees ‘em.” All surgical candidates in the gender clinic were required to visually pass as their desired sex to some

degree—it depended on the breadth of a given clinician’s idea of what someone of either gender looked like—and candidates that did not pass were far, far less likely to receive treatment or even basic respect. The institution of passing as a prerequisite for transitional health care prevented any candidates that didn’t already look enough like cissexual women and men from receiving the care they needed, and trans women were subjected to the extra prejudiced pressure to pass as *attractive* women (Serano 122, 135). More than just one evaluative aspect of many, aesthetic presentation became “a critical diagnostic component” (Irvine 261) in the gender clinic with “immense influence...in the acceptability, categorization, and recognition” of transsexual subjects (Davy 63). One clinician during this era said that “he was more convinced of the femaleness of a male to female transsexual if she was particularly beautiful and was capable of evoking in him those feelings that beautiful women generally do” (Kessler and McKenna 118). Another said the same thing with less pretense: “We’re not taking Puerto Ricans any more; they don’t look like transsexuals. They look like fags” (Irvine 261). Christine Jorgensen’s long shadow hung over this arena, too, as her beautiful appearance became the benchmark for other transsexuals trying to pass. Harry Benjamin himself wrote that “the physical and especially facial characteristics of the patient” must be considered before deciding on surgery, and that “a feminine habitus, as it existed for instance in Christine Jorgensen, increases the chances of a successful outcome. A masculine appearance,” he continued, “mitigates against it” (51).

Given how dehumanizing, disrespectful, and obstructive the gender clinic was to the transsexual patients that it ostensibly existed to serve, it’s worth wondering why so many transsexuals submitted themselves to its gaze and judgments at all. The simple answer is that they *needed* to in order to *be* transsexuals. Living life as a transsexual without an official

diagnosis and care, without institutional recognition and approval, was both unfathomable and untenable at the time. Between the publicity surrounding Christine's remarkable "transformation" and the deliberate efforts of the gender clinic to shore up its own authority, sex reassignment surgery—which only the gender clinic could grant—became "the hinge upon which the transsexual's 'transsex' turns," the moment of "sex change" itself (Prosser 63). The particular, foundational model of transsexuality established by the gender clinic enshrined this surgery as "the primary thing that a transsexual person wanted and needed in order to be physically, mentally, and sexually a woman" (Plemons 6), even if such an ontological coupling within the diagnosis "undercut trans-autonomy and self-determination" (Gressgård 541). Although the gender clinic predominantly catered towards and served transsexual women, all transsexuals were ensnared in this clinical model by necessity. There were no other options for them, culturally or legally. If they knew themselves to be transsexual, then they would *need* to get an official transsexual diagnosis, which meant that they would *need* to present sufficiently as their desired gender, which meant that they would *need* to conform to very specific aesthetic and behavioral standards of sexed identity, and ultimately, meant that they would *need* to want sex reassignment surgery. Failure to meet any of these steps meant failure as a transsexual, and rejection from the clinic.

The "state of the transsexual" in the post-war era was a state of subjugation to the gender clinic, and the gender clinic was the site of an intensive, overbearing, highly specific, pretensively scientific process of *creating a new kind of being*, defined in this time more than any other by the surgical circumstances of its "birth" and the novel hybridity of its form. It parallels the Frankensteinian myth in many ways: the Doctor must first assess his raw materials,

the flesh and bone and blood from which he will create his Monster, choosing only the most optimal components for his experiment. The Doctor then has certain expectations for his Monster: it must act in a certain way, it must be beautiful, it must be capable of living with and amongst normal humans, it must act in accordance to the Doctor's particular vision of *perfection*, and it must be prevented in as many ways as possible from rebelling. Despite his hopes for science, the Doctor ultimately thinks little of his Monster, since it is not a "real" human, never could be, and its unnaturalness cannot be entirely ignored, even by him at his most generous. Then the Monster is laid on the slab, its operating table, and *created*, with the final climactic procedure of thunder and lightning, scalpels and stitches, instituting the transformation from dead to alive, mold to Monster, and man to woman. The Monstrous transsexual's acceptance depended upon its approving, optimistic creation by its Doctor and its ability to appear normal, human, un-Monstrous to a fascinated public. Even those that *were* accepted were still regarded with abject and often sexualized fascination; the tabloid magazine *Dare* even published "exclusive" photo-composites of Christine Jorgensen in a bathing suit—ostensibly "to show how amazingly effective this hormone treatment has been," but no doubt to tantalize readers with an idealized image of a so described "female figure with some male characteristics" (6-10). The terror of the transsexual had arrived at just the right time. Sex reassignment was just one of many "remarkable inventions" of the post-war era, as scientifically sensational as the atomic bomb, and just as concerning. Christine and her successors served as symbols "for both scientific progress and a fear that science was attempting to play God" (Beemyn 14), and accordingly, the gender clinic symbolized both a new frontier of medicine and a workshop of filthy creation.

Monstrous Transsexuals in the Movies

In his essay “Metaphors and Monsters,” Fred Botting observes a tragic point about the Frankenstein’s Monster and its rejection by the Doctor. He writes that “no matter how wonderful such an act of creation may be as a technical achievement,” the Monster is rejected because “it fails to match up to the exorbitant fantasies that gave shape to the work in the first place” (340). Representations of the Monstrous transsexual in Frankenstein films of the post-war decades tend to embody this ethos: the Doctor’s hopes for his Creation and the significance of his achievement are emphasized, only for the Monster to fail those expectations and consequently cause grief and calamity. It’s worth remembering that our operative definition of a “Frankenstein” film is very broad—we are looking at films that contain a Doctor and a Monster. The first Monstrous transsexual on film from this era to be discussed, then, is not Frankenstein’s Monster itself, but a close friend: the Gill-Man from *The Creature Walks Among us* (1956), which was the second sequel to Universal Studios’ original *The Creature From the Black Lagoon* (1954).

This third film in the *Creature* trilogy begins with researchers hunting for the Gill-Man in the Florida Everglades, where he escaped from his captors at the end of the previous film. The researchers eventually find Gill-Man, but Gill-Man is set on fire during their confrontation and severely injured; to preserve the life of their priceless specimen they perform emergency surgery on the creature and discover both a dormant pair of lungs in the Gill-Man’s body and a layer of human-like skin beneath its scales. Back at the research lab, the Gill-Man is detained in an electrically fenced-in outdoor pen like an animal but forced to stay on land and wear clothes like a human being, part of a vain experiment by the team to acclimate the Gill-Man to a more human

life. From the confines of his misery, the Gill-Man stares outward through the fence and towards the ocean, waves crashing, day in and day out. After several days of study and captivity, the head of the research team kills one of their own for having made advances on his wife, and attempts to frame Gill-Man for deed. Realizing the set-up, the Gill-man suddenly revolts and rampages, killing the research head before escaping its containment, and the cruelty of its captors. Finally free, the Gill-Man—unable to adjust to just being “Man”—walks slowly and directly into the ocean, where without its gills, it is sure to meet its death. But what life is there for Gill-Man in such a wrong, mutilated body, in a world that it did not request to be a part of? There was no fourth Creature film, and in fact, *The Creature Walks Among Us* would be the last entry in the classic Universal Monsters franchise as a whole; the weight of the Creature’s suicidal yet desperate, yearning march into the ocean is ultimate.

The symbolism of the Gill-Man in this entry as a Monstrous transsexual is localized in its surgical “transition” from aquatic amphibian to clothes-wearing land-dweller. The activation of the Gill-Man’s underdeveloped lungs during emergency surgery draws obvious parallels to sex reassignment; it is a decisive and transformative procedure that alters its body and ushers it from one identity to another. The researchers’ ensuing attempts to acclimate the altered Gill-Man to life on land, learn the ways of humanity, and pass as normal in society further resemble the behavioral mission of the gender clinic in controlling its clientele, while their captivity of the creature in an outdoor pen proves that it is still treated as a dangerous, inhuman, and unequal Other regardless. This set-up is evocative of attempts to “cure the monster queer rather than destroy him” that were popularized on film and in real-world psychology during the 1940s and 1950s (Benshoff 133), but the trademark Universal twist of tragedy to the Monster in this case is

also a demonstration of a more specific fear that spread throughout American society from the very first moment that sex reassignment became possible: *what if you did it to someone who didn't want it?* In this regard, *The Creature Walks Among Us* is one of the earliest examples of “forced transition” in the Monstrous transsexual canon.

The forced transition narrative depicts a perfectly normal person or creature (normal by its own merits) being subjected to transition without its consent, transformed by a Doctor into some new Monstrous identity. As we move roughly chronologically through key films of this era in the Monstrous transsexual canon, there will be more films that fit this mold—but *The Creature Walks Among Us* can be credited here as the most exemplary entry of its kind, and given its release in 1954, it served as an extremely timely depiction of the anxieties provoked by the transformative potential of sex reassignment, embodied by the miserably maimed Monster of the de-gilled Gill-Man. The Monster’s suicidal march towards the ocean at the climax of the film suggests that it would rather die as what it *was* than live life as the horrid half-thing into which the Doctors mutilated it. On the one hand, *The Creature Walks Among Us*’s forced transition narrative stokes fears that sex reassignment is indeed mayhem, and the Gill-Man’s fishy grimace and barely-fitting clothes evoke an unflattering caricature of the non-passing transsexual. On the other hand, the forced transition narrative can be inverted to mean its opposite: we can instead identify the Gill-Man as a Monstrous transsexual being coerced into existing as “normal,” as human, as cissexual or cissexual passing. The Gill-Man’s yearning to return to the sea and be its authentic Monstrous self, not the never-quite-real facsimile of a normal human being into which its captors are so adamant on molding it, becomes a sympathetic model of the pressure and prejudice that coerces transsexuals to conform to constrained, cis-centric ideals of sex, sexed

identity, and acceptable deviance. Because the forced transition narrative can be so inverted to represent the victimization of either a maimed cissexual or confined transsexual, it's a narrative type that is ultimately ambivalent towards the Monstrous transsexual itself.

The first Monstrous transsexual film of this era that actually features the name "Frankenstein" is Herbert L. Strock's *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957), in which the Doctor, Professor Frankenstein, constructs a Monster from the body parts of teenage athletes slain in a car crash. Harry M. Benshoff provides a thorough homosexual analysis of this film in his book *Monsters in the Closet* (142-48), and his description of Professor Frankenstein's relationship with his assistant Dr. Karlton seems to reinforce the dichotomy of gay Doctors and trans Monsters that I proposed earlier. My analysis of the film departs from his, then, on the matter of the Monster, which I view as transsexual. Professor Frankenstein demands in this film that his creation be strong, handsome, and youthful, which is why he turns to slain student athletes for his raw materials. The result is an eponymous teenage Frankenstein that is physically perfect in every way *except for his face*, which still bears the scars and disfigurement of the car crash victim from which he is comprised. This incongruity preoccupies the Doctor and the Monster for much of the middle of the film, in which the Doctor and his assistant confine their creation to the basement of their laboratory and out of sight until they can rectify the issue. Eventually, the Doctor and the Monster abscond to a Lover's Lane in order to pick out an amorous teenager from whom to violently seize a replacement face. Once the victim is chosen and separated from his own face, the Doctor grafts this new face onto his Monster, resulting in a perfectly and wholly handsome creature at last.

This Frankensteinian facelift is motivated by the Doctor's concerns that "the monster cannot pass in normal society ('walk among people')" without a normal-looking visage, concerns which evoke "the phenomenon of queers passing as straight (wearing a normal face), and the care with which this must be done" (Benshoff 147-48). Although the increased criminality of homosexuality during the 1950s forced many cissexual gays to try to "pass" as straight for their own safety, "passing" possessed and will always possess a different and deeper meaning for Monstrous transsexuals, and the Monster's horrifying face betraying the perfection of its surgically constructed body bears similarities to the limitations of sex reassignment surgery as the end all, be all of transitional health care and the realities of trying and failing to pass as transsexual. Although the procedure would not be developed for close to thirty years after the release of *Teenage Frankenstein*, and although the Monster in the movie is male, this "flaw" in the Monster and the steps taken to correct it are almost excessively descriptive of facial feminization surgery—a procedure which, even if it didn't exist yet, surely must have existed in the imaginations of clinicians and transsexuals who were struggling with the problem of a face that people did not or could not read as womanlike. The anguish of the Monster as it struggles to understand why it is hidden, why its face is bandaged, and why it cannot "walk among people" just yet, and the relief and pride of the Monster as it inspects its new, beaming, attractive visage in a mirror capture the euphoria and satisfaction of a successful, passing surgical transition just as much as the Gill-Man's outrage in *The Creature Walks Among Us* captures the dysphoria and ostracization of an unsuccessful, non-passing, or forced transition.

It almost seems like a ringing endorsement for the reconstructive capabilities of the gender clinic—until Professor Frankenstein, wanting to smuggle his creation out of the country, must

reduce his Monster to disassembled parts again. The Monster panics at the threat of being torn apart and rebels against Professor Frankenstein, killing him by throwing him into the basement's alligator pit, then electrocutes himself to death while trying to flee from police who have broken into the lab. The climax of this film depicts the Doctor trying to exert an ultimate form of control over his Monster—control over its individual body parts, and control over the right to take them apart and put them back together at will. The Monster's panic comes both from the threat of having its identity dismantled—it's finally *happy* with the way it looks and the body it has—and the possibility of its bodily autonomy being supplanted on the most intrusive possible level, objectified by Professor Frankenstein through dismemberment. Again, this analysis diverges from Benschoff's homosexual view of the movie because homosexuals are not *created* in the same way that transsexuals are—and if the classic mantra of “I created you, and I can destroy you” is to be believed, then the horror of the climax of *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* is the horror of the gender clinic threatening to take *back* what they have given and *undo* what they have done. One doesn't simply “take back” or “undo” sex reassignment surgery, but given the power exerted over transsexuals by the gender clinics, the transformative power that they alone held, and the influence of the clinic on every aspect of “creation” in a transsexual's (new) life, the relationship between Professor Frankenstein and the teenage Monster exaggerates this relationship to a fantastic but uncomfortable extreme. Part of the gender clinic's authority over transsexuals is its purported ownership of trans bodies, both literal material ownership (“parts and labor”) as well as ownership that a draftsman would have over a design or an author would have over an idea. This is a dynamic to which the Monstrous transsexual owes its very life and

very happiness, but also its dissatisfaction and fear, as it's a dynamic in which the Monster is coerced into being subservient, compliant, and eternally malleable for the Doctor—*or else*.

Another Strock-directed film analyzed for its homosexuality by Beshoff was 1958's *How to Make a Monster*, in which a horror movie make-up artist named Pete uses a hypnotic make-up compound to brainwash two teenage actors into exacting his revenge on the movie studio that fired him. Beshoff's reading of *How to Make a Monster* indulges in "theme[s] of feminization and objectification," arguing that the make-up artist transforms his virile male victims into feminized "monstrous non-heterosexual" states to do his bidding, with each boy becoming "both Pete's possession and sexual object" (Beshoff 150-57). *How to Make a Monster* continues the trend from *The Creature Walks Among Us* and *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* of emphasizing the Doctor's control over and attempts to control his Monster(s), though instead of surgical science, Pete feminizes his subjects with hypnotic make-up that makes them obey his every command. Of more interest to us is the fact that *How to Make a Monster* was allegedly written or even stolen outright from a script by Ed Wood (Beshoff 157). Wood is most famous, or rather infamous, as the auteur behind *Plan 9 From Outer Space* and other cornerstones of the "so bad it's good" canon. What he is slightly less famous for is his life as a cross-dresser (Craig 26), which he grappled with explicitly in his first feature film, *Glen or Glenda* (1953).

The film is a docudrama about the turmoiled life of a closeted cross-dresser named Glen, played by Wood himself. Glen feels compelled to cross-dress, however, as a female alter-ego named "Glenda." After much internal conflict, Glen eventually reveals "Glenda" to Barbara, and the two of them ultimately stay together. *Glen or Glenda* is a straightforward exploitation film on its face, but under Wood's autobiographical direction, it was shaped by Wood's autobiographical

eye into a “deeply personal polemic which pleaded tolerance of difference [and a] provocative discussion of gender politics years before the subject became dynamic” (Craig 23). Although Glen himself is adamantly a straight cissexual cross-dresser—he loves his fiancée and doesn’t want to *be* a woman, just dress like one—references to transsexuals abound. According to Ed Wood himself, *Glen or Glenda* was originally pitched by producer George Weiss as being “a sex change type of picture” about Christine Jorgensen (Grey 39), justifying Wood’s mission in the film to exhaustively differentiate and distinguish between homosexuality, transvestism, and transsexuality for the audience’s benefit.

The most explicit reference to transsexuality, as opposed to transvestism, occurs in the film’s post-script, in which a psychiatrist named Dr. Alton relates the story of “Alan or Anne” in direct contrast to Glen’s story. According to Dr. Alton, Alan was born a boy but raised as a girl by his mother who had wanted a daughter—possibly another auto-biographical element from Wood’s life (Grey 16)—and that by the time he was a teenager, Alan was secretly identifying as a woman. Although he’s conscripted into World War II, Alan keeps his identity a secret until after the war and eventually gets sex reassignment surgery to become a “lovely young lady” named Anne. Wood’s sympathetic depiction of transvestites and transsexuals as capable of being understood, well-adjusted, and harmlessly happy individuals was extremely bold for its time, and the film “depicts Wood as a champion not only of sexual difference in general...but more enduringly, as a fierce advocate of personal independence in a world turning increasingly regimented and conformist.” However, this very depiction comes at the *expense* of transsexuality, as Wood’s representation of subjects like himself is contrasted with and at the expense of “those who he considers, by implication, to be morally and psychologically

corrupted” (Craig 26), ultimately reducing the scope of its sympathies for cross-sex behavior and identification as a whole.

The most glaringly hedged bet in *Glen or Glenda* is that despite how thoroughly it distinguishes cross-dressing, homosexuality, and transsexuality from each other, they are all nevertheless inscribed as disorders which can be cured through either heterosexual love, psychiatry, or surgery. Gender deviance is explained away by the film’s narrator as “nature making mistakes” (from which the inference is that they can and should be corrected), it is revealed that “Glenda” vanished from Glen’s life after marrying Barbara (her love filling the feminine void in Glen’s life where Glenda had been allowed to prosper), and Anne’s happy ending is “entirely due to corrections made by medical science.” Anne, being the case study for “full on” transsexualism in the narrative, is also described in the most abject terms. Her surgical procedure is referred to as “the tortures of the damned” and the namesake of the Monstrous transsexual is invoked directly by Dr. Alton’s assessment of her as a “happy, lovely young lady that modern medicine and science had created almost as a Frankenstein’s Monster.” And speaking of monsters—in the first of several collaborations, Ed Wood cast as the film’s narrator the aging ex-vampire Bela Lugosi, and the film frequently cuts to him for ominous commentary from an office apparently situated in a Gothic mansion, complete with lightning strikes. The film’s longest scene, a graphic nightmare sequence in which Glen is tormented by dancing devils and sexual violence, only further associates the film with horror despite its otherwise clinical approach to educating its audience. Wood’s appropriation of horror trappings muddied the film’s message even to its producer George Weiss, who recalls that several would-be transsexual actors in the film were turned off by Lugosi’s inclusion because “Lugosi signified ‘horror’ and any sex

change, therefore, was horror [and] there were a lot of people who thought the same thing” (Grey 46). Still, even Lugosi’s cryptic narrator expresses sympathy for transsexuals, lamenting that “we were not born with wings, we were not born with wheels...we have corrected that which nature has not given us...yet the world is shocked by a sex change?” Yet Monstrous transsexuality may be at its most subtle yet strong in the following exchange from the film, between two nameless, faceless characters in voice over:

Did you read about the guy that had his sex changed to a girl? Says he was perfectly normal, too.

How can a guy be normal and go and do a thing like that to himself?

All the same, it must take a lot of guts to pull a stunt like that.

That's a problem I don't ever intend to face.

Maybe it's a problem we should all face.

Does this suggestion that we should all face the “problem” of our sex and think about whether we would have the “guts” to transition not resemble Susan Stryker’s demand of cissexuals to “investigate your nature as I have been compelled to confront mine...to risk abjection and flourish as well as have I” (“My Words,” 241)?

The strict yet sympathetic Othering of the transsexual in *Glen or Glenda* links queer sexuality of all stripes with Monstrousness (Benshoff 71), but given the film’s autobiographical nature and Ed Wood’s own cross-dressing, it nevertheless provides a rare inside look into the conflicted, complicated feelings of a cross-sexed person in the post-war era. Given the

opportunity to put his experiences to film, Wood exploits horror imagery and associations to frame transsexuality as Monstrous, but also to plead that this Monstrousness should be attempted to be understood, not chased out of town with pitchforks. Like the Frankenstein's Monster itself, Wood may have been self-loathing, afraid, and lonely as a cross-dresser, which may have motivated the urgency of his pleas for sympathy in *Glen or Glenda*. However, the conclusion of the film and the distinctions he draws between cross-sexed behaviors and identities ultimately frames all cross-sexuality, transvestism and transsexuality alike, as not needing "acceptance" but needing curing and controlling—destruction with a softer hand.

There would be a lull in this kind of Monstrous transsexual film throughout most of the late 1950s and 1960s, although several films from this time period depicting Bride narratives will be discussed in the following section. The 1964 sex-swapping screwball comedy *Goodbye Charlie* marks an interesting pseudo-representation of transsexuality on-screen from this time; the film concerns the reincarnation of a philandering playboy named Charlie into a beautiful blonde woman after being shot and killed at sea. Upon his return, the executor of Charlie's estate, George, struggles with "Charlene's" various antics and undeniable attractiveness. Much ado is made about Charlie/Charlene's incredible transformation, including her moments of gender euphoria in her new body, but it's treated as something completely fantastical with no mention of real-world transsexuality at all. Additionally, the film avoids basically any actual romantic or sexual tension between George and Charlie/Charlene, since any man-on-man(-in-a-woman's-body) content would have still been too much for the censors or the culture at the time. Times, however, were about to change in a significant way. In 1966, two years after *Goodbye Charlie*, Harry Benjamin would publish *The Transsexual Phenomenon*,

ushering in the “‘big science’ period of transgender history” (Stryker, *History* 93), a decade-and-change colored by more interest than ever into the scientific study of transsexuality and its causes and treatment. One of the biggest breakthroughs to come from Benjamin’s book was the highest profile distinction between transvestites and transsexuals yet, and scholarship on and treatment for the latter was excised from the shadow of the former (King 93)—Ed Wood certainly must have been relieved. During this period, several films were released that sought to either educate audiences on the subject of transsexuality or exploit the surge of fascination, or both.

In 1967, the Southeastern Pictures Corporation released *Queens at Heart*, a documentary short consisting of archival footage from a drag ball and interviews with four trans women in either a doctor’s office or a set that’s been decorated to look like one. The interviewer hounds these women—named Misty, Vicki, Sonja, and Simone—with intrusive, insensitive questions about their bodies, the changes that hormones are producing on their bodies, their heights, their weights, their childhoods and whether they were bullied, the development of their breasts, their surgical procedures that they have either had or want to have, and their suicidal tendencies. When asked about their sex lives, the womens’ answers are censored with cartoon sound effects. As the interviews go on, the trans women grow offended, indignant, and downcast. When asked what her brother would do if he knew that she was transsexual (though the interviewer says homosexual), one of the women awkwardly laughs and says that he would probably kill her. Probably. The interviewer’s voice never wavers from an even, objective baritone, cracking only as he almost seems to relish in bringing his freakish subjects back down to earth by reminding them that the surgeries they seek are exorbitantly expensive, and that their gender expression is

against the law. *Queens at Heart* is an illustrative example of the exploitation films of this era which “took taboo or controversial subject issues of the day, many if not most of a sexual nature, and mounted cheapjack productions which purported to educate the audience even as it served its primary purpose, to titillate that same audience with salacious sights and sounds of the topics discussed” (Craig 23). Although immensely disrespectful of its interviewees, the film nevertheless gives them a voice and the ability to describe their experiences and lives and aspirations in their own words; although it makes them Monstrous at every possible turn, even the Monster, as in Mary Shelley’s original novel, gets to speak its story and argue for its own acceptance and sympathy. This, coupled with the invaluable archival footage of the drag ball, makes *Queens at Heart* one of the earliest films of its kind to depict real transsexual life, even if it’s through a such an exploitative lens. The next year, a far more comprehensive, sympathetic, and respectful feature documentary—Frank Simon’s *The Queen*—would endeavor to do the same, capturing the organization and putting on of the 1967 Miss All-America Camp Beauty Contest by New York drag queens and so-described “female illusionists.”

At the same time as *Queens at Heart* was making its rounds and one year before *The Queen*, another film appeared that claimed to present the “real life” of cross-dressers and transsexuals. The film’s opening message attempts to explain its noble and moral purpose in advance:

The film that you're about to see has to do with the better understanding of our fellow man. We have gathered the information as intelligently and as honestly as within our power and potential, and would like to portray to you as intellectually as our medium will permit the findings of our research. The people you are about

to meet may shock you. They may frighten you. But we hope that by this factual exposition, we can broaden your view towards this kind of individual, and increase your capacity to sympathize with the unexplainable drives and anxieties that constantly haunt them.

The line that the film “may shock you, may frighten you” is lifted verbatim from Edward van Sloan’s introduction to James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931), priming the Monstrous transsexual gears before the reveal of the film’s title: *She-Man: A Story of Fixation*.

She-Man is hardly the objective scientific and sociological documentary that its opening disclaimer suggests. Like *Glen or Glenda* before it, it also sought to educate and inform audiences about the transsexual phenomenon, but borrowed from the trappings of genre to enhance and exaggerate its messages. The plot concerns Albert Rose, a former army lieutenant and resolutely cissexual, heterosexual man who is contacted by a mysterious woman named Dominta and blackmailed into serving as one of her feminized mistresses for one year. She forces Albert to debase himself by taking estrogen, completely shaving his body, plucking his brows, wearing a wig and make-up, and responding only to a woman’s name. Gradually, he even begins to speak in a high feminine cadence. Dominita glees in completely transforming Albert Rose into “Rose Albert,” snipping at her cissexual woman assistant Ruth to correct her pronoun usage (“*She* hasn’t had much time”) and forcing him to pass in front of his former commanding officer as the ultimate test of his new persona. Dominta’s, well, domination evidently unlocks the “real” selves of the people that she keeps in captivity and servitude, and Albert begins to confide in Ruth that there’s aspects of being Rose that he actually likes. Ruth herself is a lesbian—a

defect ascribed to being “fondled a great deal” by her governess as a child—and their trust results in an extremely complicated, sexuality-defying romance. Ultimately, Albert and Ruth conspire with the other servants to retrieve their blackmail material and revolt against Dominta, and she’s defeated by dramatically outing her as a cross-dresser herself. Her clothing is torn away and her deadname is revealed, reverting her back to her pre-transition self which, essentially, ‘kills’ her. The narration of a doctor in the post-script, again resembling *Glen or Glenda*, ties up the loose ends: “Albert is a transvestite, pure and simple. He enjoys cross-dressing with no change in his sexual desire or emotion. There is no doubt that he will lead a normal life.” He draws a distinction between Albert and Dominita, however, whom he says “shows different problems because of different dynamics in [her] personalities,” and that “besides being a transvestite, [s]he shows unnatural desire for power, eminence, and superiority.” The film ends with a heartfelt argument to the audience that “transvestism is considered a perversion and perversion is punishable by law. To say that this is ridiculous is putting it mildly.”

To say that this *film* is ridiculous is putting it mildly. Its simultaneous effort of earnestly informing its audiences as to the plight of the transvestite and transsexual and its outlandish forced feminization blackmail plot collide against each other in a misguided and campy mess. Director Bob Clark’s attempts to broaden sympathy and “understanding” of transvestites is undermined by the sensational presentation of the effort, and as usual, the call for acceptance comes with several caveats. The difference between transvestites and transsexuals is even more heavily laid out than in *Glen or Glenda*, and the final moral inscribes yet again a distinction between good, acceptable cross-dressers and bad, perverted ones. Despite being described as a transvestite by the Doctor, Dominita—who lived full-time as a woman—is drawn as the

monstrous Transsexual against Albert's innocent transvestite. She's malicious, cruel, and uncontrollable, preying on helpless cissexuals for no purpose other than the petty, perverse gratification of propagating more of her own kind against their will. There's a saying about inmates running asylums; *She-Man: A Story of Fixation* is a Monstrous transsexual running the gender clinic.

As the "big science" period of transsexuality marched onward and into a new decade, the most explicitly Monstrous transsexual film would arrive yet from Hammer Studios in the United Kingdom. Hammer emerged in the post-war era to fill the niche left behind by Universal Studios for lurid Gothic horror, starting several film franchises of their own for familiar literary and mythological monsters like Dracula and the mummy. Their Frankenstein franchise would premiere in 1957 with *The Curse of Frankenstein*, and spawn six sequels between then and 1974. There is an obvious entry in this franchise for the Monstrous transsexual canon, but its moment will come later in the discussion. At this juncture, of interest to us is a different literary adaptation from Hammer, their 1971 gender-bending horror *Doctor Jekyll and Sister Hyde*.

In this retelling of the classic Stevenson novel, Dr. Jekyll is a brilliant but mild-mannered scientist committed to the study of diseases and their cures, but following a remark from his colleague Dr. Robertson that he would be dead before being able to see the results of any of his discoveries, he begins to research an elixir of life that could potentially unlock immortality. His findings take him to "nature's elixir": female hormones. Jekyll uses these hormones as the basis of his experimental elixir and proceeds to drink it himself: suddenly, dramatically, and entirely, the meek Jekyll transforms into a beautiful woman, and the stuffy actor Ralph Bates is exchanged for model actress Martine Beswick. The transformation sequence is one of absolute

euphoria: as the newly minted “Sister Hyde,” Beswick expresses recognition, astonishment, and relief as she excitedly inspects her new face, breasts, and body in the mirror. The illusion is shattered, however, when it’s Jekyll’s hairy, masculine hand suddenly reappears by her side, and the transition is undone as quickly as it came. This transformation becomes the driving force of the film: desperate to continue his experiments, Jekyll turns to body-snatching to acquire the necessary hormones for more doses of his elixir, and the mysterious spree of murders sends a shroud of suspicion over all of London.

Jekyll’s change into Sister Hyde is undeniably transsexual, depicting the crossing of sexes more dramatically and literally than any other example discussed so far. The process is scientific, drawing inspiration from real-life hormone treatments, but fantastically unnatural, instituting as it does a complete, full-body change from Dr. Jekyll to Sister Hyde, Bates to Beswick, cissexual man to cissexual woman. In this way, *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* becomes a Frankenstein film in which the Doctor and the Monster are localized in the same body at different times—although Monsters are usually “fusion” monsters, this would be an example of a rare but valid “fission” Frankenstein, per Noël Carroll’s categorizations (*Philosophy* 45-46). As Jekyll takes more doses of his elixir and spends more time as Sister Hyde, who’s spending time with who becomes less obvious as the Sister Hyde persona gradually gains its own independent personality, scheming to supplant her male counterpart for good with a permanent transition/formation. He worries, “to continue my work I needed Sister Hyde, yet all the time I became more and more aware of her growing dominance within me, a dominance that I no longer had the strength to fight, contain, or control.” Unable to completely resist her thrall and still clinging to the hope that his elixir can be used for good if perfected, “natural” women must be cannibalized to sustain his “unnatural”

womanhood. Their tension reaches a fever pitch after Sister Hyde seduces Dr. Robertson and kills him after he connects her (and Jekyll) to the disappearances and murders, signifying both a moral threshold for Jekyll and a violation of what had hitherto been his preserved (male) heterosexuality. Frightened and outraged and desperate to regain control, he destroys his research so that it can never be replicated, but Sister Hyde is not vanquished yet: she vows that “It is *I* who exists, Dr. Jekyll, not you! It is *I* who will be rid of *you!*”

The ambiguity in *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* between which of its eponymous characters is, in fact, flying the plane is its central conceit, and one which produces an emotionally intense, complex representation of Monstrous transsexuality, dysphoria and euphoria, and the transition itself. Sister Hyde’s developing independence demonstrates that she’s not merely an alter-ego of Dr. Jekyll, but her own person with her own wishes and ambitions and desire to live—but what is uncertain is whether she was created the moment that Jekyll first drank his elixir, or if she has been hiding within him the entire time. More than just Jekyll’s “feminine side,” it’s not unreasonable to interpret Sister Hyde as a closeted womanhood, barricaded by Jekyll within himself but given the strength to start clawing its way out after a taste of hormone-induced gender euphoria in a changing body. The first time that Jekyll takes the serum and Sister Hyde lives, she reacts to Jekyll’s hand reappearing with panic and horror. She sees herself detransitioning before her very eyes, reabsorbed by the maleness to which she is inescapably tethered—yet her determined spirit still lingers. As she develops her own agency and the capacity for self-preservation, is she to blame for her determination, her ferocity, and her ruthlessness when innocent women must die so that she may live, when the alternative is worse than death, when the alternative is a metaphysical destruction, a death that occurs outside of life

itself? To borrow an old trope, she's a woman trapped in a man's body, and she doesn't want to die in there.

The greatest evidence in the film that Sister Hyde is more than a chemical creation occurs after Jekyll has destroyed his research and abstained from his elixir. Having been invited to an opera by his lovely upstairs neighbor, Jekyll is preparing and getting dressed in his laboratory—but after taking one of Sister Hyde's dresses from his closet out of instinct, he finds himself under her control yet again and transforms, the elixir no longer necessary. Making her move, Sister Hyde follows Jekyll's stood-up date into the city with the intent to kill her for her hormonal lifeblood, and then obliterate Jekyll's will so that she can take over his life completely. If Sister Hyde was a modern-day transsexual, she would describe this plan as going “stealth,” transitioning as fully as possible and then starting over, ensuring that no knowledge or trace of her pre-transition life gets out. This plan is foiled, however, when Jekyll makes one last push to regain control and stop the murder, attracting the attention of the police. Jekyll escapes to the rooftops, but begins to transform back into Sister Hyde again as he hangs from the ledge of a building. As the police convene on the location, the murderer falls to the ground—half Jekyll and half Hyde, their chimerical Monstrousness revealed at least. This final shot of the half-Jekyll half-Hyde Monstrosity is akin to the outing “death” of Dominta in *She-Man: A Story of Fixation*, in which the demise of the Monstrous transsexual comes from the physical revealing of their transsexuality. The bifurcated halves of Jekyll and Hyde form a truly ghastly whole and fantastically epitomize the transsexual's inherent anatomical contradictions without resorting to the too-taboo shock of transsexual nudity. Much of the film appears unsympathetic to transsexuals, appropriating the act of transition and hormone therapy to make a murderous

Monster out of a man's female alter-ego, but there's a tragic desperation to Sister Hyde's demand for life and liberation from her place in Jekyll's subconscious that evokes what it takes to come out as transsexual, even to one's own self, and pursue transition with such necessity.

All of the films analyzed in this section, from Gill-Man to Sister Hyde and Glenda to Dominita, communicate transsexual themes through their central Monster, which embodies or demonstrates transition or cross-sex identification. In forced transition narratives such as *The Creature Walks Among Us* and *She-Man*, transsexuality is made Monstrous by its threatening potential as a torture, but also sympathetic through its representation of dysphoric embodiment. The Frankenstein films, *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein's Daughter*, apply transsexuality to the Monster itself to exaggerate its constructed and designed nature, especially with regards to how attractive the Monster may or may not be. The exploitation films *Glen or Glenda* and *Queens at Heart* attempt to elucidate the transsexual phenomenon to their audience, but ultimately serve as horror shows that either warn of "bad" transsexuals or put them on display for a cheap thrill. Additionally, the attempt by cissexual Doctors to control or subjugate their transsexual subjects is a constant in all of these films. The representation of Monstrous transsexuality in *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* includes all of these themes, but Sister Hyde is the most developed and agentic of them all. She's not a "good" transsexual, she's an unnatural murderess, and she is flippantly uncontrollable, outwardly rebellious, and sexually powerful. She refuses to yield to Jekyll at every turn and actively schemes against him to permanently subjugate his body to hers, forcibly transitioning him on a metaphysical level, and the luridness of the gender-swapping plot was played up sensationally in the film's taglines and advertising, such as in the epigraph of this chapter. *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* is a complex and contradictory

film like many of its peers, but its fractured portrait of a woman fighting tooth and nail to claw her way out of a man enshrines it as one of the most powerful representations of Monstrous transsexuality of its era. “It’s a queer business, sergeant,” Dr. Robertson tells a London policeman in the midst of Sister Hyde’s reign of terror. “Very queer.”

The Perfect Woman

The Monstrous transsexual films discussed previously, with their emphasis on transition and transformation and explicit representations of cross-sex behavior and identification, are only one side of the coin. The priorities of sexologists and tabloid press and the disproportionate clientele of the gender clinic during this era connected the Monstrous transsexual indelibly with femininity, femaleness, and womanhood—not merely as a product of transition, but as a construct in and of itself. As discussed in Chapter I of this thesis, the Monstrous transsexual literalizes the “construct” of gender itself through its artificiality and intentionally sexed nature, embodying and exaggerating gender roles and expectations as a creature expressly designed in relation, if not direct aspiration, to them. At the same time that transsexuals were being forced to conform to conservative standards of feminine behavior and appearance to “earn” their transition in the gender clinic, cissexual women were growing more and more fed up with the stratification of the sexes after World War II. When men returned to the work force, women were forced out in droves and relegated to homemaking and mothering, and gradually they became fed up with their lack of agency, lack of career choices, always being expected to be docile and demure and

domestic, and ultimately a “howl of rage” would erupt across the gender divide (Rudacille 166). The women’s liberation movement arrived, but their rage and revolt would establish a bitter dichotomy. For cissexual women, the movement promised an escape, a transcendence, from the constrained, hegemonic, and subjugated realm of womanhood circumscribed by the patriarchy; for trans women, however, this realm was the only one afforded to them by the pernicious preferences of the gender clinic, and by the public at large if they hoped to live as their desired gender with any degree of consistent acceptance. With significant but irreconcilable stakes in reshaping the cultural meaning of womanhood, the inevitable ideological schism between these two “sides” would permanently destabilize what it meant to be a “woman” in both feminist and patriarchal discourses.

I will say first and foremost that not all feminists during this era were trans-exclusionary—if it was unanimous, there wouldn’t have been such a dramatic schism. Still, trans-exclusionary radical feminism was the *dominant* position in the movement, exerting significant control and influence over both feminist thought and the perception of transsexual bodies at large (Davy 45). These feminists positioned themselves as existing in total and uncompromising opposition to men and maleness, a position which necessitated, to them, excessive hostility towards trans women especially. Transsexuality as a general concept posed an ambivalent contradiction for second wave feminists regardless of specific sect or ideology; as theories of sexuality, biology, socialization, and ontological womanhood proliferated among the movement, the Monstrous incomprehensibility and hybridity of transsexuals “threw the very meaning of the term ‘woman’ into disarray” (Irvine 269). No conceivable definition of womanhood that excluded all men could simultaneously include all trans women unless they could accept that a woman was whoever

identified as one. Some did, and others did with the caveat that they only became receiving sex reassignment surgery or starting transition. The resolutely trans-exclusionary wing of the feminist movement made no such concessions, leading to the rise of phrases like “womyn-born womyn” on festival flyers and pamphlets. The foundational belief was that transsexual body modifications “denigrate women through their performance of normative femininity” and demonstrate the “fetishistic idolizing of patriarchal ideals,” and the feminists theorized that trans women were conspired by male doctors “to prop up patriarchy by surgically and hormonally transforming [men] into ‘pseudo-women’” who could “infiltrate” feminist and political lesbian movements. (Davy 47). Radical feminist Catherine Millot put it in terms particularly reminiscent of Frankenstein: “the reason doctors acquiesce to Transsexuals’ demands for body modification...is to bolster the doctor’s own ‘phantasy’ of scientific omnipotence” (qtd. in Davy 48). In this sense, there’s an agreement between radical feminists and I that the “construction” of transsexual women mirrored, in hyperbolic fashion, the expectations of *all* women as decided by patriarchal interests. However, radical feminists attacked the Monster for the sins of the Doctor, demonizing transsexual women for acquiescing to the criteria and norms required of them to be able to be women at all.

The breaking point for the transsexual problem in second wave feminism came in 1973, at the West Coast Lesbian Feminist Conference, in which lesbian transsexual folk singer Beth Elliott was ejected from the event by vocally opposed trans-exclusionary attendees. This blow-out was not unique; disputes and disruptions such as this evidenced the depth of the divide between feminists over which kinds of women *counted* as women, and feminist-minded trans women would be terrorized by their insatiable hatred for decades. Around the same time,

eventual “Transsexual Manifesto” author Sandy Stone was forced to resign from her position as a sound engineer for the feminist label Olivia Records because of overwhelming anti-trans backlash, and a similarly high-profile ejection would occur in 1991 when Nancy Jean Burkholder was removed from the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. Past was simply prelude, however, as transsexuality would be “elevated to a metaphysical precept” five years after Elliott’s ejection with the publication of Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology*—which contained her theory of the Frankenstein phenomena—and Janice Raymond’s *The Transsexual Empire* shortly afterwards, with which “the hostility of lesbian feminism toward transsexuals reached its peak” (Rudacille 168). Raymond’s warnings that “transsexual women were patriarchy’s shock troops, medically constructed pseudo-females created to infiltrate the lesbian community and destroy it” became a cultural touchstone with a long lifespan in both popular and academic presses (Rudacille 172), and her work remains influential among trans-exclusionary radical feminists to this day (Goldberg; Kerri; Burns, “Anti-Trans”).

This was the zeitgeist of womanhood in which transsexual women found themselves in the mid-to-late post-war period. Although Daly and Raymond’s writing came late in this era, the conspiracies that they imagined in their writing were uncannily predicted in Frankenstein films. The dichotomy unintentionally established by the women’s liberation movement between revolutionary power and conventional passivity was not unnoticed by the patriarchal forces that it intended to oppose. Men were not exactly pleased or unperturbed that their wives and daughters and romantic interests were becoming rancorous, rebellious, and free-minded. Transsexual women became caught, therefore, in a double-bind: on the one side, cissexual feminists considered them to be either brainwashed Monsters or malevolent double-agents of the

patriarchy, and on the other side, they *were* often emblematic of conservative femininity because it was what was necessary for their womanhood to be legible or permissible at all. Every gender role and patriarchal prejudice that burdens cissexual women also burdens trans women, with the added threat that they may not be allowed to be women if they resist them. As transsexual writer Christine Beatty writes, “feminists dislike our image consciousness...when, out of ignorance or insecurity, we portray ourselves as caricatures of womanhood” (Beatty 31). Still, as “real” cissexual women grew unruly and radical, the transsexual “caricatures of womanhood” women remained captive to clinical and patriarchal standards of feminine beauty and passivity/ing.

It’s therefore difficult to ascribe to mere coincidence the fact that in the three decades after World War II, there would be more “Bride” narratives, in which the Doctor creates an explicitly and purposefully female Monster, than ever before or since, and each would be exceptionally preoccupied with the creation of a “perfect” woman. Chauvinist opponents of women’s liberation could not go back in time and *un*-create women, destroying them as Victor Frankenstein did his incomplete Bride in Mary Shelley’s novel, but the Frankenstein narrative presented an appealing if fantastical alternative: simply creating *new* women who couldn’t—wouldn’t—possibly revolt or rebel against “social stability” (Beenstock 418). This “motif of re-creation is one central to the misogynistic tendencies in the horror film” (Boruzkowski), and nowhere more than in the Frankenstein film is (re)creation the name of the game. Many of these films slightly predate both the “big science” years of transsexuality and the true tipping point of women’s liberation, but such chronology renders them as prescient rather than untimely—science fiction once again borrows from the future to shock us today. Bride

narratives tend to privilege themes of desire, perfection, and beauty on top of the usual Frankensteinian notions of monstrosity, artificiality, and Otherness (Hawley 224), and while these themes are easily applicable in a purely cissexual way, the literal bodily construction of these female Monsters is inseparable from the project and production of transsexuality and the specific criteria that controlled transitional health care under the authority of gender clinicians. Cissexual women have the convenience of at least being born as who they are; transsexual women, like Monsters, must be *made* in a particular image. In the Bride narrative, that image is of the “perfect Monstrous woman.”

The process through which the perfect Monstrous woman is created and the criteria by which she is judged are virtually identical to those reserved for transsexuals in the gender clinic, though it bears repeating its most salient aspects for emphasis. The beauty of the Monster in a Bride narrative will always be of great concern, for both the fictional Doctor and the real filmmakers. The telltale signs of their unnaturalness—the scars, stitches, and various taints of undeath—may be far more understated in their Monster make-up than their male counterparts or even omitted entirely so as not to make them un-beautiful, a reservation which “directly contrasts with the aesthetic involved in creating a male monster,” (Boruzkowski). They may be allowed to look Monstrous, in some form or another, but they are not allowed to look *ugly*. Furthermore, the objectification of women takes on an entirely new meaning when the woman, herself, is a very literal object, grown or sewn from objects hand-picked by her creator. Bride narratives will feature frequently the Doctor trawling countryside, catacomb, and city for only the most optimal *parts* from which to construct his creature, literally reducing women to pieces of meat, with Brides comprised only of prime cuts. More often than not, especially in films set in their present

day, the Doctor will acquire these materials by killing sex workers and models—a trope taken to its greatest extreme in the 1990 Bride narrative *Frankenhooker*—and the prevalence of this trope is an exploitation of the idea that sex workers are not selling sex alone but “selling their bodies” as something to be utilized; on a symbolic level, Frankenstein is utilizing them indeed.

Secondly, the subservience of the Monster is paramount in the Bride narrative. The Bride has been all but defined by its subjugation and lack of agency ever since Victor Frankenstein aborted his female creation in the pages of Mary Shelley’s original novel, out of fear of what she may do if she was more difficult to control than the male Monster. This demand for compliance extends beyond the obvious expectation to commit oneself to dutiful domestic bliss; Erin Hawley, in “The Bride and Her Afterlife: Female Frankenstein Monsters on Page and Screen,” notes that “the female monster does not talk” as a rule (222). Although there are several male Monsters who do not talk—Boris Karloff’s portrayal didn’t learn to speak until its second movie, and promptly forgot for the third and rest—the proportion of verbal to nonverbal Brides is far more paltry. The muteness of the female Monster persists even more prominently in the films of this post-war era, in which there are more female Monsters in general who are frequently either unable to speak, speak far less than men, must yield their voices to men, or must learn how to speak from the men who control them.

Finally, the Bride—given its name—is not always but usually created expressly for the purposes of coupling, either with another Monster or with the Doctor himself. Her obligate origin defines her as “merely a female counterpart to the [male] monster—maybe the future mother of a monstrous litter bred by more traditional methods, but primarily a living doll” created for the pleasure and gratification of another (Manguel 55); even though trans women lack the

impregnable capabilities of cis women, the omission of any actual reproduction in Bride narratives makes it a moot point—it's far more about the promise of sex itself, sex for its own sake, sex with a custom-built companion who can't say no to *anything*. For a Bride to be truly “perfect,” she must be domestically *as well as sexually* subservient to her creator, and one of the more common methods for ensuring compliance from a female creation is a women's liberation nightmare. By purposefully making his Monster as ignorant and infantile as possible, and sheltering her entirely, a Doctor can groom his Bride into following his every wish and order without her ever even developing the *capacity* to think otherwise. This subordinate socialization process unearths the Oedipal subtext that is present in all Frankenstein stories, but especially Bride narratives—is a man who creates a woman not her father, and she his daughter? Newly animated Brides are often helpless in their creator's hands and completely unable to understand the world around them; male Monsters, too, usually enter the world uneducated, scared, and pathetic. Their fates diverge at how male Monsters are more likely to be rejected by the Doctor in this state, thrown to the wilderness to figure things out for themselves, while Brides get the “privilege” of being raised by Father Frankenstein. The horror in raising one's own Bride this way is a perverse exploitation of a significantly stacked power dynamic. Frankenstein is at once father and husband for his Bride, her sole teacher, provider, and protector; due to the unnatural and artificial circumstances of their relationship, however, there are no *actual* incestuous obstacles to her sexual availability. The only requirement is the preservation of her naivete and dependence through either overprotection, gaslighting, or even imprisonment.

The barrage of Bride narratives would not begin in earnest until the 1960s, but there were still some notable examples of female Monsters on film from the years immediately following

the end of the war. The fittingly titled English screwball comedy *The Perfect Woman* was the first such film, released in 1949 and adapted from a play of the same name. Its plot is simple: when an eccentric Doctor named Professor Belmon creates a ‘perfect’ female robot named Olga, modeled after his beautiful but sheltered niece Penelope, he hires the straight-laced yet penurious charmer Roger Cavendish as its valet and unsuspecting Turing test participant. Unbeknownst to both, however, Penelope takes Olga’s place so that she can see the world. When the three leads all end up together in a hotel bridal suite, the ruse is unraveled and Roger and Penelope declare their love for each other. Unfortunately, Olga is not programmed to withstand hearing the word “love,” and suddenly explodes to conclude the film. The screwball comedy genre is rife with battle-of-the-sexes style commentaries on gender roles and relations, and *The Perfect Woman* gets a lot of mileage out of Olga’s unique failings as the supposedly eponymous paragon. The “perfect” Olga is mute, typical of female Monsters, and naturally obeys any command spoken to her. The catch is that because she’s a robot, she’s compelled to take them very literally and is also incapable of discerning the context of *actual* commands, resulting in gaffes like turning directly into a brick wall after overhearing a subway passenger ask “is this *right* for Green Park?” Where the film veers into Monstrous transsexual territory the most is at its climax in the bridal suite, in which the differences between Penelope and Olga are thrown into explicit relief. Dr. Belmon explains that Olga is perfect because “she does exactly what she’s told, she can’t talk, she can’t eat, and you can leave her switched off under a dust sheet for weeks at a time,” stressing her subservience and complete lack of agency as positives. He further contrasts her against Penelope by saying of his niece that “there are millions of them,” referring disparagingly to real non-robotic women, but “there’s only one Olga.” Here, Dr. Belmon lauds the robotic,

artificial perfection of Olga as a novelty, something newly invented that is therefore *better* than real and natural women. However, given her self-destruction in the bridal suite after “normal” heterosexual love wins the day between Roger and Penelope, the *real* woman is reestablished as the perfect woman by default, and the looming threat of a man-made, patriarchal replacement for natural womankind is vanquished—at least for now.

In 1953, another Frankensteinian film could come from the United Kingdom, *Four-Sided Triangle*, synopsisized by its sensational tagline as “He outdid Frankenstein and created this beautiful woman to satisfy his strange lust for passion!” The “he” refers to two scientists, Bill Leggat and Robin Grant, who have invented a “Reproducer” that perfectly duplicates physical objects. Their partnership is suddenly strained by the return of their mutual childhood crush, the beautiful Lena, to their hometown with the intent to marry Robin. Painfully in love, Bill convinces Lena to let him duplicate her in the Reproducer, so that he can have a copy of her for himself. The procedure is a success—but the resulting duplicate, “Helen,” *also* falls in love with Robin, not Bill, but she agrees to undergo electroshock therapy to try and change her mind. Before they can succeed, the electroshock apparatus explodes (why so many sudden explosions in these movies?) and starts a terrible fire in their laboratory. Bill and one of the women are killed in the accident while Robin escapes with the other—but she’s amnesiac and doesn’t know whether she’s Lena or Helen. This quandary is resolved when Robin remembers that Helen had two distinctive scars on the back of her neck from when they used an electronic device to start her heart after she was “born.” With relief, Robin realizes that he’s saved Lena, the original. Again, and true to the mantra that Frankenstein must be destroyed, the unnatural woman is conveniently vanquished at the end of the film so that heterosexual love between a man and a

“normal” woman can prevail without any uncomfortable implications for the future. Unlike the obedient Olga from *The Perfect Woman*, Helen has agency, possessing real thoughts, feelings, and desires that aren’t necessarily what her male Doctors expected or wanted from her. Still, the acquiescence of both Lena and Helen to the Doctors’ attempts to get what they want anyway—Lena agreeing to be duplicated and Helen agreeing to electroshock therapy—renders them complicit tools in their self-gratifying experiments. By striking Lena with amnesia at the end of the movie, it doesn’t actually *matter* whether she’s Lena or Helen, since either of them would love Robin and submit to his control regardless. The potential horror and the patriarchal dream is that, with a new reproducer, Robin could duplicate as many Lenas as he wants—and if one should disobey him, or disrespect him, or threaten to leave him, he could replace her with another and count on her compliance.

The most interesting female Monstrous transsexual from the post-war decade would also be the first to bear the Frankenstein namesake: the eponymous creation from Richard Cunha’s *Frankenstein’s Daughter*, a z-grader released to teenage audiences in 1958. Set in the then-present-day, the Doctor *du jour* is Oliver Frank, secretly Oliver Frankenstein and trying to perfect the experiments of the original Frankenstein, who was his grandfather. Under the cover of night and after a date gone wrong, Oliver runs down a woman with his automobile and brings her brain back to his lab for use in a brand new Monster. Like in *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* and in later Bride narratives to still be discussed, cissexual womanhood must be destroyed so that the unnatural Monster may live—but why does Oliver need a woman’s brain specifically? As he explains, it’s easier to control, as “the female mind is conditioned to a man’s world. It therefore takes orders.” The resultant creation is “Frankenstein’s daughter,” Oliver Frank’s vision for a

“perfect being.” What makes this film so unique among Bride narratives in the Monstrous transsexual canon, however, is that the Monster was actually *far* from perfect, at least according to all of the real people who worked on it. Although the Monster is referred to as Frankenstein’s *daughter* and exclusively in feminine terms, beneath the monster make-up is the broad-faced character actor Harry Wilson. The story behind this contradictory casting choice is fascinating: Harry Thomas, the make-up artist in charge of the film, wasn’t even aware that Wilson was supposed to be the eponymous “daughter” of Frankenstein and “blew a gasket” when he realized the truth, telling Cunha that “they won’t buy this out there” and that it was “the wrong thing to do.” Cunha himself blames a lack of time and money for the mix-up, recalling that he said that it was “not quite what we need, but by God we can't do anything about it!” (T. Weaver, *Return of* 363-64). Like a blooper, bad fall, or transsexual according to *Glen or Glenda*, Wilson’s turn as a “daughter” seems to have been one of nature’s mistakes.

Even if this infamous casting choice was just the result of Cunha's breakneck shooting schedule and shoestring budget, it's rare to see the subtext of the (female) Frankenstein's monster as a haphazard body, a marginalized creature, and a horrifying yet fetishized object rendered so boldly and explicitly as it is in *Frankenstein's Daughter*. The creature is a construct of quasi-womanhood, a ghastly and disproportionate giant unrecognizable as female (or even human) by its terrified onlookers. Their fear is not unfounded—the Monster’s face is gruesomely scarred down the middle, bifurcating its permanent grimace into relatively normal and ghoulishly deformed halves, and the whole thing is framed by a stifling wrap of gauze and staples. Furthermore, it wears a bulky striped jumpsuit and restrictive braces on its limbs that inhibit its movement so much that the creation is nearly statuesque. "Not what we need, but by God we

can't do anything about it"? Is that a quote from Richard Cunha about the make-up for *Frankenstein's Daughter*, or something overheard during an intake assessment in the gender clinic as Doctors pored over the bodies of Monstrous transsexuals, or is it my own reaction to my reflection in a mirror about the way that a dress fits on my body? It's important that it's not just *any* man beneath that make-up—Harry Wilson was the self-proclaimed “ugliest man in Hollywood” (Slide 110). This extreme cross-gender casting choice makes Frankenstein's daughter into a Monstrous transsexual in the most exaggerated of ways, and compared to the invariably beautiful Brides in the rest of this canon, the failure of the film's make-up and costuming to mitigate that casting choice makes it a horrible, unassimilatable, and hopelessly unpassable transsexual at that. Yet if the evil of Oliver Frankenstein was making it in the first place, his madness was that he could not be more *proud* of his “perfect being”—and that he dreamed of making more daughters just like it.

The first major Bride narrative of the 1960s was 1962's *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*, directed on a low budget by Joseph Green. The role of the Doctor is dutifully filled by plastic surgeon Bill Cortner, who gets into a car crash with his fiancée, Jan, while driving out in the countryside. Much to Bill's horror, Jan is decapitated in the accident. He collects her severed head from the wreckage and brings it to the basement his second home, where with the help of his assistant Kurt, he successfully reanimates it on a platter in his basement laboratory and sustains it with chemical drips and electricity. As Bill heads into the city to find a replacement body for Jan, his disembodied fiancée slowly regains consciousness and begins to plead for death and violently resent Bill for prolonging her agony. Bill's search for Jan's new body, and specifically a very hot body, takes him to a burlesque show and a beauty contest. Since Jan's

head is unscathed except for the fact that it's decapitated, he has set his sights on obtaining a single attractive body rather than building one piece by piece. The body he eventually settles on is that of an ex-girlfriend and facially scarred supermodel named Doris, whom he lures back to his lab under the pretense of free reconstructive surgery. Meanwhile, back at the lab, Jan has developed a telepathic bond with another one of Bill's Monsters—a gargantuan, deformed mutant that he keeps locked in a hidden, reinforced cell. Although Jan is decapitated, the mutant is disembodied—we only hear its grunts and pants and see a glimpse of its hideous hand when it partially breaches its cell to throttle Kurt to death. Once Bill returns with Doris, he places duct tape over Jan's mouth to quiet her protests, upsetting the mutant enough to rile it into breaking out of its cell completely. The lab is set ablaze and Bill is killed in the ensuing fight; the mutant safely carries Doris out of the burning house while Jan, still stuck in her pan, laughs maniacally as the flames consume the basement.

The Brain That Wouldn't Die is the most prototypical of the Bride narratives of this era, moving away from screwball comedy and teen-oriented schlock and towards something decidedly more dark, deriving its horror from its Doctor's maddening pursuit of control and sexual perfection. Bill's fixation on finding models and dancers, only the most attractive possible women, for "Jan 2.0" also make it the earliest Bride narrative to be so crude yet unsparing in its condemnation of its Doctor's obsessive chauvinism. Doris, the lucky date, was no random acquaintance of Bill's—she was the runner-up to Jan in a beauty contest, an encounter that led Bill to break up with her and date Jan in the first place, making her nothing more than the second-most beautiful person he knows and therefore second in the line of succession. The greatest distinction of *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* is that all of this is backdropped against

Jan's repeated objections to the entire operation. Here, the Bride is not a lifeless corpse to be revived, or a nonentity until the moment of animation—she *was* a normal woman, once, and she *hates* what Bill has done to her, and plans to do to her. The decapitation of women as a symbol for loss of intelligence, education, independence, or autonomy “is not unusual in the horror genre” (Boruzkowski), but what makes Jan's seething hatred in *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* so genuine is that she seems to understand this symbolism *herself*. Unlike the ideally subservient Bride or the perfectly accommodating women from *Four-Sided Triangle*, Jan openly expresses extreme contempt for her creator and her circumstances. Her most famous line is as venomous as it is bleak: “Let me die,” she pleads, repeatedly. “*Let me die.*”

Jan's disenfranchised, disembodied position in the pan is one of ultimate feminine subjugation, a captivity that could not possibly be more complete, as she is reduced to a part to be connected to another part in a procedure outside of her control, against her will, and only for the fulfillment of a sexual standard that she lacks the ability to oppose. The Monstrous transsexual themes of construction, creation, and strict aesthetic criteria arise in full-force from this dynamic, from Bill's preoccupation with a perfectly beautiful body and Jan's helpless hatred at the obligation to receive it. What brings it all the way home, though, is the contrast between Jan and the mutant behind the locked door. At least Jan is salvageable—the mutant has been shunned as a lost cause and a mistake, kept alive and imprisoned in the laboratory only as a reminder of Bill's hubris. However, it's the solidarity between Jan and the mutant—between those whom the clinic deigns to approve for transition or are capable of passing in society, and then those who are denied that opportunity altogether—against their common enemy of patriarchy and medicine that ultimately earns them their revenge.

Two years after *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*, the Frankenstein narrative would find its way into the “nudie cutie” genre with *Kiss Me Quick*, also titled as *Dr. Breedlove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love* to leech off the success of the Kubrick film that same year. Nudie cuties were an interesting consequence of evolving obscenity laws: “nudity for nudity’s sake” was afforded legality in 1957, from the *Excelsior Pictures v. New York Board of Regents* case in the New York state court, and the exploitation film industry pounced upon their new power to put butts in seats with the promise of real naked women—while still respecting the still on-the-books restrictions against sexual content and pornography. One way to thread this needle was by making films about nudist colonies, a convenient model of non-sexualized nakedness, but the “nudie cutie” distinguished itself as a lighthearted subgenre of comedy that was paradoxically suggestive yet chaste: the nudie cutie found every excuse to disrobe its female characters, but they were forbidden from showing any sexual contact (Lewis 199-200). “Sexploitation” became a “booming, integrated industry” in the 1960s, and perhaps what primed the nudie cutie genre so well for a Monstrous take was that its inability to depict actual heterosexual intercourse forced its filmmakers to indulge in “other nonprocreative sexualities: voyeurism and exhibitionism, sadomasochism, (simulated) group sex, ‘girl-on-girl’ scenes, and even implied bestiality” (Benshoff and Griffin, 131-32). The pseudo-reproductive creation process integral to the Frankenstein myth was right at home.

The plot of *Kiss Me Quick*, or what little there is of one, follows an asexual alien named Sterilox who is sent from his planet of Droopiter in the Buttless galaxy to find a human on Earth with whom to breed a new race of servants at home. “One of the sexes they refer to as women,” says his leader, the Grand Glom, “these women make ideal servants if you train them properly.”

Upon his arrival, he meets the unhinged scientist Dr. Breedlove and his bombshell of an assistant, Kissme. Breedlove has created an industrial-looking “sex machine” that drives women mindlessly wild with pleasure—demonstrated promptly by a rapturous Kissme—but his current research is into the perfection of a chemical formula that could transform “an ordinary, obnoxious woman” into “a gorgeous creature whose only love and concern is for her master.” From there, the film consists of Breedlove showing his various “experiments” to Sterilox. They watch three topless women dance in his laboratory, then peer into a video screen to watch Breedlove’s creations in “Catacomb 69” writhe and recline as sexily yet censor-compliantly as possible. The “perfect specimen” that Sterilox ultimately chooses to take back to Droopeter is Breedlove’s “Duz-All Vending Robot Butler,” a massive machine capable of doing every household task imaginable. Kissme, a Duz-All sales representative, joins Sterilox and the Grand Glom’s imperative is fulfilled after all. Breedlove wishes them well, then turns his attention to a “new shipment” of specimens: carts upon carts of nude women, on all fours and with their faces obscured, wheeled into his laboratory and across a conveyor belt, onto which he slaps meat-grade stickers such as “Prime,” “Choice,” and “Reject.” Adventurous narration concludes the film: “And so, Dr. Breedlove continues his search for his perfect specimen...”

Taking full advantage of the freedoms afforded by *Excelsior Pictures v. New York Board of Regents*, *Kiss Me Quick* is by far the most overtly sexual of the decade’s Bride narratives, even if it can’t actually show any ‘sex.’ Breedlove’s Monstrous minxes are as objectified in the diegesis as they are by the camera, *literally* treating them like pieces of meat by the end. His sales pitches to Sterilox about the quality of his specimens emphasize their beauty, compliance, passivity—all typical Bride traits—and the schtick is that Sterilox is too oblivious and naive to understand their

value. “I show you Lady Godiva,” he says exasperatedly, “and you ask me does the horse play the piano! *Who cares?*” Little more needs to be said—the plot retelling is all that’s necessary to reveal how *Kiss Me Quick* demonstrates all of the most extreme conclusions of the Bride narrative and its myriad key themes.

What is of especial interest in *Kiss Me Quick* is not its harem of hotties that dance and undulate at Breedlove’s command, but one of the most explicit references to transsexuality to be found among all of the film’s peers—more especial yet, it’s a rare example of Monstrous transmasculinity. As Breedlove’s favorite three “sex bombs” disrobe and dance in his laboratory, who should lumber in but a far more traditional version of Frankenstein’s Monster, complete with green skin and a rubber mask to look perfectly Karloffian. Intrigued, Sterlox asks whether this clumsy creature is also a specimen, to which Breedlove replies:

Oh no, no, no. This attempt did not turn out too well. Her name was Fanny Stein.

Her?

Don't call him a her. Her name is Frankie Stein now. She turned into a man and she gets very upset when people call him a her.

Gee, that's too bad. She seems like such a nice guy.

Well, you can't win them all, but, eh, I could have had a very lucrative practice in Denmark doing the same sort of thing.

Frankie Stein grunts aggressively when Sterilox first misgenders him, but despite Breedlove's fastidious correcting of his alien colleague's pronoun use, neither are particularly diligent in gendering him correctly afterward. The result is an unstable and uncertain representation of both maleness and femaleness, collapsed into a single abstractly transsexual Other. Despite being transmasculine, at least according to Breedlove's remark that he was an attempt that "turned into a man" but "not too well," the joke about opening a "lucrative practice in Denmark" alludes to Christine Jorgensen's jet-setting surgery. Compounding the complexity is Frankie Stein's aggressive reaction to the dancing, gyrating, naked women around him—the Monster recoils from the women with the same snarling fear and confusion usually reserved for when it's threatened by a burning torch. This discomfort could be read as psychosexual, or even as a dysphoric reaction on the Monster's part, but Breedlove simply tut-tuts Frankie for "frightening" the girls and shoos him away. Mixing pronouns once again, he vents to Sterilox that "*he's* really a nice boy, but I don't know what I'm going to do with *it*. He's so big, and, well...maybe I'll send him to a charm school." The threat to send Frankie to charm school further invokes transfemininity, given the intensive behavioral assessments that gave the gender clinic a reputation as a "charm school" for prospective trans women (Stone 160). An alternative to the compromised transmasculine reading of Frankie Stein's subject position (and I'm sorry to take yet another one away from you, fellas) is one that takes her as transfeminine instead. Between the dominant yet almost pitying usage of the "her" pronoun, Breedlove's complete lack of sexual interest in her, the Denmark joke, and the juxtaposition between the beautiful sex bombs and Frankie's Karloffian appearance, her Monstrous maleness is recast as the shock of unpassable transfemininity.

In any case, a “properly” Frankensteinian and transsexually tinged Bride narrative would arrive in theaters soon enough from Hammer across the pond, the aforementioned English studio behind the previously discussed horror of *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*. In 1966—the same year as *The Transsexual Phenomenon*—they released the third film in their successful Frankenstein franchise, *Frankenstein Created Woman*. As the most mainstream of the films discussed so far, it has the most prior scholarship dedicated to it, including several treatises on its comparatively lurid approach to the myth. Caroline Joan Picart writes that “the sexuality merely hinted at in the Universal films becomes explicit” in Hammer’s films (*Rebirths* 101), to which Pedro Javier Pardo García adds that Hammer “innovated in the creation scene and the new importance attached to sexuality” (225). Lester D. Friedman and Allison B. Kavey observe the distinct emphasis on the existentialism of the Monster in Hammer’s films, and how its Monsters “immediately search out answers about who they are, not what they are,” and that the films’ “fundamental identity questions [speak] directly to current issues within the transgender community” (144). The important of self-determination and the search for identity, meaning, and embodiment on one’s own terms in the Monstrous transsexual existence was also described by Susan Stryker, whose words to Victor Frankenstein contained the admission that “[the] monster and I... have done the hard work of constituting ourselves on our own terms, against the natural order” (250-51).

Unlike Universal’s film franchise, which kept bringing the Monster back to mash again and again, Hammer’s Frankenstein series focused on Victor Frankenstein himself. This time, has discovered a method for capturing and preserving the soul after death, and reanimating dead life by transplanting that soul into the body. Meanwhile, trouble brews in town when a man named

Hans attacks three dandies for insulting his disfigured and partially paralyzed lover, Christina, at her father's bar. The indignant dandies return to the bar to steal wine and beat Christina's father to death when he catches them; Han, the son of a murderer, is easily framed and executed, and an inconsolable Christina distraughtly drowns herself. The ever-resourceful Frankenstein knows useful materials when he sees them and quickly retrieves both fresh corpses, successfully transplanting Hans' soul into Christina's body, a procedure which revives Christina.

Frankenstein's experiment doesn't stop at reanimation. Victor took liberty of curing her facial deformity while she was out, and more than that, he and his assistant Hertz went to the "cosmetological extreme" of curling her hair and dyeing it blond. When she wakes up in bed as a dependent amnesiac and asks who she is, Hertz provides an efficient answer that reduces her identity to this beautified image: "You're a very lovely girl" (Boruzkowski). Since the revival process has left her helpless, Frankenstein assumes the duty of teaching her how to walk again, talk again, and live again, but protects the integrity of his experiment by never telling her more than her name and forbidding her from leaving Hertz's house. Frankenstein seems proud of his perfect woman—to a sexual and borderline necrophiliac extent (García 235)—but unbeknownst to him, the incongruity between Hans' soul and Christina's body is causing cracks in her psyche. Christina finds herself under the seemingly ghostly of Hans, whose voice commands her to exact revenge on the dandies responsible for their deaths. She seduces the men in order to kill them, and right before killing the last, uses Hans' own voice to speak to herself: "You've done what you had to do, Christina. You may rest now in peace." By this point, Frankenstein has realized the horror and chased Christina to a seaside cliff. He pleads to her, "Let me tell you who you

really are,” and she replies defiantly: “I know who I am.” The film ends when Christina throws herself into the sea, drowning herself once more.

Frankenstein Created Woman is for all intents and purposes Hammer’s answer to Universal’s *Bride of Frankenstein*, i.e. “the one with the female Monster” in its own franchise. The treatment of women, and especially Christina, in the film is very typical of Bride narratives overall, but its soul-swapping conceit adds several twists to the formula. Although she arrives to Frankenstein dead and disfigured—Hertz even discourages Victor from trying to salvage a body so “twisted, deformed, [and] broken”—Christina is *made* exceptionally beautiful by Frankenstein. With her facial scars removed and hair styled back, nothing was left to obscure the fact that Frankenstein’s Monster was being played by twenty-two year old Playboy playmate Susan Denberg, an on-the-nose casting choice for a beautiful Bride which the film’s marketing “exploited every opportunity [it] had to publicize” (Picart, *Rebirths* 129). Christina is not assembled from pieces like other Monsters or even like the Bride portrayed by Elsa Lanchester, but her remaking by Frankenstein is a *creation* nonetheless, both for the way he overhauls her appearance and subsequently takes her under his exploitative tutelage.

Although the transplantation of a male soul into a female body is the obvious attraction, it’s the sequence in which Victor Frankenstein grooms the amnesiac Christina into an idealized woman that draws its bead most precisely on monstrous transsexuality. She’s instructed in etiquette and consigned to performing household chores, ostensibly as a way of assessing her recuperation from her “procedure” and adjustment to her “new life.” Christina’s “sexual desirability is barely kept harnessed by her infantilization” in Victor’s possession, and despite being a vector of sexual desire, “her reproductive potential is never hinted at in the movie”

(Picart, *Rebirths* 135). Again, the Monstrous transsexual is a sexualized yet infertile, embodying and associated with a “hollow” array of pseudo-reproductive possibilities. She only starts to resist Victor’s control when another male voice—that of Hans—convinces her to become violent and vindictive.

One way to interpret Hans’ control of Christina is to treat him as just another male authority, supplanting her agency with his own to exact a personal agenda. The suppression of a woman’s very soul applies the patriarchal preoccupation with control and subjugation to a realm beyond the physical, emotional, and mental—the spiritual—and given that Hans’ soul was placed into Christina, it’s valid to ask whatever happened to Christina’s soul, “or do women not have souls?” (Friedman and Kavey 138). Another way to interpret the corporeal synchronicity of Hans/Christina is to consider them both the same creature, their masculinity and femininity contradictorily co-existing as a Monstrous transsexual non-identity like Frankie Stein in *Kiss Me Quick*. The concept at the center of *Frankenstein Created Woman* simultaneously obliterates Cartesian dualism and takes “being trapped in the wrong body” to a metaphysical extreme, “[going] beyond transgenderism or even hermaphroditism” (Freidman and Kavey 139). However, *Frankenstein Created Woman*’s “convincing exploration of problematic androgyny...is not sustained” (Picart, *Rebirths* 129), as predictably, the film ends with the destruction of the Bride. Christina’s vindictive suicide is bittersweet. Her final words, “I know who I am,” are vague enough to not preclude the possibility of her *not* being “Christina” as we know her. All that we know is that *she* knows, and that she would rather fling herself to a watery grave than spend another second under the thumb of Victor Frankenstein. It’s debatable exactly *what* Frankenstein created in *Frankenstein Created Woman*—it certainly wasn’t *just* a woman—but Christina’s

convenient death spares audiences yet again from the uncomfortable implications of suffering such an unintelligibly Monstrous transsexual to live.

Another decade would soon come and go—as the 60s transitioned into the 70s, the “post-war period” was petering out and the “big science” years of transsexuality were taking off. Women’s liberation had exploded as a force to be reckoned with by the late 60s, so the Bride narratives of the new decade were also of a new paradigm. They couldn’t *not* exist in relation to women’s liberation, and so the Bride narratives of the early 70s became far more heavy-handed in their messaging, and in the case of the first Bride narrative, outrageously regressive. Released in 1972, *The Body Shop* was a low-budget sexploitation film written, directed by, and starring J.G. Patterson Jr.—a personal friend of “godfather of gore” Herschel Gordon Lewis. At first glance, *The Body Shop* bears alarming similarity to *The Brain That Wouldn’t Die*, in that they’re both cheap films about a plastic surgeon whose supermodel wife dies in a car accident, and who spend most of the runtime hunting for the perfect specimen(s) from which to build their Monstrous replacement. The fact that *both* of these doctors are plastic surgeons is significant: it’s worth citing Erin Hawley’s observation again that the Bride of Frankenstein is often “deployed as an icon of artificial beauty and called upon in discussions of cosmetic surgery” (Hawley 228). Our Doctors Bill Cortner and Don Brandon differ on methodology, however. Bill only needed one perfect body to rebuild his wife Jan, but Don’s wife was unsalvageable from the accident, so he stalks, kills, and dismembers *multiple* women in his Build-a-Bride workshop, endeavoring to create a Monster that’s literally as perfect as the sum of her parts. He pursues the usual targets of sex workers and socialites and breaks them down for their legs and breasts and face, but also for

body parts as innocuous and specific as their hands, stitching them all together in his laboratory before finally bringing his perfectly pretty patchwork creation to life.

The Doctor's exploitation of his Bride's naivete and indoctrination of her into total, unquestioning servitude is taken to unprecedented heights of horror in *The Body Shop*. Once Don's Bride-to-be has risen from her slab, he sits her down—towering over her—and waves his hands like a hypnotist:

Your mind is going totally blank. You remember nothing of your past life. You will not even remember what a glass of water is. You remember absolutely nothing. All memories and all thoughts are vanishing from your mind.

Completely blank. Completely blank. All is gone. You know only what I teach you and nothing more. Do you understand me? Only what I tell you, will you know. You will have every desire to follow my every bidding. Your pleasure and happiness will come from doing as I ask you, things that will make me happy.

Since Frankenstein's Monster, as in *The Body Shop* and *Frankenstein Created Woman*, is traditionally constructed from formerly living body parts and a donated brain, the development of the Monster's sentience and personality begs the question of *who*, exactly, the Monster is, and whether it's its own, original person or merely a composite of those who posthumously comprise it. In Kenneth Branagh's *Frankenstein* (1994), the Monster shows Doctor Frankenstein that he can play the flute, remarking that and asks "from which part of me did this knowledge reside? From this mind? From these hands? From this heart? Not so much things *learned* as things

remembered.” It’s a touching and tragic scene, and a rare inquiry into whether there could be a lingering humanity in the organs and appendages so objectively disregarded as mere parts by the mad Doctor. Don’s use of hypnosis in *The Body Shop* mere moments after the awakening of his creation, then, *destroys* the possibility of such a complication. By taking the extra step to brainwash his Bride, he’s not merely creating a Bride *sans* identity—he’s creating a Bride that *may* have had its own identity, or even just the *potential* to develop its own identity eventually, and erases the chance of that occurring entirely, *preemptively* eliminating her capacity for free will. The woman his Bride once was or could have been is no more. In her place is a perfectly beautiful and permanently subservient living doll—exactly what he wanted. If the gender clinicians could have simply learned hypnosis, I’m sure they would have been far more efficient in their agenda.

Immediately after the hypnotic procedure, Don gets to work “teaching” his creation. Like the other Doctors before him, Don keeps his infantilized Bride in secret captivity, training and teaching her from the isolation of his home. Nursery music plays as he boasts lovingly of his new Bride that “she knows nothing at all” like “a beautiful newborn child, with full maturity,” and that it’s up to him to teach her “how to drink a simple glass of water, how to hold a fork, how to put on make-up, *and of course* how to show her affection.” In one scene, he’s teaching her the alphabet by pointing to large letters and animals in a picture book. In the very next, they’re on top of each other. Yet she couldn’t seem happier—Don’s indoctrination of his Bride is air-tight, except for one flaw: he forgets to teach her to love *only* him. When the Bride wanders into the basement laboratory and sees Don’s hunchbacked assistant, Greg, she compulsively exclaims “you’re a *man!*” and throws herself onto him. The vindictive Don swiftly murders Greg with a

butcher knife and throws his body in acid, intolerant of this breach of his Bride's solo social sphere. The problem repeats itself when a man arrives at Don's house to clean his furnace, and not one to pass up a good time, takes her out of the house with him. The ending of the film seems to suggest that the furnace cleaner lost track of the Bride at some point, with the final shot being a trucker picking her up from the side of the road, and that Don was either arrested at some point after she vanished or imagined the entire thing from a jail cell, projecting his fantasies onto a cleaning woman on the other side of the bars. Despite the possible ending that would recast the film's fantastic events as a dream, the extremely overt gender regressiveness in *The Body Shop* pushes the subjugation of women in the Bride narrative to an even greater extreme than *Kiss Me Quick*. Don's piece-by-piece assembly of his perfect Bride objectifies women with more breadth than any Bride film before it, and the Doctor's sexual exploitation of his Bride's mental infantilism is catapulted from a subtext to *just* text, ultimately serving as a far cruder counterpart and thematic primer for the final Bride narrative to be discussed.

Far more mainstream than *The Body Shop* and released two years later, *The Stepford Wives* endures as a touchstone of feminist cinema and has arguably the strongest legacy of the Bride narratives featured in this chapter. So profound is the place of this film (and the 1972 novel by Ira Levin on which it's based) in popular culture that "Stepford wife" has become a popular term on its own, a derogatory term and warning for any woman with an uncanny enthusiasm for conservative sex roles. The plot, briefly, is that independent, free-thinking, feminist photographer Joanna Eberhart moves to the suburban town of Stepford, Connecticut with her husband Walter and two daughters, where she discovers that almost every other woman in town is the picture-perfect model of subservience, domesticity, and passivity; they're entirely unintellectual

and even sexually submissive to their husbands to excess beneath their modest public exteriors. Furthermore, they are all exceptionally beautiful. Joanna's only ally in uncovering what's so *weird* about Stepford is another like-minded wife and recent move-in named Bobbie, but when Bobbie is suddenly as bland and chirpy as the other housewives, Joanna fearfully stabs her with a kitchen knife—revealing that she does not bleed. The truth is that the husbands of Stepford have replaced all of their once-human wives with life-like animatronic replicas that are designed to serve and please their husbands, and nothing more—and that the Stepford Men's association has been studying and collecting her likeness and voice to replace her as well. At the climax of the film, Joanna confronts her own robotic replica, which looks exactly like herself except with massive, plump breasts instead of her flat chest. The replica strangles Joanna with a nylon stocking, and the film ends with the bleak reality of the town's female population being totally replaced. Walter, Joanna's husband, beams with pride as he picks the new Joanna up from the supermarket.

Unlike previous Bride narratives, *The Stepford Wives* “specifically addresses the changing role of women in contemporary society” (Boruzkowski), since Joanna is not just *any* woman prior to being (re)created as a Monster. She is explicitly an outspoken feminist activist, and the ideology that she brings to Stepford is exactly what the men of Stepford are trying to suppress and erase from their community through robotic replacement. Recall my earlier point that this is *precisely* the fantasy afforded by the Bride narrative itself: rather than try to un-create rebellious women, the opposing solution to women's liberation would be the creation of *new* women incapable of rebellion at all. The quaint suburban hell of Stepford is a ghost of an idealized past where the female Monster-machine, once something to be feared and destroyed as in *Metropolis*

and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, has been reappraised as something to be “comfortably installed in the supermarket and suburban home...cooking, cleaning, caring for the children, and fulfilling their husbands sexual needs” (Doane 114). The Stepford wives are not only content in their subjugation but inexhaustible in it, their programmed loyalty far exceeding that which (supposedly) was, but no longer is, possible from “real” women.

The element of control is exaggerated in *The Stepford Wives*, too, through the familiar motif of building the Bride with built-in naivete and ignorance. Unlike the Doctors of *Frankenstein Created Woman* and *The Body Shop*, however, the Men’s Association of Stepford have no actual interest in teaching their Monsters anything—they’re already programmed to know anything that they should be allowed to know. The Stepford wives lack interest, and the capacity for interest, in any hobbies or activities more social or stimulating than grocery shopping, “‘contained’ and pressed into non-creative, non-fulfilling, non-rewarding labor” (Boruzkowski). Dale Coba, the mastermind roboticist and Doctor behind the scheme, prides himself on this compliance to Joanna’s face: “I like to watch women doing little domestic chores.” The use of “little” is significant: the wives are forbidden from doing any kind of work that could be interesting or challenging enough to make a man feel insecure in himself. No, just “little domestic chores.” Cleaning, cooking, caring, shopping, and fucking—quite convenient that their complete range of proficiencies can be counted on just one hand.

When Joanna fears that whatever has happened to the other wives in Stepford may happen to her, she pleads for her Walter not to leave her alone:

I won't be here when you get back, don't you see? It's going to happen before then. Don't ask me to explain it, I just know. There'll be somebody with my name, and she'll cook and clean like crazy, but she won't take pictures, and she won't be me!

Through tears, Joanna summarizes the relevance of the Bride narrative to women's liberation and its opponents: what would the stakes be if any given woman *could* be replaced, and if that replacement could be inhumanly subservient, unable to resist, and maybe a little hotter than the one that came before? It's not that these films set out to be, or *are* being, purposely chauvinistic—on the whole, Bride narratives are very aware of the commentary they contain on sex roles, and a good proportion of these films are actively satirical. The point instead is that the Frankenstein myth is an incredibly effective tool for dramatizing and exaggerating the sex-based ideological conflicts at the heart of the movement. The Doctor's obsessive need for control, pursuit of only perfect beauty, and literal objectification of women consolidates the worst abuses of the patriarchy that the women's liberation fought against, and by literalizing the construction of sex itself, the Monster could represent the "ideal woman" for either side of the movement: either the compliant pawn for the Doctor's desires, or the revolting and rebellious experiment that can't be controlled.

Conclusion

Four years after the release of *The Stepford Wives*, Mary Daly would publish “the Frankenstein Phenomenon” in *Gyn/Ecology*, and Janice Raymond’s *The Transsexual Empire* would follow suit in 1979. Both of these feminists would argue that female transsexuals were the nefarious creations of male doctors, designed to physically embody patriarchal ideals of femininity, infiltrate and undermine feminist organizing, and eventually replace all of womankind. So reminiscent was their writing of *The Stepford Wives* that it’s almost hard to find criticism of their work that *doesn’t* mention the film at some point (Beemyn 24, Stryker and Whittle 131, Brown 262). Regardless of whether *The Stepford Wives* “meant” to say something about transsexuality, its prescience or antecedence as the extreme logical conclusion to Daly and Raymond’s theories color its significance as a “feminist” satire and horror film of women’s liberation. Just who are we supposed to be horrified of, again?

For the sake of organization, I have attempted in this chapter to bifurcate—as best I could—films that felt more transsexual than Bridal and films that felt more Bridal and transsexual. The appropriation of the premise of *The Stepford Wives* into Daly and Raymond’s trans-exclusionary feminist theories, however, is a practical demonstration of why this distinction is as futile as it is. There is no possible conception of the “construction” of woman, or foray into what makes the “perfect” woman and how to do so and by which criteria, without accounting for the ways in which transsexuality has been both enshrined and demonized as a (re)constructive, (re)creative project with the goal of outputting only perfect, passable, assimilated trans women. Even today, generations removed from the tyranny of the post-war gender clinic, contemporary social norms and gender roles still enforce *de facto* criteria on who will be welcomed, recognized, and respected as a transsexual and who will be rejected,

unrecognized, and disrespected—and no “good” transsexual is permanently secure, for any acceptance that we are awarded by our oppressors is merely loaned to us.

Despite the successes of the women’s liberation movement on both a cultural and structural level in the 1960s and 1970s, the gender industry was “seemingly untouched,” shored up as it was by the pretenses of objective scientific pursuit and the backing of the dominant ideology, and it “reified normative, oppressive constructions of gender roles” even as the world had a revolution outside (Irvine 278). These reified normative, oppressive constructions of gender roles were expended fully on their clientele, for whom the feminist fight to be less ladylike wasn’t necessarily an appealing or inclusive option. The strength of trans-exclusion within the women’s liberation movement led many feminists to turn several patriarchal logics against their own kind: even cissexual women fell in the crosshairs as feminists judged each other’s physical appearances, personal histories, and sexualities harshly in an effort to root out “traitors,” and this was *on top* of the proliferation of paranoid prophecies about body-snatching transsexual robo-women. Both the invention of transsexuality and the women’s liberation movement incited deep ideological crises in what “sex” *was*, what “gender” *was*, and what it meant to *be* a “woman,” and these were crises that needed to be resolved *somehow*. The Frankenstein films of the post-war era, especially the Bride narratives, provide a structure for understanding, interpreting, and unraveling the instability and explosive potential of these categories. Trans women specifically were novel horrors of science gone too far, tabloid material, modern marvels, blond bombshells, ugly fags, success stories, laughing stocks, mutilation victims, sex impostors, insidious infiltrators, caricatures of femininity, botches, passing, non-passing, artificial, constructed, lovely, successful, failed; so broad and deep was their symbolic potential during this

time that they were essentially anything imaginable, except for just “woman.” The body of the transsexual woman was the map on which the limits of sex and womanhood were redrawn—both the necessary reference and the deliberate omission. Exiled from womanhood and estranged or surgically excised from manhood, the transsexual fell down, down, down into the darkness beyond that which is definable and outside of that which is intelligible.

All that was there was the Monster.

Conclusion

I suppose that it's finally time to talk about *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Its inclusion in a thesis about Monstrous transsexuality is all but inevitable, and I'm sure that you've been wondering, at least idly, when it was going to happen or how it hadn't been referenced already. I would be lying if I said it wasn't on purpose. In addition to the benefits of being reserved as a capstone for the very end, I knew it would be fun to make the reader shiver with anticipati...well, you know it goes.

Director Jim Sharman and writer Richard O'Brien originally unleashed this story as a stage musical, and it was known as just *The Rocky Horror Show*, sans *Picture*, when it premiered in London in 1973. It was a successful show, but given its mission as a raucous parody of horror and science fiction films from the 1930s-1950s, it makes sense that it wouldn't find its most enduring audience until it jumped to a more faithful medium. The film opens with the engagement of Brad and Janet, two wholesome squares from small town America, and their stranded arrival at a spooky Gothic castle following a flat tire in a horrible storm. There, they meet the electric Dr. Frank-N-Furter, a "sweet transvestite from [a place named] Transsexual, Transylvania," who has created an immaculately handsome Monster for his own sexual gratification: the bronzed, blond, and bountifully beefy Rocky Horror. With nowhere else to go,

Brad and Janet stay the night at “the Frankenstein place,” experiencing seduction and sexual ecstasy beyond their wildest expectations from their host. The night culminates in Frank-N-Furter’s petrification of his guests with a “Medusa Transducer” and spellbound reanimation as helpless, orgiastic participants in a swimming-pool cabaret floor show. Two of Frank-N-Furter’s servants, Riff-Raff and Magenta, suddenly reveal that they, too, are aliens from the planet Transsexual in the Transylvania galaxy, revolting against Frank-N-Furter who they claim has “failed his mission.” Frank-N-Furter is slain, the distraught Rocky Horror dies when it climbs up an RKO radio tower and falls, Riff-Raff and Magenta blast off in the castle (which was actually a spaceship) back to Transsexual, and Brad and Janet are left on Earth to sit with what they’ve just experienced, much like the audience of the movie.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show was called “the ‘gayest’ film yet made by a major studio” at the time of its release, an exceptionally high compliment when it came from Vito Russo in *The Celluloid Closet* (52), and it’s easy to understand why. The film “takes on the sexual content of *Frankenstein* full steam,” (Eberle-Sinatra 186), and it demonstrates almost all of the principles of the Monstrous transsexual framework to excess. Like *Angelic Frankenstein*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* provides explicit representation of the homosexual Doctor/Monster dynamic in Frank-N-Furter and Rocky Horror, the latter being “nothing but a sexual object for Frank, who acknowledges having made him for his personal sexual enjoyment” (Eberle-Sinatra 197). A telling line occurs when Janet comments to Frank-N-Furter that she thinks too many muscles are unattractive—incensed, Frank-N-Furter retorts “I didn’t make him for *you!*” Unlike the merely subtextually gay doctors in the Frankenstein canon, Frank-N-Furter “never aspires to achieve any grand scientific breakthrough or ascribes his motives to bettering the fragile condition of

mankind” (Friedman and Kavey 161), as he is solely in this line of work for the handmade hunks. He even wears a pink triangle on his lab apron—a loaded symbol of homosexuality instituted by the Holocaust’s labeling of its undesirables, reappropriated here to shave even more subtlety away from the proceedings.

Yet what makes *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* so unavoidable in discussions of Frankenstein, transsexuality, or both at the same time is the unavoidable fact that Frank-N-Furter has remained one of the most truly iconic and enduring representations of transsexuality in popular culture ever since the first note of “Sweet Transvestite” boomed through theater speakers. One may object to Frank-N-Furter’s prominent status as horror’s transsexual *numéro un* on the grounds that he’s not a “real” transsexual, just a cross-dresser—the song isn’t called “Sweet Transsexual,” after all, and Tim Curry himself described him as an “absurdly masculine” “big bloke in drag [who] just enjoys wearing clothes of the opposite sex” (qtd. in Picart, *Remaking* 70). To cross sex is to cross sexes, however, and a great portion of this thesis has already been dedicated to exhaustively explaining why the distinction is moot when it comes to m/Monstrousness. Clad in a corset and fishnets with long dark hair and make-up, Frank-N-Furter is ultimately “over-the-top enough to be unthreatening” (Newman 187), and interestingly, his lowercase-m monstrous transsexuality is all the more exaggerated by the physical masculine perfection his chiseled yet confused boy-toy Rocky Horror, the movie’s actual capital-M Monster. Frank-N-Furter is theatrical, overbearing, and phenomenally sexually confusing, especially in his seduction of both Janet *and* Brad in which he successfully poses as the other corresponding spouse when visiting each betrothed in their bedchamber. Caroline Joan Picart writes that in addition to being “able to appear sexually attractive to ‘straight’ and ‘normal’ male

and female heterosexuals,” his mixing of “scientist and slut, tyrant and victim” form a fusion of extreme masculine and feminine oppositions (*Remaking* 63). Many have praised *Rocky Horror* for the character of Frank-N-Furter and its significance in pushing the sexual envelope: its emphasis on indulgence, pleasure, and losing one’s inhibitions suggest “an alternative to the restrictive binary categories of male and female” (Eberle-Sinatra 196), especially when the “sybaritic climax” of the floor show finale depicts “male, female, and newly created bodies [that] blissfully touch, kiss, and intermingle without shame, guilt, or gender distinction” (Friedman and Kavey 163), producing a paradise in the Frankenstein place of “the greatest possible sexual liberty” (Eichler 110).

The hedonistic debauchery that pervades and perverts the film made it a smash in the underground film circuit, where it became a legendary cult hit whose reputation and attendance remains strong today. Beginning roughly five months into the film’s theatrical run in Greenwich Village, New York, repeat audiences “began a ‘counterpoint dialogue’ with the film” that evolved throwing props around the theater on certain cues and elect audience members *performing* the film *alongside* the film in costume as a shadow cast (Wood 156-57; Picart, *Remaking* 64). The subcultural significance of this audience participation may be owed to the salacious subject matter of the film, since the ritual of performance and response invites the audience to confront and act out the very issues “raised by its thematic focus on liberation from sexual and cultural taboos” (Wood 159). According to Wolf Eichler, the communality of the audience participation ritual is itself a breaking of the boundaries of the self, generating “a temporary state of trans-individualism, which is manifested in the image of the androgynous being, symbol of trans-sexuality”—Frank-N-Furter, the all-sexed alien aberration.

Ultimately, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is one of the most exaggerated examples of the Frankenstein narrative's "adaptability and elasticity" (Friedman and Kavey 163), but I have reserved it for the end because it's not exactly the obviously seminal Monstrous transsexual text that it seems to be at first glance. The Rocky Horror, despite its impeccable masculine brawn, is a very conventional Bride: his vat-grown origins spare his unsoiled body from any unsightly surgical scars or necrotic stitching, all to better and beautify him for his purpose as purely a sexual object, and his naivete leads to his being sexually taken advantage of by men and women alike; Janet euphorically gets a round with him before Frank-N-Furter can. Yet Frank-N-Furter is so overwhelmingly the locus of transsexuality in the film, not Rocky, consolidating the Monstrous transsexual and the Doctor into a single body and single role for the first—and only—time in a movie of its prestige. Unlike *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*, Frank-N-Furter's identity is singular and synchronous; there isn't a straight male Frank-N-Furter and a prancing minx Frank-N-Furter taking turns in the body at different times. As he exerts his rapturous influence over the other residents of the castle, "the borders separating the 'safe' from the 'dangerous,' the 'normal' from the 'abnormal,' the 'sane' from the 'mad,' [and] the 'heterosexual' from the 'homosexual' [are] violated" (Picart, *Remaking* 71)—Frank-N-Furter clearly outgrew those borders himself a long time ago, but he spreads his outlook and inhibitionlessness far less like an evangelist and far more like a contagious mania on par with the Dancing Plague of 1518. No one gets out of the Frankenstein place with their cis-heterosexuality intact, and when the film concludes with the death of Frank-N-Furter and Rocky and the departure of the alien Transsexuals to their home planet, Brad and Janet don't look at each other and say, "Gee, that was weird, it's a good thing we're still straight after all." They're simply left

in the crater of the castle without closure, certainty, or confirmation as “the full-blooded romp this larger-than-life transvestite has wreaked on traditional gender categories has not been negated...no traditional conclusion of the narrative is achieved” (Picart, *Remaking* 3).

This thesis, too, will not conclude satisfactorily. There is no “ending,” there is no “final form” to either the Monster or the transsexual that will provide closure, certainty, and confirmation to those who seek it. The Monstrous transsexual is unstable and never entirely knowable by definition, and it will *always* escape and evade any and all attempts to annex it into a comprehensible category for safekeeping. In the first chapter of this thesis, I assembled from parts a working theory of Monstrous transsexuality to *demonstrate* the mutual unintelligibility, constructedness, and hostility to classification that is inherent to the Monster and the transsexual, and although it is vulnerable to be a wretch and an outcast, it is powerful to be something more than what men and women are made to be—because we *are* made to *be*. The parameters of the post-war era discussed in the second chapter of this thesis were chosen because of how formative of an era 1945-1975 was for transsexual identities and how innovative of an era it was for the Frankenstein narrative, and as this thesis has hopefully explained, it’s not so much a question of whether the Monstrous-chicken came before the transsexual egg in this time—it’s an argument that they are one and the same entity on every symbolic level, inextricable and inseparable from each other’s connotations and constructions.

This mutability persisted well after 1975—history did not stop where this thesis does, and Monstrous transsexuality was not preserved in amber. Every decade after World War II would see an increase in the number of self-identified transsexuals from the one before (Rudacille 15), but things wouldn’t necessarily get easier over time. There were several cultural, medical, and

psychological developments in the 1970s and 1980s that would reshape transsexuality on both an individual and cultural level. The summer of 1969 was a critical turning point for transsexual history in the United States, as the Stonewall Riots in New York City prominently demonstrated the capability and willingness of transsexuals to no longer tolerate the violence and abuse of an oppressive society, with the Riots being a direct response to police raids on the Stonewall Inn and its LGBT patrons. A crowd comprised primarily of non-white trans women and drag queens fought and repulsed the police from the bar, and the ensuing Riot would consume Greenwich Village for two nights of retribution, catharsis, and necessary defense. The Monstrous transsexuals were the heroes—and indeed, “the idea that the monster queer can be the hero (or anti-hero) of the genre [became] increasingly prevalent in the horror films of the post-Stonewall era” (Benshoff 98). In reality, though, the aftermath of the Riots brought mixed blessings.

In contrast to the trans-exclusionary tendencies of the women’s liberation movement, gay communities have “consistently offered a haven to transsexuals, who often feel assured of safety in gay-identified space” (Irvine 270), and the Stonewall Inn was one semi-secret place of many across the country where cissexual gays, drag queens, and transsexuals could gather as a community and exist as themselves safely. However, for all of their significance, the Stonewall Riots would inspire the formation of a “schism between radical potential and assimilationism in LGBTQ movements” in the ensuing sexual revolution. A sharp split would emerge between ascendant assimilationist groups such as the Gay Activists Alliance and more radical activist organizations like the Gay Liberation Front. This divide was stained by class, as whiter and more middle-class gays and lesbians favored the respectable palatability of the former kinds of groups. Solidarity between cissexuals and transsexuals was strained by increasing convictions from

assimilationists that “these ‘extreme’ members of the community were holding back the progress of the whole,” and cis-homosexuals began to “publicly dissociate themselves from cross-dressers, drag queens, and transsexuals” (Rudacille 158). Progress for cis-homosexuals was frequently earned at the expense of transsexuals, such as the successfully lobbied removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; it would be replaced by a broad category of “Sexual Orientation Disturbance” in the DSM-II in 1974, but all remnants of the diagnosis would be removed entirely by the revised edition of the DSM-III in 1987, effectively de-pathologizing homosexuality in American psychology. However, these diagnoses would be replaced by new pathologizations of transsexuality, with “transsexualism” appearing in the DSM-III and remaining in some form or another to this day.

These developments compounded the Monstrousness of the transsexual—once a wretch to the world at large, it was now a wretch among those who once accepted it. The cultural and pathological divide from the cissexual gay community was a brutal blow to a storied shared history of struggle and solidarity, and in addition to the bitter battles in the lesbian and feminist communities that erupted over the issue of trans inclusion, “the transgender political movement lost its alliances...in ways that did not begin to be repaired until the early 1990s, and which, in many ways, have yet to be fully overcome” (Stryker, *History* 94). As a consolation for those who could afford it, sex reassignment and transitional health care became “a thriving industry” in the 1970s, “buttressed by a vast medical armamentarium of research, publications, and treatment programs” (Irvine 258-59). As swift surgical advances in sex reassignment improved the fidelity and function of constructed genitals, the medically constructed transsexual body became a commodity—not just a “luxury” that could be sold by a shrewd private surgeon hawking his

wares in what he knew was a booming business (Billings and Urban 107), but a commodity that could be sold to an outside public that may have not necessarily been more tolerant but was certainly ever more curious. Autobiographies, exposés, pulp paperbacks, and tabloid articles about transsexuals appeared throughout the post-war years with lurid titles like *I Changed My Sex!*, “I Once Had a Penis,” *Take My Tool: Revelations of a Sex-Switch*, and “Sex-Changed Son Raped by Father,” and the transsexual platformed by these stories were usually either sex workers or criminals (Beemyn 27; Meyerowitz 200). The sensationalist naming trend would continue on film, as movies like *I Want What I Want* (1972) *The Woman Inside* (1981) brought the shock value of surgical sex reassignment out of mere prose and into video, and Doris Wishman’s 1977 exploitation documentary *Let Me Die a Woman!* would very infamously include extremely graphic footage from a surgical theater of an actual sex reassignment. As the horror genre grew gorier and gorier, this cinematic exploitation of and growing fixation on the intimate surgical details of transition would place new importance on reconstructed transsexual body’s association with mutilation and body horror. Even the earliest of these surgery-sensationalizing films, *The Christine Jorgensen Story* from 1970, “could not escape the horror film’s generic coding: it was advertised with the exploitative tagline ‘Did the surgeon’s knife make me a woman or a freak?’” (Benshoff and Griffin 145).

In sum, the changes to transsexual identity, community, surgery, and representation that would occur later after the post-war period only seemed to render them as more alone, more ostracized, more wretched, and more mutilated than ever before; the transsexual was made ever more Monstrous. There were still Frankenstein films, too, such as *Young Frankenstein* (1974), which parodied the conventions of the past much like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The

1980s would be one of the most diverse decades on record for Frankenstein films, with movies like *Re-Animator*, *Blade Runner*, *Tomorrow's Child*, *Weird Science*, and *Deadly Friend* representing a broad gamut of robotic, genetic, and traditional necrotic Monsters—fitting, given that the 1980s were even more future-thinking and future-fearing than the 1950s. Although Frankenstein films have been on a gradual decline ever since, especially among the efforts of major studios, transsexuals have risen in recent years to an unprecedented level of visibility. The 2010s was the decade in which “the trans celebrity as we know it today” emerged as a mainstream figure (Valens, “Transgender”), with *Time* magazine’s “Transgender Tipping Point” cover declaring in 2014 “that the transgender moment had arrived, presenting trans rights as the next great civil rights struggle” (Burns, “Internet”). That cover featured trans actress Laverne Cox, who would—as it is worth noting given the earlier discussion—play Dr. Frank-N-Furter in a 2016 live broadcast of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, imbuing the transexually charged role with real-world weight. Despite these ostensible leaps and bounds in public opinion, transphobic discourse has lashed back intensely, and “a genetic, biological gender identity has taken on a vastly greater political salience that it has ever had before” (Baskin). An epidemic of “bathroom bills” across the United States in recent years have sought to prevent predatory transsexuals from breaking into bathrooms that do not match their birth sex, a fear that bears resemblance to Victor Frankenstein’s paranoia of the Monster attacking his beloved Elizabeth on their wedding night. Of course, the Monster *does* get into her bedchamber anyway.

The future of the Monstrous transsexual is unknown, and along with a more in-depth analysis of its evolution in other decades before and after the post-war era, is certainly a subject for future research. Although still not without caveats, especially class-based obstacles, hormones are more

widely available than ever before and a litany of transitional procedures have arisen to dethrone sex reassignment surgery as the end-all-be-all of transition. The increasing number of individuals identifying as non-binary and rejecting the logic of a binary transition are pushing the incomprehensibility of the Monstrous transsexual to brand new limits, as are the binary trans men and women who continue to embody their sex at its most Monstrous. Increased political hostilities towards transsexuals in the form of bathroom bills threatens to turn the transsexual body into a battlefield of legality unseen since the dragnets and sexual psychopath laws of the 1950s, adding to the already existing oppression and violence that transsexuals disproportionately experience from police and society at large. Somewhere, someone is reading “My Words to Victor Frankenstein.” The woman writing the sentence that you are reading right now was not a woman when she first wrote the paper that would be adapted and expanded into this very thesis. At some point, you may not be what you are now, either, and should that point be reached, perhaps Monstrousness will be your language for your subjectivity as well. No matter how many times the laboratory blows up or the windmill gets torched, Frankenstein will not be destroyed—not for long, because we have always been here and always will be. The Monster shall always be transsexual, and the transsexual shall always be Monstrous, generation after generation, year after year, person to person, flesh to muscle to bone.

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