A Corpse by Any Other Name: Romancing the Language of the Body in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* for the Adam Storyline in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Amber P. Hodge

Much has been made of the body, particularly the gendered body, in scholarship related to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). However, criticism has largely focused on functioning (living/reanimated) bodies, specifically those of Frankenstein and his Creature.[1] In "Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, and the Spectacle of Masculinity," for example, Bette London asserts Frankenstein "remains the prime representational stage experiencing in himself all the wrackings of the body and the tortures of the unsolicited gaze, displaying an imagination acutely sensitized to the martyr's fate, claiming, at the last, preeminence in suffering" (262). Here, London emphasizes the burden the unwanted gaze places on the living. While analyses such as this are valuable, they tend to neglect the equally weighty descriptions of the corpse as described by Shelley through her three first-person narrators.

Patricia Comitini acknowledges the substantial history of

Amber P. Hodge is a fifth-year Ph.D. candidate in the English Department at the University of Mississippi with a graduate minor in gender studies. They hold masters' degrees in English from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and American Studies from the College of William and Mary. Amber's dissertation, *The Meat of the Gothic: Animality and Social Justice in United States Fiction and Film of the Twenty-First Century*, examines the role of nonhuman animals and the presentation of animalized humans, and how each function in constructing the deviant that contrasts the normative Self. Amber's work has appeared in *Southern Quarterly*, *Post Script*, and is forthcoming in *The Palgrave Handbook for Violence in Film and Media*.

the body in *Frankenstein* criticism in her article "The Limits of Discourse and the Ideology of Form in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." She contributes to this dialogue by invoking Lacan's Symbolic Order. Comitini contends, "The source of the Creature's monstrosity is that he 'lays bare' the contradictions within the social system; he cannot be integrated within it because he represents the Real, or rather, what the system cannot account for" (194). Examining the language Shelley deploys to narrate encounters with the corpse as an entry point into the novel effectively reinforces these themes of contradiction, adding to them layers of abject inversion involving identity and legacy. The abject, of course, is that which demonstrates the distinction between Self and Other, perhaps most famously articulated by Julia Kristeva. Consequently, Kristeva's semiotic approach to abjection, whereby the abject is "a wellspring of sign" because it is unutterable, "maintaining that night in which the outline of the signified thing vanishes and where only the imponderable affect is carried out," is essential for this reading (11, 10).

The pattern of corporeal descriptions in *Frankenstein* is echoed in a televisual text that has been presented as both Gothic and Romantic, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997 2003), particularly the Adam storyline in Season Four. *Buffy* continues the Romantic tradition of Shelley's *Frankenstein* that valorizes human life by sparing the corpse from abjection that results from the critical gaze and, instead, focuses on the visibility of non-human and mechanical bodies. While each of these texts marks the human body as sacred, they also unite sex and death as sites of abjection. *Buffy* is able to fulfill a feminist mission impossible during Shelley's lifetime, eventually presenting a model of a female-led community predicated on interpersonal relationships that value human

life. While both *Frankenstein* and *Buffy* insist on the sanctity of human life by disassociating death from the abject corpse (linguistically in the former and visually in the latter), they also demonstrate anxiety surrounding sexuality and death through abject depictions of intercourse and dehumanized bodies. Ultimately, Shelley's solitary scientist is unable to reconcile a sacrosanct humanity with the abject realities of both sex and death; however, *Buffy*, produced in the milieu of the late-twentieth century, resolves its *Frankenstein* narrative with redemptive potential through feminist alliance.

Anita Rose first linked these works in her 2002 essay "Of Creatures and Creators: *Buffy* Does *Frankenstein*," observing, "*Buffy*'s refashioning is no mere modernization of a classic tale" (134). However, Rose paints in broad strokes, concerning herself with the "complex philosophical and ethical issues" introduced by each narrative (142). The intent of this essay is to build on Rose's pioneering piece. Although a connection has not been made between representations of the body, specifically the corpse, in *Buffy* and *Frankenstein*, a substantial amount of criticism has covered the significance of the body in each text individually. Peter Brooks devotes an entire chapter of his 1993 book *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* to *Frankenstein*. He explains, the novel "concerns an exotic body with a difference, a distinct perversion from the tradition of desirable objects" (Brooks 199). In this vein, *Buffy* employs the use of "exotic" bodies like Adam's to identify the "Other." If we are to read the protagonists as the series' body standard, then (at its most base level) *Buffy* revolves around the systematic destruction of the exotic body. Buffy is a petite, blonde cheerleader-turned-vampire/demon hunter, the ideal, nubile form, which directly opposes the demons and vampires she is tasked with destroying. Assembled from one of the

ultimate abjections the corpse and a compilation of the exotic bodies of various demons (and, possibly, vampires), Adam is an amalgam of all variant physiques, marking him as the ultimate Other.

Buffy's representation of (non)human forms can trace its roots to *Frankenstein*. Eleanor Salotto, for example, views "[t]he creature as the representational object [that] symbolizes the death of presence; the body of the creature is a hybrid text, made up of countless other bodies without any definitive origins" (193). Alan Rauch also calls attention to the significance of the balance that exists between life and death in his article "The Monstrous Body of Knowledge in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." He observes, "Frankenstein's fascination with the concept of life is wholly dependent on a parasitic devotion to death" (238). Shelley echoes this sentiment in Frankenstein's assertion, "To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death" (33), and the narrators in *Frankenstein* repeatedly describe death as an absence of life rather than a state unto itself. Recounting the discovery of Clerval's body and his first interaction with it, for example, Frankenstein notes, "life was quite gone," and goes on to refer to his "lifeless form" (Shelley 147, 148). Similarly, Elizabeth's corpse is described as "lifeless and inanimate" (165). Later, Walton details Frankenstein's "lifeless form" (187). Even Victor adopts this phrasing when forecasting his own death, framing it as a lack of feeling rather than a transformative state (190). The consistent language employed across characters points to a motif in which the disassociation of the named person from their body aligns respect for human life with censoring the physical reality of death. By positioning death as an absence, instead of addressing the presence of the

always-abject corpse, the deceased, be it Clerval, Elizabeth, or Victor himself, is shielded from the dehumanizing gaze.

The Adam storyline in *Buffy* likewise aligns corporeal absence with sanctity, though scholars have tackled a variety of bodily presentations across the series. *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association* is particularly rich in this sense. Jesse James Stommel discusses the framing of dead bodies and "fundamentally abject nature of embodiment" in "I'm Not a Dead Body; I Just Play One on TV: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the Performativity of the Corpse" (para 2). In a more recent issue, Katherine E. Whaley addresses "ability/disability and capability/incapability" as represented through the body of the only superpower-less main character, Xander (para 3). The subject has been equally broached in other texts. In one essay, "At Stake: Angel's Body, Fantasy Masculinity, and Queer Desire in Teen Television," Allison McCracken refers to the masculine body on *Buffy* as being presented "through multiple narrative frames that simultaneously revere and mock it" (132). As these examples indicate, *Buffy* is a rich text for studying representations of the body, and the Adam subplot has yet to be explored in this respect.

From the perspective of adaptation, representations of the body are significant in a text as corporeally driven as *Frankenstein*. Brooks explains, "The afterlife of the novel in the popular imagination has been intensely focused on that monstrous body, to the extent that the name 'Frankenstein' tends to evoke not the unfortunate overreaching young scientist Victor Frankenstein but his hideous creation" (199). *Buffy* is true to the "spirit" of its source material in this sense, both as it relates to creature and creator. Adam, while clearly manufactured from various human, demon, and mechanical

parts, remains what the contemporary viewer would call a "Frankenstein" figure. However, James Whale's *Frankenstein* does not appear to be the primary inspiration for Adam. Rather, *Buffy* evokes the source text through narrative; a secret hybrid developed by a scientist, the quest for self-understanding, and a desire for kinship. Even his name Adam recalls the Creature's repeated likening of himself to the Biblical figure, from his pleading declaration, "I ought to be thy Adam," to his metaphor for isolation, when he "remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator," asking, "But where was mine?" (Shelley 114, 156). By connecting to the novel rather than a later film adaptation (as so many *Frankenstein* references are inclined to do) the series makes possible transmutations reflexive of the nearly two centuries that elapsed between texts. Rose explains, "*Frankenstein* anticipated modern anxieties and fears about industrialization and science; in *Buffy*, those effects have, in a sense, arrived. The characters, storyline, and outcome both acknowledge the issues raised in Shelley's novel and suggest antipatriarchal and postfeminist solutions to the problems Shelley saw in Romantic ideology" (135). While corporeal emphases in *Buffy* take their cues from Shelley's work, both in the corpses they conceal and display, the series is able to offer "antipatriarchal and postfeminist solutions" as a contemporary adaptation of the 1818 *Frankenstein* narrative.

Turning specifically to the *dead* body, there is perhaps no more influential resource than Julia Kristeva's *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Though it nearly always involves obvious physicality, the abject can take many forms, one of the most potent being the dead body. As Kristeva states, "If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the

most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything" (3). The cadaver as a mark of unmitigated decay is pervasive in literature, and *Frankenstein* is no exception. For example, Victor describes his education in the church yard, which he depicts as a:

> receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay, and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel houses […] I saw how the fine form of a man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. (Shelley 34)

Notably, Shelley's use of the abject in *Frankenstein* is limited to the abstract and the anonymous. That is, Victor makes clear the permeation of boundaries, the rot of death, but only as it relates to anonymous figures. Even those body parts that are to become known (be reanimated) are exempt from abjection. As he works to assemble the Creature, Frankenstein describes the limbs and organs he is collecting merely as "materials," a relatively vague term that is clarified only when he reveals, "The dissecting room and the slaughterhouse furnished many of my materials" (Shelley 36, 37). Such statements are not limited to unknown bodies; while no less than six characters die over the course of the novel, not one is described while it is the subject of the gaze.

Although Victor's friends and family are contextualized as absent of life rather than described abjectly, not all corpses

are safe from the abjection of the gaze. Significantly, while human life is valued vis-à-vis characters with whom the narrator connects Shelley is careful to articulate the abject nature of death more broadly through hypothetical victims of "the worm inherit[ing] the wonders of the eye and brain." Clerval's death offers one such example of sanctity, and it is preceded by a narrative interjection. Frankenstein pauses his story to address his deceased friend directly by reflecting on, "your form so divinely wrought, and beaming with beauty, has decayed, but your spirit still visits and consoles your unhappy friend" (Shelley 130). Granted, this language is muted compared to the anonymous corpses covered in worms, but it nonetheless acknowledges a degradation of boundary between man and earth that is occurring to his friend at the very moment Victor is recounting his ordeal.[2] By the time Frankenstein reaches the point in his story where he is narrating the experience of viewing Clerval's dead body first-hand, his focus shifts from the corporeal. Victor recalls:

> I entered the room where the corpse lay, and was led up to the coffin. How can I describe my sensations on beholding it? I felt yet parched with horror, nor can I reflect on that terrible moment without shuddering and agony, that faintly reminds me of the anguish of the recognition […] The human frame could no longer support the agonizing suffering I endured. (Shelley 148)

There is the acknowledgement, as earlier, of the separation between soul and body, in the use of "corpse" rather than Clerval's name. This also establishes Victor's own movement from the physical to the spiritual (and back again). Clerval is

now a lifeless body, while Victor becomes wholly aware of his own physicality, moving immediately to his feelings and the physical toll they take on his grief-stricken frame.

When viewing the body, Victor is willing to acknowledge only his own physical presence; left to his own interiority, however, he is comfortable projecting the image of the dead. Later, a vision similar to the narrative interjection comes to mind: "The image of Clerval was for ever before me, ghastly and murdered" (153). One could argue a case favoring the character's psychological coping mechanisms, but I believe Shelley's work is anticipating a more contemporary phenomenon: "corpse porn." Sociologist Jacque Lynn Foltyn coined the term to describe the sexualization of televisual death, specifically in series such as *CSI* (2000–2015) and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* (2001–2011), that "exploit the nude, young and beautiful, not the clothed, old, diseased, and ugly" (167). Shelley's insistence that her narrator avoid corporeal descriptions whenever possible predicts this exploitation of the corpse via the gaze. She further undermines the objectification of dead bodies by applying these exceptions to the young Clerval and Elizabeth while (as I will discuss shortly) the deteriorated form of Victor's shrouded mother is described in vivid detail. This reversal reinforces the sanctity of human life by concealing potential "corpse porn" and, instead, refocusing the reader's gaze on the abject reality of death.

Corpse porn has since been applied more broadly than Foltyn's initial definition to include any fetishization of death via gaze; the Adam storyline and its connection to *Frankenstein* functions within this wider understanding. Foltyn's commentary can be applied to explain how Shelley's absence

of abject cadavers forecasts mass visual representations of the body:

> Corpse porn and sex porn have much in common. […] Both rely on the close-up, the exploration of every nook and cranny of the body, which is prodded, poked, penetrated, and presented as an outrageous sight. Both luxuriate in body fluids. Socially appropriate emotion is absent from both. Love from sex porn. Grief, reflection, and discussion of the preciousness of life from corpse porn, which also divorces the dead body from spiritual or other moral lessons such as compassion. (167)

Abject descriptions act as textual "close-ups," chronicling the alignment of physicality with primal instincts. By making private Frankenstein's gaze on his loved ones, Shelley maintains the connection between the once-living person and their now-departed soul. Simultaneously, she is able to highlight Victor's emotional response, an effect that is intensified by the redirection of gaze to the living body.

Shelley's position is made particularly apparent in the evolution of Frankenstein's Creature. While being assembled, the dead components that will become the Creature are not only vague "materials," but also, when more detail is provided, the reality of the human life behind the "parts" Victor is collecting while exploring the psychic harm Victor is causing himself by working with once-living beings. For example, after noting that he "seemed to have lost all soul" in his experiments, Victor remarks that he "disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame"; soon

after, he notes that his "human nature turn[ed] with loathing" from his work (Shelley 36, 37). Not only does Shelley highlight the horror the living can inflict by characterizing Victor's fingers as "disturbed" and "profane," she also shields the dead from becoming "corpse porn" through the generality and reverence of the "secrets of the human frame."

The recognition of the potential for exploiting dead bodies is fully realized, however, when the Creature is animated and the once-deceased "materials," now imbued with life, become the object of spectacle. The moment of creation is wholly abject, as the "wretch" is described with intricate specificity. Victor takes each (working) body part in turn: "His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes [...] the dun white sockets [...] his shriveled complexion, and straight black lips" (39). Notably, these once-anonymous "parts" are now described as belonging to a single entity a living, breathing Creature. This description also further suggests the potential for "corpse porn" by beginning the description of the Creature with the "beautiful" features Victor "selected," a direct link to Foltyn's original definition (39). Throughout his interaction with the corpses Victor is dissecting, he maintains the connection between the corpse and "spiritual or other moral lessons" despite the reality that he is, to paraphrase Foltyn, actively prodding, poking, and penetrating every nook and cranny of these bodies. It is only once the Creature is alive that he becomes abject.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, in contrast to the procedurals of Foltyn's study but aligned with *Frankenstein*, departs from the fetishized corpse by restricting the abject to the living body.[3]

At this point in the series, viewers are aware of ongoing experiments run by a fictional government entity, the Initiative, well before Adam first appears on screen. A special project directed by Professor Maggie Walsh, head of the operation, is revealed to be some sort of creature, evidenced only by a human-like form covered by a white sheet ("A New Man" 4.12). Adam is shown in the following episode, but he is as yet a not wholly assembled (inanimate) assortment of body parts and machinery, only appearing from the shoulders up ("I in Team" 4.13). This limited reveal makes the audience aware of Professor Walsh's work, but keeps attention away from its reality (the fusion of human body parts with demons and technology) by restricting the field of view to what is complete. Significantly, the staples that obviously hold together the majority of Adam's body once animated are absent from his face, which is comprised of finely stitched grafts of human and demon flesh. Moreover, in subsequent profile shots, Adam's left side, which is primarily robotic, is nearly always what is in view. The Creature's depiction establishes the visual representation of those he kills.

If "popular culture uses humor to express that about which we feel discomfort," then *Buffy*'s presentation of the bodies in the Adam storyline demonstrates a deep unease with the dead human form (Foster 44). Beginning with his first victim, the deaths are all quick and virtually invisible. Creating a tangible link to *Frankenstein*, Adam kills young boy who, like Victor's brother, calls Adam a "monster" (the little boy's death occurs off screen ["Goodbye Iowa" 4.14]).[4] To emphasize this deflection, one of the few significant references to Adam's construction comes in the form of a joke. Adam recruits a recurring villain (and frequent source of comic relief) to assist him, promising to provide a favor in return. When asked if he

can be trusted, Adam replies, "Scout's honor." The secondary character responds dubiously, "You were a boy scout?" to which Adam quips, "Parts of me" ("New Moon Rising" 4.19, 00:25:09-15). Lines such as this demonstrate that the human deaths necessary for Adam's creation can only be considered in jest, presumably because other than the little boy, Adam kills only recurring characters, those to whom the audience may have an emotional attachment (albeit dubious in some cases). The instrument of death is even more sterile than the strangulation deployed by the Creature, typically designated an intimate crime given the extended proximity one must maintain with the victim. Adam's tool is, instead, a spike that is thrust from his arm on command. In fact, the extent to which this body part is made visible from its acquisition and detachment from its nonhuman source to its reattachment on Adam demonstrates another deflection from the human deaths in the narrative.

Adam's status as not wholly human gives *Buffy* some opportunity to make his construction visible. Dr. Walsh sends newly-recruited Buffy with her boyfriend, Riley (a member of the Initiative), to retrieve a "Polgara demon." Although unaware Adam is being constructed, Buffy and Riley are familiar with ongoing experiments happening at the Initiative, which they believe are designed to neutralize the threat posed by demons. Under this direction, Dr. Walsh insists that they leave the demon, particularly the arms, intact ("I in Team" 4.13). This arm will eventually become Adam's, and is the only part the viewer sees being attached.

The significance of this demon arm, however, is two-fold. Most obvious and notable is the scene in which the demon is captured. Just after Buffy and Riley engage with the Polgara demon, the sounds of the fight (punching, grunting,

etc.) are replaced with a musical score. Immediately, the camera cuts to a shot of Buffy and Riley walking toward each other in Riley's room later this evening. This pattern continues, alternating between fight scenes and sequences of Buffy and Riley, undressing, kissing, moving to the bed, and so on, intercutting nearly a dozen times in total ("The I in Team" 4.13 00:24:18-26:01). This scene is, significantly, the first time Buffy and Riley sleep together. Given that "the program's conflation of female sexual pursuit with violence" is well documented, this particular montage occurs at a vital moment in Adam's creation (McCracken 124). Equally notably, the scene is capped by the revelation that Maggie Walsh, the head of the Initiative and creator of Adam, is watching these events unfold from a control room. Returning to the concept of corpse porn, Maggie is literally uniting sex and death in her surveillance, as she observes her soldiers in the field (for example, the killing of the Polgara demon) and in their homes, including intimate encounters. Whatever milestone this may be in Buffy and Riley's relationship, the scene, focused on passion interlaced with violence, is stripped of any emotion when surveilled by Maggie. Ultimately, one of the Polgara arms, which is shown being attached to Adam's body later in the episode, is the last remaining piece to complete the "experiment." Although Buffy and Riley are unaware of their role in creating Adam, these visual couplings all under the watchful eye of Maggie indelibly pair Adam's creation with sex and sex with the abject.

The way the Polgara is acquired leads to a second implication for the demon arm based on how Adam uses it. As mentioned, what is essentially a spear is ejected from his arm during combat. Despite being designed "to be the ultimate warrior" with a litany of weapons at his disposal, this phallic

device is the only weapon Adam effectively uses to murder through his entire narrative arc ("Goodbye Iowa" 4.14, 00:42:03). Additionally, the first time the viewer sees Adam alive is the first time he uses it, to impale his creator, Maggie, who names him only after she realizes she is dying ("The I in Team" 4.13, 00:43:27).[5] Although quick and relatively clean, the spearing of the maternal (Adam calls her "mommy" as he stabs her) makes it hard not to view the murder as phallic. Despite the onscreen death, however, a reverence for human life indicated by an absence of abjection persists. Maggie falls to the floor, face down, and remains there while her death is investigated (the only clear evidence of her death is a nearby pool of blood, which, considering the alternate shot options, is far from abject). Rose observes, "Adam, unlike Frankenstein's creature, becomes both creator and creation with this act of matricide" (139). As Rose indicates, Adam takes on a dual role at this juncture (later "upgrading" some of his body parts); however, a similar relationship is also evident between Frankenstein and his Creature.

The choice to finish Adam's creation with the act of copulation may have its origins in the source text. Immediately after the Creature is brought to life, Victor has a dream conflating sex, death, and the maternal. In his dream, he recalls seeing Elizabeth:

> in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-

> worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (Shelley 39)

The sexual immediately becomes abject in the form of Victor's fiancée transforming into a woman long buried, a woman who is, not insignificantly, his mother. Kristeva notes, "devotees of the abject [...] do not cease looking, within what flows from the other's 'innermost being,' for the desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous, fascinating and abject inside of the maternal body" (Kristeva 54). Between the night the Creature is "born" and his later insistence that he is "an abortion," there are undoubtedly maternal undercurrents surrounding his existence, despite being created by man alone (Shelley 189).[6]

When considering the nature of motherhood in the narrative, it is worth mentioning, "A number of critics have noted that Shelley's treatment of the Frankenstein monster as a product of her eponymous scientist's imagination draws on an eighteenth-century understanding of how imagination influences the fetus," specifically the idea that the parents' thoughts during conception will determine the nature of their child (Punday 34). Punday continues, "Like the social critics who worried about the power of the imagination to affect the fetus, in *Frankenstein* imagination is fundamentally linked to birth" (35). These patterns continue as Victor works on a mate for the Creature, remarking, "It was indeed a filthy project in which I was engaged. During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment; my mind was intently fixed on the sequel of my labour, and my eyes were shut to the horror of my proceedings. But now I went to it in cold blood, and my heart often sickened at the work of my hands" (Shelley 137).

Moreover, Frankenstein is no more than the sum of his component parts: mind, eyes, heart, blood, hands. Like the process of birth, Victor is wholly abject as he creates: a "cheek […] grown pale with study," "eyeballs […] starting from their sockets," and, on reflection, a set of "limbs [that] tremble" (36, 37).

An overshadowing parental presence establishes a connection between the Creature and his creator that can be observed throughout the novel. Despite his efforts to distance himself from his creation, Victor remains connected with the Creature, at least textually, through his death. For example, after seeing Clerval's body, Frankenstein wonders, "Of what materials was [he] made, that [he] could thus resist so many shocks," echoing the "materials" used to create the Creature (Shelley 149). As Adam physically kills Maggie, so too does the Creature emotionally destroy Victor, condemning him to the misery and wretchedness so frequently used to describe his creation. The Creature also echoes Victor's language of creation when considering his impending suicide. Before leaving Walton's ship the Creature confesses, "I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived, and long for the moment when they will meet my eyes, when it will haunt my thoughts, no more" (Shelley 190). From the Creature's first speech, in which he says, inversely, "my creator" and "thy creature" followed by "thy creature" and "my creator," the two are bound as long as one is living.

Given their connection in life, and Victor's disassociation with his creation, the Creature seems to seek kinship in death. In fact, considering "the advent of one's own identity demands a law that mutilates," the deaths may be no more than an effort to establish identity in the absence of

community (Kristeva 54). The desire for community is made clear throughout *Frankenstein*. From his appeals to Victor for a companion "as hideous as" himself to his promise to render himself (and, as a result, his species) "extinct," Shelley emphasizes the Creature's isolation (120, 191). The ultimate Otherness that results from being the amalgamation of discrete parts may also be the most basic example of the abject. Kristeva notes, "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). There is no one with whom the Creature can relate; although he has parts of many, there is not enough for any *human* to consider him their own (nonhuman animals, however, seem willing to embrace him, which is interesting given the number that Victor kills during his quest for the Creature). The Creature explains, "Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence" (Shelley 105). While Victor's creation cannot find sanctuary even in religion, the postmodern hybrid seeks a more familial sense of community in *Buffy*.

The establishment of connections is one of the many ways the adaptation of *Frankenstein* demonstrates that "Far from anti- or ironically Romantic, *Buffy* employs Romantic ideology in contemporary contexts and terms and suggests alternatives within that framework" (Rose 133). In this vein, Adam perceives his differences as superiority, insisting, "No one no human, no demon has ever been as awake and alive as I am" ("Superstar" 4.17, 00:21:45-52). Despite his perceived superiority, he nonetheless seeks companionship through familial bonds. While a member of the Initiative, Riley became a subject of experimentation without his knowledge in another of Walsh's experiments intended to create the perfect soldier.

His modifications, minor compared to Adam's, are the insertion of a chip that can control his behavior and chemical enhancements to his natural abilities. As Rose explains, "The connection between Riley and Adam is both implied and explicit" (139). However, like Victor, Riley denounces any connection to Adam. After Adam repeatedly refers to him as "brother, "Riley asserts, "I'm not your brother. You're a botched science experiment, and I'm a human being" ("Primeval" 4.21, 00:02:04-09). Riley's assertion of his humanity and simultaneous revocation of Adam's (discounting many body parts from which the latter is constructed) is especially notable in light of Elizabeth Gilliland's assertion that "Riley acts as the true embodiment of the Frankenstein creature" (para. 17). Although Gilliland contends that Riley is the genuine Creature figure in the storyline, Riley's argument against affiliation with Adam (in spite of their shared conditions as experiments of the Initiative) highlights that Riley is a natural-born human. Adam and the Creature can aspire to humanity, but, by nature of their origins (including their human interactions), can never fully attain it. Adam's solution to loneliness may be different from the Creature's or, for that matter, Riley's, but a thread identifying the need for community runs through each narrative, and not just the creations.

Part of Victor's downfall lies in his Romantic desire to be a solitary hero. However, where Victor experiences seclusion, a supportive community embraces Buffy. In fact, great pains are taken to separate Buffy from those closest to her because Adam is aware of the power of a support system. Rose makes an important distinction in her observation, "In a sense, Victor's loved ones are sacrificed to his Romantic ideals, but Buffy's loved ones are saved; they become a part of

the process" (141). It is because Buffy is able to embrace the community Victor rejects that she is ultimately able to destroy Adam. In contrast to humans, Adam's death is distinctly abject. Buffy's friends enact a spell that imbues her with their energy. With this collective strength, Buffy is able to punch through (literally) the stomach of the previously impenetrable Adam. If we are to believe that "The body's inside [...] shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside [...] Urine, blood, sperm, excrement then show up in order to reassure a subject that it is lacking 'its own and clean self'," then this death scene is the embodiment of abjection (Kristeva 53). After plunging her fist into Adam's chest, Buffy pulls out his technology-age power source, a Uranium 235 core. This piece of machinery is coated in some manner of internal connective tissue, the ultimate disintegration of borders. Although Adam is subjected to abjection in death, the Initiative's mission, determined a failure, is destroyed completely, with a secret government agency giving instructions to "Burn it down [and] salt the earth" ("Primeval" 4.21, 43:05-09). This harkens to how the Creature chooses to end his life in the novel.

A far more sympathetic character than Adam, the Creature is freed from the abject, and its associated gaze in his destruction, which occurs after the narrative ends. Just as the Initiative was wiped from the government record, so too does the Creature believe his existence will be expunged. In his farewell speech to Walton the Creature exclaims, "He is dead who called me into being, and when I shall be no more the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish" (Shelley 190). Unbeknownst to him, unlike the Initiative's complete annihilation, the Creature's legacy will live on in the story narrated by Victor. Frankenstein's self-serving narrative may

be its own violation, but, though he lives in memory, the Creature's corpse will be secure. He expresses his plan to "collect my funeral pile, and consume to ashes this miserable frame, that its remains may afford no light to any curious and unhallowed wretch, who would create another such as I have been. I shall die. I shall no longer feel" (Shelley 190). Freed by flame, there will be nothing left to fall under the abject gaze. The most potent of his declarations, however, may be the final statement from the previous passage. The Creature found no companion in life, so he is responsible for his own protection from the judgment of the gaze in death. Just as Victor protects those he loves from the abject gaze by replacing physical description with emotion, so too does the Creature yield his own body to oblivion in an effort to end his emotional suffering.

Despite its status as teen-oriented television, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is able to convey many of the same messages through its interpretation of the *Frankenstein* legacy. Given the visual focus of television, the language (and image) of the body provides one of the richest areas of consideration in examining the relationship between this adaptation and its source. Whether in the early nineteenth or late twentieth century, preindustrial or postmodern, anxiety about technology and how the individual is identified and remembered persist, and the ability to apply this Romantic novel to a postmodern, post-industrial narrative is demonstrative of the enduring value of the text.

Notes

[1] See also Patricia Comitini's "The Limits of Discourse and the Ideology of Form in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" or "Acts of Becoming: Autobiography, *Frankenstein*, and the Postmodern Body" by Mark Mossman.

[2] There is also another, better-known moment in which the borders between the body and earth breakdown, which I address later in this essay.

[3] *Buffy*'s refutation of corpse porn is perhaps most evident in an episode from the following season, "The Body" (5.16), which deals with the biologically natural death of Buffy's mother, Joyce, and was both written and directed by Joss Whedon. Lawson Fletcher discusses the episode in detail in "'Is She Cold?': Telaesthetic Horror and Embodied Textuality in 'The Body.'" In addition to many of Fletcher's astute observations, "The Body" defies corpse porn at every turn. Returning to Foltyn's definition: the body in question is clothed (in fact, the only way Buffy is able to "help" her mother is to ensure her skirt is not riding up before the paramedics arrive); identified repeatedly as "mom" and "mommy," Joyce is divorced from youth; and she is marked as "diseased" through Buffy's reflection on a brain tumor, that likely resulted in Joyce's untimely death. The episode, which intentionally highlights the corpse, has also been lauded for those qualities deliberately absent from corpse porn, "grief, reflection, and discussion of the preciousness of life" as well as connection of the dead body to "spiritual or other moral lessons such as compassion" (Foltyn 167).

[4] This scene is doubly evocative, tracing the history of the narrative from Shelley's novel to James Whale's 1931 adaptation, arguably the most enduring interpretation of Frankenstein's Creature in the United States.

[5] Although Maggie is firmly implanted within two institutions, the University and the Initiative, like Victor Frankenstein, she is acting alone in her creation the solitary scientist killed by her creature/hubris (though her subordinate, Dr. Angleman, also knows of and is killed by that creation). This similarity is highlighted, with a contemporary twist, when Maggie declares that she will "remove the complication [Buffy] when she least expects it," a sentiment that is interrupted when Adam impales her.

[6] For the seminal discussion of motherhood in *Frankenstein*, see Moers.

Works Cited

Brooks, Peter. "What is a Monster? (According to *Frankenstein*)." *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*. EPUB ed., Harvard UP, 1993, pp. 199 220.

Comitini, Patricia. "The Limits of Discourse and the Ideology of Form in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 55, 2006, pp. 179 98. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30210650.

Fletcher, Lawson. "'Is She Cold?': Telaesthetic Horror and Embodied Textuality in 'The Body.'" *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2011, http://www.whedon studies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/2628859 3/fletcher_slayage_9.1.pdf

Foltyn, Jacque Lynn. "Dead Famous and Dead Sexy: Popular Culture, Forensics, and the Rise of the Corpse." *Mortality*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2008, pp. 153 73. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi: 10.1080/13576270801954468.

Foster, Gwendolyn Audrey. *Class-Passing: Social Mobility in Film and Popular Culture*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2005.

Gilliland, Elizabeth. "Double Trouble: Gothic Shadows and Self-Discovery in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Slayage: The Journal of Whedon Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2018, www.whedon studies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/2628859 3/gilliland_-_slayage_16.1.pdf.

"Goodbye Iowa." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, season 4, episode 14, Mutant Enemy, written by Marti Noxon, directed by David Solomon, 2000. *Hulu*,

www.hulu.com/watch/247a2074-05d3-42c8-81ca-6734bd330ebe.

"The I in Team." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, season 4, episode 13, Mutant Enemy, written by David Fury, directed by James A. Contner, 2000. *Hulu*, http://www.hulu.com/watch/062c460b-f294-4c04-bc14-525012da8900.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia University Press, 1982.

London, Bette. "Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, and the Spectacle of Masculinity." *PMLA*, vol. 108, no. 2, 1993, pp. 253–67. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.1632/pmla.1993.108.2.253.

McCracken, Allison. "At Stake: Angel's Body, Fantasy Masculinity, and Queer Desire in Teen Television." *Undead TV: Essays on* Buffy the Vampire Slayer, edited by Elana Levine and Lisa Parks, Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 116–44.

Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. Doubleday, 1976.

Mossman, Mark. "Acts of Becoming: Autobiography, *Frankenstein*, and the Postmodern Body." *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 11, no. 3, May 2001. pmc.iath.virginia.edu/issue.501./11.3mossman.html .

"A New Man." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, season 4, episode 12, Mutant Enemy, written by Jane Espenson, directed by Michael Gershman, 2000. *Hulu*, www.hulu.com/watch/b2996569-c8c8-4bb0-aa39-6c51c30c8724.

"New Moon Rising." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, season 4, episode 19, Mutant Enemy, written by Marti Noxon, directed by James A. Contner, 2000. *Hulu*,

www.hulu.com/watch/f8fd1bb3-8db5-4fba-9979-fb483c2dfd68.

"Primeval." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, season 4, episode 21, Mutant Enemy, written by David Fury, directed by James A. Contner, 2000. *Hulu*, www.hulu.com/watch/524cfd46-ee9f-4e22-8e7d-61cec9fae6ad.

Punday, Daniel. *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Rauch, Alan. "The Monstrous Body of Knowledge in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1995, pp. 227–53. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25601114.

Rose, Anita. "Of Creatures and Creators: *Buffy* Does *Frankenstein*." *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in* Buffy the Vampire Slayer, edited by Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002, pp. 133–42.

Salotto, Eleanor. "*Frankenstein* and Dis(re)membered Identity." *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1994, pp. 190-211. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30225415.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. 1818. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Stommel, Jesse James. "I'm Not a Dead Body; I Just Play One on TV: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the Performativity of the Corpse." *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2010, http://www.whedonstudies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/2628893/stommel_slayage_8.1.pdf.

"Superstar." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, season 4, episode 17, Mutant Enemy, written by Jane Espenson, directed by

David Grossman, 2000. *Hulu*, www.hulu.com/watch/d2cc91c5-843d-4ebb-bebe-46c22d10495f.

Whaley, Katherine E. "'There's Nothing Wrong with My Body': Xander as a Study in Defining Capability of the Disabled Body in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2015, www.whedonstudies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/2628859 3/whaley_slayage_12.2-13.1.pdf.