

**MONSTROUS PROGENY:
REVISITING MARY SHELLEY'S CREATURE IN
GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S *PAN's LABYRINTH***

by

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Monstrous Progeny: Revisiting Mary Shelley's Creature in Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*

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Abstract

Frankenstein's Creature is the ultimate adaptation. Not only does he adapt mankind's behavior and appearance, but he is a literal collection of parts strung together and brought to life. It is unsurprising that this position has encouraged filmmakers to further deconstruct and restore the Creature for decades. The process of adaptation mirrors Frankenstein's method, as both Victor and the adaptation genre take apart old and decaying bodies and introduce them into new bodies of work. For figures like Guillermo del Toro, a renowned monster maker and film director, the Creature represents the definitive union of cinema and literature. Like Victor, del Toro is interested in collecting parts from previous media and creating new cinematic bodies. His projects thus focus on the overlap between real and unreal, literature and cinema, living and dead. A pivotal example of this is his 2006 *Pan's Labyrinth*, which indirectly extends Shelley's Creature both thematically and compositionally. Because del Toro treats his film as a body, one which can be divided and cut, he incorporates Victor's principles into the filmmaking process.

I am interested in the ways in which del Toro's fascination with Mary Shelley's 1818 text, and its later 1931 film adaptation by James Whale, influences his understanding of film. I suggest that del Toro's *Pan* creates an ambiguous and liminal environment, where the boundaries between real and unreal overlap. Because the film juxtaposes its fantasy realm with fascism, it suggests that fascism corrupts the very foundations of imagination, making fairy tales political, and vice versa. I continue this discussion by suggesting that *Pan's* liminal emphasis represents a broader engagement with overlapping parts, those which the *Frankenstein* narrative emphasizes. My first chapter focuses on the overlap between ideology and fantasy, the second on the adaptation genre, and the third details the female body, one who is frequently dissected and

repurposed by these texts and the adaptation process. I do so to illustrate how the Creature's body informs both del Toro's subject and approach to filmmaking.

Lay Summary

My project details how the work of Guillermo del Toro incorporates the themes and methods of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I argue that del Toro's 2006 film *Pan's Labyrinth* reflects Victor's method of dissecting old bodies of work and revitalizing them into new forms. It does so by treating both the subject and the film itself as bodies or extensions of the Creature. I also demonstrate that this model is found in the adaptation genre, where films repurpose parts of old narratives. *Pan* illustrates this model by creating a liminal environment, one constructed from overlapping parts of reality and fantasy. My goal is to demonstrate that Shelley's novel influences del Toro's content and composition, and that *Pan* illustrates this by emphasizing parts and traces which can be removed, restored, and revitalized to suit modern anxieties and politics.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, and the independent work by the author, Brenna Goodwin-McCabe.

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Introduction

Pan's Labyrinth begins and ends with the death of a child at the center of a labyrinth. Just as the film concludes, it transitions from the scene of the labyrinth to image of a small and remote flower. As the flower slowly blooms, the narrator describes that although she is dead, the child "left behind small traces...visible only to those who know where to look". In doing so, *Pan's Labyrinth*, henceforth *Pan*, suggests that the dead leave traces of themselves in our contemporary world. What seems dead is never truly gone and is always threatening to revitalize. The term 'traces' (she "left behind small traces") perfectly encapsulates director Guillermo del Toro's approach to filmmaking. He collects and blends traces or bits from history, film, and folklore. Del Toro is thus interested in overlap, where what is dead can still be alive, and where the distinctions between reality and imagination collapse. The most prominent example of this overlap for del Toro is *Frankenstein*, a story where the dead return. He is particularly fascinated by the overlap between Mary Shelley's original 1818 novel and James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* film. For him, the Creature is equally literary and cinematic, or a collection of parts and traces from various media.

Pan was released in 2006 and was widely celebrated for its masterful blend of horror, fantasy, and drama. While the film takes place in 1944, during the Francoist period in Spain, it interweaves fairy tales with its historic backdrop to suggest that reality and fantasy are equally dangerous. It does so by examining history from a child's perspective, thus presenting two versions of monsters: man and beast, fascist and fantasy. Its protagonist, Ofelia, is the young stepdaughter of fascist General named Vidal. The film begins with her journey to Vidal's fortress with her pregnant mother, Carmen. Once she arrives, she meets a Faun and embarks on a quest to fulfill three tasks and return to her rightful place as Princess of the Underworld. Initially, the film

is divided into two spaces: the fascist reality and Ofelia's imagination. However, as Ofelia continues with her quest, these spaces become less distinct. After Ofelia is shot and killed by Vidal, the dynamic between reality and fantasy becomes more complicated as the film ultimately refuses to answer if Ofelia's fantasy realm is real or not. This ambiguity leaves the film open for interpretation and insists that what is 'real' is not necessarily separate from the 'unreal'. The film thus emphasizes that history and imagination coincide and overlap.

Frankenstein is similarly interested in the uncertainty between life and death. Shelley's novel centers on Victor Frankenstein's disastrous quest to recreate the human. He creates a frightening and vengeful posthuman who is fixated on destroying Victor's life and family, which eventually leads to his and Victor's destruction. Whale's film revisits this story and focuses on the similarities between Victor and his Creation, rather than the differences. Del Toro extends this comparison to address how monsters are humanistic, and conversely, how mankind is monstrous. *Pan* is perhaps del Toro's most well-known project, and one which best exemplifies del Toro's ongoing interest with Shelley and Whale. Del Toro has a special kinship with these figures, as they impact not just the way he understands filmmaking, but his personal mythos. He frequently refers to Shelley and Whale when describing his own work, once noting he shared "a kinship to the same spirit that animated...[Shelley's] melancholy and art" ("Introduction" xvi). Del Toro's legacy as a monster maker thus comes directly from the *Frankenstein* film and novel as it showed him "how life changing, a monster parable could be" (xvi). My project seeks to evaluate the depths of this relationship in *Pan*, and how it informs not just del Toro's subject but his technical approach to filmmaking.

There are two kinds of scholarship leveled at del Toro's canon; scholarship that addresses his opinions on monsters and scholarship that details his blend of reality and horror. The first

kind includes the work of Britt Salvesen, who suggests that del Toro is not interested in praising the actions of monsters, but in observing the way in which they operate. Salvesen provides an overview of del Toro's curatorial approach to film, one which highlights del Toro's interest in martyrdom and social convention. Paul Koudounaris continues this branch of scholarship as he argues that del Toro's films feature monsters who are a reflection of society's other, but also "a reflection of society's ability to turn something that was inherently good into something abhorrent" (57), which makes us, the viewers, the corrupting force. Roger Clark and Keith McDonald indirectly extend Koudounaris' point into this second kind of scholarship. They note that del Toro's world juxtaposes real and unreal to imply that monsters are not exclusive to fairy tales or horror, but their conventions exist around us. *Pan* highlights this by using "fairy-tale imagery to interrogate the politics of war and nationhood" (53), thus politicizing monsters in a more obvious way.

These are all relevant perspectives, but they neglect just how uncomfortable and ambiguous the film's politicization of fantasy is, as the viewer cannot separate the human world from the monster. What academic writing has yet to consider, is how del Toro's powerfully confrontational tone in *Pan* complicates this exchange of monsters and society and asks the reader to reassess our definitions of monstrosity. I argue that the film's emphasis on monsters illustrates that fantasy is not an escape but an invasive force which perpetuates the violence of the real world. I will argue that *Pan* indirectly incorporates the subject and composition of *Frankenstein* by creating an uncertain environment between life and death, and by treating both its subject and film itself as bodies. My thesis thus examines how Del Toro's film involves Shelley and Whale's Creature by recreating his amalgamated form.

I begin the first of my three chapters by examining how *Pan* overlaps reality with

imagination to create an uncertain environment. I argue that the way fascism and fairy tale mirror one another in the film suggests that fascism corrupts everything, even the imagination. Because the film never solves the ambiguity between what is real and not, it ultimately suggests that the two can not be separated from one another. Much of this section details why *Pan* presents two different types monsters, human and fairy tale, and how these figures are connected. For example, I unpack the similarities between Vidal and the Pale Man to illustrate how fascism extends into folklore, and vice versa.

I continue this discussion on *Pan* and boundaries in my second chapter, where I analyze why the film's ambiguous movement between realms is indicative of del Toro's use of adaptation and plurality. Like the Creature, who is made with multiple parts from different bodies, adaptations extract the organs of previous works to create new life. I argue that *Pan* demonstrates this process by treating film as a human body, one which it cuts through editing. I also argue that this emphasis implies that there are two bodies in *Pan*: the subject and the film itself. I similarly suggest that Ofelia symbolizes this multiplicity and thus shares the Creature's plural body and legacy. Both she and the Creature are liminal and undead, which suggests that what is dead still contains life. I will thus detail the similarities between Ofelia and the Creature, how the film recreates the Creature's body, and finally how the film divides its characters to illustrate that parts can work independently from their original body, something which adaptations also demonstrate.

My third and final chapter examines these violent cuts, specifically the way *Frankenstein* narratives silence their female Creatures. I will focus on the organs or bodies which I previously argued adaptations use, considering what dangers they pose and why they are so violated. I do so to argue that the women in *Pan* and *Frankenstein* operate between victim and

monster to create a subtle counter-narrative to the ones which surround them. As such, figures like Ofelia and Elizabeth subvert traditional gender roles by quietly disobeying and rejecting passivity. I begin by discussing how Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* dissects its Bride both thematically and compositionally. I then perform a close reading on Shelley's Elizabeth, where I suggest that she is an insect, one whose behaviour and anatomy symbolizes anxieties around control and containment. I also detail how Elizabeth presents a more feminine version of science, one which directly contrast Victor's method by focusing on adding to the natural world, rather than taking things apart. Ofelia mirrors this interest as she functions as a storyteller in *Pan*. This chapter thus suggests that these women are both victimized and self-aware in these media, particularly to the forces which try to dissect and rearrange their bodies.

Chapter 1. Politicizing Fairy Tales: Overlap and Boundaries in *Pan's Labyrinth*

Shortly after her mother dies in childbirth, Vidal catches Ofelia trying to escape with Mercedes, his housekeeper and a resistance operative. He assumes that Ofelia has been spying on him and so he locks her in an attic bedroom so he can begin his offensive attack on the rebels. Ofelia, meanwhile, is running out of time to complete her quest, and so she takes a piece of chalk and draws a door, in the childish belief that she can escape just by imagining a door. Initially, the viewer may dismiss this scene as Ofelia's ability to transit between reality and fantasy without adults noticing. However, this moment becomes more complicated when Vidal returns to find the chalk and no Ofelia. Ofelia really has, apparently, escaped the literal room by imagining a fantasy door. The fantasy world now has consequences in the real, leaving the question; where does one realm begin and the other end? The film ultimately refuses to answer this overlap, or distance reality from fantasy in any definable way. Instead, it establishes binaries and questions without solutions to involve the viewer in critical thought. This ambiguity gestures to the film's broader commentary on monsters, both fantastic and real. The film highlights an ambiguous dual reality where man and fantasy collide by illustrating that fascist and fairy tale monsters are equally violent, and their actions and appearances mirror one another. *Pan* uses this intersection to demonstrate that fascism corrupts everything around it, including fantasy life. The film thus argues that true monstrosity comes from those who can disguise themselves politically and putrefy the very foundations of culture and imagination.

Pan situates this uncertain dual environment using director del Toro's beliefs regarding monsters, specifically that "Being in love with the monstrous is about the desire to understand the Other, as opposed to destroying" (in Vaz and Nunziata 10) or banishing it. Rather than killing its monsters, *Pan* examines how society treats them, how they affect reality, and vice versa. This

means that monsters in del Toro's film are made, not born. They therefore embody the political act of making monsters and the consequences of such classifications. The film is thus an open-ended commentary on the harmful effects of borders and definition, where both fairy tale and fascism produce monsters. In this chapter, I argue that the cultural need to control the definition of monsters and life, as seen in *Pan*, relates to del Toro's broader conversation on fascism. I will rely on this discussion in my later chapters to detail boundaries and liminality, particularly in the way Shelley's Victor constructs and classifies the creature. This section demonstrates that because *Pan* complicates what it initially presents as binaries, it critiques complicit viewership, and suggests that making borders around fantasy and reality resembles the political act of creating borders around people to make monsters. In doing so, the film illustrates that fantasy is not an escape but an invasive force which perpetuates the violence of the real world. In my following chapter I will explore how del Toro's filmmaking continues this violent extension.

I begin this chapter by detailing how *Pan* critiques fascism by creating two types of monsters, the fascist and the fantasy. I start by examining how Vidal represents one form of monstrosity because he embodies ideological violence. I argue that Vidal's need to control life and the narrative around him relates to the film's broader commentary on making monsters out of men, politically speaking. I then relate Vidal's characterization to the film's fantasy monsters, specifically the Pale Man. Because the film doubles these figures, it implies that these realms are connected not just through shot composition but thematically. The fantasy world thus shows the outcome of Vidal's ideological warfare. Del Toro further emphasizes this connection by suggesting that fairy tales are inherently politicized. The film demonstrates this by having its characters refer to political situations using fantasy, like when Mercedes and Ofelia discuss the need for fairies. This scene implies that fairy tales are synonymous with the political world,

which explains why characters like Carmen are sick of fairy tales, both emotionally and physically. I continue this discussion by suggesting that Ofelia uses fairy tales to interpret her world and to navigate its violence. I conclude by detailing how the film's ambiguity around what is real and unreal gestures to its commentary on fascism, an ideology which thrives on creating distinctions. Because the film refuses to distinguish these realms, particularly in its ending, it ultimately asks the viewer to be aware and responsible for their own experience rather than being complicit with the filmmaker.

1.1 Fascist and Fantasy: The Two Kinds of Monsters

I am interested in how del Toro does not simply glorify monsters but complicates our involvement with them, or how society classifies monsters with both disgust and fascination. Del Toro describes this emphasis on observation and function as “When you watch a documentary of a praying mantis eating the head of its mate, because of the complexity of the mouth mechanism, you’re fascinated” (in Salvesen 26) and frightened. The act itself is still startling, but there are layers of meaning within it. I believe *Pan* is made up of these layers, hence the labyrinth image in the film. Characters and environments represent overlapping tiers of fantasy and reality. One way in which the film illustrates this is by juxtaposing history with imagination, implying that what is real coincides with what is imaginary. This means that monsters are not as remote as fairy tales would suggest, as they filter into both our collective imagination and history. *Pan* thereby visualizes del Toro's opinion that “the only thing you have to be afraid of is people, not creatures, not ghosts” (in Kermode), but rather, the damage that society can do to itself, either physically, mentally, or culturally. Humans are thus a perverting body in del Toro's film, as our trauma and complicity shape the fantasies which Ofelia encounters. Likewise, as the film doubles its fantasy monsters with ideological kinds, it suggests that fairy tales can be used to

interpret and navigate history and our current cultural world. Therefore, it makes horror and fairy tale monsters relevant by extending them into the ideological violence of 20th century.

One way in which the film illustrates this overlap is by establishing two types of monsters: the traditional bloodthirsty fantasy kind, and the more subtle but equally violent ideological kind. The difference between these types are that ideologies are more inconspicuous. Fascism is an ever-present threat, always lingering in the backdrop of our cultural consciousness. It might not be as grotesque as some of the creatures in *Pan*, but its actions are just as lethal, as is its ability to disguise itself. Del Toro is sympathetic with the traditional fairy tale monster type, as they embody figures who have been rejected from society and antagonised by conventional narratives. This focus has been oversimplified by scholarship, which typically argues that del Toro is simply interested in the outcasts of society. It is more complicated than this approach, as del Toro's interest actively rejects the other ideological version of monstrosity. He rebuffs institutional monsters, or the violent figures and political movements which suppress and corrupt the imagination by attempting to control the social or cultural narrative. Therefore, del Toro troubles the concept that monsters are simply an inverted self-image, as Koudounaris describes (59), by suggesting that the borders around these definitions are more politicised than just Self and Other. Rather than simply rejecting all monsters based on their actions, *Pan* implies that we privilege certain monsters, those who can justify their violence through ideology. In doing so, the film suggests that traditional fantasy monsters are scapegoats, or figures who distance one definition of monstrosity from a more acceptable version. Society is thus responsible for constructing and defining monsters in addition to either expelling or institutionalizing them.

Del Toro's projects thus suggest that society creates its own monsters by illustrating that monsters are complex political metaphors which blend real with unreal. This unreal state

disguises del Toro's broader social commentary and makes his argument more nuanced and consumable. He describes this usage in his introduction to the Penguin horror series, noting "Horror is made up of such base material-so easily rejected...that it may be hard to accept...that within the genre lies...the last great refuge of spirituality" ("Haunted Castles" ix) as horror films often quietly unpack massive ideological and theological questions by focusing on what and how our culture fears. Being afraid in a del Toro picture is therefore deeply personal as it asks the viewer to examine their institutionalized beliefs around what makes a monster. Monsters thus take on a slightly religious undertone for del Toro, as he considers the banishment and death of traditional monsters as a form of martyrdom. For del Toro, "every Universal [monster] film turned into a hagiography and every creature, a martyr" ("Foreword" 6) to be worshipped. This implies that our rejection of monsters symbolizes a literal dying for our sins, making their death a religious parable. Del Toro's positioning of monsters as religious icons is relevant here as it suggests that monsters test boundaries which we cannot and do so to highlight where these boundaries are in society. In other words, monsters illustrate how society treats its Other and celebrates ignorance. Importantly, del Toro's film also refuses to solve these boundaries, as it indicates that monsters and society are stuck in a cycle of rejection. Because del Toro is concerned in how monsters are made, this cycle involves the viewer. We are complicit in making the monster and perpetuating this narrative model. *Pan* simply asks its audience to consider if this chain should continue by suggesting that neglecting fantasy and the imagination is as dangerous as dismissing a quiet but ever-present political movement.

Pan demonstrates this emphasis by focusing on how the actions of monsters and men compare. It does so by suggesting that violence is a shared language which unites fantasy and reality. Vidal is the most violent figure in the film as he acts violently but also embodies the

political violence of fascism. He is not a supernatural monster, but rather, a familiar ideological one which continues to haunt our cultural history. As such, the damage he inflicts in the film is physical but also mental, as he tries to control the narratives around him. The film introduces his need for narrative authority when he and Ofelia first meet. As Ofelia arrives at her new home, Vidal constructs a specific story using pronouns. As Paul Smith describes, when Vidal greets Ofelia and his pregnant wife, “he addresses them in the masculine plural form (*bienvendios*) on the assumption that the unborn child...is a boy” (qtd in Tracie Lukasiewicz 76). This unseen child is so important that Vidal constructs his language to blatantly ignore Ofelia and Carmen. Vidal is so blind that the child might be a girl, that his language creates a specific world without any choices or variability. We can read this as Vidal’s attempt to control reality, as his story and authority becomes the only one which matters. Likewise, his dismissal of Ofelia’s fairy tales in this scene also suggests that there is only room for hyper-masculinized stories, and there is no choice for different narratives or perspectives.

Even Vidal’s name relates to this need to control language and people, as “Vidal...whose name ironically implies *vida* or ‘life’ in Spanish” (Clark and McDonald 60) suggests that he has authority over life. This comparison also implies that Vidal’s need for control is similar to Victor Frankenstein’s in Mary Shelley’s novel, as both Victor and Vidal want to possess life, to control the natural order, and both are willing to sacrifice and harm women for personal gain (60). Vidal does this by sacrificing Carmen and Ofelia, while Victor does so through Elizabeth and Justine. This suggests that while, as Robert Miles observes, “Vidal remains something of a comic strip baddy” (201) without much dimensionality, there are layers and doubles around Vidal which complicate his portrayal. Vidal’s complexity thus comes from the monster he embodies, and the connotations which the viewer brings with them around controlling life and people.

1.2 Vidal and the Pale Man

To emphasize Vidal's need for control, the film shows the physical and mental consequences of violence and uses this pain to motivate its characters. The violence here is not spectacular or glorified, but visceral and important for the narrative. For example, when Vidal smashes a man's nose, the film does not cut away but rather focuses on the terrible and prolonged death. The brutality of this scene is confrontational and highlights human anatomy. It also shares the same level of violence as the film's fantastic subject, and as a result, the film links the fantastic and fascist using violence. A prominent example of this duality is Vidal and the Pale Man. Here, the film doubles its most frightening and violent figures to illustrate that Vidal's political violence is connected to the fantasy realm. Although the film suggests that the Pale Man is an exaggerated version of Vidal, it never states which is the double: the fantasy or the fascist. The similarities between Vidal and the Pale Man are so closely linked that it is impossible to tell which came first, or which influences the other. However, this proximity does imply that in its attempt to rewrite and refocus narratives, fascism overwhelms our perception of fantasy, to the extent where what was fantastical becomes another political statement.

The Pale Man and Vidal are frequently compared, but most scholars focus on how their actions mirror one another rather than the tension they elicit. For example, Tseui describes that both characters hate children, or at least want to control them, and use food to manipulate (239-240), specifically at the dinner party and the Pale Man's feast scenes. These scenes have a similar layout and appear around the same time in the film. First is Vidal's dinner party, which features an assortment of local fascist supporters. Vidal and his guests discuss various tactics to suppress the rebels during the meal, those which include starving and torturing them into submission. The conversation strongly contrasts the ongoing luxury and feast in the scene. As a

result, these luxury items take on a sinister connotation, as the viewer is encouraged to consider where these resources came from, and at what cost. Ofelia is not present for this scene, but when she returns, she is sent to bed without supper for being too dirty. Shortly after, Ofelia descends to the Pale Man's banquet, which, as Thormann notes, "The table is a cornucopia of food that mirrors the dinner party the Captain has held, and the hall itself resembles the shape of the Captain's dining room" (179), which informs the audiences that these scenes are connected. It also signals that the content of these scenes is similar as both deal with the threat of food. For instance, Ofelia fails her test in the Pale Man's lair by eating grapes as a consequence of not having dinner, which demonstrates that her actions in reality affect her choices in the fantasy realm.

Both of these food scenes also resemble one another on a political and emotional level. For example, the tension at the formal dinner comes from our knowledge of what Vidal is capable of in addition to the way the conversation tactfully avoids directly discussing death and violence. As such, the threat of violence is not an immediate kind, but imagined. The Pale Man scene relies on this imagined violent space to build tension. Unlike the dinner scene, there is no talking in the lair, just Ofelia wandering past a seemingly unconscious Pale Man. The tension here is not dialogue-based but visual, as both the audience and Ofelia learn what the Pale Man is capable of through the paintings on the wall. These murals depict the Pale Man butchering and devouring children, so while there is no violence in the beginning of this scene, we still imagine it. The threat here comes from the imagination, what is visualized but not immediately acted on. Therefore, the audience is responsible for interpreting the tension in each of these scenes, as they know a threat is coming based on the imagery and suggestions in the room. One prominent example of this is the ominous pile of children's shoes in the Pale Man scene. These are

frequently read as an allusion to images of victims' clothing from the Holocaust (Kotecki 245), but the film also uses the recognition of this symbol to link the fantasy realm with historic reality. Because of this connotation, the Pale Man mirrors the actions of fascism, or what it being discussed upstairs but not depicted. Additionally, according to del Toro, the Pale Man represents the excess, hunger, and "the church...devouring of children...[as] the original design was just an old man who seemed to have lost a lot of weight and was covered in loose skin...[and] became the personality of an institution" (in Kermode). Because the Pale Man represents an always hungry and hidden figure, lingering underneath the floorboards of Vidal's home, he embodies the fascist movement, or that political monster which is never satisfied and always lurking in the conversations above and in our history.

While the film initially presents two separate versions of monstrosity, it later complicates the relationship between the two by stripping Vidal of his human appearance and turning him into a visible monster. Right before he can torture Mercedes, she springs free and stabs him with a kitchen knife. Before she leaves, she takes the knife and slashes his mouth, leaving him with a permanent smile, a face he can never again change or deceive with. This moment essentially transforms the face of fascism and illustrates that it can no longer disguise its monstrosity. It is noteworthy that this moment occurs while Vidal is monologuing, as Mercedes' stabbing interrupts and rejects his narrative. She does so again later in the film, right before she finally kills him. As Vidal realizes that he has lost to the rebels, he asks Mercedes to tell his son what time he died. Mercedes interrupts this request and shoots him, a moment which signals that his meticulous narrative has ended. These scenes additionally suggest that fairy tale creatures are not separate from relevant contemporary dangers. Although the film creates two versions of monstrosity, it eventually implies that monsters exist in the outskirts of society and within

institutional centers. The overlap between these realms is intentionally confrontational as it suggests that society is willing to overlook systemic violence. It is only when Vidal transforms into a more traditional monster that he loses the battle.

1.3 Fairy Tale Politics

Ofelia is prepared for reality because of her experience with fantasy, as *Pan* suggests that fairy tales are a tool for navigating reality. Ofelia focuses on the similarities between these worlds, rather than the differences. According to del Toro, Ofelia has the ability to see both fantasy and reality because “Deep in her, [there is]...a place touched only by monsters” (in Lindsay 26), which indicates that Ofelia has been transformed by fantasy and carries it with her. She embodies this duality as she is both the daughter of a mortal and of a mythic King. Because the film never informs us whether she is entirely mortal or other, Ofelia is simultaneously both. She exists between these realms, which explains why she can transit back and forth. However, because of her liminal placement, Ofelia is also unable to belong to one realm over the other, as does not fit with the fascists, but she can also not enter the fantasy world without completing her quest. Therefore, just as these spaces blend with one another, Ofelia’s liminal role suggests that there may be an alternative, a blend of the boundaries between unreal and real.

Although the film eventually scars Vidal and destroys his disguise, Ofelia recognizes that Vidal is a monster early in the film. While she treats other monsters, such as the Faun, with respect and trust, despite their fantastic and othered nature, she immediately distrusts Vidal. This lack of faith contributes to the film’s larger statement about monsters and reality, as del Toro describes that “When a monster inspires more affection and displays more paternal care than a man, we...[must] reassess what we demonize” (in Edwards 144) and how. Ofelia does so by rejecting the narratives imposed by Vidal, such as his role as a new father. Her ultimate rejection

comes as she returns to the Faun at the end of the film, essentially retreating from the fascist driven narrative. However, once Ofelia also rejects the Faun at this climax, reality and Vidal remerge, suggesting that both realms must be rejected in order to restore our cultural narrative. The ambiguity here is not around which realm is more moral or which came first, but which realm might emerge by rejecting the boundaries between the imagination and reality.

Likewise, Ofelia is aware of her role in the narrative because she recognizes the various fairy tale conventions which surround her. The film expects its audience to also be familiar with these tropes, as it establishes them only to then trouble our expectations of how they should perform. It presents fantastic creatures only to suggest that these creatures are untrustworthy and violent as they try to kill the film's heroine. As such, there are two layers of complication in the film, the one Ofelia experiences and the one the audience does. Just as Ofelia encounters deadly creatures, those who exist outside of her fairy tale books, the audience sees political violence interwoven with fantasy. As such, the film does not just de-stabilize these structures and messages (Blitch 5) but changes the very way we engage with fairy tales, making them culturally and politically relevant rather than just narratively. Therefore, the film de-stabilizes both the content and reception of fairy tales and historic drama.

There are two ways to read Ofelia's engagement with fantasy, either as naïve or as a form of coping. First, Ofelia is regularly criticized for reading fairy tales because they are too childish. Early in the film, Carmen questions why Ofelia is interested in something so impractical and different than reality, an exchange which happens again between Ofelia and Mercedes where Ofelia asks, "Do you believe in fairies?" and Mercedes replies "No, but when I was a little girl I did. I believed in a lot of things I don't believe in anymore". Fairies take on a political undertone in this scene, as Mercedes no longer believes in fantasy or reality, specifically a fascist reality.

This reading means that fairy tales are naïve, and that trauma forces you to grow out of them. However, the other way we can read the film's fairy tales are as a coping mechanism, as Ofelia's first interaction with Vidal suggests. Here, as O'Brien notes, Ofelia greets Vidal with the wrong hand as her "'right hand' is busy nursing her precious fairy tales, which are privileged over...proper protocol" or reality (114). The way she clings to books in this scene illustrates that Ofelia uses fantasy knowledge to interpret and survive, using them as a type of defense. Because Ofelia understands how fantasy operates, she knows how to participate with it and how to treat monsters, both fantastic and real. Ofelia uses this ability to recognize danger in the real world, essentially using fantasy to make sense of the oppressive trauma which surrounds her.

However, Ofelia's engagement with fairy tales becomes more challenging as she ultimately rejects the borders around what qualifies as fantasy and reality, which subsequently causes reality to collapse onto fantasy. Rather than listening to her mother or the Faun, Ofelia makes her own path between these realms, as theorists like Blitch have proposed. However, because the film never solves the binary between reality and fantasy, it instead leaves it open to interpretation. A similar openness occurs between the grotesque and human monsters in the film, as the boundaries between the two continue to mirror one another and there is no solution. Although, as Blitch suggests, Ofelia escapes a divided binary realm (1), the film leaves no specific resolution for the audience as fantasy and reality have blurred too greatly. This ending thus creates an uncertain environment where monsters continue to overlap real with unreal.

Because the film treats both fantasy and reality as threats, it implies that dismissing fairy tales is dangerous, specifically as they reflect our political and historical world. By ignoring or destroying fairy tales, we neglect an important tool for interpreting our current reality, and the resulting cultural ignorance can have terrible consequences. Orme highlights this by noting that

the near the beginning of the film, when Carmen criticizes Ofelia for needing fairy tales, she suddenly becomes sick. Her need to vomit implies that there are bodily consequences to rejecting fantasy (219), which I argue also represents a broader rejection of imagination and cultural heritage. This moment is symbolic of Carmen's political anxiety, as the very thought of Ofelia's fixation with fairy tales within the fascist regime makes her sick. This happens again when Carmen discovers the mandrake root under her bed. Just before she burns the root, Carmen shouts, "Magic does not exist. Not for me, or for you, or anyone", but once the root is destroyed Carmen goes into early labour and dies. It is unclear which event caused the other; was Carmen sick because she insulted stories or because she was stressed and worried about her daughter? In other words, did she go into labour because of her rejection, or because of stressful moment? A similar question is whether Ofelia's obsession with fairy tales allowed her to see both realms or if her interest simply reshaped reality into something recognizable. In both cases, the film leaves the relationship between fairy tale and reality ambiguous, something which its ending additionally emphasizes.

1.4 Ambiguity and Responsibility

There are two ways to read the ending of *Pan*. The first is that Ofelia sacrifices herself, and in doing so, can take her rightful place as Princess of the Underworld. The alternative reading is that this ascension does not actually happen. Instead, this scene is how Ofelia imagines death will be like in the moments before her death. It initially appears that the viewer must pick between these outcomes, but like Ofelia proves in this conclusion, there is another option. Rather than accepting the two most obvious readings, there is a third, more nuanced perspective. Because the ending is so ambiguous, it encourages viewers to blend fantasy and reality, rather than separate the two. Both readings must be simultaneously possible in order for Ofelia's

actions to be read as a sacrifice. In other words, Ofelia must die in the real world to justify entering the fantasy realm. Her sacrifice must be real (Lindsay 24) in order to have meaning for the narrative. This means that one cannot distinguish fantasy from reality at the end of the film, because these realms are still communicating. As a result, one could read Ofelia's coronation scene as either her reward or as a type martyrdom narrative later created by Mercedes. Both are equally possible because of the film's ambiguity, meaning that one may interpret the ending as a tragedy, a commentary, or even a parable, as there is no one correct interpretation.

Rather than resolving which space came first, or reinstituting boundaries between what is real and imagined, the film emphasizes the role of the viewer. Specifically, it suggests that the viewer is responsible for examining the complexity of this ending, or its underlying mechanics. This focus connects to del Toro's interest in monsters, and the mechanics through which they operate. Like his monsters, this ending emphasizes the components rather than the result, or these different readings rather than one specific kind. As such, the film becomes a lesson about the importance of examining fairy tales and monsters as they contain important cultural trauma and memory. Del Toro continues this comparison in his appreciation of Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Like the chalk scene mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, del Toro is primarily interested in the spaces where things overlap and are liminal. The following chapter will extend this conversation on boundaries to suggest that liminality and plurality relate to the adaptation genre. It will thus detail how del Toro translates his philosophies on monsters from Shelley's novel, and how Whale's film contributes to his views on adaptation and genre.

Chapter 2. “A Collection of Parts: The Ultimate Fabrication”: Adaptation and the Filmic Body

When Ofelia uncovers the center of the labyrinth she calls out for her echo. The decaying walls call back and duplicate her, recreating the echo ad infinitum. This moment symbolizes a prevalent aspect in *Pan*; the multi. Ofelia is an adaptation of herself and the many girls the Faun has previously tested. As such, she is never just one girl, but multiple echoes simultaneously. This relates to del Toro’s broader engagement with adaptation politics, those which are specifically informed by Whale’s 1931 adaptation of *Frankenstein*. In my last chapter, I argued that *Pan* treats fascism as a corrupting force which blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy. Here, I will continue my discussion on *Pan* and boundaries by analyzing why the ambiguous and liminal movement between realms is indicative of del Toro’s use of adaptation and plurality. I argue that adaptation films mirror Victor Frankenstein’s transgressive method because they deconstruct and then resurrect bodies of work. In doing so, we can read both the subject and material of filmmaking as a symbol for Whale’s Creature. Whale is relevant to del Toro because his adaptation is the traumatic core of del Toro’s projects. In other words, Whale’s film is at the center of del Toro’s personal labyrinth, one which echoes, as Ofelia does, within his own work. I will thus argue that del Toro’s *Pan* highlights adaptation by focusing on liminal figures and decaying bodies.

The greatest example of del Toro’s involvement of Shelley and Whale is his unfinished magnum opus *Frankenstein* project (Douglas “On Frankenstein”). This film would treat Shelley and Whale as collaborators rather than competitors, which emphasizes del Toro’s plural views of *Frankenstein*, where one cannot discuss the novel without gesturing to the film, and vice versa. As of today, del Toro has been unable to move forward with his project and directly contribute to

its plurality. What promises to be his greatest cinematic creature, like Victor's, is paralyzing to him. This should not suggest that *Frankenstein* does not impact the subject and form of del Toro's other projects, as it is still crucial to the way he perceives filmmaking. Rather than creating a direct adaptation, del Toro's work is a commentary on how films construct monsters and contribute to a growing chain of adaption. His projects are interested in the symbolic role and value of the Creature, and the way he indirect influences the shape of contemporary cinema. Like the Creature, who is made with multiple parts of different bodies, adaptations extract the organs of previous works and create new life. Ofelia symbolizes this multiplicity and thus shares the Creature's plural body and legacy.

I begin this chapter by detailing how *Pan* treats film as a human body, one which it regularly cuts via editing techniques. I will do so by examining two violent scenes in *Pan*, one in which Vidal smashes a man's nose with a bottle and the other where Doctor Ferreiro saws off a resistance member's leg. These sequences treat the camera as an extension of the violent action, as the framing and shot composition becomes a surrogate for the bodily cut. By juxtaposing these scenes, and how they present violence differently, I argue that *Pan* includes two bodies, the subject and the film itself. The emphasis on cutting in these scenes relates to adaptation because adaptation films cut the inner mechanics of previous works. These sequences thereby illustrate that the filmmaking process represents a surgical kind, one which Victor and his stitched together Creature are associated with.

My next section focuses on how *Pan* recreates the Creature's decaying body, one which is plural both because it is a collection of parts and because the Creature is simultaneously living and dead. I will relate this to adaptation by suggesting that the genre takes what seems used and dead and revives it using new media. Ofelia embodies this capacity for adaptation while also

being an adaptation herself. I start by focusing on how Ofelia exists in a liminal undead position, one which mirrors the Creature and its potential for adaptation. I do so by comparing the beginning and ending shots of the film, in addition to the Faun's prophecy. I also argue that Ofelia acts as an adaptor in the film because she finds life within dead and ancient bodies, like the fairy in the statue and Faun's body. These fantasy creatures reclaim their potency once Ofelia integrates them into her new narrative.

From there, I will focus on the way *Pan* physically divides its characters to show that body parts can work independently. This relates to adaptation because the genre slices parts from characters and narratives to repurpose them. In doing so, it divides these characters from their original bodies, which *Pan* symbolizes using the frog and Pale Man. The same method which cuts these characters and removes their body parts mirrors the process of adaptation and Victor's operation, both of which take apart bodies to locate specific parts. This section will focus on how individual parts can be removed from their original body and continue to function, often in horrifying or disgusting ways. I relate this emphasis on parts and dislocation to Whale's Creature, whose behavior is blamed on the wrong part. Like adaptation, Whale's Creature is dictated by his parts, those which function collectively but also with an independent will.

I conclude this chapter by detailing how del Toro treats his film like the Creature; a body which can be cut and added to. *Pan* demonstrates this through the mandrake, the Faun's prophecy, and its ending. Each of these create additional bodies, those which emphasize plurality, the same kind adaptations rely on. For example, I will examine how the endings of *Pan* and *Frankenstein* highlight the importance of the multi using ambiguity. In doing so, they suggest that their narratives live beyond the confines of the film and are thus prone for further interpretation. Like the Creature, Ofelia and her legacy are plural.

2.1 Cutting the Body

Pan depicts violence using its subject and the way it captures said subject. Everything from the framing, lightening, and shot composition is intended to extend the violent connotations of the scene. Violence for del Toro is thus an important and carefully chosen tool, as is the decision to show or simply insinuate violence. Del Toro uses both approaches in *Pan*, as there are multiple prolonged and disturbing sequences, but there are also scenes where violence is not shown directly but still implied. In order to suggest violence without depicting it, del Toro relies on violent camera work. In doing so, *Pan* implies that both the subject and film are bodies which can be abused and cut.

Before examining how the camera becomes violent, I want to focus on how the camera magnifies violent scenes. One prominent example of this occurs midway in the film, when Vidal and his men capture two trespassers. The two men, a father and son, tell Vidal that they are innocent poachers, while Vidal's lieutenant argues that they are spying resistance members. When Vidal searches their bags, he comes across an empty bottle, which implies that the two have been watching the house for a while. As this happens, the son interrupts Vidal to insist that they are poachers, causing Vidal to smile, punch the man, and then brutally smash his face with the bottle. Before this moment, the camera is steady and does not cut. It is only when the victim interrupts Vidal that the camerawork changes, as does the tone. Once Vidal begins his attack, the camera switches between the victim and assailant in time with Vidal's blows. The moment is also magnified by the harsh cracking noise as the man's face collapses. Because the noise matches the camera's steady back and forth pace, the editing duplicates and intensifies Vidal's violence. Thereby, the film suffers the same cuts as the victim, as both are divided by the same motion. We only escape from these brutal and close shots once the violence is over. As such, the

film cuts become an extension of Vidal's violence.

Something similar occurs when del Toro chooses not to show violence, as the camera still captures violent motion, this time to insinuate further brutality. For instance, when Doctor Ferreiro arrives at the resistance hide out, one of his patients needs a leg amputated. There is a substantial build up to this moment, as the Doctor first examines the leg, has a conversation about it with a resistance member, gives the patient a drink, and then prepares to cut it off. Each of these moments contribute to a growing fear of violence. It is not as sudden as Vidal's bottle scene, as the scene instead builds towards a specific and inevitable violence. Additionally, there are no rapid cuts in this build up, as the camera prolongs each shot and intensifies this dread. However, just as the Doctor is about to saw the leg, the camera cuts with the same movement of the saw. Although violence is not shown, the camera still captures the sawing motion, which means that the framing of the scene becomes a surrogate for the bodily cut. The viewer is expected to fill in the violence based on the camerawork, as the violence happens, but not as visibly as Vidal's bottle scene. While Vidal's scene shows how editing and violent motion collaborate, this other scene uses editing to double unseen violence.

These sequences imply that *Pan* constitutes two bodies: the filmic and the subject. As such, the editing process is not just associated with the subject, it becomes a part of it. Because of this, del Toro's project treats filmmaking like an additional character, one who can be abused and taken apart. This focus on deconstructing the body mirrors Victor's task of mutilating and rearranging body parts. The cinematic process is thus a type of surgery, one which slices, cuts, and arranges the presentation of a filmic body. This will become more important in my later discussion on adaptation, wherein this cinematic body becomes further mutilated and its organs removed and rearranged.

2.2 Decay and Liminality

The Creature in Shelley and Whale's works is an amalgamated body, a collection of parts and organs from what seemed dead. He is liminal, not just because he is undead, but because he comes from many different sources. Cinematic adaptations use a similar resurrection model. These films give life to once dead material, taking and then reorganizing themes and characters into a new body. Adaptation films thus expose the inner workings and mechanics, or organs, of the source material which they repair and restore. This resembles Victor's process, as he did not take one corpse to reanimate, rather, took parts from several bodies. He chooses these parts based on his vision of idealized post-human, and the same level of comparison, research, and composition can be said of the adaptation genre. This means that what seemed old or dead still contains life. As decayed and liminal, the entity is neither dead nor alive, but somewhere between. A decayed object or environment is in the process of death, moving from one state to another. The insides have slowly deteriorated to the extent where the exterior shows signs of death and withering. It is thus liminal, as even as something decays, there is life within it.

There are several decayed bodies in *Pan*, those which are stuck between life and death. The most prominent example of this is Ofelia, who appears dead in the first shot and returns to this position at the end. What happens between these points is a liminal undead positioning. Because she is introduced as dead, the audience expects her to die again at the ending. As a result, Ofelia is never entirely alive in the narrative, just moving between deaths. Her state resembles the Creature because both are stuck between categories. For instance, the Creature is undead because bringing him back to life does not reverse his earlier death. It just revives life within death. Ofelia resembles this because she too was brought back from the dead, both because she the reincarnation of a Princess, and because she returns after the first shot in the

film. Ofelia's undead position is further emphasized by her fixation on old fantasy material, which the modern world has disregarded. Because she uses this decayed genre to interpret the world around her, Ofelia's mental state is additionally decayed. Although she looks like a young and vital child, there is death inside her. This relates to the Faun's prophecy, as Ofelia is the reborn soul of the Princess, meaning that she is an adaptation of herself, specifically a dead self. As such, Ofelia contains dead material which has been recycled, like a part in an adaptation.

Decay is what refuses to die, at least according to del Toro. It makes death and life more ambiguous and suggests that there are no ultimate endings, just continuation in a new form. Ofelia's decayed state resembles del Toro's position on Shelley's *Frankenstein*, as he argues that "The impossibility [and ambiguity] of death is...the greatest of the tragedies for the monster" ("Introduction" xv), as the novel refuses to answer if the Creature really could kill himself. In other words, Shelley's text does not demonstrate if undead material can ever become static or stuck to one category. The same occurs in *Pan*, as Ofelia continues to impact reality while stuck between life and death. This state resembles adaptation politics, where history is revived and repurposed into new forms to impact modernity. Ofelia is not the only character who undergoes this process in *Pan*, as Ofelia awakens many ancient and decayed bodies. In doing so, Ofelia is both an adaptation and an adaptor, specifically as she finds life within dead fantasy spaces. By paying attention to fairy tales, when no one else in modernity does, Ofelia revives old material and inserts into a contemporary narrative. This represents a form of adaptation, one which operates using the same decay model as Victor's Creature, who is a collection of undead parts which still contain life.

One example of Ofelia's resurrection method is the fairy in the statue. This scene occurs early in the film, when Ofelia and her mother are traveling to Vidal's fort. When Carmen

suddenly feels ill, the cars pull to the side, and Ofelia explores the surrounding forest. As she does, Ofelia comes across a stone fragment which she replaces into a nearby statue. After she replaces this stone eye, and returns to the car, a large insect suddenly emerges from the statue's mouth and follows Ofelia. This insect later transforms into a fairy, proving that this discarded statue contained life and power. Although the statue was withered and decayed, there was life within this decay, patiently waiting to be reborn. Likewise, it is only after Ofelia returns this part that life emerges, which suggests that decayed bodies need some form of restoration in order to exhibit life. In Whale's film, this is Victor's labour. In adaptation filmmaking, it is the script and production work. Here, Ofelia's attention and belief revives decayed subjects. As such, decayed material requires active work, or a new body which it can be integrated into, like a narrative or a new collection.

A more subtle instance of Ofelia's ability to revive fantasy is the way the Faun's body changes throughout *Pan*. When Ofelia first meets the Faun, he has been almost entirely reabsorbed into nature. He has become a sleeping statue, similar to the one the fairy emerges from. This makes him a decayed body, one which slowly regains its youth and potency during the film. Although he initially appears as withered, mossy, and slow, by the end of the film, he is quick and youthful. This is the result of Ofelia's attention to the Faun and fantasy world. It is also because Ofelia mixes his world with her own, thereby restoring the Faun to his earlier vitality. By performing the same actions as the girls previously tested by the Faun, but now in a new environment, Ofelia essentially restarts and adapts the Faun's story. This resembles Victor's method because both he and Ofelia return to sites of decay, or disrepair, and revitalize these spaces. The same can be said for the process of adaptation, which mixes old material with contemporary methods and ideologies.

2.3 Independent Body Parts

In the pivotal moment of Shelley's novel, Victor watches as his creation begins to move. He has successfully condensed multiple body parts into one being, creating an individual from a collection. However, the question remains: to what extent do these parts influence the Creature's behavior and identity? If one part had been replaced by another, would the Creature in Shelley's text remain the same? I believe that the Creature's undead status, as both living and dead, also suggests that he stays a collection of parts. He thus remains plural because of his constructed nature. This plural reading of *Frankenstein* is of great interest to del Toro, as his fascination with the Creature centers on its status as "a collection of parts: the ultimate fabrication" (Britt Salvesen 23). I believe these parts refer to both the Creature's physical state and the legacy around *Frankenstein* adaptations. While the Creature is a collection unto himself, his cultural image has similarly been cut and reshaped since Shelley's publication. These projects edit the Creature to suit contemporary audiences, but in doing so, they replicate the same resurrection model as Victor. Thereby, the process of dividing characters from their source material and repurposing them mirrors Victor's experiment. As a result of del Toro's interest in parts, *Pan* splits its characters to illustrate that parts can work independently. By cutting these characters up, the film implies that what was singular has the potential to multiply. In other words, the film performs a vivisection to illustrate that organs contain living material which can be reused in other ways. It also implies that this ability to split and reorganize the body is potentially threatening, as it is difficult to classify what is singular versus plural. This same anxiety around dead material appears in *Frankenstein*, as Victor's ability to resurrect implies that what was dead can produce life if placed in a new body or collection of parts.

Ofelia is often the catalyst for division in *Pan*. This is primarily because she acts as an

adaptor in the film, meaning she is what incites these characters to split and reform for her narrative. A good example of this is when Ofelia tricks a giant frog by getting him to swallow a magic stone. When he does, the frog regurgitates his stomach and leaves behind his skin. In this sick moment of division, Ofelia finds the key she needs to unlock her next task. This mirrors the process of adaptation because the frog has ripped itself open to reveal the necessary material to move the plot along. In doing so, it represents the ruthless nature of adaptation, and Victor's need to take apart corpses for specific parts which, when relocated, create a new body. This also implies that individual parts are valuable, and that to get to them, the whole body must be cut. As such, the process of adaptation is violent and transgressive, as it requires what was internal to suddenly externalize. I define 'transgression' here as a confrontation wherein what was internal or suppressed externalizes and causes disgust or anxiety. An example of this is when a character breaks a bone, and it violently protrudes. Although everyone knows that they contain a skeleton, being confronted by this reality is unnerving, as we do not like to think about what parts create us. *Pan* visualizes this with the frog, as Ofelia is disgusted by the sickly transgressive material, or the frog's stomach. Although it contains valuable material, the process by which it externalizes is revolting, as is the realization that what composites us can externalize and damage our bodies.

The Pale Man also symbolizes this because he inserts his eyes into his hands. Here, the humanoid body has been warped and the monster's touch becomes synonymous with its gaze. This corresponds with del Toro's belief that "the first thing a child displaces when drawing a monster is the eyes" (in Britt Salvesen 925) because that is what the monster uses to track and interact with the subject. I believe this also implies we break down monsters into different parts based on how they interact with the viewer. For instance, when Ofelia restores the statue by

returning its eyes, she also restores vision to all of the fantasy realm, both good and evil. As a result, Ofelia can see the monsters, but the monsters can also see her. The Pale Man embodies these anxieties around sight and parts because he first appears blind and unthreatening as his eyes have been displaced. When Ofelia disrupts this environment and wakes up the Pale Man, he inserts his eyes into the wrong place. His hands thus pose two threats: touch and sight. What makes this sinister is that the Pale Man's inverted features still retain the function and appearance of a human, just relocated. Like the Creature, parts have been put together in new and frightening ways. This relates to a moment in Whale's film, where Fritz brings Victor, or Henry in the film, the wrong brain. Here, the abnormal brain is responsible for the Creature's monstrous behavior. The Creature's body still functions as it should, but because they use the wrong brain, the Creature becomes monstrous. The same goes for the Pale Man, whose features are humanoid and familiar, but have been put in the wrong areas. This suggests that individual body parts or organs dictate both appearance and behavior.

Adaptations are similarly dictated by their parts, those which function collectively but also with an independent will and background. Because *Pan* focuses on the splitting and repurposing bodies, it relates to both Shelley and Whale's Creature in addition to the process of adaptation. It implies that what seems whole is in fact a collection of parts and associations. Both the Pale Man and frog demonstrate this by suggesting that body parts can be recycled for new purposes. Like the Creature and Ofelia, they are amalgamated bodies.

2.4 Plural Bodies

In addition to the way *Pan* cuts its characters, it also adds to them, again emphasizing the bodies' plural capabilities. One example of this is the mandrake, which Ofelia uses to protect her mother during her difficult pregnancy. The mandrake is a humanoid root who represents a

monstrous adaptation of Ofelia's unborn brother. Rather than dividing Ofelia's brother, the Faun multiplies him into the mandrake root. It is not an exact double, as he creates only a vaguely humanoid shape, but it duplicates the features and behavior of Ofelia's brother. The two are intrinsically connected so Ofelia can save her brother and mother by taking care of this surrogate baby. However, because the mandrake is an extension of the baby, Carmen threatens her pregnancy by burning the root. Here, what happens to one body impacts the other, which means that although parts can be separated and repurposed, they still connect to earlier iterations. This emphasizes that the body can be split into multiple forms, but also that a body can be extended and added to. What was one entity becomes two.

The Faun's prophecy mirrors this emphasis on parts and adding by informing the viewer how the film will end near the beginning. The prophecy outlines Ofelia's journey as it concerns a young Princess who is destined to return to the Underworld after performing a series of tasks. The viewer is expected to put this information together to recognize that Ofelia will complete her quest and succeed. The ending here is less important than what leads towards it. As such, the prophecy emphasizes that the viewer should pay attention to the individual components in the story, not just the narrative body but the parts which create it. In doing so, it shows us the completed narrative in order to focus on other things. This plural logic mirrors why adaptations remain relevant. Rather than changing the narrative, adaptations often reexamine neglected details and characters, recreating a similar format while still introducing new aspects. For instance, *Frankenstein* adaptations anticipate that their audience will be familiar with either Shelley or Whale's narrative. These later adaptations therefore expect their audience to recognize where the *Frankenstein* story is going so they can focus on detailing characters and unexpected moments.

Adaptation thus becomes a way to thwart expectation while also working with an informed audience, something which *Pan* also plays with. Even *Pan*'s focus on fairy tales involves this method, as it introduces its narrative through familiar fairy tale archetypes, which the viewers already have knowledge of. The narrative consistently follows these tropes in order to focus on the details within them. For instance, Vidal is a stereotypical stepfather villain, one who specifically disrupts Ofelia's perception of home and security. Using tropes like this, *Pan* creates certain expectations for the audience to recognize. It does so in order to examine parts of the narrative and these tropes instead of just the result. Yes, the evil stepfather is defeated, but what leads to this moment is substantial.

The endings of *Pan* and *Frankenstein* also highlight the importance of multi by leaving room for speculation and comparison. Similar to the life within decay model, these works refuse one definition. They remain liminal by suggesting that their narratives live beyond the confines of the film and are thereby prone for further interpretation. This approach mirrors del Toro's complicated views on rebirth and adaptation. According to del Toro, no adaptation of *Frankenstein* has ever captured the whole narrative, tone, or experience of reading Shelley's novel ("Haunted Castles" xiv). This language suggests that adaptations are missing some integral part, something which needs to be excavated from Shelley's work. It also emphasizes that adaptations only extract parts of *Frankenstein* to create their own Creature. He emphasizes this again in his short *Pan* documentary, where he argues that "the worst thing an effects house can do, or a director can do, in creating a monster is just referencing other movies" (*Making of Pan's Labyrinth*) as that shows an individual's ability to replicate, not innovate. Del Toro is thus interested in reinvention in adaptation, perhaps to the same extent as Victor in his attempt to reinvent the human. Like the Pale Man, del Toro is interested in adaptations which take familiar

parts and place them in new and alarming locations.

As a result of this position on reinvention, del Toro believes that ambiguity is an essential cinematic tool for adaptation. It is what allows characters to multiply beyond the confines of their source material. This emphasis on ambiguity appears in del Toro's history with rebirth narratives. In *Frankenstein*, it is the question of how much the Creature's parts impact his behavior and thinking. It is also the question of if dead material is ever truly dead. Del Toro believes that it is important for these to stay questions, as do the questions in *Pan*. Although the Faun tells Ofelia that she is a mystical Princess, the narrative never proves that this is the case. The ambiguity of whether she is rewarded or not makes her sacrifice more impactful. Her death must have sustained consequences, those which the film does not entirely resolve. In other words, rebirth in *Pan* is still steeped with death. It is not entirely alive nor dead but stuck between the two. It is no coincidence that *Pan* was developed right after del Toro objected to the most famous Christian rebirth narrative. Del Toro was asked to direct a film adaptation of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, which he accepted on the condition that the lion Aslan, who is traditionally read as a Jesus allegory, remained dead after his sacrifice. His explanation was, "What's the worth of that sacrifice if he knows he's coming back?" (in Lindsay 25). The sacrifice is still important, but it needs long term consequences in order to mean something. As such, once one crosses the boundary between life and death, there needs to be some ambiguity to what they are moving towards, and if they can come back.

Additionally, this means that any viable source material must have enough ambiguity or decay to justify restoration. In short, these media must leave room to be plural. Adaptations continue rely on this model because they are made with preexisting media to compare and contrast to. If the audience is already familiar with the source text, then adaptations are prone for

debate on which is better or in what ways the adaptation changes the narrative. In this manner, adaptations leave the audience multiple links or parts which they can follow independently. This decision is also found at the end of Shelley's novel, where the Creature's death is not shown, and therefore not certain. The novel also leave it unclear how Victor fashioned the Creature or if the narrators are reliable. Therefore, the text allows its monster to live on after the narrative ends. This ambiguous ending encourages the reader to make up their own mind, and in doing so, create additional narratives and speculation based on what they have read. This is evident in massive legacy that *Frankenstein* has culminated, as each film revisits the basic structure and parts of Shelley's text but reinvigorates its characters with new intentions.

Like the echo I referred to at the beginning of this chapter, *Frankenstein* continues to reverberate in our contemporary culture long after its narrative ends. *Pan* reflects this echo by involving plural and undead characters, those who refuse to abide to life and death and thus continue after the film concludes. As a result, *Pan* involves the politics around adaptation and rebirth, those which similarly situate Victor's work. Returning to this echo symbol, the question becomes: why does one call out for an echo? Is it to feel less lonely? Perhaps the answer is that characters like Ofelia need to hear their voice spoken back, this time from another repurposed body. My next chapter will focus on these reconstructed bodies, specifically how these media violate the female body, while also suggesting that these subjects are aware of the adaptation politics which surround them.

Chapter 3. “As Gay as a Summer Insect”: Monstrosity, Vivisection, and the Female Body

The little girl does not scream when she meets Frankenstein’s monster. She only screams when he begins to kill her. This shocking moment in Whale’s *Frankenstein* comes after the young girl tries to teach the monster how to float flowers on the river. The scene radically changes when the Creature misinterprets her lesson and transforms her from teacher to victim. In doing so, the Creature essentially warps her knowledge of the natural world, that flowers float, while signaling that the feminine body is interchangeable with the natural. By juxtaposing the laws of nature with the feminine, the Creature dehumanizes the girl and drowns her with the rest of her flowers. The scene seems to suggest that the little girl died because she was naive enough to trust the monster. Unlike the other characters in Whale’s film, she is not initially afraid of the Creature. Rather, the Creature reminds her of another child, someone who needs a friend but also an education. By sympathizing with the monster in this way, the girl ultimately compares herself to him, which implies that both figures are in some way monstrous. Although she dies because of this comparison, the film still suggests that the female body is victim, monster, and teacher simultaneously. These labels pose the question: how are women abused in media like *Frankenstein*, and how do these women understand their victimization?

This drowning scene outlines two ways in which women are traditionally treated in horror films, either as victim or monster. However, the outcome of this scene additionally suggests two things. One, that femininity is a type of ignorance which will make you prone to monstrous predators. The second, there is logic beneath femininity, one which, if misinterpreted, has deadly consequences. I argue that this approach complicates what initially appears as naivety and passivity to suggest that there is a logic underlying this appearance and that women operate within their victimization. In my last chapter, I examined the ways in which adaptations mirror

the Creature's amalgamated form, and how *Pan* demonstrates this by treating both the subject and film as a body. This final chapter will focus on these cuts, specifically the way *Frankenstein* narratives silence their female Creatures. In other words, I will focus on the organs or bodies which I previously argued adaptations use, examining what dangers they pose and why they are so violated. As Shelley's *Frankenstein* illustrates, the female Creature is a threat because of her ability to procreate without Victor's control. I argue that this extends beyond sexual procreation and into knowledge, or the capability for women to understand passivity and work within their archetypes. I will thus argue that Shelley, Whale, and del Toro's projects each present versions of a silent victim, only to additionally subvert these models. Whale presents a traditional passive victim, del Toro incorporates the little girl, and Shelley works the innocent angel. Each of these women are abused in some way but use these positions to subtly assert themselves. Although both Whale's *Bride* and Shelley's *Elizabeth* ultimately fail to change their circumstances, Ofelia manages to reframe her status as a little girl. These women thus operate between victim and monster to create a subtle counternarrative to the ones which surrounds them.

This chapter will first examine how these works treat the female body as a symbol, and how their dismemberment represents both a literal and metaphoric suppression. I begin by describing how *Pan* treats Ofelia's mother and associates her with death and decay. I relate her maternal body to the Female Creature, both of whom are suppressed by the men who created them, socially and economically in *Pan*. This implies that the threat the Female Creature poses, her ability to create children, has already happened in *Pan*. Ofelia thus functions as the uncontrollable product of a monstrous female body. This leads to my second discussion where I expand on the monstrous body by describing Whale's *Bride*. I argue that the film treats the *Bride* as a literal test subject, not just a person who is subjected. I end this point by describing the

Bride's wordless scream, filled with thoughts that she can not acceptably speak. I suggest that this shriek echoes and stretches into later horror cinema, particularly in *Pan*.

My next section details how Victor treats Elizabeth as an insect in Shelley's text, a term which emphasizes her role as flighty and a pest. I compare the terms incest with insect to suggest that this wording is a part of Victor's incest avoidance model, one which objects to Elizabeth using subtle atypical romantic language. This will draw from Victor's first description of Elizabeth in addition to the two other times he uses the term insect; to describe the Creature and the grave worm. Both references imply that Elizabeth is monstrous to Victor and causes him to seek alternative inheritance models. My final section incorporates Theresa Kelley's term "the edge of hazard" (90) to detail how these women, particularly Elizabeth, operate within passivity and create a different version of natural science. I suggest that we can read Elizabeth as an entomologist, one who both studies insects and, because she is an insect to Victor, studies herself. I will draw from Sam George's evidence on what constitutes entomology in Shelley's era and compare this with Elizabeth's letter and defense of Justine. I do so to suggest that Elizabeth uses scientific language throughout the text, a form which directly opposes Victor's method. I end this discussion by comparing Kelley's edge to Ofelia to suggest that she and the other women in these works are not simply victim or monster, but conscious figures stuck within a system which operates on them, similar to the adaptations model I detailed in my last chapter. Only by embracing liminality and working within passivity can these women manage to enact independent action.

3.1 The Female Body as a Symbol

Similar to Whale's portrayal of the little girl, del Toro involves the same politics and symbols of innocence through Ofelia. She operates beneath the adult world and has very little

power in the social realm. However, Ofelia is still aware of the adult issues which exist around her. This is primarily because of her age, as at 11, Ofelia is an unstable figure. She is on the edge of maturity, which means that the childlike innocence she is associated with has begun to disappear. Ofelia's portrayal similarly complicates the redemptive view of childhood, whereby children embody future potential, as Ofelia moves towards an uncertain future, one which the film ultimately kills. The film thus troubles the implications of being a little girl in addition to what connotations and maturity this liminal position might contain. One way in which the film gestures to this liminal body is featuring multiple fallopian symbols. Various theorists have discussed these symbols at length (Richard Lindsay and Kim Edwards), but what is less discussed is how these womb images are sickly. For example, del Toro once described Ofelia by noting that her "idea of heaven, ultimately, is to go back into her mother's belly" (in Lindsay 16), but the film illustrates that this womb-like heaven is associated with death. Ofelia's mother dies while giving birth, which means that what was safe and fertile has become the opposite.

Likewise, fear of maternal death also appears in *Frankenstein*. If we read Carmen as Caroline, then the maternal body becomes a haunting figure which disrupts the domestic sphere and causes further death and isolation. However, if we instead read Carmen as the dismembered female Creature of Shelley's text, then Ofelia becomes the frightening progeny which Victor cannot control. Ofelia is Vidal's stepdaughter, meaning that although he is responsible for her, they are not biologically related. When she misbehaves or tries to run away, it still reflects on him, which means that the two are involuntarily connected. This also explains why Vidal kills Ofelia when she tries to escape with his son, rather than detaining her. Technically she poses no threat, as a little girl, but the implications around her are threatening. Additionally, Vidal's failure to control his indirect offspring says something about his ideological and systemic

control. The way his broader actions are implicated by Ofelia, whom he can not contain, thus resemble the fears Victor has about the female Creature's offspring.

Other fertility symbols in *Pan* include the moon and blood, as the moon measures Ofelia's quest but also combines with blood to represent menstruation and the womb. Although these symbols have been unpacked based on their gender connotations, what I find more intriguing is how these feminine symbols are additionally politicized. The moon has no direct role in the narrative and is instead an ancient feminized body which watches the world and the narrative. This is coincidentally the same way women operate in the film. Both observe the world and operate in more subtle or invisible ways, as the moon quietly guides Ofelia's quest while also illustrating her growing maturity. Likewise, spilt blood becomes a political act, not just in the film's violent moments. Ofelia understands the importance of blood, as although she is willing to give the mandrake some of her blood, she is not willing to sacrifice her brother's. Blood is thus associated with life but also knowledge. The need to spill blood, specifically women's, also relates to the need to control information. For example, Vidal only attacks Mercedes and Ofelia because they are opposing his regime and information. He does so to ensure that they do not escape and share information with the rebels. This need for control, in addition to del Toro's assertion that the film is a "Womb with a view" (in Lindsay 6), imply that the female body connects to a symbolic order, but one which is decomposing or apparently passive in the face of male domination.

The moon and dead mother reappear in *Frankenstein*, as both del Toro and Shelley feature the female body amid decay. Before detailing Victor's associations with his mother, I would like to focus on the Female Creature. Even unborn, this woman poses both a biological and conceptual threat to Victor as her ability to give birth is as dangerous as her ability to

directly work against Victor. It is no coincidence that Victor comes to this conclusion after he sees his male creation in moonlight, as this combination reminds him of both of his paternal anxiety but also the fertile female body. Victor has already associated the moon and nature with womanhood, so his decision to rip the woman apart directly after seeing the moon signals his broader fears around control. This act also becomes the ultimate version of suppression, as the woman is not given the opportunity to speak or defend herself.

Victor's extreme suppression reappears in many horror and *Frankenstein* films, as the violence against women becomes a voyeuristic trope, one where women's bodies are interchangeable and consistently abused. Sometimes Elizabeth's body becomes the female Creature, and other times this violence is more symbolic. What remains is that the female body is prone to violation and reconstruction, as Victor continues to rebuild women only to further violate them. Women become interchangeable parts in the narrative and can thus be summarized using categories like 'Victor's wife', 'love interest', and 'victim'. They receive no other attributes other than these titles. Unlike Whale's Creature, who is corrupted just by using the wrong brain, the female Creature is analogous with all women kind, and the threat she poses is found in all women.

3.2 I Now Pronounce You Victim: Whale's Bride

Likewise, the way *Frankenstein* media structures these women is inherently sexualized. Many instances of indirect sexual abuse occur in Shelley's text, particularly with the unsubtle rape association in Victor's passionate tearing of the female Creature (175). These connotations become more evident in Whale's film, where both the camera and its characters violate the female body. According to Elizabeth Young, both the camera's gaze and filmmaker treat the female body as a site of experiment and abuse, just as Victor does (12). Similar to the way

adaptations cut their subject, Whale's film utilizes both a violent and sexualized cut. His *Bride of Frankenstein* from 1935 visualizes the extent of this while illustrating how female figures are interchangeable. The very title of this film gestures to the categories mentioned above, as does the question of who the bride is. Her lack of name makes her no one at all (4), just a body ready to be recycled. At least the Creature is regularly, if not mistakenly, called Frankenstein. The term 'Bride' in the title is more complex, as technically both Elizabeth and the female Creature fill this role.

I refer to Young here because she outlines how the title is just one of the many complicated dismissals in the film, especially when compared to the graphic scenes which were cut. Not only was the ending changed to remove the suggestion that the female Creature's heart was Elizabeth's (7), but the film originally included an extraordinarily horrific scene. Allegedly, the original cut included a moment where Dr. Praetorius, Victor's mentor, dissects and experiments on a live woman as she screams and begs for mercy (7). This radically changes Shelley's original material, as although it is never specified where Victor got his parts, they are dead when he begins to reconstruct. In Whale's film, these literal cut scenes demonstrate the extent to which the female body becomes an anonymous vehicle for experimentation. They become a literal test subject, not just one who is subjected but an actual object.

Whale's filmmaking mirrors this experimentation by refusing to identify women as anything more than nameless victims. At the same time, these victim's womanhood is what makes them prone to cutting. Although they lose their identity and become literally objectified, they maintain their femininity. Del Toro's *Pan* also involves this identity dissection, but its female characters manage to resist it. Vidal places each of his women in a specific and controllable category; servant, mother, child. He reinforces these roles and narratives to suppress

and detach these figures from alternative identities. His bride is also dissected, as Vidal prioritizes his son over Carmen. It is noteworthy that in the scene where he informs the doctor to save his son instead of the mother, he does not refer to her by name. Vidal's treatment similarly mirrors the anonymous victim in Whale's film, as both women die painfully so that an ambitious man can succeed.

The women in these films suffer from three forms of dismemberment: literal, metaphorical, and visual. They are literally divided and cut by men, but also metaphorically split from their identities and names. The third kind is that they are visually cut to emphasize their victimized positions. The camera closes in on them in a predatory way, focusing on individual body parts and thus dividing the subject. For example, during the birth of the female Creature in *Bride*, the camera cuts between close up shots and full body. It begins by cutting to her eyes, which are the first thing we see after the bandages are removed. Once she is dressed, the camera moves into three cuts, each of which magnify and move towards her face. In the third shot, the woman twitches her head to examine her newfound environment. In doing so, she also outlines the tight frame which has cut her from the rest of her body. She looks to the side, then up, and then to the other side, all at things which the viewer can not see. Thereby, she gestures to the almost prison-like outline which surrounds her, inescapable and voyeuristic.

Another example of this voyeuristic cut comes from *Bride's* most iconic shot. While the film appears to victimize women, it also draws attention to this tradition and expectation of abuse in one startling moment. When the Bride first meets the Creature, her potential mate and the rationale for her existence, she utters a wordless shriek and hisses at the men in the room. Young argues that this is the film's attempt to challenge expectations around passive victimhood, but I think it goes further than this. I agree that this moment is strangely liberating, because the Bride

recognizes the visual economy and its attempt to dissect her. I believe her scream and eye contact is reminiscent of the Milton quote which opens Shelley's text; "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay/To mold me man? Did I solicit thee/From darkness to promote me?" (47). Combined with Whale's image of the screaming woman, the question then becomes: was she created just to be a victim? Likewise, using the same logic which implies that the women in the film are interchangeable, her wordless scream becomes a cry for all violated female bodies. Her glance and scream resonate and thus become a rallying cry for the women who work within the categories of victim and monster.

3.3 The Insect: Understanding the Female Body as Disgusting and Monstrous

These works suggest that the female body is intended for two purposes, either to be the delicate victim or the monster. Shelley's novel balances these archetypes using one symbol; the insect. Victor introduces this symbol during his first description of Elizabeth, noting "She was docile and good tempered, yet gay and playful as a summer insect" (66). While this passage features a variety of atypical romantic language, this insect image stands particularly apart due to its connotations. The insect can be read two ways. Either, Victor refers to a dainty, flighty, but ultimately short-lived summer insect or to a mosquito-like breed, a pest which circulates around sites of death and decay. I argue that Victor switches between these perspectives in the novel, based on the frequent dismissal of his cousin. This initial passage highlights his disdain through its conditional language, as Victor describes Elizabeth using contradiction clauses such as 'although' and 'yet'. For example, he details that "Her figure was light and airy; and though capable of enduring great fatigue, she appeared the most fragile creature in the world" (66), which implies that Elizabeth is not one but many things. She is a contradiction, hovering between two simultaneous definitions or attributes. Here, she is both enduring and fragile, terms

which again relate to the insect as either a pest or overly delicate.

Insects are associated with multiple things, but according to Coleridge, who detailed insects in same year as *Frankenstein's* release, “the insect world, taken at large, appears as an intenser life” (75) because it is more than just a symbol, especially for Victor. Let us first turn to why Elizabeth might be pest-like for Victor, and how she embodies this “intenser life” (75). Elizabeth represents his responsibilities both to his family and to a traditional heteronormative system. Victor establishes the importance of this familial duty within the first line of his narrative; “I am by birth a Genevese; and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic” (64), and it is his responsibly to maintain that distinction. His sense of responsibility becomes more complex when we read Victor using an incest avoidance model. Although Victor and Elizabeth are not related by blood, they have been socialized as siblings. Elizabeth’s father abandons her to remarry, and Caroline becomes her surrogate mother. She trains Elizabeth to be her replacement, focusing on domestic love over romantic (66) to secure Elizabeth to the family. By marrying Victor, Elizabeth could officially become a family member and gain social and economic security. While Elizabeth is raised as Victor’s sister and plaything (66), there is always an underlying tension in their relationship. This is traditionally read as an incestuous tangle (Vlasopolos 128), mainly because Caroline wants Elizabeth to become a mother, sister, cousin, and lover to Victor. Many argue that this is what drives Victor from the family and into his isolation, one which he hopes will rid of him his incestuous pest. Before considering how the terms ‘incest’ and ‘insect’ conjoin and alternate, its noteworthy that Victor’s insect term is an attempt to remove Elizabeth from the social order. By comparing her to the natural, or insect, world, Victor dehumanizes Elizabeth, thus removing himself and his desires from the conflicting moral and familial duties. We can also relate this need to classify Elizabeth as nature based as

another example of Victor's desire to control the natural world. In both, Victor attempts to reorder nature for his own benefit.

Victor's treatment of Elizabeth thus leaves the question: what are the connotations around insects? The term has not been discussed by many *Frankenstein* academics, except to suggest that Victor uses it to distance her troubling body and thus control her (Labbe 351). I would argue that this issue of control is even more nuanced than mere dehumanizing. Victor makes a massive generalization with the word 'insect', which seems unusual for a scientist. Because he does not specify to what type of "summer insect" (Shelley 66) Elizabeth is, he leaves the term and his behaviour towards it up for interpretation. I will refer to Sam George to situate this evidence, as she writes extensively about how insects were perceived in Shelley's time. They were primarily divided into three categories: useful, pretty, and pest. Useful insects included bees and silkworms which were celebrated because they had economic value (495). Pretty insects were entertaining to look at, like butterflies, and pests were a problem which needed to be controlled. Literary women also balance these three categories, and because Victor is so unspecific, Elizabeth functions as each of them. Elizabeth is economically useful, as she benefits the family, and she is very beautiful.

The third category listed by George are where issues arise for Victor. As pests, insects are difficult to catch, control, or observe, each of which Victor encounters in the novel. Linnaeus' classification adds an additional problem, as he suggests that there is a "so-called metamorphoses of nearly all *Insects*" (28) whereby they transform into a second creature, as the caterpillar becomes the butterfly. The threat Elizabeth poses is thus not what she currently embodies, but what she could become one day, which resembles the logic Victor uses towards the female Creature. So why would Victor use this term if it relates to eventual danger? The answer: insects

elicit disgust and are sexless (Coleridge 78). As such, the insect symbol represents both Victor's anxieties around incest but also an attempt to remove himself from this equation. Victor's goal is to asexualize his sister's incestuous body. Therefore, the term effectively illustrates that Victor is disgusted by his sister and that he wants to remove her fertility.

Victor's use of the term insect also creates a comparison between the Creature and Elizabeth, as the Creature is the only other character Victor refers to as an insect. This happens right after Victor meets the Creature, as he calls out "Begone, vile insect! Or rather stay, that I may trample you to dust" (Shelley 118). Victor's resentment links these figures, as he is responsible for them, paternally for the Creature and both romantically and maternally bound to Elizabeth. It is interesting as well that Shelley uses the same insect symbol in her 1826 *Last Man* novel, which deals with the apocalypse. The word appears two times, first as "we were gay as summer insects- playful as children" (70) and then as the "slight stir of invisible insects is heard and felt as the signal and type of desolation" (228). Both quotes describe insects in relation to naivety and impending violence, particularly the first one which emphasizes the characters Adrian and Idris' ignorance before the world falls apart. This quote refers to the same "gay as a summer insect" as Victor's description but does so to highlight that such a model foreshadows tragedy. By incorporating this reading onto Victor's term, it seems that Victor is being purposefully pessimistic and desolate about Elizabeth, a trend which Shelley would continue to use in later work.

Victor only refers to one insect by name in Shelley's text: the grave worm. This insect first appears when Victor is researching how to build the Creature, as he notes that "the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which...had become food for the worm" (78) and that "I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain" (78). The term 'inherit' here

implies that the worm operates as the body's progeny, one who takes parts of the body rather than biologically obtaining them. Although this is more parasitic and violent, it does reject the incestuous inheritance model Victor faces. As such, the parasitic body can reproduce by taking apart bodies, something which Victor soon after begins. Consequently, the grave worm reappears during Victor's incestuous dream, where his first kiss with Elizabeth, possibly the first romantic kind, transforms her into the corpse of his mother. As it does, Victor notices that "I saw the grave-worm crawling in the folds of the flannel" (84) which suggests that the insect reminds Victor both of these desolate and incestuous bodies but also of his need to escape Elizabeth. As such, the insect reminds Victor of two things, both of which he wants to escape from. The first, Elizabeth is a pretty and yet naive body, and the other, Elizabeth is a monstrous body and pest.

Pan also associates the female body with the insect using fairies. Ofelia relies on the fairies during her quest, as they alert her to danger but also report back to the Faun. The first fairy we meet appears as a large praying mantis, and it is only when Ofelia shows her a picture of a fairy that she transforms to mirror the image. Here, the insect becomes the woman, while the opposite occurs in *Frankenstein*. This is because the circumstances are very different, as Ofelia asks the fairy to identify herself, and gives her a possible suggestion, while Victor imposes his definition onto Elizabeth and uses it to justify his insecurities. *Pan* likewise treats this insect body as equally fantastic and monstrous, particularly when they are violently killed. Like Elizabeth and the Female Creature, these fairies are ripped apart, their heads chewed off by the Pale Man. What unites these figures is thus not just their association with the insect, but the way their bodies are violated by male monsters. The extreme nature of this violation implies that these women pose a threat. In Shelley, it's the fear of procreation, both biologic and mental. In *Pan*, the fairies get in the Pale Man's way as he tries to attack Ofelia. They sacrifice themselves

to slow down the Pale Man and protect her, and in doing so, embrace the pest-like associations of the insect. This is evident in the way the Pale Man at first tries to bat away the women before he attacks them. These women thus embrace the insect's negative connotations in order to stop the Pale Man from hurting Ofelia. As such, both the fairies and Elizabeth demonstrate that the need to control, destroy, and avoid the insect implies that these insects pose a threat. Even naming them as a specific insect or threat gives them a definition which they can work within, which explains why Victor is so unspecific with Elizabeth. The vague nature of his insect remark implies that Victor does not want to identify Elizabeth as anything concrete. Instead, he both classifies and declassifies her by focusing on surface level attributes rather than discussing her character. To classify her as one thing would mean confronting the way in which she operates.

3.4 Working within Passivity: The Edge of Hazard

I have previously detailed the extent to which del Toro, Shelley, and Whale's female characters have been victimized and controlled. The next section of my argument will focus on how these women, particularly Elizabeth and Ofelia, operate within this imposed passivity. I argue that these women participate in unconventional things and thoughts using acceptable and feminized methods. Passivity is thus a carefully managed status, one which women use to be undetected and dismissed. While their bodies are abused and suppressed in these works, these figures do what they can to work within this terminology. My argument stems from Theresa Kelley's term "the edge of hazard" (90), which she uses to discuss women in botany in the 19th century. Botany was an acceptable scientific study for women of the time, specifically as it kept women in their gardens, which functioned as an extension of the domestic realm. As a result of this gendering, botany features feminized subjects and was studied by similarly feminized scientists. The domesticized version of botany was consequently dismissed by many as a

feminine hobby, which benefitted the women studying it. Within this dismissal, women produced fascinating scientific work based on private observation and experience, instead of competitive and male dominated text studies.

Kelley argues that these botanists thus operated beside the edge of convention, which represents “the same authority, and pretty cruelty that attended making women into flowers or [enforced that] women who created flowers in thoroughly domestic settings...kept at bay” (90) and conformed. These same mechanics appear in del Toro and Shelley’s work, meaning that Kelley’s term extends beyond botany and into the self-conscious role of femininity. Kelley’s term is also a way to disregard traditional *Frankenstein* readings which suggest that “Elizabeth does nothing to fight her marginalized position” (Barron 61) or her passivity. Barron’s argument implies that the only active female presence in Shelley’s work is the Creature, who dramatizes “the double blind that women face as material objects and thinking subjects during the nineteenth century” (52). I believe that this position disregards the subtle ways in which Elizabeth can and does act in the text, as she is unable to behave more outright. Victor, by contrast, can exert himself physically to deal with his needs and issues. Elizabeth, and the other women in the text, must fold in (Boren and Montwieler) and consciously withdraw from active terms. By folding in, these figures can focus on their mental state and safely express themselves after consideration. The question then becomes: how can we expect obvious or visual signs of resistance in a text like *Frankenstein*, one where the social conventions surrounding women is so overwhelming? Like these female botanists, we must focus on miniscule observation rather than massive displays.

Before examining how Shelley represents this edge in her work, del Toro provides some good visual examples of Kelley’s edge. His film is very aware of the power discrepancy between

women and men, but suggests that, like Ofelia's imagination, there is power within the repressed. One tool which theorists like Irene Gomez-Castellano have commented on is the kitchen knife, which Mercedes uses to slash Vidal. Her argument is that it symbolizes a feminized weapon, one which has silently moved from the kitchen and into a masculine space (9). Extending this, we can read silence as a form of warfare, one which the knife embodies. Rather than stealing a weapon from Vidal or the resistance, Mercedes chooses a domestic weapon, one which she hides in the folds of her apron. Unlike other weapons, a kitchen knife is small and excusable, as Mercedes works in the kitchen. Therefore, when Mercedes stabs and slashes Vidal, she suddenly inverts the domestic system which once fed and supported him. When Vidal enters the scene, he jokingly notes that Mercedes is "just a woman" and that he can torture her on his own. Mercedes responds with "that's why I was able to get away with it-I was invisible to you". Vidal pays no attention to this warning, giving Mercedes a chance to escape. She cuts herself loose and stabs Vidal, noting "I'm not some old man! Not some wounded prisoner", which emphasizes that being "just a woman" has an advantage as it is a tool which Vidal never comprehended. It also stresses that Vidal's dismissal of women is what leads to his downfall. This resembles the same anxieties which Victor has about the female Creature. Victor is afraid that if she is left alone, she may work against him, which is the very thing which occurs in *Pan*.

3.5 Elizabeth the Entomologist

Elizabeth embodies the most compelling case of "edge of hazard" (Kelley 90) in Shelley's novel because many of her actions appear within Victor's dismissive descriptions. I believe that Elizabeth is aware of Victor's insect classification and avoidance model. This becomes more evident if we read her as an entomologist figure, another feminized science of the era but based on insects. This approach is a way to recognize how Elizabeth uses an

alternative and feminized version of science, and in doing so, contrasts Victor. It additionally implies that Elizabeth studies herself as an insect, acknowledging the conventions which surround her and using this scientific method to carefully translate her will into preestablished structures. Her mind is thus as scientific as Victor's is, but a very different version of natural science. One way in which Victor alludes to Elizabeth's ability to navigate femininity is through the word 'uncommon'. He uses this term to describe both Elizabeth and Caroline, associating them first with a feminine attribute and then noting that it is 'uncommon'. For Elizabeth, Victor notes in his first description that "Although she was lively and animated, her feelings were strong and deep, and her disposition uncommonly affectionate" (66), because she is affectionate, but something about her affection is wrong or off. He does something similar in an earlier description of his mother, where he details that "Caroline Beaufort possessed a mind of an uncommon mould" (102) as although his mother's mind has been moulded, it is still uncommon within that mould. It is not enough for either of these women to be unfeminine or unaffectionate, but just enough for Victor to be aware that something about these women is 'uncommon'.

Because both Caroline and Elizabeth are described as such, the text implies that this 'uncommon' behaviour links the two, and that Caroline has possibly trained Elizabeth using her uncommon mind (102). Caroline taught Elizabeth to replace her, but in doing so, established a female kinship education model which engrained this edge. It's no coincidence that such a system appears later in Safie's story to the De Lacey, as the Creature describes how Safie's mother escaped slavery and then taught her daughter to avoid such bondage using knowledge, specifically a kind forbidden to women (139). Here, a woman transfers unconventional knowledge to another so they can safely operate in society and within their suppressed position. Victor resents this kinship model and possibly blames it for his Caroline's death. When Elizabeth

falls ill, Caroline decides to take care of her, only to die from the same disease. Here, the transfer between women has deadly consequences. Victor's use of the term "her favourite" (72) in this situation illustrates his spite, as Elizabeth is not Caroline's biological child and yet the two created a bond and exchange of information which Victor can never recreate.

This emphasis on kinship between women is one of the many stark differences between Victor and Elizabeth's sciences. Another example is how the two view the world with different intentions, primarily based on their gendered positions. Victor focuses on controlling the world and reading old science, while Elizabeth utilizes the same observation and imagination skills as Kelley's botanists. Victor describes this dissimilarity as "I delighted in investigating the facts relative to the actual world; she busied herself in following the aerial creations of poets" (66), which emphasizes the real versus the creative views of the world. What makes this more complex is that Victor claims to investigate 'real' science but creates an 'unreal' Creature. He even implies this contradiction in his note that "The world to me was a secret, which I desired to discover; to her it was a vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own" (66). While Elizabeth is interested in peopling the world based on these secrets and what is already there, Victor wants to uncover the world and possess both it and its secrets.

Elizabeth's traits of imagination, observation, and creativity are all those discussed by Sam George in her definition of 19th century entomology, which focuses on collecting and illustrating insect breeds in addition to observing the natural world. Its documentation style encouraged women to actively participate with nature instead of focusing on texts. This detail marks another substantial difference between Victor and Elizabeth, as Victor is entirely text based while Elizabeth is connected to nature. For example, when Victor tries to show Elizabeth his reading on Cornelius Agrippa, he claims that she is not interested in the study (69). However,

this moment also asks the question: was she uninterested because it was too advanced or because it was an outdated text based on a non-inclusive version of natural history?

Another area where Elizabeth and Victor contrast is in how they collect information. Georges' argues that the feminized version of entomology discouraged the unnecessary destruction and collection of insect life (496), which firmly separates Victor and Elizabeth's approaches to the natural world. Imagination has more value here as it is a way to detail minuscule aspects without disrupting the environment, something which Victor fundamentally opposes. Victor focuses on the big picture rather than its smaller, but equally relevant, brush strokes. This is evident in his unspecified use of the term 'insect', but also in his disregard for individuals like Elizabeth and Justine. Elizabeth, by Victor's description, peoples the world based on her imagination (66), and in doing so, creates something based on what is already there. By contrast, Victor reconfigures the world in his own perverse image which he then wants to control. These differences mirror the debate around gender and science in the 19th century. Shelley may have even been aware of these gendered distinctions because of her mother, as Mary Wollstonecraft supported the non-violent approach to entomology. George notes that Wollstonecraft was influenced by entomology documents which opposed tormenting any living creature, and that she used this as background for her 1791 *Original Stories from Real Life* (497). This implies that Shelley's novel may have adopted a similar stance by critiquing Victor's need to violently collect, specifically for the "glory [that] would attend the discovery" (Shelley 69). Elizabeth contrasts Victor specifically because she is interested in filling the world with her thoughts and observations, rather than accumulating living bodies. In other words, Victor takes while Elizabeth fills.

Victor's recognition of this fundamental difference explains why he so frequently

criticizes Elizabeth's mind, and not just her behaviour. He often fixates on what Elizabeth chooses to think about, like when he notes, "I never saw so much grace both of person and mind united to so little pretension" (66). It is in fact this "little pretension" which guides Elizabeth through the natural world and into the tumultuous one she encounters in the text. She observes the small details and her place within these details throughout the narrative. As a result, when Justine is accused of murder, Elizabeth refuses to accept the trial's evidence (101), even though everyone else does. Elizabeth knows to look further, so although Victor implies that she is foolhardy with statements like "how is my poor Elizabeth" (100), she is ultimately correct. The evidence is false, and more importantly, she is willing to defend her position, something which not even Victor is brave enough to do.

3.6 "The Otherside of the Question": Elizabeth's Scientific Method

Elizabeth does not simply utilize the philosophies of entomology; she incorporates many of their practices in the novel. She does so to carefully watch herself along this edge, and to make sure that she never extends beyond convention. Simultaneously, Elizabeth uses these methods in order to produce scientific claims and evidence. One scene where these features are apparent is her letter to Victor. Elizabeth uses a series of 'I cannot' statements, including what constitutes as her first line in the letter and in the novel; "I cannot describe to you the uneasiness we have all felt concerning your health" (88). This statement is like Victor's use of 'uncommon', as although Elizabeth does not describe her concerns, she still identifies that she has them, and in doing so, draws attention to them. As such, she uses the statement to imply what she cannot say directly. Another example is the line "I cannot bear to think of the otherside of the question" (91-92), because she does not talk about what the question is but still highlights its existence. In doing so, Elizabeth makes a series of indirect arguments in the letter, whereby the edge of hazard

is Elizabeth's ability to describe something by not talking about it. Another example is the way Elizabeth instructs Victor on things he already knows. She discusses Justine as if Victor had never met her and describes incidents which Victor is already aware of. As such, Elizabeth is not really addressing Victor, but rather, disguising her criticism of Victor and his lack of responsibility. Her lesson on Justine highlights how good hearted and responsible Caroline was for embracing and taking care of Justine, while Victor does the opposite by avoiding his family.

The third notable aspect of the letter is Elizabeth's scientific language. In addition to her carefully chosen 'I cannot' statements, Elizabeth utilizes many overtly formal and scholarly terms. For instance, she notes "I cannot conclude without again" (90) which implies that her 'so-called' casual discussion is a formal argument. Likewise, whenever she uses 'I cannot', she follows it with a guiding term like describe, conclude, and think. Each of these emphasize thought and consideration, which suggests that this is not simply a letter but a thorough essay. This coincidentally follows another entomological practice, as letters are both public and private, like a garden. Therefore, they are an acceptable means for women to use introspection (George 491). I address this because letters are a complex negotiation between private and public but also between past and present, as they speak to the reader but were written in the past. This liminal position resembles Ofelia's two realms, both of which occur simultaneously and blend into one another. Like Ofelia, Elizabeth uses this liminal position to illustrate her perspective.

Elizabeth's scientific voice reappears during Justine's trial, where she expresses herself after using Kelley's "see for self method" (104), whereby female scientists were encouraged to make observations rather than relying on others or texts. Elizabeth demonstrates this skill throughout the case, including when she wants to see William's corpse (96). Although she faints shortly after, Elizabeth still needs to see rather than relying on second-hand information.

Additionally, during the trial, Elizabeth becomes increasingly frustrated by her friend's case and eventually speaks on her behalf, even when Victor will not. However, when she defends Justine, she continues to carefully walk this edge by managing her words and attitude. Victor describes this moment as, "Elizabeth saw even this last resource, her excellent disposition and irreproachable conduct, about to fail...although violently agitated, she desired permission to address the court" (Shelley 105) in a respectable way. She also centers her argument for Justine on domestic and feminine values, focusing on Justine's role as a family member and in the house. In doing so, Elizabeth translates her violent agitation (105) into a smart defense which relies on enforcing stereotypes. Therefore, Elizabeth maintains her composure and forms a convincing argument based on her self-aware understanding of the situation. When this fails, she and Justine have a moment of "half suppressed emotion" (109), which again relates to female kinship systems and how women are connected through trauma and self-recognition.

After the trial, Elizabeth almost slips off the edge by admitting to Victor that she is self-aware of her situation. Here, she admits that she can see the narrative around her and her role as a victim in the genre, noting "Before, I looked upon the accounts of vice and injustice, that I read in books or heard from others...but now...men appear to me as monsters thirsting" (113) because she has seen for herself. She shuns whatever book knowledge once taught her and realizes that the world is very different when one pays attention to its details. Like the little girl at the beginning of this chapter, Elizabeth's lessons and science are ultimately dismissed and misinterpreted, and she is unable to save Justine, let alone herself.

The overlap between men and monster also appears to Ofelia, who like Elizabeth, is aware of the violent systems in her world. However, dissimilar to Elizabeth, Ofelia is given the opportunity to rewrite her narrative. Del Toro details that Ofelia "chooses to give birth to herself

as she wanted to be” (in Thormann 183) and is thus an author in *Pan*. She is the one who wanders between fantasy and reality and chooses to ignore the boundaries which separate the two. She offers a liminal route between these categories, essentially destabilising the two in doing so. This is significant because Ofelia remains on the edge of hazard at the end of the film, as she is physically on the edge of the labyrinth pit. Although she is a storyteller, meaning she has authority over her story, she is still victimized by what Kelley calls “the authority, and petty cruelty that attended making women into flowers” (90) and then metaphorically throwing those flowers into the river. Both she and the little girl I mentioned prior are killed because a dominating man misinterpreted their logic. Vidal is incapable of seeing Ofelia’s liminal understanding of the world, not just between reality and fantasy, but between maturity and innocence, passivity and action. This is ultimately fatal for Ofelia and the little girl in Whale’s film, in addition to Elizabeth in Shelley’s text. Whale’s *Bride* also follows this trend, as her unsubtle rejection of the Creature is what instigates her death. Each of these figures are self-aware and attempt to make their own decisions within their victimized position. Although these women face these injustices differently, each recognizes that they are just parts in a narrative which refuses to authorize them without also destroying them. While *Pan* critiques this model, it does so by referring to the violated female body and this wordless scream.

Ultimately, what unites these women is their conscious understanding of the society which either victimizes or turns them into monsters. Whale’s *Bride* provides a good symbol for this through her wordless scream, one which embodies Elizabeth’s violent yet silent agitation (105). Ofelia, at the very least, can stay liminal and between categories at the end of her narrative. The Elizabeth types have less choice, as they continue to be recycled and abused by various adaptations. It is only by embracing this liminal role that these women can operate within

their worlds. Even then, however, these women are stuck on the edge of convention, victimized and cut over and over again, unable to stop the cycle.

Conclusion

Del Toro keeps a massive Boris Karloff *Frankenstein* head at the top of his staircase (Koudounaris 43). The statue is the first and last thing one sees as they enter his carefully curated home. The same can be said of his films, as each of his projects contain this unspoken yet ever present body. The Creature is a collection in two ways, both as a subject and an approach to filmmaking. Just as del Toro is interested in parts, so too are his films focused on amalgamated bodies and overlapping states. This suggests that although Victor Frankenstein never outlines the way in which he built his Creature, his method is recreated in the very legacy of the Creature. For both del Toro and Victor, what is dead, decayed, and discarded may still contain life in our modern world. Adaptations thus vivisect their characters and perpetuate a cycle of violent redistribution. However, as *Pan* demonstrates, the victimized bodies in these works are often self-aware and rely on liminality, or the overlap space between two realms or conventions, to subtly object to this model. As such, *Pan* critiques the voyeuristic tropes of collecting nameless women while reflecting on this tradition.

My thesis is just an introduction to a broader theme across del Toro's canon and the adaptation genre. I believe by discussing how *Frankenstein* influences the subject and form of film we can analyze the ways in which literature and cinema collaborate. I similarly believe that viewing cinema as a collection of parts allows for a better perspective on passivity and victimization in horror films. Because these films treat women as disposable parts, they perpetuate Victor's self-absorbed methodology. However, as *Pan* and *Frankenstein* also illustrate, there are ways in which these victims work within this model and reject this passivity. Characters like Elizabeth and Ofelia oppose Victor's adaptation model, as they create based on what is already there, something which del Toro also attempts to do.

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