Humour and Horror in Science Fiction and Comedic Frankensteinian Films

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With the cyborg, the Frankenstein myth comes full circle... With the advent of genetic engineering and cybernetic technologies, notions of artificiality have changed; the monster is no robot but a flesh-and-blood construction like ourselves. Indeed, as Haraway contends, most people in the West today are cyborgs. (Clayton, 1996)

Introduction: The Numinous and the Humorous

The origins of this article date back to the 1980s, when I realised that the Frankensteinian cinemyth had spawned more than classic horror renditions, producing, among others, comedic and science fiction versions (see Appendix One). It dawned on me that these "hideous progeny" were an unruly lot, often defying classification, ranging in a continuum across horror and laughter. It is precisely this ability to elicit a complex spectrum of reactions, ranging from fear, terror, awe, laughter, ridicule, ironic sympathy and distance, which fascinated me, and which forms the heart of this inquiry. I was drawn to how the Invisible Man's dark laughter that "closes" *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* in effect leaves the narrative open, leaving the nature of what laughter signifies, at the end of what had appeared a standard comedy, disturbingly unsettled. I found myself ambivalent about how Elizabeth's (Madeline Kahn) ecstatic breaking out into the melodious "Ah, sweet mystery of life, at last I have found you," as she and the creature engage in an implied rape-turned-seduction, elicits laughter rather than terror. In addition, the attractive-repulsive magnetism of the transgressive sexuality of Dr. Frank-N-Furter's transvestite mad scientist in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* cries out for further examination.

Prior work that I have done on the cinematic retellings of the *Frankensteinian* narrative have remained limited, for the purpose of clarity, to films that do not blur the genre boundaries of "straight" or "classic" horror (Picart, 1998: 384-404; Picart, 2000: 17-34; Picart, 2001). This work aims to diffuse beyond the traditional cinematic depiction of the evolving *Frankenstein* narrative with an eye to clarifying the relationships binding comedy to horror that are made manifest in comedic versions, such as *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*; science fiction versions, such as *Alien*, and iterations in which horror and comedy hang in a tight, oscillating balance, such as *Terminator* and *Terminator 2*. In brief, what I show, using a Koestler-ian inspired analysis of the ambivalent politics of these hybrid genres is that the proximity of laughter to horror enables more liberatory versions (albeit ambivalent ones) of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth to emerge (Koestler, 1949). It is important to note that I am referring to "Frankensteinian" stories, rather than strict narratives that revolve around the cinematic character called "Dr. Frankenstein" or "Baron Frankenstein." In taking this position, I agree with Rushing and Frentz's analysis that the recurring myth of technology running wild is "Frankensteinian" and is continued in such films as *Jaws*, *Rocky IV*, *Blade Runner*, and *The Terminator* (Rushing and Frentz, 1989; Rushing and Frentz 1989); yet

unlike Rushing and Frentz, whose theoretical framework is Jungian, the approach I use is more in line with Margaret Whitford's analysis of Luce Irigaray's mytho-politics, where Greek myths constitute a record of how matriarchal myths gradually give way to patriarchal myths (Whitford, 1994: 33). In the myth of the thigh birth of Dionysus, Irigaray argues, one can still detect signs of the deadly struggle between the two forms of narratives. "In Dionysos, the fight to the death between two conceptions of the world is still staged. He participates in both, and clearly shows he is torn apart by that double allegiance." (Irigaray, 1991: 129) In hybrid Frankensteinian myths that ricochet across realms of laughter and horror, I argue, this ambivalence, constrained to a greater degree by the formulaic requirements of the straight horror genre, become unleashed, even if only temporarily (Picart, 2003).

There are two elements that are continuous from my earlier work and this article, which explain my choice of the word "Frankensteinian" rather than "Frankenstein": 1) the emphasis on *parthenogenetic* births (male self-births, such as Frankenstein's birthing of his creature), and 2) the focus on the *third shadow*, or representations of the female monster and the feminine-as-monstrous, as a crucial site of ambivalence revelatory of tensions regarding gender, power, and technology. Briefly sketched, what I showed in prior work is that traditional Frankenstein films in the straight horror genre generally attempt to excise out, or severely de-limit, the novel's embedded critique of the Romantic politics of gender, as hiding a politics of masculine domination and narcissism. In place of the novel's complex characterisation of the monster, these straight horror films often substitute a grotesque creation doomed to criminality and isolation; in place of the ambivalent relationships binding Victor to his mother and his bride/surrogate mother, these films obliterate the M/Other, and set up a more conventional love triangle between male figures, such as Henry Frankenstein and Victor Clerval, who seem monstrously cobbled together from fragments of Shelley's novelistic characterisation of them.

Yet this severe repression backfires. At the centre of these horror films is a retelling of an exaggerated myth of male self-birthing -- a myth whose classic analogue may be glimpsed in the story of the birth of Dionysus from the thigh of Zeus. I argue that contemporary *Frankenstein*-ian films draw from an antinomic hybrid of pre-Socratic and Romantic narratives, both of which mythically configure the natural world as one of strife, in which gendered antagonisms comprise a crucial component. Pre-Socratic myths, as Nietzsche tells us, are narratives "beyond good and evil," whose "morality" derives from an unadulterated expression of the will-to-power (Nietzsche, 1989). Romantic myths, as the novel shows us, can constitute a masked and murderous domination of nature, woman, the Other, done in the name of the pursuit of Scientific Truth or Artistic Creativity. While pre-Socratic myths give evidence of a tense and creative agonism between matriarchal and patriarchal myths, Romantic myths (and straight horror film renditions of the Frankenstein story) have a predominantly patriarchal cast, in which manifestations of the "feminine" or "M/Other" are severely delimited and disciplined, often, with a great deal of narrative strain. Ironically, this immense narrative strain conjures up something other than a simple victimiser (male) -- victim (female) model. Rather, what we occasionally glimpse are the outlines of the feminised/tortured male body, which requires, in order to sustain the borders of masculinity versus femininity, a radical repression of the powerful female body, negatively re-envisaged as what I call the *third* shadow--either the female monster (as in the female creature in *Bride of Frankenstein*) or the feminine-as-monstrous (for example, the ambitious and seductive Justine in *The Curse of Frankenstein*; see Appendix Two). Yet this repression, even as it gains an easy victory, attests, in the vehemence of its negation, to its dark underside. As

Deborah Wilson writes: "Victor never quite makes maternity *exclusively* male; the womb may be displaced, the maternal body reinscribed, but it will not remain subsumed." (Wilson, 1997: 109) This strain on the intertwined patriarchal myths of parthenogenesis, and of science as an unambiguous guarantor of progress, is even more obvious in comedic, science fiction, and horror-comedic film versions of the evolving Frankenstein myth.

Stated differently, these more contemporary offshoots of the Frankensteinian narrative allow a fuller emergence of what Janice Rushing and Thomas Frentz call the "dystopian" aspects of the Frankensteinian complex (Rushing and Frentz, 1989: 62). In comparison with their horror film counterparts, which strive to stamp out any hint of sexual ambiguity and to create traditionally "happy" endings, these more contemporary renditions, which range across comedy and horror, tend to unleash these elements -- at least for longer, and in a more overt fashion, than their classic horror counterparts. The fact that even in these more subversive and open-ended narratives, some form of conventional closure is reached -- e.g., Frank-N-Furter is savagely sentenced to death because his "lifestyle is too extreme" in the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* -- does not negate the full blooded romp this larger-than-life transvestite has wreaked upon traditional gender categories. Though Janet, Brad and Dr. Scott survive their adventures in Frank-N-Furter's castle, no traditional conclusion of the narrative is achieved. The last shot in which we see them does not show Brad and Janet getting married; nor is the professor shown safely enclosed in a laboratory setting, his masculinity reinstated. Rather, we have an extreme high angle shot, which looks down from the point of view of Frank-N-Furter's castle blasting off, revealing how tiny their figures are, amidst the rubble and gaping hole; the professor's stockinged leg sticks out from the rubble -- an absurd and laughable spectacle defying conventional closure.

Thus, I carry on this genealogy of the transformations of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth into its more contemporary renditions, and more importantly, into selected examples of its comedic, science-fiction and hybrid progeny, which constitute horror-comedy. Once again, the guiding question is what these transformations reveal about the evolving depictions of "masculinity" and "femininity," particularly when the revisioning of the Frankenstein narrative shifts from straight horror to comedy, science fiction, or horror-comedy. What I argue is that unlike their straight horror counterparts, where Mary Shelley's critique of patriarchal politics is predominantly silenced (though not without tension), more contemporary hybrid versions (comedic, science fiction and horror-comedy offshoots) effectively unleash, at least for a time, the transgressive powers of the parthenogenetic birth's twin myth, the story of Baubo's *ana-suromai* (Baubo's lifting of her skirts to reveal her genitalia and belly, uttering "dirty" jokes, as a defiant act celebrating female reproduction and sexual desire). In taking this position, I draw from Sarah Kofman's interpretation that "Baubo can appear as a female double of Dionysus," which she does by locating Baubô and Dionysus as masks/symbols for life as eternally self-generating and protean (Kofman, 1988: 197; Picart, 1999). Yet if I were to carry the implications of Kofman's genealogy even further, it appears that Baubo is more than Dionysus' twin (a quintessentially parthenogenetic being: a son born from a father, devoid of feminine participation, much like Frankenstein's Monster). As someone who nurses a goddess of fertility back into health, and as the woman upon whose belly the image of Iaachos-Dionysus (i.e., Dionysus as an infant) is etched, Baubo seems more powerful than Dionysus is. It is this celebration of female sexuality and power that the hybrid versions of the evolving Frankensteinian story enable to re-emerge more clearly, even if only in glimpses, as compared with their straight horror renditions.

In taking this position, I argue that Rhona Berenstein's position on classic horror in general, as opposed to my earlier focus on straight horror Frankenstein stories, is actually more apropos for describing the comedic, science fiction, and horror-comedy offshoots of the Frankensteinian cinematic narrative,

> what I do not argue is that classic horror is transgressive from a larger ideological perspective... [T]o claim that the genre is *either* politically progressive or conservative oversimplifies one of its most important qualities; namely its function as a site of ideological contradiction and negotiation. (Berenstein, 1996: 10)

Among the aims of this article is to show, even more so than their straight horror counterparts, how these genre departures from straight horror disrupt the following conventionally canonical assumptions concerning horror spectatorship 1) that the sadistic male viewer is the genre's ideal implied spectator; 2) that all women in films are necessarily terrorised, passive objects, and that the archetypal female patron is incapable of sharing the Mulveyan "male gaze" and 3) that classic horror's stories are principally about heterosexual, even if monstrous, desire.

Thus, this article is in line with Isabel Christina Pinedo's characterisation of "post-modern horror" as compared with "classic horror." Briefly, Pinedo's schema exemplifies classical horror film through movies like *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931), and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), and creature feature films of the post-war period such as *The Thing* (1951), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), and *The Blob* (1958). All these "classic horror" films possess a similar narrative structure, which can be outlined in the following way. There is a monster (who may be a supernatural or alien invader, a mad scientist or a deviantly transformed being), who goes on the rampage, and seems unstoppable. Ultimately, male military or scientific experts successfully employ violence and/or knowledge to vanquish the monster and restore the normative order. Thus, the boundary between good and evil, normal and abnormal, human and alien, and masculine and feminine, remains unimpeachable; similarly, "the imperative that good must conquer evil, thus producing a secure Manichean worldview in which the threats to the social order are largely external and (hu)man agency prevails, largely in the figure of the masterful male subject." (Pinedo, 1997: 15) This interpretation is very much in keeping with my reading of the straight horror visualisations of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth, in which, despite narrative tensions and glimpses of a dark underside, patriarchal power wins the day.

In comparison, Pinedo cites films such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), *Halloween* (1978), *The Thing* (1982), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), and *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1990) to illustrate what "postmodern horror" entails. She summarises the narrative structure of post-modern horror as follows. Like classic horror, a monster appears and goes on the rampage; yet this time, ultimately,

> the inefficacy of human action and the repudiation of narrative closure combine to produce various forms of the open ending: the monster triumphs (*Henry*); the monster is defeated but only temporarily (*Halloween*), or the outcome is uncertain (*Night of the Living Dead*, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *The Thing*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*). (Pinedo, 1997: 15-16)

The boundary between living and dead, normal and abnormal, human and alien, good and evil, masculine and feminine, powerful and disempowered is blurred, and sometimes indistinguishable. Pinedo's findings concerning the post-modern horror films parallel my observations concerning the hybrid genres of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth. In these hybrid versions, women play a more prominent role as both victims and heroes, and despite the ambivalences that the movements across horror and comedy present, promote not only actively display feminine power but also survive, quite unlike their straight horror counterparts who either are ruthlessly killed off, or "voluntarily" choose to end their lives, such as Elsa Lanchester's bride in *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), Susan Denberg's Christina-Hans in *Frankenstein Created Woman* (1967) and Helena Bonham-Carter's monstrous Elizabeth-Justine in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994).

The proximity between raucous screaming and raucous laughter, a characteristic feature of these hybrid versions of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth that I study, has also been remarked on by William Paul. Briefly, Paul discusses the aesthetic of "gross-out" which embraces "bad taste," transforms revulsion into a desired goal, and converts disgust into pleasure. Paul argues

> The horror films and comedies connect in that they share the desire to gross their audiences out, but my point in looking at the two genres together is that views of utopia and dystopia presented in the films combine to form different aspects of the same discourse, as the utopian view at times penetrates the horror of films, while the dystopian view surfaces on occasion in comedies. And because it is a discourse of gross-out, it is necessarily equivocal, ambivalent, contradictory. (Paul, 1994: 79)

In the various examples Paul examines, the ambivalences surrounding gender and power, especially those steeped in images of unbridled female sexual appetite or the power of birthing, which are characteristic of the evolving Frankenstein cinematic mytheme, slide across positive and negative poles of disgust. For example, in *Ghostbusters* (1984), when Sigourney Weaver becomes possessed and thus dangerous, she also becomes sexually alluring. Paul's conclusion is that "uninhibited aggression is something to fear, as perhaps female sexuality is something to fear, for which reason sexual liberation in a fair number of these films implies its own bondage." (Paul, 1994: 122) In the *Exorcist* (1973), a desecration scene shows an image of the Virgin Mary with a phallus, and overly emphatic breasts, tipped with the bright crimson of what appears to be blood; the transmogrification of a symbol of spirituality and asexuality into one of blasphemy and animal corporeality forcefully erases the sacred boundaries of Western tradition, graphically corrupting the borders of, among others, the male and the female -- once again, a feature of the hybrid Frankensteinian cinematic versions. In *The Brood* (1979), Nola bites into the monstrous placenta growing outside her body and begins to lick the blood off her unnatural progeny -- another "gross-out" scene that underlines the monstrosity of the maternal body (a recurring theme particularly in science-fiction-horror iterations of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth). As Paul notes

> Because of its reproductive capacity, the female body itself provides the end point for each of the three progressions that structure this film: the body that deforms itself; the body that produces new life; the body that challenges assumptions of male power. More than anything else, it is the revolting body that distinguishes gross-out horror. (Paul, 1994: 380)

With this essay's emphasis on multiple hybridities, it is important to note that I draw from Noël Carroll's explorations into the nature of the monstrous in relation to humour. In his *Philosophy of Horror*, Carroll observes that monsters "are beings or creatures that specialise in formlessness, incompleteness, categorical interstitiality, and categorical contradictoriness… Horrific monsters often involve the mixture of what is normally distinct." (Carroll, 1990: 32-33) In a more recent piece, Carroll turns to affinities binding humour and horror as conventionally configured antitheses to beauty (Carroll, 2000: 37-56). He notes that both horror and humour root themselves in the terrain of the ugly (i.e., the not-beautiful clown and not-quite-human monster) and in category violations (e.g., simultaneously alive and dead; animate and inanimate; human and animal), for creatures of horror, and conceptual incongruity for humour (Carroll, 2000: 39). An example of a category violation Carroll cites to illustrate how humour operates is how the word "test" means "experiment" and "exam" in the joke: "Why did the moron stay up all night? He was studying for his blood test." (Carroll, 2000: 40-41) In addition, Carroll's comments on the unseen political effects of seemingly value-free aesthetic pronouncements is instructive

> If beauty -- the perfect realization of the concept of the human -- rhetorically implies goodness, ugliness and category violation encourage the suspicion of evil and moral defectiveness. Where beauty can be used to valorize, horror and humor can be used to dehumanize and vilify and, for that reason, they are diabolically effective levers of ethnic and racial hatred -- ones that operate pretty close to our nerve endings. (Carroll, 2000: 53)

I argue that though Carroll is correct to point out the similarity-differences between comedy and horror based on category violation and its political import, he makes essentially the same assumption that Zakiya Hanafi does in *The Monster in the Machine* (Hanafi, 2000). Briefly characterised, there is a major equivocation that sits right at the heart of Hanafi's characterisation of what constitutes the "monstrous." She repeatedly characterises the monster by negation from the very beginning -- "A monster is whatever we are *not*" (Hanafi, 2000: viii); "what is monstrous is simply radically other, nothing more than 'nonhuman'" (Hanafi, 2000: 2) until her Afterword "the monster is a concept that we need in order to tell ourselves what we are *not*." (Hanafi, 2000: 218) Carroll states a similar view when he writes: "Horror, at least in popular fictions, is a compound emotional response. It is made up of two components: fear and disgust." (Carroll, 2000: 40)

Both Hanafi and Carroll voice sentiments similar to those held by other theorists. Robin Wood draws from Freudian and materialist theories in order to conclude that the monster is the "repressed" generally understood from the point of view of a monogamous, patriarchal, bourgeois, heterosexual and capitalist society. Thus, the real plot of traditional horror is the repressed/oppressed struggle for recognition, and its subsequent vanquishing, which constitutes the reconstitution of the "normal" order (Wood, 1984: 164-200). Steven Neale uses the lens of gender to point out that the monster either exceeds masculinity or femininity, or dangerously mixes them (as opposed to the homogeneously "pure" masculine and feminine entities the monster imperils), thus threateningly unsettling the boundaries between sexual identity and difference (Neale, 1980: 61-62).

While I think these analyses are highly insightful, I think they constitute only a partial explanation of monstrosity. This characterisation of the monster as a "not-I" would explain the fear and suspicion with which monsters have been increasingly treated as their sacred origins have been sundered, but it does not adequately explain why there is a continuing

fascination with, and ambivalent admiration of, monsters. Hanafi herself observes in her Afterword: "Our favorite contemporary monster of all -- the extraterrestrial -- always arrives in a spaceship born from a superior technology. More often than not, we envy their superior advancement. Perhaps the truth is that we all secretly yearn to be aliens." (Hanafi, 2000: 218) One of the things I aim to prove in this manuscript is that monsters are the liminal point of *not only* what we are *not*, but also what we *are*; they reveal and conceal not only what we *fear* but also what we *hope for*; and allow us imaginatively to excavate the depths of not only who we *could be* in relation to nature and divinity, but also who we are in relation to the daemons that lurk within. As Steve Neale and Frank Krutnick observe

> The ego is thus founded in alienation. The self is in a sense inherently other. And the other here is both an image of the control to which the subject aspires, and, inasmuch as it is other, nevertheless itself beyond the subject's own control. (Neale and Krutnick, 1990: 78)

This continuum of attraction-repulsion, same-otherness, fear/awe-ridicule is perhaps best seen in hybrid genres, such as the comedic, science fiction, and horror-comedic offshoots of the Frankensteinian cinemyth. Both humour and horror have progressive and regressive political tendencies. Humour and horror destabilise and problematic -- through comic explosion, numinous rupture, and fluctuations across laughter, disgust and fascination -- only to fall back, many times, but not all the time, upon some iteration of a conventional "ending." Nevertheless, this traditional "conclusion" undercuts itself as a final closure, signalling the eternal return of comedy and horror as alternating with conventional "closure" as a never-ending spiral. As Pinedo has argued, the point of analysing what she calls post-modern horror (of which a subset is comprised of the hybrid versions of the Frankensteinian cinematic mytheme I study), is less to "fix" the ambivalences and contradictory tendencies than to genealogise and structurally analyse the critical potential within these films, from which audiences of different types derive pleasure. As Pinedo cautions, "critics who ignore the contradictory elements of the genre do a disservice to the complex readings of which audiences are capable." (Pinedo, 1997: 133)

Multiple Hybridities in Humour and Horror

In prior work, I have pointed out that the term "monster" has at least two etymological roots: *monere* (to warn) and *monstrare* (to demonstrate) (Picart, 2001). Yet Virginia Jewiss adds other dimensions to the characterisation of monstrosity

> Exegetes of the Vulgate followed the Ciceronian understanding of the term as an omen, a sign of things to come, while common usage, derived from Aristotle's observations in the *Generation of Animals*, held that the monstrous was anything deviating from the natural order. (Jewiss, 2001: 180)

This etymological hybridity is apropos because the "essence" of monstrosity appears to be hybridisation, "By their very nature monsters escape classification, frustrate the possibility of linguistic precision, embody an ontological ambivalence, and make visible the process of mutation." (Jewiss, 2001: 180) Yet it is precisely this slippage that is not only threatening but also potentially liberating, because as Donna Haraway points out, if our post-modern way of being in the world is cyborg-ian (i.e., multiply hybrid), then monstrosity (understood as pluralistic category violation) is a way out of a maze of dualisms that somehow seem inadequate to describe the chiaroscuro of lived (and culturally imagined) existence, "A

cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end… it takes *irony* for granted." (Haraway, 1991: 180; emphasis mine)

It is this emphasis on plural hybridity that is crucial to my analysis of how horror is configured in relation to comedy, as instantiated particularly in the horror comedies, science fiction-horror and comedic-science fiction-horror offshoots of the Frankensteinian cinematic saga. To explain this, I borrow from Arthur Koestler's notion of the continuum binding the "Haha" experience (comedy) and the "Aha" instance (artistic creation and scientific discovery). Briefly sketched, the psychological "mechanics" of comedy are essentially the same as other "creative" acts; it is the sudden clash between two mutually exclusive codes of rules, or associative contexts, which are suddenly juxtaposed. What results is "bisociation"-- a condition that compels us to interpret the situation in "two self-consistent but incompatible frames of reference at the same time; it makes us function simultaneously on two different wave-lengths." (Koestler, 1978: 112-113; Koestler, 1949; Koestler, 1967) The tension caused by bisociation is purged either through laughter, scientific fusion, or artistic confrontation. As Koestler writes

> The conscious or unconscious processes underlying creativity are essentially combinatorial activities -- the bringing together of previously separate ideas of knowledge and experience. The scientist's purpose is to achieve *synthesis*; the artist aims at a *juxtaposition* of the familiar and the eternal; the humorist's game is to contrive a *collision*. (Koestler, 1978: 129)

Instead of the continuum binding humour (the "Ha-Ha" experience), scientific discovery (the "Aha" experience) and artistic creation (the "Ah" experience), I substitute an analogous continuum in which horror-comedy, comedic-science fiction-horror , and science fiction-horror blur into each other. Yet the continuum I construct has a slightly different configuration. Koestler briefly tabulates some of the essential characteristics of his continuum in the following fashion (Koestler, 1978: 110).

HA-HA	AHA	AH . . .
Comic Simile	Hidden Analogy	Metaphor
Caricature	Diagram	Stylisation
Impersonation	Empathy	Illusion
Pun	Word Games	Rhyme
Collision	Synthesis	Juxtaposition
Coincidence	Serendipity	Deus ex machina
Self-Assertive	Self-Assertive/Self-Transcending	Self-Transcending

Adopting selected features of his schema, my own tabulated summary would look like this

Ha-Ha	Ah/Ooh-Ha	Ah/Ooh
Comedy-Horror	Comedic-Science Fiction-Horror	Science Fiction-Horror
Humour/Ridicule/Fascination	Humour/Ridicule/Fascination-Fear/Terror/Disgust/Awe/Fascination	Fear/Terror/Disgust/Awe/Fascination

Verbal and Musical Puns	Menacing and Sudden Shocks, alternating with Verbal and Musical Puns	Menacing Silences and Sudden Shocks
Fast-talking Dames, Crones, and Transsexuals	Female Monsters; Monstrous Females; Androgynous Monsters	Hypermasculinised or Hyperfeminised Aliens and Cyborgs
Politically Progressive and Conservative	Politically Progressive and Conservative	Politically Progressive and Conservative

Thus, a key argument I make is that at one end of the spectrum, in films like *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, *Young Frankenstein*, and *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, the juxtaposition between comedic elements, such as the practical joke or slapstick (*Abbott and Costello*), impersonation ("Fronkonsteen" in *Young Frankenstein*) and parody (Frank-N-Furter, Rocky, Janet, Brad and Dr. Scott in *Rocky Horror*), and elements of horror, such as the deformed, ugly and menacing monster, create a hybrid genre which allows for a simultaneous destabilisation of the boundaries of power, gender and sexuality. At the other end of the spectrum, films like *Alien*, *Aliens*, *Alien3* and *Blade Runner*, involve a fusion of science fiction narrative elements (futuristic dystopias) with "horror" and "terror" narratological techniques (e.g., the predatorial, stalking gaze the audience implicitly sees from the perspective of the unseen Alien; the unexpected resurrections of the Terminator) (Ebert, 1981: 54-56; also see Appendix Three). Such films, I argue, are not simply sensationalist and sado-masochistic splatter films set within a futuristic context, but repositories of Rudolf Otto's notion of the "numinous" as intersecting with Tzvetan Todorov's notion of the "fantastic." Briefly outlined, Otto describes a primitive "demonic dread" to which one becomes prey when one encounters the "unheimlich" -- the uncanny, weird, eerie, mysterious, incomprehensible -- that is:

> 'wholly other,' that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which… falls quite outside the limits of the 'canny' and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment. (Otto, 1958: 26)

Such a demonic dread is "numinous" and "irreducible," and intersects with Todorov's characterisation of the fantastic as entailing a "hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event." (Todorov, 1973: 25) Both Otto's numinous experience and Todorov's encounter with the fantastic entail wonder, astonishment, and awe (alongside fear, terror and disgust), which can serve to unfix commonsensical demarcations of gender, power and human-ness. However, these elements of the uncanny and marvellous are sustained only by the indeterminacy of the phenomenon and the uncertainty of the viewer; once the phenomenon has become classifiable or explainable via traditional categories, the potential for destabilisation becomes harnessed, resulting in a semblance of conventional closure.

Finally, the intermediate category, of comedic-science fiction-horror, is instantiated in films like *Terminator*, *Terminator 2* and *Alien: Resurrection*. Precisely because the monsters (the Alien Queen and the T-800) have long been "explained" through semi-scientific discourse and have been rendered visible through precursor films, it is no longer possible to sustain the element of the numinous principally through these characters. New monsters have to be spawned: Ripley is reborn as a hybrid cloned from a mixture of human and alien genes, and the T-1000 emerges, possessing not only the tenacity and indestructibility of the T-800 but

also higher level lethal talents for simulation, metamorphoses, and trickery. Interestingly in *Terminator 2* and *Alien Resurrection*, for example, the humorous elements are now directly aligned with monstrosity; Arnold Schwarzenegger's reformed T-800, and Sigourney Weaver's human-alien clone and mother, having the best comedic lines. Yet with their emergence as bearers of humour comes an openness to vulnerability. The T-800 learns to understand what tears signify; and Ripley, the powerful alien-human mother, tenderly engages in an embrace with the Newborn as if it were a lover-child, prior to killing it off.

In concert with my revision of Koestler's schema of forming a continuum across the realms of humour, artistic creativity and scientific discovery to create a continuum across the realms of humour and awe/gross-out, Neale and Krutnick point out the structural and political nexuses that conjoin the laughable and the horrifying. Both are built from an element of surprise, or the overturning (and reinforcement) of expectations, and ultimately, are steeped in a form of "defense,"

> In both genres [horror and comedy], surprise is the point at which the spectator's position is most at stake -- the point at which the physical articulation of affect (in the form of laughter or screaming) is more likely to occur. The spectator's laughter, specifically, marks in each instance the restoration of superiority and power: the point in a horror film at which the monster strikes us as unconvincing and ridiculous, or when the build-up of tension is a deliberate false alarm (the monster isn't there behind the door after all). (Neale and Krutnick, 1990: 80)

Ultimately, I argue that a crucial part of the dynamic in these hybrid genres of the Frankensteinian cinemyth is that the categories of what Rushing and Frentz have described as "first" (or "inferior" or "feminized") shadow; "second" (or "technologized" or "hypermasculinized/demonized" shadow) and what I have identified as "third" (female monsters and the feminine-as-monstrous) shadows, blur into each other. Such an analysis is in line with Susan Purdie's remarks that a study of joking (alongside horror), may be used to "highlight the problematic relationship between a necessary and desirable individual empowerment and the destructive exercise of power over others, in a culture where 'power' is primarily understood as identical with aggression" (Purdie, 1993: 8). It is precisely through plotting the hybridisations of these "shadow" figures (representations of Others to whom we are ambivalently drawn, precisely because they are part of our collective consciousness, which we wish to disavow; see Appendix One) that a more nuanced understanding of the slippage from laughter to horror, and back, and across different degrees of empowerment and disempowerment, may be clarified. Purdie sketches the dynamics of gender, power and humour and notes that the usual butts of jokes include spinsters and nuns (who are "unnatural" because they seem to have resisted the "natural" impulses to heterosexual coupling and marriage); nymphos (who are just as "unnatural" in their devouring sexual appetites; nuns and spinsters are construed as wanna-be nymphos); and feminised men (who are not "manly" enough to be "natural") (Purdie, 1993: 133-139). To this list of list of dreadful women that inhabit the universe of the comedy, Kathleen Rowe adds the archetypal figure of the matriarch, who represents a terrifying domesticity and propriety -- a fearful symbol of a community that is inclusive of women, even to the potential exclusion of men. Subtypes of the matriarch include spinsters, dowagers, prohibitionists, mothers-in-law, librarians, suffragettes, battle-axes, career woman, "women's libbers" and lesbians, who "serve as targets for the hatred of repression mobilised by comedy and especially by the infantile, regressive and misogynistic male hero of the comedian comedy." (Rowe, 1995: 46)

Yet in the hybrid genres of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth, these butts are figures of both power and humour.

For example, Dr. Sandra Mornay and Joan Raymond in *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* mirror each other as fast-talking dames whose feminine attributes mark them as "inferior" shadows, and yet whose ambition, wit, manipulative intelligence, and physical beauty render them instances of the "feminine-as-monstrous." This notion of woman as potentially castrating rather than castrated is related to Barbara Creed's explication of the seven faces of the "monstrous feminine" -- that is, woman as archaic mother, monstrous womb, vampire, witch, possessed body, monstrous mother and castrator (Creed, 1993). Later, when Dracula bites Mornay, she makes the transition into female monster as a formidable vampiress, and yet she remains Dracula's servant and ultimately proves ineffectual at hypnotising even the not too intelligent Chick Young (Budd Abbott), thus maintaining her position as a "feminized" shadow at the same time.

As another example of this blurring of the different types of shadows, which are figures of horror and humour, Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* occupies the site of what Mary Russo calls the "female grotesque" by being simultaneously dangerous and endangered (Russo, 1995: 278). With her muscle-clad body, expertise in warfare and fanatical adherence to stopping Skynet at all costs, she has been transformed into a female Terminator and thus occupies the site of the third shadow. Yet she is still very much of flesh and blood, and a woman who must be rescued from danger, just like any feminised shadow, as the ending of *Terminator 2* shows.

Finally, in *Blade Runner*, Roy Batty, the best and last of the rebel replicants, who are "more human than human," appears as an avenging angel/demon when he confronts Tyrell, the Frankensteinian "biomechanical god." In this version of the Frankensteinian cinemyth, the creature demands "more life" for itself and its mate and in an elegant game of genetic chess with its father, explores the possibilities for prolonging its life. When all such possible moves seem fruitless, Roy Batty becomes a Judas figure, who kisses his father tenderly on the lips (with ambiguous homoerotic tinges) before crushing his skull. Yet the next sequence aligns him with a howling, avenging beast and a Christ-like figure, with his bloodily spiked hand and the white dove that he releases as he expires, granting the gift of life to the stunned Rick Deckard, the bladerunner assigned to terminate all rebel replicants. The refractory characterisation of Batty both hypermasculinises him, granting him the physical destructive power of the Frankensteinian monster, and hyperfeminises him, endowing him with the creature's ability to weep and empathise.

Ultimately, *Blade Runner* ends up radically problematising the boundaries of the Frankensteinian narrative. The replicants, rather than the humans, emerge as more genuinely free, committed to life and passion, than their human counterparts. In contrast, the conventionally "heroic" figure, Deckard, is feminised in his fumbling and puny attempts to complete his mission. Since there are clear hints, at least in the director's cut, that Deckard, too, is probably also a replicant, both Deckard and Batty once again mirror each other, occupying the intersecting spheres of technologised and hypermasculinised shadow, and feminised shadow (sacrificial and vulnerable victims). It is this fluctuation-juxtaposition of different types of shadows, which the straight horror cinematic narrative tends to keep distinct, that these hybrid genres blur.

Raucously Screaming and/or Raucously Laughing

Jonathan Lake Crane rather dismissively claims

> The fact is, adolescents do not keep these dated monsters alive… In our time, Dracula sells achingly sweet chocolate cereal (Count Chocula), and Frankenstein hawks artificially flavored strawberry cereal (Franken Berry); such is the current flavor of these so-called timeless monsters. (Crane, 1994: 27)

Yet even that very quotation shows that these "dated monsters" do have an enduring appeal -- though the commercial representations of their "monstrosity" have now become domesticated and conventionalised, and inevitably imbricated with humour. One of the aims of this article has been precisely to point out that the Frankensteinian cinematic myth, in particular, has not lost its currency. Rather, it has simply evolved, generating hybrid genres. One such hybrid genre is the horror-comedy, which generates what I have called, inspired by Arthur Koestler's theoretical schema that aims to explain the mechanics of creativity, the "Ha-ha" response -- in which humour, ridicule and fascination interact in a tight interplay. The second hybrid genre germane to the evolution of the Frankenstein cinematic myth is the science fiction-horror genre, which often uses noir and action techniques. This second type generates what I have labelled the "Ah/Ooh" experience, in which a type of demonic dread enables the tense coexistence of fear, terror, disgust, awe, and fascination. The third type I have outlined is a composite comedic-science fiction-horror film, which moves in between the two roughly outlined, generating what I have called the "Ah/Ooh-Ha" experience. This type ricochets across the registers of humour, ridicule, and fascination (characteristic of horror-comedy) and fear, terror, disgust, awe, and fascination (the recognisable emotive hallmarks of science fiction-horror films).

Rosemary Jackson remarks that "It is, surely, no accident that *Frankenstein* has become one of the central myths of post-Romantic culture, both through literary and film texts." (Jackson, 1981: 101) She perceptively notes that what makes the Frankensteinian myth so relevant is its record of the loss and disillusionment with the modern quest for the self seeking total union with an other (which is a version of the self), thus justifying the cogito's desire for absolute significance. What results is a distorted image of the self as other, writ large as a "grotesque, unredemptive metamorphosis, as mere travesty, parody, horror." (Crane, 1994: 102) For Jackson, the "modern fantastic," of which the Frankenstein narrative is a primary example, continually reinscribes "the *impotence* of mind to transcend matter -- and the grotesque victory of the latter." (Crane, 1994: 102)

However, as I have shown in prior work, within the conventions of mainstream cinema, for the most part, the straight horror tradition (as opposed to the hybrid versions) of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth has predominantly maintained a triumphant patriarchal version, where the female creature, when she appears, is killed off even more ruthlessly than her male counterpart, and where the inferior shadows, characterised by the Elizabeth and Justine figures are either killed off or harnessed into domesticity (Picart, 2001; Picart, 1998: 382-404; Picart, 2000: 17-34). In contrast, in the hybrid versions of the Frankensteinian cinemyth, the dark underside of the modern parthenogenetic myth reveals itself; in these versions, glimpses of Baubo, a goddess who signifies a celebration of female erotic and reproductive power, begin to emerge -- though in a complex manner. Within the evolution of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth, classic horror conventions for the most part decide between patriarchal and matriarchal myths in favour of the masculine parthenogenetic narrative -- in which a father gives birth to a son, over the dead/covered/murdered body of a

mother figure. The parthenogenetic myth's feminised counterpart, instantiated in Baubo's *ana-suromai* (imaged in Baubo's lifting her skirt in order to reveal her genitalia, thus causing the goddess Demeter to laugh and reclaim her powers as goddess and mother), is often suppressed in these straight horror renditions.

In contrast, these hybrid genres explore new realms of narrative possibilities. For example, horror-comedies, like *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, create monstrous females like Dr. Sandra Mornay and Joan Raymond. Sandra and Joan emerge as mirror-imaging figures of the feminine-as-monstrous: attractive, ambitious and intelligent women who use their powers as women in order to succeed -- women who exemplify Creed's notion of the *Femme Castratice* (Creed, 1993: 122). Yet it is Sandra alone, the female Frankensteinian surgeon-scientist, who becomes bitten by Dracula to become a female monster, as opposed to her "good girl" counterpart, Joan, who becomes safely harnessed to handsome young Dr. Stevens. Though the narrative ends fairly conventionally, with the good girl being saved and the bad girl being killed, it is important to note that this hybrid genre restores the wit and physical agility characteristic of the romantic comedy dame to both of these women. This is very much in keeping with Kathleen Rowe's observation that "whereas the transgressive male finds his home in the heroic gestures if what Mikhail Bakhtin has called 'the high melodramatic plane,' the transgressive woman finds hers in the 'lower' forms of melodrama and romantic comedy." (Rowe, 1995: 41) Such a narrative possibility has traditionally been denied to the numerous Elizabeths, Justines and other ubiquitous heroines who function as feminised shadows in conventional straight horror renditions of the Frankensteinian cinemyth. These inferior shadows, in straight horror versions of the evolving Frankensteinian cinematic myth, are often cast in the position of the melodramatic heroine, whose suffering and sacrifice are glorified, beautified, and rendered "necessary" by the narrative.

In comparison, other horror-comedies, like *Young Frankenstein* and *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, enable characters, who are normally coded as "monstrous" by virtue of their ageing or bizarrely costumed bodies within the conventional horror genre, to command the narrative fluctuations across horror and laughter, rather than simply be victims. Thus, the impressively intimidating Frau Blucher, in *Young Frankenstein*, and the raucously and lasciviously gender-crossing Frank-N-Furter in *Rocky Horror Picture Show* become primary forces in moving the narrative forward. Without Blucher's secret playing of the Transylvanian Lullaby, and at least in the script, her constant shaming and prodding of Fronkonsteen to redeem and reclaim his heritage, the beloved reconciliation between creator and creature (not to mention that memorable song and dance rendition of Irving Berlin's "Puttin' on the Ritz") would not have happened. Without Frank-N-Furter's seduction/sexual mentorship of Janet and Brad, the two characters would have remained flat, "white bread," linear characters, whose "normality" is so overwhelming that it emerges as abnormal in this parodic rock horror musical.

Similarly, in science fiction-horror movies, it is the monstrous creatures, with their incredible speed and power, acid blood, and machinelike survival instincts, who inspire the demonic dread that characterises the Ah/Ooh experience. Significantly, in *Alien*, for example, the gender hierarchy becomes reversed, and what emerges is a narrative that has never been told within the confines of a straight horror rendition of the Frankensteinian cinemyth. In this version, male bodies become rapable and vulnerable to pregnancy. In a grotesque parody of rape trauma and morning sickness, Kane, after the facehugger has detached itself from him, awakens to an inability to talk about the experience, dizziness, and a ravenous appetite. As Creed notes: "[Kane] becomes a 'part' of the primal scene, taking the place of the mother, the one who is penetrated, the one who bears the offspring of the union." (Creed, 1993: 19) This

time, it is the male body that becomes the site of a monstrous birth, and it is a simultaneously phallicised and sexualised female body that emerges as Carol Clover's brutalised and brutalising "Final Girl" (Clover, 1992: 3-20, 114-165).

In addition, *Aliens* documents Ellen Ripley's developing masculinisation and feminisation. Ripley learns how to use a power loader to transfer heavy equipment as a man would, and to use that same power loader as a weapon against the Alien Queen, as she transforms herself into a formidable image of a masculinised mother. Unlike the famous skimpy underwear scene of *Alien*, which served scopophilically to underline her feminine sexual desirability and vulnerability, Ripley in *Aliens* remains clothed in the androgynous clothing of the marines.

As Ros Jennings notes, it is of utmost importance to "explore who is coded as masculine and who is coded as feminine in a setting which is, to all intents and purposes, androgynous in terms of division of labour and dress." (Jennings, 1995: 200) Thus, in *Aliens*, Ripley is characterised as a woman mainly via her surrogate maternal relationship with Newt, who is, like herself, a survivor who has learned to live within the undulating realm of blurred boundaries -- between the masculine and the feminine, the human and the animal, the young and the old, of nightmarish dreams and reality. The Alien Queen, which is described as a gigantic mantis-like entity with a huge birth sac, emerges as a primal site of numinous wonder and terror. Yet it is also clear that Ripley herself mirrors the creature, and that she, too, in her courage, wit and determination, possesses equivalent female powers. Though this narrative ends up with another conventional conclusion (i.e., pitting the "good mother" against the "bad mother" and viciously killing off the "bad mother"), *Aliens* creates a heroine whose profile is not even conceivable within the traditional boundaries of the classic horror iterations of the Frankensteinian cinemyth. Finally, *Alien3* ends up being the most conventional among the three *Alien* instalments, with Ripley ending up hirsute and pregnant upon a forsaken prison colony. Despite the fact that the narrative allows Ripley feats that few of the double Y chromosome men can match (as far as outwitting and laying traps for the Alien is concerned), this version underlines her rapability -- by both the male convicts and the Alien. Ultimately, we glimpse the numinous as Ripley plunges, in a Dali-esque pose of Crucifixion, into a vat of molten metal. She emerges as tragically heroic in a masculine sense (in terms of her battle with the hyper-enhanced warrior Alien) as well as in a feminised sense (in her cradling of, and yet killing of, her monstrous progeny).

In *Blade Runner*, it is principally through the figure of Roy Batty, in whom Christ and Lucifer combine, that we encounter the demonic dread of the Ah/Ooh experience. Batty, who "burns brightest" among the rebel replicants is more superhumanly human than human: he is capable of the excesses of a mass murderer, as he is of the largeness of spirit to save one of his persecutors, who has murdered his beloved, Pris. He is completely other in his combination of primeval and mechanical traits (he howls like a wolf, and can withstand the pain of impaling himself in the hand with a spike); yet he is completely human in his abilities to love passionately, to feel anger and rejection -- to value life. *Blade Runner* does allow some of the numinous to be glimpsed in its female replicants; nevertheless, compared to Roy Batty, these bisociated figures of the third and first shadows pale in vividness and power. Thus, both Pris and Zhora emerge as deadly Eve-female Terminator figures, though Pris is the more ambiguous character, because the script codes her as something in between an innocent child-adolescent, and a demon. While the narrative, in keeping with its Frankensteinian structure, eventually kills both female replicants off violently, the parts they play are significant to the flow of the plot. Zhora's violent death seems to be the reason why

Leon hunts down Deckard alone, which was strategically unwise; Pris' blood becomes Batty's war paint as he hunts down Deckard during the final chase scenes of this film.

Finally, comedic-science fiction-horror movies enable fluctuations across dark humour and horror, enabling a gamut of responses ranging from humour, ridicule, and fascination (the ironically comic response), alternating with fear, terror, disgust, awe, and fascination (the response to demonic dread). In these versions, the primal site of the Ah/Ooh-Ha experience is the monstrous. Thus, the Terminator emerges as both terrifying and humorous with its systematic efficiency, evident in its wholesale destruction of all Sarah Connors, and in its deadpanned, coincidentally appropriate ripe one-liners. In *Terminator 2*, T-800 now becomes the underdog, and though it is still a formidable killing machine, it is nothing compared with T-1000, which is a liquid metal shape shifter. For the most part, the locus of the numinous becomes the province of T-1000, with its terrifying chameleon-like abilities, and the locus of the humorous remains the province of T-800, which continues to deadpan lines like "Trust me" and "Hasta la vista, Baby." In *Alien Resurrection*, the cloned half-Alien, half-human Ripley is undoubtedly a central fulcrum of both terror and laughter. Through her genetic alliance with the Aliens, she acquires both a dogged cold-bloodedness to survive, and enhanced capabilities, which inspire awe and repugnance. Yet like the Terminator, she utters the best quips and double entendres, and shares the ribald and loud humour of the motley crew of smugglers, in whose company she is flung.

What therefore seems characteristic of all these hybrid genres is an ability to blur the three types of shadows (thus producing simultaneously empowered and disempowered heroically monstrous characters). Many of the monstrous female characters (i.e., instantiations of the third shadow) such as Ripley or Sarah O'Connor, are also simultaneously first shadows, in that they are hystericised and medicalised bodies, and survival machines that resist rational ego-consciousness. T-800, in *Terminator 2*, emerges as both a second (technologised and hypermasculinised) and first shadow (as vulnerable flesh and hyperfeminised) shadow. Call, in *Alien Resurrection*, combines, in Koestler-ian juxtaposition, first shadow (as potential sexual prey to everyone she encounters), second shadow (as an android that knows how to control machines and display some masculinised physical abilities), and third shadow as a female monster. Yet the most interesting finding to me is that all of these hybrid shadow figures *live* or are at least predominantly rendered heroic for the most part. The only exception seems to be Sandra Mornay, who moves from being a figure of the feminine as monstrous (a version of the third shadow: beautiful, ambitious women who use their erotic powers to achieve their ends) to becoming both a female monster (a vampiress) and a feminised shadow (as slave to Dracula and pure body, seething with bloodlust). Mornay is thus coded as a villainous bitch who deserves to die; this is the standard characterisation and fate of third shadows in straight or classic horror renditions of the Frankensteinian cinemyth.

In addition, all these hybrid comedic-science fiction iterations of the Frankensteinian cinemyth also appear to problematise the distinctions between creator and created, and human and machine far more so than their classic horror counterparts. Furthermore, one could also read the increasing reliance upon special effects as real looking artefacts, which are marketed and consumed as simulacra simulating the hyper-real (as opposed to simple illusion masquerading as literal reality), as in keeping with this post-modern updating of the Frankensteinian cinemyth within the hybrid realms of science fiction and comedy. As Pete Boss notes

The categories of Otherness which traditionally functioned in the [classic] horror film are no longer adequate -- comparing Hawks' 1951 version with Carpenter's 1982 version of *The Thing* instantly underlines this -- and the Frankenstein monster of the present is difficult to distinguish from [its] creator. (Boss, 1986: 24)

Conclusion: It's (Still) Alive!

The fluctuations across horror and dark humour that these films seem to enable appear rooted in the fact that these hybrid genres allow viewers a certain fluidity in moving from adopting the point of view of the protagonist, or the director of the films, or the ambivalently fascinating monstrous predator, or the helpless victim, and so on. Thus "actors," conceived as "players" -- whether they are characters within the story, directors or actors enacting the story, or audiences, participating in the shaping of the story, similar to Hans Georg Gadamer's notion of *spiel* or play (in which, the interactive metaphors of "playing" a game or "playing" at a concert, or performing in a "play" are all simultaneously set into motion), play these roles and are played by these roles, enabled and limited by ritualistic conventions that mark these genres (Gadamer, 1993). The juxtaposition of humour and horror, resulting in an ambivalent movement across laughter and horror, unleashes to an even greater extent what Jerry Palmer observes

> The enormous variety of relationships between humour and gender that are to be found in every respect (identity of tellers and listeners, humour preference, joke themes) certainly implies that there cannot be a single functional relationship between gender and humour in our society. (Palmer, 1994: 78)

Thus, the horror-comedies I have studied rely on verbal and musical puns to create the Koestler-ian bisociation of oppositions resulting in humour. These also ambivalently render fast-talking dames, crones, and transsexuals as vilified and heroic characters. This dynamic is particularly evident in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, for example, whose success has been directly related to its costume donning, witty quipping, rice-bread-and-confetti flinging participatory audience-performers. The science fiction-horror iterations of the Frankensteinian cinemyth I have studied rely on menacing silences and sudden shocks to produce the genre coded demonic dread. The characters who become the locus of Otto's "numinous" experience are usually hypermasculinised or hyperfeminised Aliens and cyborgs (Otto, 1958). Since this hybrid genre is closest to classic horror, it is hardly surprising that many of them reproduce the hierarchy of gender, monstrosity and power characteristic of classic horror (and noir) films. Thus, demonic dread turns into catharsis as the monstrous characters in these narratives are often killed off violently (at least till the next potential sequel). Finally, the comedic-science fiction-horror versions of the Frankensteinian filmic myth I have analysed exploit fluctuations across menacing and sudden shocks (characteristic of science fiction-horror), alternating with verbal and musical puns (characteristic of comedy-horror). The agents of these Koestler-ian bisociations across horror and dark humour are often female monsters, monstrous females, and androgynous or bisexual monsters. Michael Arnzen says the following regarding splatter films, but what he has to say also applies, to some extent, particularly to contemporary science fiction-horror and comedic-science fiction-horror hybrids, which increasingly use the numinous dread and horror-hilarity of the splatter film aesthetic,

The aesthetic of splatter is a realization that we have allowed the zombies of mass culture to take over, that our own fingers are reaching for the blade that could either set us free or unwillingly commit cultural suicide… 'Who's laughing now?' the postmodern consciousness asks us -- screams at us -- and the answer is simple. We all are -- and we're cackling as we clench the pullcord of postmodernism between our teeth and ferociously yank. (Arnzen, 1994: 183)

Philip Brophy coins the term "horrality" to describe these hybrid fluctuations across humour and horror, which involves a reconstruction, affirmation, and ironic manipulation of horror -- in all its various guises -- as a self conscious textual mode (Brophy, 1986: 2-13). The horrality of hybrid renditions of the Frankensteinian cinemyth rely, to some extent, on the physical damage and destruction to a body configured as a brute, bloody mass of flesh. Showing, rather than telling, is crucial to this dynamic, and its extreme visuality is such that it often lends itself to a comic book look. The antics of Abbot and Costello or Frank-N-Furter; the repulsive and awe-inspiring destructive acts of the Aliens; and the fluctuations across gory and fascinating action sequences and risible one liners have a comic book aesthetic (see Appendix Four). The emphasis on technologically hyperbolised embodiment is such that it either inspires what Robert Romanyshyn calls a "distancing and detached vision" of the body as spectacle (Romanyshyn, 1989: 117) as in the *Terminator* films (Telotte, 1992: 26-34), or a parodic, earthy humour that unconceals adolescent fantasies and fears concerning bodies out of control (Twitchell, 1985: 188-190).

In addition, when humour does appear in these hybrid genres, it is often employed as an undercutting agent to counter-balance its more intense and horrifying moments. Often the humour has a macabre, gallows quality to it (as when T-800 says "He'll live" when he walks away from a writhing, wounded guard, whom he has, legalistically or mechanically speaking, "disabled" -- in a twofold sense -- rather than killed), and the gory, horrifying spectacle is constructed as humorous (e.g., General Perez's incredulous expression as he picks a piece of his own brain out from the back of his head in *Alien Resurrection*). The extremes of gory and laughable spectacle easily tip into each other, and the films that attempt the effect of horrality strive to achieve a delicate balance between them. Finally, the punch-lines or jokes are either completely embedded within a particular circumstance of the film (the examples above illustrate this), or are in some way intertextual, referring ironically to prior sequels. This second type of joke is illustrated in Ripley's glib reply: "I get that a lot" when Johner says: "Man, I thought you were dead" in *Alien Resurrection*. The reference plays across her numerous close encounters with death in this, and prior sequels, or the specific ending in *Alien3*, in which she martyrs herself by plunging into a vat of molten metal. In all these cases, as Brophy notes

the humour in a gory scene is the result of the contemporary Horror film's [whose description fits my characterization of hybrid horror-humor genres] saturation of all its codes and conventions -- a punchline that can only be got when one fully acknowledges this saturation as the departure point for viewing pleasure. (Brophy, 1986: 12)

Ultimately, Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" is thus important to return to because it intersects with the Frankensteinian cinemyth in various important ways (Haraway, 1991: 149-182). Both the continuing filmic saga of Frankenstein and her essay focus on monsters because

according to Haraway, the representation of the monstrous sets the boundaries of what constitutes community in Western imaginative-lived experiences. Both explore and playfully pun on the relationship between female authorship or heroism and the generation of monstrous shadows. Both have evolved into "ironic political myths." (Haraway, 1991: 149) Yet ultimately, in their common stress on the spectacle of the body as both technologised simulacrum and real, physical entity, both these films and the essay explore ways in which the conventional subject-object divide characteristic of classic horror iterations of the Frankensteinian cinemyth, may be subverted. Unlike classic horror renditions that render "female sexuality as monstrous and constructs femininity as a subject position impossible to occupy", these versions begin to allow glimpses of Baubo's rebellious *ana-suromai* as a celebration of female erotic and reproductive power (Lindsay, 1991: 34). Thus, all these hybrid narratives still reveal the tension between conservative and progressive tendencies in imagining the boundaries of gender politics. Rowe points out how comedy strains between the narrative possibilities of being caught up in the Oedipal struggle of father and son -- a conservative structure, or of exploring a tendency towards renewal and social transformation, which, in conventional genre structuring of gender in relation to humour, "finds its fullest expression in romantic comedy." (Rowe, 1995: 44) In romantic comedy, the utopian desire for friendship between the sexes presents an alternative to the passive and suffering heroines of melodrama -- but, like the straight horror renditions of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth (or what Pinedo would call "classic horror"), it also "[covers] up the costs of a woman's heterosexuality with laughter and pleasure." (Rowe, 1995: 51; Pinedo, 1997)

In contrast, these hybrid narratives of the Frankensteinian cinematic myth (which comprise a subset of what Pinedo calls "postmodern horror") variably open the possibility that monstrous women -- women who blur the boundaries of virgin and whore; maiden and mother; muse and monster -- may become not only traumatised victims, but also heroic figures who *survive* the retelling of this contemporary parthenogenetic cinemyth, without becoming, using Hayden White's term, reductively "emplotted" in relation to men, heterosexuality, and motherhood (Pinedo, 1997; Blaetz, 2001; White, 1978; 1987; 1999).

Appendices

Appendix One: The justification for describing the film renditions of the Frankenstein narrative as a "cinemyth" is derived partially from Patricia Warrick's characterisation of a "myth" as a "complex of stories which a culture regards as demonstrating the inner meaning of the universe of human life" (Warrick, 1978: 3). Through cinematic retelling, the Frankenstein narrative has spawned new associations and narrative threads, whose details, though they hover about recurring themes of humanity, creation and society, as Martin Tropp notes, "change to suit a changing culture" (Tropp, 1979: 9). What is peculiarly "modern" about the Frankenstein myth, though, is that it depicts anxieties concerning technology, and for Rushing and Frentz, gender as well (Rushing and Frentz, 1995).

Appendix Two: I am indebted to Janice Rushing and Thomas Frentz for their work on "shadows" -- points of extreme psychic ambivalence, revelatory of fears regarding technology and gender. In brief, they identify two types of shadows: the first, or "inferior" shadow, is represented by the feminine, women, the body, minorities, and anything that deviates from rational ego consciousness. The second or "technologized" shadow is represented best by Frankenstein's monster. What I argued in earlier work is that a third type of shadow, which is a combination of the two -- either a feminine monster, or the feminine configured as monstrous -- is the more crucial shadow to track in resolving the tensions of the

Frankenstein myth within straight horror film renditions (Picart, 1998: 384-404; Picart, 2000:17-34; Picart, 2001). It is this third shadow that often serves as the scapegoat, whose sacrifice is necessary in order for a conventional closure to occur (Rushing and Frentz, 1995; Rushing and Frentz, 1989: 61-80).

Appendix Three: I realise critics have made various distinctions between horror and terror, but for the purposes of discussing these hybrid genres, both use similar formal narrative devices, which I describe above.

Appendix Four: In an interesting aside, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, partially because he spoke very little English when he started directing *Alien Resurrection*, was highly dependent on detailed storyboards, which effectively functioned as a comic book version of the film. Sylvain Despretz, who was in charge of these story boards, remarked

> Jean-Pierre was enamored by the thought that we could push our drawings to the level of little comic book panels… I think they are unusual in that you could ink them and add balloons and you would have a comic book (Murdock and Aberly, 1997: 12).

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