Bride of Frankenstein

**Viewing Day 1: 00:00:00-0:35:45**

* **Begins with opening credits**
* **Ends with the monster hearing the blind man play**

*Things to Notice*

The “frame” of the story starts with Lord Byron, Percy Busshe Shelley, and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley on the famous night where she reportedly came up with the idea of the monster. Be sure to notice that the actress who plays Mary Shelley (Elsa Lanchester) also plays the intended bride of the monster. We learn very quickly that the monster is not dead, and he immediately and rather brutally dispatches two people, as an owl looks on indifferently. Frankenstein’s home in this one is very gothic in form, and when the evil Dr. Pretorius arrives on urgent and “grave” business (his bad pun not mine), the lighting causes ripples like firelight behind him and the eerie music suggests his evil plan to draw Frankenstein back to the dark side. The laboratory of Dr. Pretorius is very expressionistic in lighting and angular set design, and, though Frankenstein is appalled, he is tempted to continue his work. In marked contrast, the next time we see the monster, he is in a lush, naturalistic setting with magical, romantic music playing in the background (see Key Sequence below). When he is captured, he is bound to a stake and held upright, not accidentally looking like Christ on a crucifix. This idea of the monster as a persecuted figure is reinforced by the soft, sacred-sounding organ music as the monster approaches the blind man.

*Key Sequence: 0:25:13-0:27:05*

In this idyllic setting the monster, the monster sees his own reflection and is horrified at his own nature. This is the first in a series of moments that are part of his growing self-awareness. When he sees the beautiful shepherdess, he seeks contact and communication, and, when she falls, he clearly hasd learned from his first disaster with water, so he tries to save her. Once again, though, he kills without knowing why.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Frankenstein feel about what he did in the first film? How has he suffered for it already?
2. How is Frankenstein different from Dr. Pretorius? Why are we somewhat sympathetic to Frankenstein but not to Pretorius?
3. Think back on the music, framing, and lighting choices that the director has used for the monster so far in this film. What was he hoping to achieve? How is this approach different from that of the first film?
4. Much was made in the first film of the monster having the abnormal brain of a criminal, but little has been said of it in this one. Why do you think this is?

**Viewing Day 2: 0:35:45-1:13:36 (about 38 minutes)**

* **Begins with the monster going into the hermit’s home**
* **Ends with closing credits**

*Things to Notice*

The monster is finally successful at doing what he had been trying to do-apparently- over the course of two films: to communicate with another human being. These scenes with the blind hermit are the most tender shots in both films, and the monster learns the word ”friend”. When he is chased out, however, he goes back to the graveyard because he was told he came from dead bodies: the monster appears to have a growing sense of himself, which hints at his suicide at the end. Another Christlike image appears as the monster descends into the mausoleum. Frankenstein, too, has occasions when he gets to know himself: he seems to know that a woman was killed to get the heart he needs in order to build the monster bride that will get his Elizabeth back (she has been kidnapped by Dr. Pretorius), though his guilt- as always- passes quickly. As the two doctors work on creating the bride, the director gives us a series of Dutch angles, quick cuts, and sharp, direct lighting to demonstrate the madness of their actions. And, once again, Colin Clive gets to utter (a variation of) the line he does so well: “She’s alive!”

*Key Sequence 0:36:45-0:40:07*

As the monster enters the hermit’s home, he is treated gently for the first time in his existence, and the soft organ music signifies that maybe the hermit is right in thinking that the monster is a gift from God. After eating, the monster weeps along with the hermit, and a glowing crucifix can be seen just over the monster’s shoulder.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Frankenstein feel about seeing his creation again? How does the director convey this feeling to us?
2. Why is Frankenstein not sickened by his female creation? What causes her reaction to the monster?
3. Why does the monster commit suicide? Why does he kill Pretorius but allow Frankenstein to leave?
4. Why all the Christ images in the second film? What is the director trying to say about Frankenstein, the monster, and the crowd’s treatment of him?