

## FROM GOTHIC TO NEO-GOTHIC: FRANKENSTEIN NOVEL INTO LISA FRANKENSTEIN (2024) FILM ADAPTATION BY ZELDA WILLIAMS

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**ABSTRACT.** This study aims to show the transformation of the Gothic genre from *Frankenstein's* novel to the Neo-Gothic genre in *Lisa Frankenstein's* film and to reveal the underlying motives. This qualitative research uses Linda Hutcheon and O'Flynn's Adaptation theory and is supported by Nick Lacey's Image and Representation analysis technique. The data are narrative events from the *Frankenstein* novel in the form of words, phrases, and paragraphs, as well as narrative events in *Lisa Frankenstein's* film in the form of screenshots containing frames per scene, dialogue, sound, background music, and film shooting techniques. The collected data is analyzed comparatively between the narration in the novel and the film, by reading images and representation analysis techniques in Lacey's Barthesian semiotics perspective, and discursively as proposed by Linda Hutcheon in the theory of adaptation. The results of the study show that the *Lisa Frankenstein* film adaptation turns into a feminine style of the creation through the playfulness of the dark comedy narration of Lisa's domestic skills in reviving the creature. The dark comedy is in line with romantic and sexual relationships between Lisa and the creature, which shows the transformation of genre from gothic novel into neo-gothic film. The transformations shown in the film are influenced by the director's agency as an adapter and the involvement of various parties, such as Hollywood, which aims to provide novelty to maintain audience interest and maximize the sales profit.

**Keywords:** *Film Adaptation; Frankenstein novel; Lisa Frankenstein's film; Neo-Gothic genre; Hollywood.*

## FROM GOTHIC TO NEO-GOTHIC: FRANKENSTEIN NOVEL INTO LISA FRANKENSTEIN (2024) FILM ADAPTATION BY ZELDA WILLIAMS

**ABSTRAK.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menunjukkan transformasi genre Gothic dari novel *Frankenstein* ke genre Neo-Gothic dalam film *Lisa Frankenstein*, serta mengungkap motif-motif di balik pembuatannya. Penelitian kualitatif ini mengimplementasikan teori Adaptasi oleh Linda Hutcheon dan O'Flynn dan didukung dengan teknik analisis gambar dan representasi oleh Nick Lacey. Data-data dalam penelitian ini berupa peristiwa naratif dari novel *Frankenstein* dalam bentuk kata, frasa, maupun paragraf, serta peristiwa naratif dalam film *Lisa Frankenstein* dalam bentuk tangkapan layar yang berisi *frame* per adegan, dialog, suara, musik latar, serta teknik pengambilan gambar film. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis secara komparatif antara narasi dalam novel dan film, dengan membaca citra dan teknik analisis representasi dalam perspektif semiotika Barthes ala Lacey, dan secara diskursif sebagaimana yang dikemukakan Linda Hutcheon dalam teori adaptasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa adaptasi film *Lisa Frankenstein* bertransformasi menjadi karya bernuansa feminin melalui keceriaan narasi komedi gelap yang menggambarkan keterampilan Lisa dalam menghidupkan kembali *the creature*. Komedi gelap ini selaras dengan hubungan romantis dan seksual antara Lisa dan makhluk tersebut, yang menunjukkan transformasi genre dari novel gotik menjadi film neo-gotik. Transformasi film *Lisa Frankenstein* dipengaruhi oleh agensi sutradara sebagai adaptor serta keterlibatan berbagai pihak, seperti *Hollywood*, yang bertujuan untuk memberikan kebaruan agar tetap menarik minat audiens serta memaksimalkan pendapatan dari penjualan adaptasi film *Lisa Frankenstein*.

**Kata kunci:** Adaptasi Film; novel *Frankenstein*; film *Lisa Frankenstein*; genre Neo-Gothic; Hollywood

### INTRODUCTION

Neo-Gothic is a new term that emerge both in architectural and literature. As widely known, gothic is one of literary genre that emphasizes on the use of dark elements such as supernatural being to evoke reader's sense of horror (Waham, 2023). On the other hand, Neo-Gothic, also known as Neo-Victorian gothic, is a sub-genre of Victorian gothic that incorporate more postmodern elements (Ruiz, 2021). Those elements are usually around the issue of marginalized voices, the subject's experience of traumatic events, etc (Ruiz, 2021). An attempt to introduce the Neo-Gothic genre is through adapting a novel into a screen adaptation or a film. There

are numerous examples of gothic novels that are already adapted into their film versions such as the famous *Dracula* directed by Francis Ford Coppola which is based on Bram Stoker's novel in 1897 (Coppola, 1992), *The Haunting of Hill House* by Mike Flanagan (2018), and *Rebecca* in 2020 by Ben Wheatley (Wheatley, 2020). Those previous gothic adaptations prove that the gothic genre continues to adapt its appearance in different eras to reach its audiences. Therefore, this study examines the reasons of adapting the Gothic genre into the Neo-Gothic genre in the adaptation of the famous novel, *Frankenstein*, into a film, *Lisa Frankenstein*.

*Lisa Frankenstein* is an American film directed by Zelda Williams aired on February

9, 2024, by Universal Pictures and Focus Features (Williams, 2024). This film shows the compassionate love between an emo-goth teenager named Lisa Swallows and a corpse from the Victorian era called the creature. The creation of the film adaptation of Mary's *Frankenstein* into Zelda's *Lisa Frankenstein* certainly presents some differences. The genre that shifted from a Victorian Gothic novel to a Neo-Gothic horror-comedy romance film for teenagers also brings different issues. This study aims to examine the adaptation of the Gothic genre from the novel *Frankenstein* into a film entitled *Lisa Frankenstein* and uncover the reasons behind the gothic adaptation

There are previous studies deal with the gothic adaptation. In "The Adaptation of Northanger Abbey Novel by Jane Austen into Jon Jones' Film", Azharoh (2023) shows the change of the motives in the film version, which is more focused on the ideology of patriarchal society and American freedom culture. While *Gothic Elements Reflected in Daphne Du Maurier's work* by Vítová (2023) shows the gothic elements in the novel presented through the setting and atmosphere, the supernatural world, and the theme of the uncanny. Furthermore, Barros (2023) in *Gothic Elements in the Haunting of Bly Manor: An Analysis* shows that Gothic elements are shown in the series through the gloomy space and the existence of monsters. This study differs from previous ones by exploring the sub-genre of Gothic, specifically Neo-Gothic, in a film adaptation, incorporating Hutcheon and O'Flynn's adaptation theory with Nick Lacey's film representation technique. This study offers a different approach in examining the transformation exists in a film adaptation that produced in the postmodern era. *Lisa Frankenstein*, which is adapted from the Victorian era work *Frankenstein*, with a twist of postmodern America's life setting, showing that this film introduces the Neo-Gothic genre.

## METHOD

This qualitative research applies Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). The primary data are taken from the main source, the *Frankenstein* novel, in the form of the narrative, paragraph, etc., and *Lisa Frankenstein's* film, in the form of captured frames of the scenes, dialog, background music, etc. related to the Neo-Gothic elements.

The secondary data are narration, discourses, and any information about Gothics and Neo-Gothics obtained from books, magazines, and also internet

sources such as journal articles, research studies, etc. The data analysis are done through a comparative techniques between the novel and film and a discursive method based on the semiotics reading on the proofs. Captured frames of the film are analyzed through a Barthesian semiotics method that is proposed by Nick Lacey in reading a film representation method, considering the content (*mise-en-scene*), audio, the subject, lighting, and setting of the image (Lacey, 1998).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Gothic Narrative in *Frankenstein* Novel and *Lisa Frankenstein* Film

Gothic works usually evoke the readers' or audience's sense of horror, through the supernatural elements such as uninhabited settings of places (gloomy forest, ruined building, castle with many rooms), monstrous beings, gloomy atmosphere, and other spine-chilling effects (Cuddon, 2013). The characters in Gothic works usually show the blurry gap between human and supernatural beings, such as in the portrayal of Dracula's character (Mishra et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Neo Gothic combined the monstrous elements of the Gothic genre with the addition of other elements such as fantasy, psychological elements, and even parody (Chonka et al., 2024). The elements in Neo-Gothic relate to Gothic, such as ghost, monstrous being, supernatural occurrence, and the setting of a place that is used as a crime setting. However, some elements are different, such as the use of unreliable narrator method and multiple endings that affect the audience's psychological perception of whether the occurrence is actual or imaginary, and the characters also usually have more ambiguous actions (Kornilova, 2022).

According to Hutcheon, adaptation as a product deals with the media in which the audience immerses the adaptation work (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). In the case of *Lisa Frankenstein*, the mode changes from the telling, which is a printed *Frankenstein* novel, into the showing performance of the film. The change of mode from telling to showing might result in a change of genre (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). The Gothic genre in *Frankenstein* changes into Neo-Gothic in *Lisa Frankenstein*, by adding postmodern elements such as mental health issues. The monstrous monster is constructed differently through the existence of the creature's silliness, which adds the comedic atmosphere. The creature kills people due to his intention of protecting Lisa, which leads them into a romantic relationship.

## 2. The Process of Adaptation from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* into Zelda Williams' *Lisa Frankenstein*

An adapter performs a process of appropriating by interpreting an existing work into a new work. This process is also done to imply the adapter's goals or motives in creating the adaptation work (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). When the directors conducted an adaptation from a novel into a film, it means that the mode of engagement shifts from telling to showing. The narration in the novel turns into the visuals shown in the film by the characters, properties, and even the soundtrack to enhance the audience's emotional response (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). Many film directors have adapted the *Frankenstein* novel into the film version with their themes and goals. The title of the *Lisa Frankenstein* film also makes us, as the audience, revisit the classical horror monstrous novel with a similar name, which is *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. The narrative events from the trailer also resemble the events in the novel, with a twist of some comedic and chaotic events (McCoy, 2024). The subsection below explains the adaptation process shown by the differences exist in *Lisa Frankenstein* film adaptation.

### a. From Gothic to Neo-Gothic: Adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* novel into Zelda Williams' *Lisa Frankenstein* Film

*Lisa Frankenstein* can be seen as one of the adaptations of *Frankenstein* in a Neo-Gothic or Neo-Victorian genre. The narrative of Neo-Gothic or Neo-Victorian usually contains nostalgia from the Victorian aspect and inserts some issues regarding women, the working class, or even minorities regarding race and sexuality (Krombholz, 2023). The way the scenes in the film reminisce about the gothic elements from *Frankenstein*, such as monstrosity, but with more modern elements, such as feminism, also shows the Neo-Gothic genre.

In the matters of character and characterization, some differences can be seen between the novel and film versions. For instance, the main character in the novel is a young man named Victor Frankenstein. In the film version, the main character is Lisa Swallows, an emo-goth teenager. The captured frame below is shot in a documentary style, showing Lisa's bold gothic make-up even at school. (Figure 1.)

Figure 1 shows Lisa's class condition is gloomy even in daylight, which is constructed through the red venetian blind, dark colours of the characters' costumes, back light on Lisa's curly hair highlighting her glamor style but gloomy, and also the dominant red and dark colours of the class decoration. Medium

close-up on Lisa's face emphasizes her bold makeup to suit the trends of the 1980s era, as the setting of the story. Vibrant layered shadow gives a dark circle on Lisa's eyes, which is combined with her dark costume, presenting a gothic impression.



Figure 1. Lisa's emo-goth appearances (01:15:18)

At the end of the film, Lisa commits suicide by burning herself in Taffy's tanning bed. The suicide is believed as a way out of her crime because she knows how the creature comes back to life through the tanning bed. They planed the awakening and reunite after death as seen in the following Figure 2.



Figure 2. Lisa's awakened corpse (01:37:07)

Figure 2 shows the creature has a normal human appearance with the ability to read a book. In his lap, there lies Lisa, who is awakened with a bandage covering her body to emphasize that Lisa is not the old Lisa, but it is the awakened corpse. In a close up, the frame shows Lisa's condition with pale skin and a lifeless expression while the creature's fingers is in a lively appearance. The gold ring on the creature's ring finger symbolizes that he and Lisa have become husbands and wives. The scene of picture is also followed by creature's reciting of a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley as the following quotation:

*To Mary*

*O Mary dear, that you were here  
With your brown eyes bright and clear.  
And your sweet voice, like a bird  
Singing love to its lone mate  
In the ivy bower disconsolate;  
Voice the sweetest ever heard!  
And your brow more...  
Than the sky  
Of this azure Italy.*

*Mary dear, come to me soon,  
I am not well whilst thou art far;  
As sunset to the sphered moon,  
As twilight to the western star,  
Thou, beloved, art to me.*

*O Mary dear, that you were here;  
The Castle echo whispers 'Here!'*  
(Shelley, 1814)

The poem recitation in the scene links the film with the real life of the author of Frankenstein, Mary Shelly, since the poem was written by her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. The poem was written for Mary Shelly when he was in Italy, but the film places the poem as a call to Lisa to come back to life and to the life of the Shelly family as a couple of husband and wife.

In the novel, the creature that Victor Frankenstein creates through the experiment does not have a name. In chapter 10, he introduces himself as Frankenstein's creature (Shelly,1969). The film begins with Lisa in a cemetery tracing a thombstone with a sculpture of a man, she found "...kenstein" on it and completed it with Fran-, before that. This film tries to give a strong clue to its connection to Frankenstein, the novel, even though it is by Mary Shelly. The thumb indicates that it was Frankenstein's thumb from the novel. As Hutcheon emphasized that an adaptation is a repetition without replication of previous works, and the repetition is exposed to call the audience's memory and to announce that it is an adaptation work (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013), this film employs the points in her theory.

The creature in Lisa's Frankenstein was created as a revival of Shelly's Frankenstein, who died in 1837. He is awakened by supernatural power through a thunderstorm that strikes his tombstone in the Bachelor's Grove cemetery. In the captured frame below, the creature stands in front of the traced picture of a tombstone made by Lisa. The traced picture showed a name "...EIN 1837. Unmarried" (Figure 3)



Figure 3. The creature introduces himself (00:28:35)

Victor Frankenstein created the monster from a collection of bones and built it through experiments.

The experiments strengthen the critical role of science in the process of creation. However, the film brings Frankenstein as a full-grown body of a young man's corpse, but missing his left ear, right hand, and male genital due to the long period of being buried as a playful but also a dark comedy. Moreover, the creature asks Lisa to help him complete his body to make an ordinary human appearance. The body parts are taken from Janet, Doug, and Trent's body that has been killed by Lisa and the creature.



Figure 4. Lisa sews Janet's leaf ear to the creature (00:46:45)

The captured frame above is shot in a close-up frame to show Lisa's effort to sew the creature's left ear while he is lying his head on Lisa's lap, indicating there is an intimate position and an emotional moment. However, the creature's new left ear did not function properly since it was taken from Janet's dead body. To make it work like a normal human being organ, Lisa decides to put the creature in Taffy's tanning bed. The electrocution from the tanning bed makes the left ear able to respond and function normally.



Figure 5. Lisa sews the creature's right hand (00:54:23)

The captured frame above is a close-up shot, showing the intimate position of Lisa sewing the right hand to the creature's body. This frame is also shot in a handheld mobile frame, showing Lisa's point of view.



Figure 6. Lisa sews the creature's male genital (01:29:29)

The captured frame above is shot at a long distance and zoomed in mobile frame to show the process of Lisa sewing Trent’s male genital into the creature’s body. Lisa’s act of performing simple surgery by sewing the left ear, right hand, and male genital to the creature and then making it function through the tanning bed’s electrocution reflects that the creature is her creation as similar to what Victor had done to Frankenstein in the novel. The difference is that in the novel, Victor creates the Frankenstein monster entirely through experiments with the help of electrocution to bring him alive. Meanwhile, in *Lisa Frankenstein*, Lisa uses electrocution to help the creature have an ordinary human appearance and functional body parts. Lisa’s sewing on the monstrous creature also gives feminine touch on the process of the creation since sewing is identical to domestic work area. In Lisa’s daily life, she works in a laundry shop which give reparation service on troubles costumes. Her job is sewing the broken clothes. The series of Lisa’s creation upon the creature with her expertise as a sewer is logically constructed in the story.

In *Frankenstein*, there is no romantic relationship experienced by the Frankenstein monster, but he has jealousy which makes him seek revenge for Victor.

“You must create a female for me with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being.”(Shelley, 1969:144)

The quotation above proves Frankenstein’s jealousy of Victor because Victor has a wife, and Frankenstein wants to feel the same feeling as he showed in Victor’s relationship with his wife. The jealousy highlights Frankenstein as a monster created by a human being who turns out to be humanized. However, his monstrous characteristic is maintained in the story with giving it reasons to kill people.

Meanwhile, in the film version, Lisa has a romantic relationship with the creature. In the captured frame below, it is shot in a medium distance showing the creature kissing Lisa’s forehead at the bed.



Figure 7. The romantic and sexual aspects between Lisa and the creature (01:30:48)

From the novel into *Lisa’s Frankenstein* film, the process of the adaptation presents in the memory call on the audiences of the previous Frankenstein

through the tombstone scene, the rise of the monster, the sewing organs scene, and the poem recitation at the end of the film. Serious creation of the previous Frankenstein through scientific experiments into a playful and dark comedy of the revival of Frankenstein in 1989 (time setting of the film), using a tanning bed as a beauty tool, changes the genre from gothic into neo-gothic. The following table shows the changes of the story in the novel into the film.

Table 4.1 Table of Differences: Gothic Genre in the Novel to Neo-Gothic Genre in the Film

Elements	Novel	Film
Characters	Victor Frankenstein, the Frankenstein monster	Lisa Swallows, the creature
The Monster Origin	Experiments conducted by Victor Frankenstein	The supernatural forces that struck the creature’s tombstone and awakened him
The Concept of Fragmented Body	A monster created from bone collection	Completing the creature’s missing body parts
Death Events Reason	Rejection and envious feelings experienced by the Frankenstein monster	The sense of protection from the creature/the monster toward Lisa
Elements of taboo	Victor is bringing the Frankenstein monster to life	Sexual intercourse and a “wedding” like ceremony between Lisa and the creature
The Monstrosity Narrative	The Frankenstein monster is still in his monstrous body	Lisa became an awakened corpse, while the creature became a human

As evidenced in Table 4.1, here are some differences from Gothic to Neo-Gothic shown in the *Frankenstein* novel and the *Lisa Frankenstein* film. In the matter of the main characters, the male scientist named Victor Frankenstein from the novel changes into an emo-goth female teenager named Lisa Swallows in the film. For the monster character, the novel has the gigantic human-like being called Frankenstein monster. Meanwhile, in the film version, the monster is called the creature. The origin of the monster in the novel is a man-made by Victor through experiments, while in the film, the creature is a corpse that is awakened by supernatural forces. The concept of the fragmented body is presented quite differently in the film version. The source work shows the concept through the process of creating the Frankenstein monster by combining a collection of bones. Meanwhile, in the film version, the fragmented body concept is shown by the creature that missing some of his body parts, such as the left ear, the right hand, and the male genital. The creature then completes those body parts using the one from the victim’s body. The gothic events related to the character’s death in the novel are influenced by the Frankenstein monster’s

feeling of rejection and envy toward Victor and his beloved people. Meanwhile, in the film version, the underlying reason for the creature's murdering the victim is due to his sense of protecting Lisa from the abusive people. The elements of taboo are evident in the novel, as shown by Victor's unethical act of bringing life to the Frankenstein monster, which was originally a lifeless creature. Meanwhile, in the film version, the taboo is shown by Lisa and the creature that ended up in a romantic relationship, having sexual intercourse and becoming spouses. The last is the shift of the monstrosity narrative, which in the novel is shown by the Frankenstein monster who maintains his monstrous body. In the film version, the monstrosity narrative at the end of the film changes when Lisa's corpse is awakened, and the creature becomes an ordinary human.

#### b. From Horror to Horror-comedy: the Monstrous *Frankenstein* Monster into Comedic *Lisa* and *The creature*

In the process of producing an adaptation work, the source work is re-created into a new form of work. Then it is reinterpreted so it suits the reception for the audience (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). The target audience of the film also becomes a prominent consideration regarding an adaptation work. Hollywood film industry targeting a global audience to reach a wider market for their films (Davids, 2023). *Lisa Frankenstein* film adaptation shows the re-creation of the source work of the Frankenstein story, by changing the horror genre to the horror-comedy genre. According to Cuddon (2013), horror is a literary genre that evokes the audience's feeling of shock, tension, and even disgust. The *Frankenstein* novel shows the horror genre through the monstrosity of the Frankenstein monster. The *Lisa Frankenstein* film gives a sense of comedy to the well-known *Frankenstein* monster, which is known as a horror parody. The monster or the creature usually changes from a frightening figure into a comical creature (Panos & Papadimitriou, 2021). The creature in *Lisa Frankenstein* has silly behaviors. At the beginning of the movie, the creature misunderstood Lisa's words about a music band named *The Cure* by raising his right hand, assuming she was talking about curing his decayed right hand (Figure 8).

In the captured frame above, Lisa clarifies that "The Cure" she is talking about is a band name, whose music can make Lisa feel better emotionally, shown by her dialogue, "No. *It's not that kind of cure. It's like a... It's a band*" (Williams, 2024).



Figure 8. The creature misunderstood Lisa's words (00:27:49)

The other scenes that make *Lisa Frankenstein* film to be a horror-comedy are when the creature is being shy after Lisa gives him a floral-pattern bathrobe and wears striped-pink pajamas. The captured frame below is shot at a long distance to show the context where the creature is done taking a bath and Lisa says, "Okay, sparky. *We got to get you some new duds*" (Williams, 2024).



Figure 9. The creature fit into Lisa's pink clothes (00:31:37)

The horror-comedy genre is also shown at the moment the creature kills Doug Moranz by throwing the axe and aiming at him like it was a sport. The captured frame below is shot at a medium distance and a normal angle. The frame shows *the creature's* reaction, which is grunting. The comedic atmosphere is presented by the creature's expression, which shows satisfaction after throw his axe into Doug's back.



Figure 10. *The creature's* satisfaction reaction (00:54:06)

The comedic atmosphere also exists when *the creature* is confused about modern customs, such as the APB system on a car, which is a tracking system installed for security. Furthermore, Lisa makes the scenes funnier when she states the old-fashioned

bicycle to compare with the modern car, and *the creature* feels embarrassed by looking away, as shown in the captured frame below.



Figure 11. *The creature embarrassed about his past life* (01:20:12)

In the other scene, the creature axes Trent's male genital and the lyrics of the background music repeat the word "fly" to show the literal event when Trent's male genital flies. The event of killing by a monster with an axe is accompanied by a cheerful background music entitled *On The Wings of Love* by Jeffrey Osbourne. This background music strengthens the situation that happens and also creates a comedic atmosphere. In the captured frame below, it is shot at a long distance showing the context where the shadow of Trent's male genital fly across his room, followed by the music background that states "*Together flying high.*"



Figure 12. Comical music background (01:23:52)

### 3. From the Victorian age of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* into the Modern America of Zelda Williams's *Lisa Frankenstein*

According to Hutcheon, those who have the primary role of a film adaptation are the film director and the screenwriter (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). The *Lisa Frankenstein* film is directed by an American actress and director named Zelda Williams and a screenwriter named Diablo Cody. In the process of producing an adaptation film, the content of the film must be adjusted culturally to make the social meaning suitable for the audiences, called the indigenization process (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). This process is usually used to show the author's agency and employ their power over the film adaptation (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013).

A film adaptation must be adjusted to suit the context of where and when the film is created. This adjustment is to ensure the film adaptation's reception among the audience (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). The source work of *Frankenstein*, published in 1818, certainly has a different context from the *Lisa Frankenstein* film. *Lisa Frankenstein* was aired in 2024, when the mental health and mental illness awareness became an important issue. A poll by NAMI, a non-profit organization based in the United States, reported that 83% workers agree that the training for mental health is needed to create a better workplace environment ("The 2024 NAMI Workplace Mental Health Poll," n.d.). In the case of the American film, the directors usually incorporate characters with mental illness to enrich the plot of the narrative. The characters can be portrayed as someone who is unstable, those who can be threatening, or a mental issue that causes agonizing pain (Krivačić, 2023:40). In the case of the *Lisa Frankenstein* film, Lisa, who was previously mute due to her mental health issue, becomes more talkative, even involved in the murder of her stepmother. Lisa's condition of processing grief towards her mother by going mute and later diagnosed with selective mutism relates to the Zelda's personal experience. The portrayal of Lisa's character who is going through a hurtful grief covered with her silliness, is Zelda's thought of relating to death (Williams & Cody, 2024).

The character named Doug in the film is killed by the creature. The reason for his murder is that he sexually harassed Lisa at the party by touching her breast. The revenge over Doug started with Lisa, who asked Doug to meet and follow her in the Bachelor's Grove Cemetery, then the creature axed his right hand. Doug was later stabbed by an axe through his back and died. In the captured frame below, it is shot at a long distance to show the context of the Bachelor's Grove Cemetery. There is Doug, who is running by holding his axed right hand and shouting, "Ow! Help!"



Figure 13. Doug runs before being killed (00:53:57)

Lisa's act of luring Doug and tricking him into her trap of his murdering show a glimpse of the *femme fatale* that usually existed in 21<sup>st</sup>-century

film (Johansen, 2021). The female characters in 21<sup>st</sup>-century film are shown to allure male using their body through appearance. The attire that the female characters wear is usually in red to symbolize blood or excess and show their sense of monstrosity (Johansen, 2021). The visualization of the monstrous femme fatale is shown by Lisa through her act of alluring Doug to meet her using his obsession with her body. Lisa's act of taking revenge over her sexual perpetrator also gives a glimpse of the third-wave feminism movement that occurred in the United States. The audiences prefer to enjoy a film in which the female lead has a brave personality and control over themselves (Liu & Yang, 2021).

The feminist movement is also shown when Lisa invites the creature to engage in sexual intercourse with her. In the captured frame below, it is shot at a medium distance and a normal angle, allowing the audience to observe the intimate moment between Lisa and *the creature*. It shows the creature caressing Lisa's hair and cheeks, while Lisa, on the other side, holds *the creature's* shoulders. Then, Lisa followed with her dialogue which says, "Make love to me," with a smile on her face (Williams, 2024).



Figure 14. Lisa asks the creature to have sexual intercourse with her (01:28:15)

Lisa's act of asking the creature to have sexual intercourse relates to the sex-positive feminism, which questions the stereotype of women's sexualities, such as being subordinate and passive. This feminist movement argued that women have their access to sexual pleasure, the same as men (Appleton, 2020). The setting of time in *Lisa Frankenstein* is in 1989, and it reflects the culture which preceded it, which is the 60s America, especially in the field of sexuality. As feminism evolved, the sexual revolution emerged that argued women have the same freedom in the sexual field as men (*The Pill and the Sexual Revolution*, n.d.). The next year, there was a Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) that emerged in the United Kingdom, which also argued about the freedom of women's sexuality (Wallhead, 2023). In the case of *Lisa Frankenstein*, Lisa shows female empowerment by adapting the source work of *Frankenstein's* narrative in a perspective of a

woman, including Lisa's choices regarding her sexual life (Truitt, 2024). Through the new narrative presented in *Lisa Frankenstein* that highlights more about feminism by Lisa's character, the film meets the audience's expectations. It is proven by the *Lisa Frankenstein* film that earns a total gross of \$5,634,150 in its first week of box office performance (The Numbers, n.d.).

The romantic relationship between Lisa and *the creature* is also added in the film version to adjust to the modern era. In the captured frame below, it is shot at a medium distance on a normal angle, which shows Lisa asking the creature by saying, "You love me?" (Williams, 2024).



Figure 15. Lisa asks the creature's feeling (01:27:48)

The addition of a romantic relationships in the *Lisa Frankenstein* film reflects the diversity developments of the Hollywood film industry. The film produced by Hollywood in recent times tries to represent more diverse stories and perspectives (Davids, 2023). In the case of *Lisa Frankenstein*, Lisa, who is a human, has a romantic relationship with an awakened corpse. This perspective does not exist in the novel version.

A film that has a touch of romance is also usually more desirable for the audience. In 2023, the global market of romance film and TV show production reached around \$30 billion. One of the prominent factors behind this huge value is streaming platforms such as Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, and Disney+ (Patel, 2025). *Lisa Frankenstein* was distributed by Amazon Prime Video in February 2024 and proved to meet the audience's expectations by earning a total gross of \$5,634,150 in its first week of box office performance (The Numbers, n.d.).

## CONCLUSION

*Lisa Frankenstein* shows its position as an adaptation work by recalling the audience's memory of Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* and the real life of the Shelly family through the title, the tombstone of the creature, and the poem recited at the end of the story. By banalizing the crime done by Lisa and the creature in low lighting mode in the whole film, the narration of

the film leads the audience into a showing mode of engagement and transforms the genre of the adaptation work from gothic into Neo-Gothic. Lisa Frankenstein shows the Neo-Gothic genre through the combination of the Gothic genre with horror-comedy aspects. The comedic atmosphere in Lisa Frankenstein is shown by the character of the monster, who often acts silly. The sound and music background also adds the comedic atmosphere, which often mismatch with the context of the events, such as a cheerful music background for a killing scene. Moreover, Lisa Frankenstein is more feminine in the process of creating the monster through Lisa's sewing skills and the use of her sister's tanning bed as the source of high energy in making her work more human. Meanwhile, the novel strengthens the sci-fi aspect by creating the creature through scientific experiments and exposing masculinity, including ending with the monster's rage because of the jealousy of being a man. The efforts of presenting the film's closeness to the previous work highlight it as an adaptation work. The recall on the audience's memory and knowledge of Shelley's version and Shelley's family in the plot throughout the story of the film constructs familiarity. The more the audience is familiar with the events, the more suspicious the plot is, aligning with the Hollywood film industry to gain more benefit. Neo-Gothic, as the newness of the film adaptation, is an offer in the neo-colonization industry. For the economic lures, Lisa Frankenstein is made in the Hollywood film industry and is also distributed through streaming platforms of Amazon Prime Video to reach a wider audience. The film also incorporates a romantic relationship, with Hollywood's romance formula, to enrich the plot of the narrative and meet the audience's desired preferences.

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