

The Frontier Within: *White Fawn's Devotion* (James Young Deer, 1910) and *Frankenstein* (J. Searle Dawley, 1910)

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Introduction

Film history is marked by a series of frontier crossings that may be technological, artistic or ideological. At times specific dates signal an inevitable change; at others, transformation occurs gradually and, frequently, the import of events is only realized in retrospect. Such a turning point may be the year 1908 with, on the one hand, the forging of the main film companies under Thomas Edison's aegis into the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) – more commonly known as The Trust – and, on the other, the move to “art films” with the creation of Paul Lafitte's Film d'Art company in Paris. Two French companies, Pathé Frères and Méliès, were members of the Trust, the latter owning several studios in the United States, and the former supplying one third of the films shown in this country.⁹ Along with importer and distributor George Kleine, geopolitical borders were indeed being crossed, although the other companies – Edison, Biograph, Vitagraph, Essanay, Kalem, Selig and Lubin – may be considered “American”, despite the European origins of some of their heads.¹⁰ Generally, the close of the first decade of the twentieth century saw changes in filmic endeavors and expectations. The following study discusses possible transformations by focusing on two films released in 1910, *White Fawn's Devotion*, and Edison's *Frankenstein*. Despite their cinematic and generic differences, both films have in common their treatment of an internalized frontier which they attempt to externalize by particular usage of screen space.

⁹ Vincent Pinel, *Le Cinéma muet*, Paris: Larousse, 2010, 90-5.

¹⁰ Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*, New York: [Random House, 1975] Vintage Books, 1994, 34–41.

White Fawn's Devotion and *Frankenstein* may seem diametrically opposed. J. Searle Dawley's adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* for Edison could be said to represent mainstream American film; while one of Pathé's first American-made products, *White Fawn's Devotion* – attributed to Native American director James Young Deer – seems a more modest production. Dawley was the prominent Edison director of the time, and Mary Fuller, who plays Elizabeth, Frankenstein's fiancée, was the company's star female lead. Whereas *Frankenstein* can be seen as part of a growing trend for art films, the French company was more interested in making what it considered "American" films. Its first "made in USA" productions reflect very much American genres – Westerns, "Indian" films such as *The Cheyenne Brave* – and the presence of American stars like Mary Pickford, America's little sweetheart.¹¹ The mutual transatlantic crisscrossing of frontiers is completed by that most American of companies, Edison, and its director Dawley choosing the European classic, *Frankenstein*. The difference between *Frankenstein* and *White Fawn's Devotion* is generic, in that the former can be considered a gothic film, whereas the latter is a typical example of an Indian Picture, a genre much in vogue at the time,¹² and the subtitle presents the film as "[a] play acted by a tribe of Red Indians in America". *Frankenstein* is a studio production with created sets and backdrops, whereas *White Fawn's Devotion* was filmed outdoors, albeit in New Jersey and not the Far West.

White Fawn's Devotion focuses on the common plot of an "Indian" woman who is prepared to sacrifice herself for her "White" husband¹³ and, as such, concerns the estrangement wrought through what is termed mixed marriage, intermixture or miscegenation. Dawley introduces an element that is absent from Shelley's *Frankenstein* – or rather, the film transforms an underlying concept in the novel, that of the perception of Otherness via the mirror through which the monster materializes and ultimately disappears. One of the manifestations of the frontier in both films is through offspring: on the one hand, the split identity of White Fawn's daughter; on the other, the unnamed monster who, due to his fabricated origins, cannot become human. In *White Fawn's Devotion*, both the main characters' differing identities and the territorial frontier are expressed via divisions of film space. Through the mirror device, Dawley's *Frankenstein* plays on the possible dual nature of the hero, Frankenstein, suggesting a Jekyll / Hyde relationship between the scientist and his monster.

White Fawn's Devotion

Before a border can be crossed, it has to be set up. Richard Dyer comments that the division created between "White and Red peoples establishes a border where there was none before", since Indians can be said not to know formal boundaries.¹⁴ Similarly, the concept of miscegenation that developed

¹¹ Martin F. Norden, "Pathé frères à l'époque du 'Trust'", in J. Kermabon, ed., *Pathé, premier empire du cinéma*, Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1994, 90-101. The American branch of Gaumont also made what it considered "American" pictures, like *Hiawatha* (1913) which, with 150 Native American extras, claimed to be the first all-Native American cast film.

¹² Films about Native Americans were very popular between 1905 and 1915 and resurfaced in the 1920s. Some 650 "Indian Pictures" were produced during their peak period from 1909 to 1915. See Ralph and Natasha Friar, *The Only Good Indian – the Hollywood Gospel*, New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1972, 15–16.

¹³ Michael Hilger, *The American Indian in Film*, Metuchen, NJ/London: The Scarecrow Press, 1986, 190–1.

¹⁴ Richard Dyer, *White*, London: Routledge, 1997, 33.

from the postbellum era establishes a border that had not existed before. This is particularly evident in Indian pictures, which generally refer to an indeterminate past in American history, somewhere between a pre-European past, pioneer days and the early twentieth century. When territorial and cultural boundaries were established, precise delimitations were not necessarily drawn between ethnic groups – White and Native American, White and Hispanic, perhaps even White and African American. Divisions developed essentially under the pressure of territorial and economic needs. The same can be said for early film, which was still in the making at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although there may have been a certain amount of “cultural latitude”¹⁵ at the time of films like *White Fawn's Devotion*, taken as a whole, strictures against intermixture had not yet been totally worked into the narratives, and romantic relationships frequently occurred between characters from different ethnic groups.

White Fawn's Devotion is set on the actual western frontier and concerns a frontiersman, Combs, a settler from the East living at Pine Ridge, Dakota, and his family, composed of his wife, White Fawn, and their young daughter. The film was released in June 1910 and named by the Library of Congress to a National Film Registry Award in 2008. The lead actress, Princess Red Wing, was born Lilian St. Cyr on Winnebago Reservation, Nebraska. She was a star in her own right, appearing in over fifty films from *The White Squaw* (Kalem, 1908) to *White Oak* (Lambert Hillyer, 1921), but is perhaps best remembered for the lead role of Nat-U-Ritch in Cecil B. DeMille's first feature film, *The Squaw Man* (Paramount, 1914).¹⁶ St. Cyr played in a number of films with her husband Young Deer, who directed eighteen films between 1909 and 1924, and acted in twenty-six films.¹⁷

White Fawn's Devotion differs from other films depicting love between Indian women and White men, such as *The Squaw Man* or *The Invaders*, in that it is told very much from the point of view of the Indians. From the opening general shot, attention is paid to creating the setting, which depicts a family scene with Combs, White Fawn and their daughter in front of their log cabin. The husband is chopping wood, the wife is seated next to a table sewing and the child is putting feathers together. Animal hides hanging outside and inside the cabin suggest that the husband is a trapper. White Fawn wears long braids and traditional dress, whereas her daughter has short, light-colored hair cut in a bob, and pale skin. Everything in this scene indicates that the frontier has already been crossed by their relationship and its result: the child and her mixed appearance.

In the second scene, Combs rides off to hunt and meets a man with a letter addressed to him, announcing that he has inherited an “immense fortune”. He returns to the cabin – the same setting as frame 1 – except that White Fawn is now inside. When she comes out, he breaks the news to her and the child, pointing to the East, where they will now have to move. The child is excited by the news and imitates her father. White Fawn is horrified and moves to the right-hand side of the

¹⁵ M. Elise Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film*, Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006, 47. Marubbio attributes cinematic intermixture to “slippage”. I would suggest that from Edison-Dickson's kinoscope views, “Americanness” in film absorbed a great many cultures, and ethnic divisions developed especially from the mid-1910s, with the growth in nationalism, racism and anti-immigrant sentiment.

¹⁶ DeMille remade his own film twice for Paramount, with the female lead played by White American actress Ann Little in 1918 and Mexican actress Lupe Velez in the first sound version in 1931. Little was frequently cast as Indian princesses, as in Thomas Ince's *The Invaders* (Kay Bee, 1912).

¹⁷ Recent research suggests Young Deer was not a Winnebago from Nebraska like his wife, but was born James Young Johnson, of mixed heritage from Delaware. See Linda M. Waggener, *Starring Red Wing: The Incredible Career of Lilian M. St. Cyr, the First Native American Film Star*, University of Nebraska Press, 2019.

screen – the Indian side – pulling the child towards her. She is left alone while Combs sends his daughter to fetch water and prepares to leave. White Fawn stabs herself and falls to the ground. When the child returns, she believes that her father has killed her mother. The title-card reads:

Deceived by appearances, and believing her mother to be dead, the child accuses her father of murder.

She runs off right and the next scene finds her in the Indian village, explaining what has occurred. The Indians return with her to the cabin, and she and the women mourn White Fawn. Seated on the ground in the center of the frame, the child bewails her mother lying behind her, throwing her arms in the air in anguish. The chief sends a party of Indians to capture the trapper and a long chase sequence ensues, during which the trapper manages to shoot all but one of his pursuers. The Indian overpowers him after they have successively forded a river and fought on the edge of a cliff.¹⁸ The trussed-up Combs is taken back to the village and put on a slab. The chief rules that his daughter execute justice. The Indian warriors begin to dance around the stone, while the child refuses to comply. In the nick of time, White Fawn appears and, in a scene reminiscent of the Pocahontas legend, throws herself on her husband and pleads for his release. The chief pardons them all, but orders husband, wife and child to leave.

Obviously, a frontier was crossed by the violent act of suicide, intended to liberate both husband and daughter from having to choose. Ironically, the daughter takes sides against her father by accusing him of murder. Later, she is faced with another terrible dilemma: having to carry out the death sentence on her own father. The frontier between White and Indian is also recreated by the divisions of screen space. On the one hand, a vertical division in the center of the frame, separating East and West / White and Indian, represents the split that governs the lives of both mother and daughter. On the other, the horizontal axis provides another frontier – that separating reality and appearance. The prostrate body of the wife, lying on the ground in the middle of the frame with the husband bending over her, is matched in the final sequence by that of the husband lying on the stone while the wife bends over him and pleads for his life. The horizontal axis of false appearance shows a wife who is not dead and a husband who is not guilty. The resolution of the narrative establishes the truth, proving the wife to be alive and the husband to be innocent. It also saves the daughter from the burden of guilt, that of somehow being responsible for her parents' deaths since her absence allowed her mother to die and her father to be chief suspect.

The spatial configurations thus combine to illustrate the underlying conflict, the resolution of which allows the couple to resolve a discrepancy in their marriage – the vertical split – built upon the *appearance* of happiness as depicted in the first sequence. In fact, this union between a White settler and an Indian woman has a shaky foundation, shown firstly by White Fawn's refusal to leave the confines of her house. There are four different spaces in the narrative: the log cabin, the road where Combs meets the messenger, the Indian village, and the countryside of the chase scene. Whereas the husband can move *through* all spaces, White Fawn is particularly static in the first and third sequences which show her at home. She sticks close to the house, seated in front of it, going inside, standing close to the table. Her two actions, attempting to kill herself and going to the Indian village, bring about the change in their lives.

¹⁸ In *The Cheyenne Brave* (1910), also directed by Young Deer for Pathé, an exciting canoe chase opposes an Indian who elopes with his loved one, followed by his rival and a fleet of canoes (Henri Bousquet, *Pathé des années 1896 à 1914: 1910–1911*, Paris: Bousquet, 1994, 366).

The second deceiving appearance is that of false stability, epitomized by the child, who is shown in the space of the home, or in the Indian village, though never actually moving from one to another. She would like to be active, riding on horseback with her father, going East with him, but she is confined to fetching water. Her half-White and half-Indian presence externalizes the split that both parents feel and that prevents them in the beginning from being totally happy. When her parents fight, she imitates first her mother, then her father. Finally, she finds herself in the middle of the frame, between both parents, but her mother pulls her to her side. Later, the child takes the same central position, but on the low, horizontal axis, mourning her mother on the ground. She is indeed caught in a double bind: her mother's seemingly "dead" body frees her from the constraints of her "Indianness"; yet because the father is suspected of that killing, she cannot turn to her "White" side either. By commanding her to do so, the chief offers her the solution—equally impossible—of killing the White side, her father. *White Fawn's Devotion* ends on a relatively happy note with the family united, although the chief orders them from the village, reminiscent of Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden of Eden. However, for husband and wife, the crossing of barriers for love represents an ultimate estrangement from the Indians.

Frankenstein

Released in March 1910, Dawley's *Frankenstein* was the first cinematic adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel. The film was believed lost, but was discovered in Wisconsin in the 1970s by Alois Dettlapp among his collection of old films. It was restored and shown at the twenty-second Pordenone Silent Film Festival in 2003. Dawley had been brought to the Porter-Edison team because of his theatrical skills. Edwin Porter was essentially a technician who delighted in finding the right solution to a tricky cinematic situation, while Dawley was an actor with some stage-direction experience.¹⁹ Their combined skills come together in *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest* (1908)—in which D. W. Griffith made his film debut as an actor—with Porter's mechanical eagle and Dawley's direction. Dawley essentially introduced a type of film with more "upper-class" appeal, specializing in European and American classics, adapting the first full version of Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* in two parts (1911) in which Mary Fuller played Constance.²⁰

The Frankenstein monster has become fixed by the image of Boris Karloff's pale, scarred face and hulking body. The 1910 *Frankenstein* gives a vision of the monster before it was refashioned by James Whale's *Frankenstein* (Universal, 1931). Dawley's monster, played by Charles Ogle—who also did his own make-up as was customary at the time—looks more like a gigantic ogre. The extant 1910 print focuses on scenes at the Frankenstein home in Geneva, with a sequence toward the beginning in Frankenstein's (Augustus Phillipe) laboratory in the Bavarian university of Ingolstadt. Three scenes stand out: the creation of the monster in the laboratory, the monster's visit to Frankenstein's study in Geneva, where it falls in love with Elizabeth through her image in a mirror; and the monster's final

¹⁹ Jack Spears, "Edwin S. Porter", in *The Civil War on the Screen and Other Essays*, Cranbury, NJ: A. S. Barnes, 1977, 164–190.

²⁰ As of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1913), Dawley joined Famous Players. Among his subsequent films are *Snow White* (1916), with Marguerite Clark in the title role, a film that would influence the young Walt Disney, and a remake of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Famous Players-Lasky, 1918), in which Clark doubles up for Eva and Topsy.

sacrifice when it disappears into the same mirror, leaving Frankenstein and Elizabeth to their married life.

When Dawley made *Frankenstein* in 1910, Porter had already left Edison to start his own company,²¹ an absence that can be felt by Dawley's recourse to static tableaux and theatrical backdrops for scenery rather than Porter's cinematic sense. Dawley or other people working on the film may have been influenced by Porter's inventiveness in the use of trick photography for the birth of the monster: a burning dummy of the creature was filmed and the footage was then played backwards to give the impression of creation. But such techniques – like the stop motion used in the final sequence – were becoming commonplace.

Frankenstein presents a different type of "intermixture" to that of the child in *White Fawn's Devotion*. Not only is the creature made up of the body parts of a variety of dead people, in its desire for humanity, its love for Elizabeth, there is the suggestion of crossing the frontier between human and non-human – between the "natural" and the artificially made. Perhaps what the monster desires most is to become its creator, Frankenstein, which may explain why in the novel, it kills all those who are close to the Baron and who refuse to recognize its worth and humanity: the younger brother, the fiancée, the close friend and finally Frankenstein himself. The desire for fusion is achieved to a certain extent by posterity since the monster is generally referred to as "Frankenstein". It may be read as the creature's desire to become its maker, especially in its relationship with Elizabeth; it can also be seen as latent homosexuality, explaining why in the novel the monster kills Elizabeth on her bridal bed. Indeed, Whale claimed that the 1931 *Frankenstein*, with its exclusion and final lynching of the monster serves as a subtext for society's rejection of the Other, in this case, homosexuals.²²

The first mirror sequence encapsulates the underlying meaning of the novel. Shelley's *Frankenstein* is about frontiers in the sense of limits. These are frequently expressed spatially, with the monster confined to far-flung regions, beginning its existence on the "edge" of Europe in Ingolstadt. Scholars have noted the otherness of central and eastern Europe in nineteenth century literature.²³ The monster shuns cities; its haunts are fields, forests, mountain tops, the Outer Hebrides and finally the North Pole.

The scientist Frankenstein is concerned with another kind of limit: the Faustian desire for universal knowledge, summed up by the desire to find "the mystery of life", as a title-card puts it in the laboratory scene, by creating life. Granted, he resembles more a magician than a scientist, pouring into a cauldron various substances which he proceeds to stir, like Edison, perhaps, who, under his nickname the Wizard of Menlo Park, transformed science into magic. The monster's disappearance at the end by way of a mirror is reminiscent of such illusory tricks performed by George Méliès's cheeky scientists and magicians. Yet, the 1910 *Frankenstein* was withdrawn from distribution despite its literary source, due to the fact that religious groups objected to the portrayal of a man creating life. The scientist had overstepped limits by flouting what was considered a divine prerogative.

The "birth" of the monster takes place behind a heavy wooden door in the wall at the back of Frankenstein's laboratory. The scientist pulls the door to and secures it with a bolt. He can now

²¹ Porter did not agree with the Trust system and also wanted more independence. He first founded a company called Defender Pictures and later co-founded Rex Film Company, which was largely financed by Carl Laemmle.

²² Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*, New York: Harper & Row [1981] 1988, 49–51.

²³ Ludmilla Kostova, "Theorizing Europe's Wild West", *European Messenger*, vol X/1, Spring 2001, 71–3.

observe his experiment through a large peep-hole in the door, much like early cinema-going practices. This is done in a series of alternating shots showing Frankenstein's growing excitement as he sees the creature coming to life and the gradual progression of the monster emerging. Death is frequently seen as the crossing of a frontier. Here, the scene insists on the reverse process of death being transformed into life. When Frankenstein sees his creation, he recoils with horror and backs away into his bedroom, falling to the bed, then to the floor, as the monster tries to make contact with him. The disgust mirrored on Frankenstein's face causes the monster to leave.

The act of looking is repeated in the first mirror sequence, which is set in Frankenstein's study in Geneva, where a large full-length mirror takes up the right-hand side of the screen. Seated left, the scientist first sees Elizabeth entering the room via the mirror, then she is seen as double, physically in the center of the screen, while her back is reflected in the mirror. She and Frankenstein leave the room to the left of the screen. The Alpine episode in Shelley's novel, during which the monster sees his ugly reflection in a pool of water, had the creature recoil from his image, unlike Narcissus who fell in love with his reflection. Here, a title-card precedes the mirror sequence:

Haunting his creator, and jealous of Frankenstein's sweetheart, the monster sees himself for the first time.

The monster enters, taking up the space that Elizabeth has just occupied in the mirror. It hides behind the scenery and emerges when alone in the room. Frankenstein enters and, as in Ingolstadt, they make contact, only here they wrestle and the monster overpowers him. Just then it catches sight of its reflection and is horrified by its appearance.

By way of the mirror, Dawley's film concentrates on individual reactions to the monster; in the 1931 version, society as a whole becomes the monster's mirror. The title to the mirror sequence suggests latent homosexuality, but the monster seems to see Elizabeth as both a mother figure and sweetheart. This is corroborated by the bedroom evocations – the first visible, the second suitably repressed off screen – and the sequence ends on an Oedipal fight with the "father", and the monster knocking Frankenstein to the ground.

Elizabeth's entrance in Frankenstein's study complies with a common literary and pictorial trope of the nineteenth century that uses the mirror image for expressing love. Yet the filtering of the male gaze through a mirror seems inevitably to end in unrequited love and frequently in death as in Alexandre Dumas's *La Femme au collier de velours / The Woman with the Velvet Collar* (1851). This love may be manipulative, as in Sheridan Le Fanu's "The Room in the Dragon Volant" (1872), in which the protagonist first perceives the face of the woman he is attracted to when she lifts her black veil and is reflected in a mirror.

If Lacanian theory is applied to the monster's "mirror-phase", his ability to have his "I" constructed through the Other (his mother's – Elizabeth's – gaze) is denied him, as he sees himself alone in the mirror. To this is added the fact that, while the mirror stage occurs in infants between six and eighteen months, the monster is adult and a result of "unnatural" birth, a frequent trait of science fiction monsters.²⁴

The closed space of Frankenstein's laboratory contrasts with his living room in Geneva,

²⁴ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror-Phase as Formative of the Function of the I", trans. Jean Rousset, *New Left Review* 1/5, September-October, 1968, 63–77. John Brosnan, *The Primal Scream, a History of Science Fiction Film*, London: Orbit, 1991, 2.

presented in the opening sequence when he leaves for university, and on his return home and wedding night. Instead of a dark wall, the room is partitioned by French windows at the back, through which characters are seen to leave and enter and beyond which the lake, hills and town are visible, bathed in light. Frankenstein's bed is recalled during the bridal night, although the bedroom is situated off-screen. Elizabeth retires alone and the monster enters through the French windows, disappearing into the bedroom. Frankenstein returns and unknowingly shuts the windows, underlining that the creature is really the monster *within*. This is illustrated in the following sequence after the monster has frightened Elizabeth – an off-screen reaction gaze that is conveyed by the monster itself as, on returning to the study, it gazes sadly on its hideous form. Suddenly, the monster is only visible in the mirror. Frankenstein enters and it gazes back at him from the mirror, as if it were his image. Then it disappears and Frankenstein sees with joy that his own reflection has returned. The monster has sacrificed itself out of love for Elizabeth.

It would seem here that the Foucauldian heterotopic action of the mirror²⁵ has worked on the monster. By creating a barrier between the self and its image, the mirror allows the self to be reconstituted in the real world, reducing thus the space between self and reflection. Nowhere is this more pertinently described than in Guy de Maupassant's *Bel Ami* (1885), when the protagonist catches a glimpse of himself in a mirror on the landing and does not recognize himself. Here, obviously, the incident has narrative implications which reveal the changes he has undergone. In the final sequence in Frankenstein's study, the monster is pictured on the screen and as it moves we become aware of its presence in the room and that the first image is its reflection. This intentional confusion allows for the audience to identify with the monster – as in the novel, but through different narrative devices – to feel horror, but also pity. Its ultimate sacrifice becomes a noble gesture. During his brief life, Frankenstein's sensitive monster experiences varying emotions that finally lead him to reason, and self-sacrifice. Indeed, it represents a possible "other" side to the intellectual scientist, whose repressed feelings can now emerge through his reconstructed mirror image.²⁶

The Frontier Extended

The 1910 *Frankenstein* works on similar spatial divisions to *White Fawn* of vertical and horizontal axes except, whereas the latter resolves its "deceiving appearances" of a harmonious family on screen, the former requires the additional dimension of the mirror to resolve the division of the screen vertically into a "real" world on the left and a looking-glass one on the right, and horizontally, into the scientist on the floor having to succumb to his failure. That this occurs in the confines of Frankenstein's private quarters – his bedroom, his study – suggests an inner world of intellectual and romantic desires. The mirror in *Frankenstein* literally extends the space at the back, a space that was clearly bounded previously by walls and doors, giving depth to character and plot, a virtually

²⁵ Michel Foucault, "Des espaces autres", [1967] trans. "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, 16(2), 1982, 22-7. Other spaces mentioned by Foucault are closed spaces like boats, institutions such as psychiatric hospitals or the neutral and impersonal spaces that we pass through during our daily lives.

²⁶ On the relationship between the repressed and the Other, see Robin Wood, "An Introduction to the American Horror Film", in Richard Lippe, *The American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1979. Whale's *Frankenstein* serves as an example for Wood.

extendable space that was used later by Orson Welles in the multiple images of Charles Foster Kane, decreasing in size, toward the end of *Citizen Kane* (1941).

The confrontation with the self is frequently illustrated in film through the protagonist looking at himself in a mirror. This is to be found in both French and American New Wave films with their emphasis on a subjective point of view. A character may refresh her face with water before confronting her changed image in the bathroom mirror, like the woman (Emmanuelle Riva) in *Hiroshima mon amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959) who has just relived her traumatic past. In *Baisers volés / Stolen Kisses* (François Truffaut, 1968), Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud) repeats his name in crescendo as he gazes into the mirror, expressing his growing awareness of self. He intersperses it with the name of the woman he loves, Fabienne Tabard (Delphine Seyrig), an affirmation of self as he projects himself into the situation of saying her name and appropriating her. Frequently, a male character unmasks his face while shaving, acquiring awareness of self, as in *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967) and Martin Scorsese's protagonists often move from fantasy to reality via their mirror image (*Mean Streets*, 1972, *Taxi Driver*, 1976, *After Hours*, 1986).

The above examples point to the mirrored image as active and mobile, a suitable reproduction of the film image. It differs thus from a portrait, which captures a person's image in fixed form, through painting, sculpture or photography. Furthermore, self-portraiture aside, the artistic image gives an external point of view. The filmed mirror image is generally that of self, except in two-shots when a character may gaze on another through the mirror, as in *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000).²⁷ As in the 1910 *Frankenstein*, the cinematic mirror serves as the locus for reconstructing identity and finding one's true self. It also allows for a new identity to emerge through the transformation of making-up while looking at one's image in a mirror.²⁸ This may lead to the discovery of true identity toward the end of *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927),²⁹ or as a primal scene in *Torch Song Trilogy* (Paul Bogart, 1988), when Arnold's (Harvey Fierstein) homosexuality is revealed as a little boy to his horrified mother (Anne Bancroft), who discovers him in her closet, wearing her clothes and makeup, a reversal of the mother-child relationship in the Lacanian mirror phase.

Both *White Fawn's Devotion* and *Frankenstein* conclude on relatively "happy" endings, even if mitigated by banishment in *White Fawn* and the monster's sacrifice in *Frankenstein*. In the early years of film, *White Fawn* and *Frankenstein* had at their disposal relatively limited narrative and cinematic resources. Yet both films are in the continuum of gradual innovations with screen space that lead to the enhancement of narrative. *White Fawn* makes up for a tendency to frontal screening by incorporating the vertical and horizontal divisions into the narrative. In *Frankenstein*, spatial dimension is enhanced by giving depth to part of the screen via the mirror. This is similar to the use

²⁷ See my "Déchiffrement de l'aide-mémoire écrit dans *Memento* de Christopher Nolan", in Nicole Cloarec (ed.), *La Lettre au cinéma*, Paris : Houdiard, 2007, 219-37.

²⁸ See the opening to *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967) or *Puzzle of a Downfall Child* (Jerry Schatzberg, 1970); my "Mannequin recherche désespérément sa voix: Polly Maggoo et Lou Andreas Sand", in P. Starfield, ed., *Femmes et pouvoir*, Condé-sur-Noireau: CinémAction, 2008, 224-41.

²⁹ Variations of blackening-up in front of a mirror are to be found in *Stormy Weather* (Andrew Stone, 1943) and *Bamboozled* (Spike Lee, 2000), which plays on an imposed stereotyped identity; see my "Le masque de blackface dans *Bamboozled* de Spike Lee", in P. Starfield ed, *Masque et lumière*, Condé-sur-Noireau : CinémAction, 2006, 197-205.

of the background for the creation of the monster or a backdrop of Lake Geneva which is to be seen in some sequences. The latter, however, provides a realistic extension to the foreground, unlike the mirror which allows for inner or immaterial expression. Granted, David Wark Griffith had gone further with intercutting and variation in shot scale as in *The Greaser's Gauntlet* (Biograph, 1908), although *White Fawn's Devotion* does present a certain rhythm in shot change and a breakdown of shots in the chase sequence. Their innovation lies more in their transformation of screen space into narrative space, much like *The Yiddisher Boy* (Sigmund Lubin, 1908), in which a flashback – believed to be the first – occurs in double exposure top left. These “on-screen” edits include the spatial divisions and are similar to the uses made of “in-camera edits” of 1960s experimental film, like those of Andy Warhol.

The films also make use of off-screen space, which is noticeable in *Frankenstein* when an additional character is far left, or off screen during the mirror sequence, or when later the monster frightens Elizabeth in the bridal chamber. In *White Fawn*, the off-screen is present throughout through the awareness of whatever is external to the log cabin – the countryside, the Indian village, the East. These examples illustrate the porosity of the film frame and underline how the screen serves as a mirror for relaying narrative.