

Part One: Coda

Shelley's novel presents a written text that subverts the law due to insisting on embodiments of perspective. Rose's film continues this subversion in prying apart quite forcefully the body on the one and the 'law' of designative language on the other hand, a subversion that peaks in the seemingly illogical self-designations of the voice-over speeches. This *Frankenstein* film works with inconsistencies of language *and* inconsistencies of narrative logic or rather, makes the two aspects into two sides of the same coin, namely that of enunciation. "What is meant by the word 'enunciation' is the presence, at both ends of the utterance, of two human persons, or, rather, two *subjects*" (Metz 747): Metz makes somewhat light here of Benveniste's repeated assertion that uttering "I" (or "you") refers only to "the reality of discourse" as such (Benveniste 218), that such pronouns "are distinguished from all other designations a language articulates in that *they do not refer to a concept or to an individual*" (Benveniste 226). Such expressions, wherever they appear (inside fiction and out), always already refuse, to some degree, the subjection of the corporeal to the licit and the legal: No one, after all, can forbid me to say, and speak as, 'I'...

...or so it would seem. Such discursive performance is powerful in its self-sufficiency at the same time as it is fragile and precarious. Its success is an eventuality that lends force to the attempt, in the first place. There is "a 'perhaps'," as Alexander García Düttmann argues, that is "not a tool in the repertory of scepticism, at least not inasmuch as it makes the success of communication into an achievement" and thus "reveals something about a, or the, feeling of life" (54). There is, in other words, an undecidability of success and failure, a mutual implication ("the inscription

of failure within success” that turns success into an “achievement” [52]), that makes speech acts expressive and thus, ultimately, into instances of liveliness (this is Düttmann’s answer to the question “What is a deconstructionist’s feeling of life?” [49]). While there are “habits, conventional behaviour, established practices that blind us to the expressiveness of felicitous performative utterances,” we need to move – through deconstructionist thought, Düttmann argues – from “an understanding of the performative utterance as a speech act whose success can be ascertained” to an “understanding of it as an act of expression, or a form of expressiveness, as a saying that is also a showing” (52). Simply put, there is depth and life in signification and communication because it can always also go wrong:

This pure expressiveness of speech acts, and of communication, is engendered by a tension that can be weaker or stronger, and that always tends toward one of its poles. It is the tension between the expressive and the ultimately inexpressive, between success and failure (mere success and mere failure being equally inexpressive), between the taking place of what is done with words and an interruption that may lead to an inquiry into what went wrong. ‘Was there something that forced me to say what I did not want to say?’ While it is likely that an answer to this question can be found in a significant number of cases, no inquiry will ever be able to bridge, or fill, all the gaps. (53)

Such life, and such depth, come from the principle of iteration, from the circumstance that going awry and missing the point are not only inevitable, but productive of singular identities or even ‘authenticity,’ in the first place.

The logic of iterability accounts for both the ‘only-once’ as an instance of repetition (the exception confirms and ratifies the rule) *and* the ‘only-once’ as an instance of alteration (the exception has a destabilizing effect upon the rule). [...] Iterability signals that, in language, nothing can ever happen only once and everything always does. [...] [T]he conjunction [‘and’] points to a tension, does not indicate its resolution, and this is the reason for language becoming expressive in

its usage, and for the transcendental being inseparable from the empirical, the law from its manifestation, the rule from its application: the becoming-expressive of language is of its very essence. (56)¹

Expression, then – expressiveness – has something to do with the circumstance that every utterance can *also* fail, and this has something to do with the impossible possibilities of iteration: the circumstance that every utterance, to mean something, *must* repeat, but also must *not* repeat – must follow a certain logic of the repetition of difference. A meaningful gap opens up between utterances that is not unlike the deviance in and of the monster's speaking body. Stories do not only concern the moment of speaking – they also concern its progress, the progress of telling time. This is, precisely, the domain of iteration, repetition, variation. What is the place of repetition in the *Frankenstein* complex; and more generally its role for the meaningfulness of stories?

1 Düttmann continues: "If one accepts [...] the argument of iterability as an argument about life, then one could perhaps infer from it that life, for the deconstructionist, is the occurrence, or the event, of what always occurs only once because it occurs more than once, and of what always occurs more than once because it occurs only once. [...] [L]ife is tension, a tension between an 'only-once' and a 'once-more', between an 'only-once' haunted by a 'once-more' and a 'once-more' haunted by an 'only-once'" (57).

