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CHAPTER 9

Jules Saladin's 1821 Translation of *Frankenstein*

Anne Rouhette

‘Translation is not an untroubled communication of a foreign text, but an interpretation that is always limited by its address to specific audiences and by the cultural or institutional situations where the translated text is intended to circulate and function’, writes Lawrence Venuti.¹ A translation may function as a mask or a screen between the original work and the target audience, as Jacques Béreaud remarks,² but the cultural context in which that translation was produced may also work as a screen and condition some of the choices made by the translator. This essay aims at examining Jules Saladin's translation of *Frankenstein* in 1821 from this double perspective, reflecting on how it may have been influenced by the literary climate in which it came out and how it influenced it in its turn.

The translations of *Frankenstein* published in French, either in France or in French-speaking countries, have been well documented and include at least 12 different versions, although Saladin's, which was the first in any language and the only one produced in the 19th century, remains to this day the only French translation of the 1818 text.³ It was not reissued, however, until 1975, after which it was revised several times by different authors. An exhaustive record of the various translations of *Frankenstein* in French up to 2019, including a few adaptations in other formats (graphic novels, animation films, series), can be found online on nooSFere.org, a non-academic website devoted to science-fiction, completing the

¹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd edn (1995; Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 14.

² Jacques Béreaud, ‘La Traduction en France à l'époque romantique’, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 8. 3 (1971), 224-44 (p. 225).

³ As a comparison, the first German and Italian versions of *Frankenstein* date respectively from 1912 and 1944. Taking a position which does not appear to reflect recent Shelley scholarship, Alain Morvan chose to translate the 1831 version for the highly prestigious and supposedly authoritative ‘Pléiade’ collection in 2014, arguing that since, in his view, there are hardly any differences between the two texts, a translator may as well choose the latter, perfected version of the work. Alain Morvan, ‘Note sur le texte’, *Frankenstein et autres romans gothiques* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2014), p. 1351.

list compiled in *Romantic Circles* until 2009.⁴ That *Frankenstein* should be thus closely linked to fantasy literature might have been expected, but it is worth noting that this association impacts the entire reception of Mary Shelley in France, as we will see below.

The following chart lists Shelley's writings other than *Frankenstein* as they appeared in French translation in the chronological order of their publication:

<i>The Last Man</i> (1826) extracts	<i>Le Dernier homme.</i> (extrait), translator unknown	Genève, bibliothèque universelle des sciences, belles-lettres, et arts, vol. XXXIV ⁵	1827
'The Brother and Sister' (1832)	'Le Frère et la sœur', translator unknown	Paris, <i>Le Salmigondis</i> , t. 3	1832
<i>Matilda</i> (1819-1820, 1 st pub. 1959)	<i>Mathilda</i> , trans. Marie-Françoise Desmeuzes	Paris, éditions des Femmes	1984
<i>The Last Man</i> (1826)	<i>Le Dernier homme</i> , trans. Paul Couturiau	Paris, éditions du Rocher	1988, rep. 1998
'The Mourner', 'The Mortal Immortal', 'The Dream', 'Transformation'	<i>L'Endeuillée et autres récits</i> , trans. Liliane Abensour ('L'Endeuillée', 'Le Mortel immortel', 'Le Rêve', 'Transformation')	Paris, José Corti	1993
'Valerius, the Reanimated Roman' (1 st pub. 1976), 'The Invisible Girl' (1832)	'Valérius le ressucité', trans. Norbert Gaulard 'La Demoiselle invisible', trans. Anne-Sylvie Homassel	Meudon, <i>Le Visage vert</i> 1	1995
<i>Valperga</i> (1823)	<i>Valperga</i> , trans. Nicole Berry	Lausanne, L'Âge d'homme	1997
'The Invisible Girl', 'A Tale of the Passions', 'Ferdinando Eboli', 'Euphrasia'	<i>La Jeune fille invisible</i> , trans. Nicole Berry ('La Jeune fille invisible', 'Une histoire de passions ou la mort de Despina', 'Ferdinando Eboli', 'Euphrasia')	Toulouse, éditions Ombres	1998, rep. 2002 ⁶
'Maurice, Or, The Fisher's Cot' (1820, 1 st pub. 2000)	<i>Maurice ou le Cabanon du pêcheur</i> , trans. Anna Bellucci	Paris, Gallimard	2001

⁴ <<https://www.noosphere.org/livres/editionslivre.asp?numitem=1642>>. Last accessed 12/12/2019.

⁵ I wish to thank Philippe Kassarian for drawing my attention to this 19th-century Swiss translation.

⁶ The 2002 edition, published in Villegly by Encre bleue in their collection 'Basse vision', aimed at the visually impaired, contained 'La Jeune fille invisible' and 'Une histoire de passions'.

<i>History of a Six Weeks' Tour</i> (1817) and <i>Frankenstein</i> (1818)	<i>Frankenstein sur la Mer de Glace</i> , trans. Christophe Jacquet (contains excerpts from <i>Frankenstein</i> and from <i>History of a Six Weeks' Tour</i>)	Chamonix, Guérin	2007
<i>The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck</i> (1830)	<i>Les Aventures de Perkin Warbeck</i> , trans. Anne Rouhette	Paris, Classiques Garnier	2014, rep. 2016
<i>History of a Six Weeks' Tour</i> (1817)	<i>Histoire d'un voyage de six semaines</i> , trans. Anne Rouhette	Aix-en-Provence, Presses Universitaires de Provence	2015
<i>Journal</i> (extracts)	<i>Que les étoiles contemplent mes larmes. Journal d'affliction</i> , trans. Constance Lacroix	Paris, Finitude	2017

Table 9.1 – French translations of Mary Shelley's writings other than *Frankenstein*

With the exception of an extract from *The Last Man* published in Geneva in 1827, none of Shelley's other novels was translated until the end of the twentieth century, although *The Last Man* and *Lodore* were both advertised in the French press when they were published in London and could probably be found in Paris. A rise of interest in Mary Shelley and in women's writings in general, corresponding to the re-discovery and publication of her works in English-speaking countries, explains the growing availability of her work in France from the 1980s onwards, but usually without the critical apparatus found in many British or American editions. Thus the first publishing company to register interest in Shelley's other novels was 'Des Femmes', founded by an avowed feminist, Antoinette Fouque, who wished to foreground works written by women and offered a version of *Mathilda* [sic] in 1984. *The Last Man* followed in 1988, *Valperga* in 1997 and *Perkin Warbeck* in 2014. Shelley's travel writing has drawn attention in the twenty-first century, which is partly due to an increasing interest in the genre and to topical considerations: the publishing company which issued *Frankenstein sur la Mer de Glace* is situated in Chamonix and specialises in mountain literature, dealing particularly with Alpine sceneries. In this work, the translator Christophe

Jacquet interestingly combines excerpts from *Frankenstein* and from *History of a Six Weeks's Tour* to highlight the parallels between the two works.

Apart from Saladin's *Frankenstein* and from the extract from *The Last Man* already mentioned, only one of Shelley's tales was translated into French in the nineteenth century, 'The Brother and Sister', published in December 1832 in an elegant magazine, *Le Salmigondis*, a few weeks after its original publication in *The Keepsake*. Her name was used in *Le Figaro* of 12 February 1832 to advertise *Le Salmigondis*, along with Alexandre Dumas's and Lord Normanby's, suggesting that her reputation was then high enough in France to be considered as a commercial asset – on what grounds, that is a question which the end of this essay will address. Other translations of her stories were published in the last decade of the twentieth century, including two versions of 'The Invisible Girl', first published in 1995, together with 'Valerius', in the first issue of *Le Visage Vert*.

Since *Le Visage Vert* is a magazine devoted to fantasy and horror stories, this choice is both problematic and illuminating regarding the reception of Mary Shelley in France today. It may have made some sense to include 'Valerius' in such a publication, at least for the basic idea on which the unfinished story rests, that of an inhabitant of Ancient Rome reanimated in nineteenth century Italy, but despite its title, 'The Invisible Girl' bears no trace whatsoever of the fantastic. Those stories were chosen precisely because of their titles and published because they were 'By the Author of *Frankenstein*', an authorship on which the magazine capitalized. Together with the relative dearth of scientific editions of Mary Shelley's work in French, this points to the partial misunderstanding under which the reception of her writing has been labouring for the general public in France (and elsewhere), a misunderstanding which may be traced to the first translation of *Frankenstein* in French.

At the time of its publication in France,⁷ the reception of Saladin's translation was not particularly enthusiastic. As far as I know, it was reviewed only in the *Revue encyclopédique* in July 1821, in which the novel is presented as the 'bizarre product of a diseased imagination'.⁸ Although the reviewer recognizes that the work is not devoid of talent, the judgement is overwhelmingly negative, calling the novel disgusting and absurd, in part, clearly, because it had been written by a woman.⁹ Its popular and commercial success is difficult to assess. The three slim volumes of *Frankenstein* were sold for the relatively cheap price of 7.5 francs, probably because the novel was short by contemporary standards – if one volume could reach 10 francs, a complete set of three usually approximated 15 francs at the time.¹⁰ It was not reprinted, but was immediately turned into a play in August 1821, which may reveal a certain degree of popularity. *Frankenstein ; ou, Le Prométhée moderne* was advertised in *Le Miroir des Spectacles* as a melodrama – the Creature was to have been an automaton – although there is no record of a possible performance.¹¹

Before dealing with Saladin's translation at greater length, it is necessary to describe briefly the general cultural context in which English novels were translated in France in the 1820s and the literary climate in which the French *Frankenstein* appeared, because they may account for some features of Saladin's version. In 1821, out of 246 novels published in France, 72 were translated from another language, which represents 29.3%.¹² The overwhelming majority of these novels were originally written in English, but the very short

⁷ Its publication was announced in the 21 July 1821 issue of *Bibliographie de la France*.

⁸ '[...] bizarre production d'une imagination malade'. M. A. J. [Marc-Antoine Jullien], review of *Frankenstein, Ou le Prométhée Moderne*, by Mary Shelley, *La Revue encyclopédique*, 9 (1821), 191-92 (p. 191).

⁹ [One wishes especially that a work written by a woman would offer lovely and graceful descriptions instead of always revolting and hideous topics] 'On voudrait surtout que l'ouvrage d'une femme offrît des peintures aimables et gracieuses au lieu d'objets et de récits toujours révoltans [*sic*] et hideux'. *Revue Encyclopédique*, p. 192.

¹⁰ The average print-run was about 2,500 copies at the time. See *Histoire des traductions en langue française, XIXe siècle, 1815-1914*, p. 276.

¹¹ Steven Forry, 'Dramatizations of *Frankenstein*, 1821-1986: A Comprehensive List', *English Language Notes*, 25. 2 (1987), 63-79 (p. 74). *Le Miroir des spectacles, des lettres, des mœurs et des arts* (2 July 1821), p. 4.

¹² *Histoire des traductions en langue française, XIXe siècle, 1815-1914*, p. 268.

delays and low pay explained the poor quality of many translations at the time.¹³ However, the liberty taken with the source texts was also the result of a long tradition of literary translation in France which endured up through the beginning of the nineteenth century, according to which texts were re-written according to the neo-classical standards of the eighteenth century in order to better appeal to the French tastes.¹⁴ This was notably the case in the late 1810s and the early 1820s with the translations of Gothic novels, for which French readers were greedier than ever – for instance, there were reeditions both of Radcliffe's *Udolpho* and Lewis's *The Monk* in 1819.¹⁵ This fascination for the macabre corresponded to the literary atmosphere in France at a time which saw the early days of what came to be known as 'le Romantisme frénétique', one of whose leading authors was Charles Nodier, who adapted Polidori's *Vampyre* for the stage in 1820 and, with Justin Taylor, translated Maturin's *Bertram* in 1821. In the same year, which also saw the publication of Saladin's *Frankenstein*, two translations of Maturin's *Melmoth* came out, neither of which would be considered satisfactory in modern terms, since the two translators cut out about one fourth of the text and freely rewrote numerous passages, altering the style considerably in the attempt to make it more palatable to the French public, as one of them, Mme Bégin, explains:

I have pared down nearly one volume of lengthy descriptions which I thought slowed down the action and diminished interest [...], I have tried to tone down as far as the topic would let me the Romantic quality of the English author, whose style I have often managed to make simple and natural.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., p. 270.

¹⁴ On the terms and conditions on which translators worked, see *Histoire des traductions*, pp. 169-85. On the conceptions of translation in France in the first third of the nineteenth century, see *Histoire des traductions*, pp. 51-74, and Béreaud, 'La Traduction en France à l'époque romantique', p. 228.

¹⁵ *Histoire des traductions*, p. 544. Joëlle Prungnaud notes that the Gothic genre remained very popular in France until at least 1830 in 'La Traduction du roman gothique anglais en France au tournant du XVIIIe siècle', *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction*, 7. 1 (1994), 11-46 (p. 12).

¹⁶ 'J'ai retranché près d'un volume de longueurs qui me semblaient ralentir l'action et l'intérêt [...], j'ai tâché d'affaiblir, autant que me l'a permis le sujet, la couleur romantique de l'auteur anglais, dont je suis souvent parvenue à rendre le style simple et naturel'. Cited in *Histoire des traductions*, p. 545.

Many of Walter Scott's novels, which became very popular in France in the early 1820s, suffered the same treatment at the hands of his most famous French translator, Defauconpret, who largely rewrote *Old Mortality* (1817), in particular, and headed a whole team of translators more concerned with the tastes of their target audience than with the subtleties of Scott's religious and political plots.¹⁷

This approach to translation contrasts sharply with Mary Shelley's, both from a practical and a theoretical point of view. In *Mary Shelley dans son œuvre*, Jean de Palacio alludes to Mary Shelley's work as a translator for the *Lives* she wrote for Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopedia* between 1835 and 1839 and to the conception of translation which is occasionally evoked in her writing or apparent in her own translations.¹⁸ He emphasises her concern for the 'literal' character of a translation, in the sense that it should aim at being close to its original in both content and form, and quotes for instance her regret that 'Lord Strangford's translation [of Camoens' Sonnet XXIV] is not literal'.¹⁹

Shelley's *Frankenstein* could, however, have fallen into worse hands than those of her publisher, Alexandre Corréard. One of the few survivors of the Medusa shipwreck, Corréard was himself a translated author: he had written a narrative of his adventures whose English version was published in 1818 to great success. Corréard's interest lay more particularly in political works, including pamphlets which would have been called 'radical' in Britain; he went to jail several times and his company, seen as seditious, was finally closed down in 1822. The dedication to Godwin, which appears on the French title-page of *Frankenstein*, possibly explained Corréard's decision to publish Shelley's first novel, but there were already a few translated novels in his catalogue: for instance, in 1821, he published a version of

¹⁷ *Histoire des traductions*, pp. 273-76. On Defauconpret, see for instance Patrick Hersant, 'Defauconpret ou le demi-siècle d'Auguste', *Romantisme* 29.106 (1999) 83-88, and Béreaud, 'La Traduction en France à l'époque romantique'.

¹⁸ Jean de Palacio, *Mary Shelley dans son œuvre*, pp. 523-29. Although Palacio focuses more particularly on poetical translation, he notes that Mary Shelley's translations of prose are both accurate and pleasant to read (p. 528).

¹⁹ Cited in de Palacio, *Mary Shelley dans son œuvre*, p. 527, n. 227.

Scott's *Kenilworth* by Defauconpret's rival Parisot, a much more respectful and careful translator than Defauconpret, which suggests that Corréard may well have paid careful attention to the literary quality of the translations he published, instead of looking exclusively at the money to be made.

At first sight, Jules Saladin would seem to share Mary Shelley's preference for a literal translation, stressing his respect for 'literalness' ('la littéralité') in the preface he wrote for his translation of Otway's *Don Carlos* (1822). Yet as the following excerpt shows, the term 'literal' holds a different meaning for the original author and for her translator.²⁰

The tragedy of *Don Carlos* does contain a few forceful images, and some ill-chosen phrases, which I have tried to soften without going against the literalness which I have made my law; but it does not share the same character as that found in some other works by the same author.²¹

Of course, toning down the style of the source text is not exactly a sign of 'literalness'. And Saladin points out further on that Otway's style lacks somewhat in 'elegance' ('il s'écarte un peu de ce qu'exige l'élégance', p. 278), a reflexion which would not have come amiss in the heyday of the eighteenth century 'Belles Infidèles' and hints that as a translator, he might have practised a certain form of cleansing to 'improve' the original and achieve that much sought-after elegance.

However, if one keeps in mind its translator's biases and the translational practices at the time, it seems that the 1821 French *Frankenstein* escapes relatively unscathed and that it may be considered a 'faithful' translation, in the sense that nothing was omitted, added or re-

²⁰ Béreaud, 'La Traduction en France à l'époque romantique' (pp. 228-30), studies the strange approach to literal translation ('traduction littérale') in France in the late 1820s, which did not preclude, and in fact even encouraged, a form of cleansing ('épuration').

²¹ 'Il y a bien dans la tragédie de *Don Carlos* quelques images vives, et des expressions peu ménagées, que j'ai cherché à adoucir sans manquer à la littéralité dont je me suis fait une loi; mais elle n'a point le cachet qu'on a pu reconnaître dans quelques ouvrages du même auteur'. Jules Saladin, 'Notice sur *Don Carlos*', in *Chefs-d'œuvre du théâtre anglais*, II: Rowe, Otway, Dodsley (Paris: Ladvocat, 1822), 271.

written and hardly anything was altered. Mary Shelley's style, in particular, is on the whole respected, as Saladin's version does not display the traits which characterize the only other French translation of Shelley's work to appear in the nineteenth century, namely that of 'The Brother and Sister' published in *Le Salmigondis* in 1832. A brief analysis of this translation reveals a clear slant towards sensationalism, characterized in particular by the addition of adverbs, adjectives and tropes which aim at making the text more dramatic: for example, 'He had been wounded' becomes 'il avait été *grièvement* blessé' (emphasis added), while 'hatred to his foes, and love for his native town' is rendered by 'une haine *violente* pour ses ennemis, un *ardent* amour pour sa ville' (emphasis added).²²

Saladin's translation does, however, present a few notable problems, of which I will give a quick overview before focusing on what represents an actual distortion of Shelley's meaning. The linguistic mistakes are usually trivial and clearly involuntary, sometimes even amusing: for instance, instead of 'la Suisse', Switzerland becomes 'le Switzerland', as though the novel took place in an imaginary country; the notes referring to Coleridge or Wordsworth are reproduced *verbatim*, with the English genitive; for some mysterious reason, Mary Shelley has become Godwin's niece on the title-page, although the phonetic rendering of her name as 'Mme Shelly' was common at the time. From the perspective of today's critics and readers, other changes, however, appear more regrettable. Certain allusions, slight perhaps but suggestive in nature, are eliminated from Shelley's text: thus, when she is first described, Elizabeth Lavenza is no longer presented as a 'summer insect' but as *un papillon* (a butterfly), and she is not a 'creature' but a *femme*.²³ The textual web which connects the Creature, also called an 'insect' (p. 67), and the feminine characters in the novel thereby partly disappears.

²² Mary Shelley, 'The Brother and Sister' (1832), in *Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson, pp. 166-89 (p. 167 for the two quotations); 'Le Frère et la sœur', trans. anon., in *Le Salmigondis: Contes de toutes les couleurs* (Paris: 1832) III, 159-219 (pp. 161 and 163).

²³ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818), ed. by Paul J. Hunter (New York: Norton, 1996, 2012 ed.), p. 20 for the two quotations; *Frankenstein*, trans. Jules Saladin (Paris: Corrêard, 1821), I, 68 and 69.

More profoundly, Saladin's *Frankenstein* arguably suffered from the sensationalist context into which it was published because it consistently displays a series of lexical mistakes that are otherwise inexplicable, all having the effect of stressing the supernatural element in Shelley's novel. Saladin thus almost systematically translated 'chemistry' by *alchimie* and 'chemist' by *alchimiste*, especially in the early parts of the novel.²⁴ To take just one example: '[...] I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside, and, with my imagination warmed as it was, should probably have applied myself to the more rational theory of chemistry which has resulted from modern discoveries' (p. 22) is rendered as '[...] j'aurais certainement jeté Agrippa de côté, et, avec une imagination échauffée comme la mienne, je me serais probablement appliqué à la théorie d'alchimie, la plus raisonnable qui soit résultée des découvertes modernes' (p. 77-78). *L'alchimie*, not *la chimie*, thus becomes the rational science of the day. In the same line of thought, Dr. Waldman teaches not only *l'alchimie* but more specifically *l'alchimie moderne* (I, p. 104), an oxymoron at the time when the novel is supposed to take place, which, together with all the other occurrences of the term, enhances the medieval atmosphere of the novel, as alchemy appears as the modern science, and conveys an aura of magic. Where Shelley manages a complex questioning of science and reaches a delicate balance between ancient and modern conceptions of science, the translation tilts the scales unequivocally in one direction and privileges the magical element, at the cost of a certain incoherence since the chronological indications remain those of the original and locate the novel at the end of the eighteenth century.

Similarly unfortunate effects are produced in other passages. When Saladin renders 'Not that, like a magic scene, it all opened upon me at once' (p. 32) by 'Tout se présentait à moi comme une scène magique' (I, p. 108), he overlooks the 'Not' with which the sentence begins and expresses a meaning exactly contrary to that of Shelley's sentence, even though

²⁴ This is always the case in the first volume but is corrected in the last, where the 'chemical instrument[s]' (pp. 31, 43, 110, 114 and 122), rendered as 'instrumens [*sic*] d'alchimie' (I, 113 and 169), become 'instrumens [*sic*] de chimie' (III, 19, 37, and 74).

the rest of the passage, in which the difficulty of Victor's work is related, is correctly translated. Not only does this grammatical mistake produce, once again, a certain incoherence, but it likens the creation of the Monster to a magical process precisely where Shelley negates this. Such 'magification' is also perceptible in other translational choices. For example, whereas Shelley carefully distinguishes between natural, unnatural and supernatural elements in her story, the word 'unnatural' is systematically translated by Saladin as *surnaturel*, a word also used, correctly this time, for 'supernatural', so that the difference between the two disappears. When Victor is animated with an 'unnatural stimulus' (p. 34), he is acted upon, in Saladin's translation, by an *aiguillon surnaturel* (I, p. 125), suggesting a form of possession. And lastly, the nature of the Creature is no longer ambiguous as in the original version of the novel, but instead presented as entirely supernatural. Where Shelley describes him as 'a figure' (p. 50), he becomes *un fantôme*, a ghost (I, p. 198), which is indeed a recurring choice on the translator's part; while he is presented by Walton at the very end of Shelley's novel as 'a form' ('over him hung a form', p. 158), the translation transforms him into a specter ('sur lui était penché un spectre', III, p. 143). Saladin thus deliberately stressed the supernatural, which may result from a conscious decision to rewrite the text in order to give it a more sensational aspect or from the influence of his literary environment, or both.

Little is known about Shelley's first translator, who signed 'J. S****' on the title-page of *Frankenstein*, apart from the fact that he translated Francis Lathom's 1820 *Italian Mysteries* (*Les Mystères italiens, ou Le Château della Torrida*, Paris, Garnot, 1823), which he signed as 'by one of the translators of Walter Scott's historical novels'. This suggests that he belonged to Defauconpret's hirelings, although to my knowledge no record exists of such a collaboration. The previous year (1822), he had translated Thomas Otway's play *Don Carlos* for the second volume of a series dedicated to the masterpieces of English drama (*Chefs-d'œuvre du théâtre anglais*), a series to whose first volume, also published in 1822, Charles

Nodier had contributed. I have not been able so far to establish firmly that Saladin and Nodier knew each other, but this is a reasonable assumption to make given that they both belonged to the circle of Amédée Pichot, one of the most famous French translators of the 19th century, who belonged to Defauconpret's team,²⁵ took part in the translations of the *Chefs-d'œuvre du théâtre anglais*, produced French versions of Byron's and Scott's poetry and would later retranslate *Caleb Williams* (1868).²⁶ In his translation of Byron's works, prefaced by Nodier, Pichot mentions Saladin as the man who introduced him to Thomas Medwin in Paris and describes him in a note as a man 'who, to the knowledge of a man of letters, adds the pleasantness of a man of the world' ('qui à toute l'instruction de l'homme de lettres joint l'amabilité de l'homme du monde').²⁷ Pichot was clearly a link between Nodier and Saladin, who were both interested in the English Romantic circle (witness Nodier's stage adaptation of *The Vampyre* in 1820 and his preface to the French version of Byron's poems), although the friendship between Pichot and Nodier really only blossomed in 1822 and 1823, so shortly after Saladin's translation of *Frankenstein*.²⁸ Rather than to the direct influence of one particular man therefore, I would argue that the transformations Saladin brought to *Frankenstein* are attributable to the literary context in which he worked.

Did Saladin's *Frankenstein* influence Nodier and others in its turn? What follows is again speculative. If only a manuscript remains of the French play directly based on Shelley's novel and mentioned above, traces of *Frankenstein* are perceptible in the very successful *mélodrame féérique* that was performed at Porte St. Martin in June 1826, *Le Monstre et le magicien*, by Merle and Béraud, a play to which Charles Nodier contributed and from which the names 'Frankenstein' and 'Mary Shelley' disappeared. The filiation with Shelley's novel

²⁵ *Histoire des traductions*, p. 595.

²⁶ Laurence Adolphus Bisson, *Amédée Pichot, A Romantic Prometheus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1942), p. 221. Nodier and Saladin are both among the recipients of the letters published by Pichot in the third volume of his *Voyage historique et littéraire en Angleterre et en Écosse* (1825).

²⁷ Amédée Pichot, 'Avant-Propos', *Œuvres de Lord Byron*, 4th edn (Paris: Ladvocat, 1825), VIII, 187-89 (p. 188).

²⁸ See Michel Salomon, *Charles Nodier et le groupe romantique* (Paris: Perrin, 1908), p. 180.

was nevertheless obvious: both the press and Mary Shelley herself acknowledged that this play was an adaptation of *Frankenstein*, although apparently it owed more to Richard Brinsley Peake's dramatization of *Frankenstein, Presumption*, than to the original.²⁹ The role of Monster was performed by an English artist, Thomas Cooke, who had already played the part of Peake's Creature on the London stage in 1823. As the title indicates, the hero is no longer a scientist but a magician, a sixteenth-century alchemist called Zametti, giving birth to his monster in a puff of smoke, a scene depicted in the illustration below. Perhaps inspired by Saladin's view of Shelley's novel, this play offers the audience a purely sensational experience giving pride of place to the supernatural to the detriment of all the other elements and firmly associating *Frankenstein* with the magical and the satanic. That this association was made by the French audience at least throughout the nineteenth century, and possibly beyond, appears clearly in several summaries purporting to be of Shelley's novel and published in nineteenth-century French literary histories or dictionaries in which the monster becomes an actual demon taking Frankenstein's soul to hell: 'The unfortunate student languishes and dies – this is the ultimate triumph of the monster who, no longer concealing his satanic origin, steals the chemist's soul and throws it to the damned'.³⁰ It seems likely that Mary Shelley's reputation in France suffered from such fantastic misreadings of her first novel, to which her first translator contributed.

²⁹ 'How goes Frankenstein of Porte St. Martin?', asked Shelley in a letter to John Howard Payne from 11 June 1826. *MWS Letters*, I, 52.

³⁰ 'Le malheureux étudiant se laisse mourir : dernier triomphe du monstre qui, ne déguisant plus son origine satanique, vient prendre l'âme du chimiste et la jette aux damnés'. André Delrieu, 'Shelley', *Revue de Paris* 23 (1843), 183-230 (p. 226). Delrieu attributes to Percy Shelley the authorship of the best parts of *Frankenstein*. His presentation of the novel was reprinted almost *verbatim* in Pierre Larousse's *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle : français, historique, géographique, mythologique, bibliographique...*, VIII (F-G), published in 1872.