Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: A Paratextual Analysis of Nine Italian Translations

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Abstract

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) is considered as one of the first science fiction novels. Still rooted in the gothic tradition, it also prefigures scientific advancement, the rise of artificial beings and the ethical implications of human innovation. In Italy, its status is attested by a continuous cycle of re-translations with almost 30 translations and more than 150 editions being published over the last thirty years. Such a long-lasting interest testifies to the novel's relevance and invites critical reflection on the construction and distribution of the translated texts. Drawing primarily on Chiara Elefante's and Kress and van Leeuwen's frameworks, the article examines the peritext of nine selected Italian editions of *Frankenstein* published between 2010 and 2025. The analysis focuses on elements such as prefaces and covers which display both verbal and visual modes of communication and require a multimodal approach. The aim is to shed light on how each translation is framed and re-framed for the Italian audience through the addition of introductions, prefaces and afterwords and the choice of the cover design.

Keywords

Frankenstein, Mary Shelley, translation, paratext, multimodal analysis