Frankenstein Complex
Is there a Dr. Frankenstein in each designer?
# Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 1: The monster reflects the creator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>An umbrella can tell a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How do we define the undefined?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Me and the brand: a love story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The monster reflects my desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Chapter last words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Bring to life the beast</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>And Dr Frankenstein created Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>A bed time story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>A family of monsters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Chapter last words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 3: The power of creation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>My imperfect world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>A world runs by monsters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>My future designer role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Chapter last words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td><strong>My last words</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Appendices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In 1818, Mary Shelley, English novelist wrote the Gothic story of Doctor Victor Frankenstein. Dr. Frankenstein was obsessed by the idea of bringing to life a creature. In his crazy dream of creation he defied the power God and been punished for it as his creature killed his loved ones.

This dissertation is bringing back the story of this crazy doctor to our reality. “Is there a Dr. Frankenstein in each designer?” is a metaphor applied to the designer’s role in the creation of brand identity. My work is based on one of my reflections about the relationship between brand identity and individual identity and the consequences of brand identity in our society. I also developed my argument about the capitalist society we live in. I also try to identify who is responsible for the bad consequences of globalization. In my last argument I am explaining why and where I position myself in the industry. This reflection was born from a worry I developed thinking about my future and the future of our capitalist world.

My first chapter touches on the development of individual identity to brand identity. Through the chapter I am explaining the concept of identity and how as human beings we develop ourselves an identity and what are the characteristics. I am asking the question why do we need to give identity to brand and how does it relate to the development our personal identity.

From my first argument, I am developing the second chapter on the fascination caused by brand identity and how it works. Through it I am basing my example on the religious interest around the Apple brand. I am examining the strategy used by the brand marketing to get to the audience.

My third chapter is based on a personal argument about the capitalist society we live in. I also try to identify who is responsible for the bad consequences of globalization. In my last argument I am explaining why and where I position myself in the design industry as I will soon become a qualified graphic designer.

In Mary Shelley’s Story, Victor Frankenstein paid the consequences of act by losing his loved ones because he defied the power of God. By bringing to life a brand and giving it a soul, should we designers consider ourselves as playing with the power of God? If so what are the consequences?
Chapter 1

The monster reflects the creator
“Hateful day when I received life!’ I exclaimed in agony. ‘Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred.”
(Shelley, 2000 p117)

God made the man at his image. In Shelley’s book, the monster reflects Victor Frankenstein mind. Why do we need to give an identity to things we create as they were human?
An umbrella can tell a lot

It was 7pm a Wednesday evening; I had my hand full of shopping bags. I got tired after few hours fighting in the crowd of Oxford Street. I was heading home feeling a bit guilty of all the money I spent on unnecessary clothes and shoes. After all, trying to convince myself that my little excess was justified I thought “what the hell! I have only been to Primark! I saved money while I spent money!” On this last thought, I was finally excited to come back home and try again all those new items. I remember to be too lazy and too impatient to take my journey by tube. I had to change three times and that was already too much for my legs and feet after shopping. Luckily I was, the bus number 137 was going from Marble Arch to Clapham Common. That was not the shorter way but at least I could sit down and relax until I got home… Once inside the bus, I went sit down at the back, on the ground floor, where I had enough space to put my bags and spread my legs. Obviously I was not the only one who had the idea to come shopping after work on a Wednesday evening. A woman came and sat down just in front of me.

I noticed since I have been living in London I am much more of a watcher than I used to be when I was back in France. In my small town, I never really had the chance to share public transport with a stranger. Also, back there, I do not remember to be able to stare at people in the street without provoking a fight! London is such a good example where people are so confident about their looks, personalities and identities, or maybe they are not. They believe that they are melted in the crowd and then being invisible.

I had to take my bags on my knees to leave her some space. She was good looking, well dressed and had nice hair. I was observing her from the corner of my eyes. I noticed straight away her shopping bags. Suddenly I was ashamed with my big brown Primark bag made of recycled paper, as she had few bags from different designer shops. I did not want to stare, but her Prada
handbag was winking at me. Even her umbrella was branded! What kinds of people are spending a lot of money on branded umbrellas? An umbrella is just here to protect you from the rain and most of the time they get broken with the wind. But those kinds of women are so perfect than their branded umbrella does not move an inch with the British wind. Who is this woman? What is she doing on a bus with Primark people? I am guessing she is going to Chelsea meet her rich husband in their nice apartment. I observed this woman for few seconds and I thought I could build a narrative about her life with few indications. The brand she was wearing was reflecting her social identity. She probably bought this branded umbrella to recognize herself or to be recognized in the social group where she wants to belong. I am asking myself is that enough details to define her identity?

As Steph Lawler introduces in her book:

“Part of the slipperiness of the term identity derives from the difficulties of defining it adequately. It is not possible to provide a single, overarching definition of what it is, how it is developed and how it works. There are various ways of theorizing the concept, each of which develops different kinds of definition.” (Lawler 2008 p2)

Yes, probably true. I cannot really define myself only by a piece of plastic in a wallet with a ten year old picture and my name on it. So what Steph Lawler explains, as many other writers, philosophers, anthropologists did too, is that identity is a concept so complex it can be described in few words. It is a bit like asking if God exists and get a straight answer, as Maries-Claude Sicard gave as an example in her book Identite de Marque (Brand Identity):

“One of my Italian friends, Ennio Borsieri, liked telling the story about a famous debate organised by the French television in the 70s on the theme “Does God exist?” This debate opposed a priest and an atheist, both of them known by the public- M. Clavel and the priest Bruckberger- everyone was waiting for their confrontation with great interest. But at the first affirmation of one, the other will answer by “What do you mean exactly by God?” Two hours of discussion didn’t lead them to any agreement, so the debate never happened.” (Sicard 2008 p 21) For original French version refer to appendix 1

So would it be a debate with no end and with undefined answer to ask: What is identity?
How do we define the undefined?

If I go back to my first example of this woman with her branded umbrella I saw in bus few months ago. I am sure I was not far from the truth when I established a little narration about her life in my head. She is probably situated in the upper middle class of our society. So yes, for sure, I cannot go further in the description of this woman because I don’t know her and even if I had known her for 50 years I will not know her from inside and probably she wouldn’t either. But I can still guess part of her identity by identifying few elements of her appearance. Maybe we cannot give a perfect definition of the term identity but we can narrow it down and try to define few facets of it.

The anthropologist Francoise Heritier delivers an element of research, she headed in the Samo ethnic group of Burkina Faso, in the book of Claude Levi-Strauss Identite (Identity):

“For the Samo ethnic group from Burkina Faso, every individual is made of nine components, the body, blood, the heat, the sweet, the breath, the life, the mind, the double and the individual destiny.” (Strauss, 1983 p52)

For original French version refer to appendice 2. This way to see identity can be related to how we defined our own identity. In a way of Dr Frankenstein built his creature by assembling piece by piece together to make something human.

So on which criteria can we build our identity on? Who I am? How do I define myself? Me, I am Florie Parenthoux, that is what it says on my French ID card, it is what people call me and more precisely how my parents named me, Florie. My family name, people who know my family can identity me, Florie part of the Parenthoux family and then history. I got a nationality, I am French, and I am from France, a country with a rich culture, as any country, but a culture proper to France so then to me. I am white, I am a woman, I am a student, I have a job, I am on facebook, I am in a relationship, I am heterosexual, etc... So many more
different things defined myself it would take the whole dissertation to enumerate them. Most of those details can be identified by other in a social perspective, my ethnic group, my gender, my nationality, etc… I am myself Florie and I am unique. There is no other person in the world who looks exactly like me or has the same identity characteristics as I do. But I am not that unique because in my journey to find my real identity I will share common identities with others. Lawler wrote: “The notion of identity hinges on an apparently paradoxical combination of sameness and difference. The root of the word identity is Latin idem (same) from which we also get identical. One important meaning of the term, then, rests on the idea that not only are we identical with ourselves (that is, the same being from birth to death) but we are identical with others.” (Lawler 2008 p2)
I will not only be defined my identity by personal characteristic as my name or my look. I will also define myself in different group social and those can be represented by brand.
Me and the brand: the beginning of a love story

I remember like it was yesterday when we had this serious chat with my mum. I was twelve years old and just started school. My mum’s concern was about brands. She explained to me that even if most of the kids at school were wearing the last Nike trainers she will not buy them because she did not see the importance to buy expensive trainers just to look the same as everyone else. I did not suffer from this decision. Well it is true I was feeling a bit ashamed of my clothes during school but I learned to do not develop an addiction to a brand.

Now things are different, I am an adult and I am in power to buy whatever I want. Of course there is always this problem of money. I never buy branded clothes, even if I secretly dream to go crazy in a designer shop…But it will not happen soon. The only brand I buy and I do not mind to spend a lot of money on is Apple. I remember very well my first contact with an Apple product. I was not that much of a computer geek at the time. I had my first PC at thirteen years old and Apple or Macintosh was not in my vocabulary. Right after my fashion studies I got this job as a sample developer in this young design office developing outdoor clothing. I was coming to work every day in this cool loft studio. The team was young and dynamic. I was envying the designers; they had such a great job. They were sitting all day designing clothes of tomorrow on their white Apple laptops. They were always placing English words in their French sentences. They were talking about their business travel in China and using technical term as Photoshop or Illustrator. This is the really right moment of my life when I fell in love with the idea of being a designer. I guess at this point I had already made a connection in my head: Be a designer is cool. Designers dress trendy and use Apple computers to design their cool stuff. So I did not really have the choice if I wanted to be a designer I had to go Apple.
Before then, I was coming to work with an old PC laptop which my dad gave it to me after years of use until the office decided to equip me with an Apple computer. It was a consecration. By buying me my first Apple IMac, I was a member of their group of coolness. Using a Mac was so different from my old boring windows platform. I had to have an introduction to the product with a friend of the office, a Mac genius. This tall guy with incredibly long hair knew every single detail about the computer. He was a bit like a mystic character from a fantasy epic story, the Gandalf of Macintosh. From this point, I was a mac user, I tested it and I could not go back. When you go Mac you do not come back and I never did. My mum brain washing did not resist, Apple got me. They used their strategic marketing magic on me and I am now an addict. I was sure to be cleverer than this, I was sure I would never have to by any brand to be recognize in a social group. But here I am.
I confess, I am devoted to Apple product. I will never, ever, ever, ever buy a PC, even if I know PC is half the price of Mac. If I need to buy an x product and I know Apple is producing this x product under their brand I will buy Apple. I will buy Apple for the quality, for the reliability of the product. My iPhone is three years old, this is the first time I keep a phone alive that long, all my phones died after maximum two years, same example for my computers. And just like that I am able to define a part of Apple Identity, quality and reliability. But of course this not enough to build a brand identity, Apple is not the only brand in world who promise long life to their products. I also confess my restrained advices to friend or family before their future new computer purchase, saying: “You don’t need a Mac if you got nothing to do with the creative industry.” Yes I buy Apple because I am a future graphic designer and I want to be recognizing as one. This is only psychological of course. In my past work experience I observed as a social model cool designers using Apple Macintosh, so my desire to appropriate the designer’s image went first by buying the same products. This event is called an aspirational reference group. Introduced by Lars Perner, assistant Professor of Clinical marketing in his article about consumer behaviour:

“Humans are inherently social animals, and individuals greatly influence each other. A useful framework of analysis of group influence on the individual is the so called reference group—the term comes about because an individual uses a relevant group as a standard of reference against which oneself is compared.” (Pener, 1999)

Because I am buying a product in consequence of an influence of a social group I would like to be part of, in my case, is called an aspirational reference group. Hayden Noel, Assistant Professor of Business Administration described the aspirational reference group in...
his book Consumer behaviour:
“These are groups to which we would like to belong, but currently are not members. These are usually groups we hold in high esteem. Marketers try to associate products with aspirational reference groups. In this way, consumers may associate membership of that aspirational group with the product itself.”
(Noel, 2009 p53)
Here another facet of Apple brand identity. Apple does not need to get social icons as David Beckman or any other celebrity in their advertising to push the audience to create an association with them and the product. After a personal observation, I noticed around me that most designers, architect studios and another creative areas use Macintosh. As Simon Meek explained in his article Why do designers use Mac?:
“We can either assume that designers are cool-hunting, arrogant technophobes, and are so emotionally stunted as to be made whole only by a shiny new MacBook, or it just may be the case that designers really do have a heightened sense of what makes for a good computing experience.”(Meek, 2009)
Because most of the creative industry is using Apple products, the aspiration reference group strategy is created by the designers. In their cool-hunting, as Meek wrote, designers must be attracted by Apple’s brand personality. In fact marketingminds.com is describing the brand attribute “The Apple brand personality is about lifestyle; imagination; liberty regained; innovation; passion; hopes, dreams and aspirations; and power-to-the-people through technology.”(marketingminds.com, 11/2011) It seems to appear that Apple identity is matching with the designer profession characterisation. In another way, during his research for the BBC documentary about Superbrands, Alex Riley interviewed random person and asked:
“If Apple was a person who would it be?” The answers are joining my argument: “If Apple was a person? Young, hip”, “Trendy, East London, designer type.”, “Spoil, sort of person who might invite you to their birthday party but when you got there you’re doing everything they wanted to.”(Superbrands, TV programme, 2011)
When I choose the brand Apple as an example to lead my argument about the connection between the creator and the monster, I was not expecting to find out that Apple is literally reflecting the creator. I have been seduced by the brand because I wanted so bad to be part of social group. The emotion between me and the brand is real. By buying a Macintosh instead of a PC I feel closer to my objective to be identifying as a cool designer. Apple embodies the image of my desire, the young fashionable designers. By itself, this invisible creature has grown his own identity and allow us, consumers, to reflect the image of the brand on our identity and social perception. We compare ourselves to the brand identity as it was a celebrity we wish to look like. I think by giving an identity to a brand as it was a person, pushing us to feel empathy for it.
Chapter 2

Bring to life the beast
“A flash of lightning illuminated the object and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy demon to whom I had given life.”
(Shelley, 2000 p75)

Victor Frankenstein just gave life to his creature. The monster escapes and creates his own story outside in the society. Every myth or religion starts with an epic story. Brands marketing are using those strategies to fascinate the audience. How does it work?
And Dr. Frankenstein created Apple

Doctor Frankenstein brought life to his creature by assembling different human body parts together. He was obsessed with the concept to bring life to a dead human puzzle. He was alone in his dark laboratory when he reached his crazy dream of power of creation. But once the monster was brought to life, the dream turned to nightmare as his creation was incontrollable. Our reality is not far from Frankenstein fiction. It seems to be that most of the successful companies of our capitalism society have been developed by crazy computer geeks in their garage before to reach the stage of multinational as Google, Facebook, Apple, etc... Maybe is there the secret of a success, playing Frankenstein in the back of a garage to bring life to the future computer wanted by the whole planet. However Apple emphasis started in California in 1976, by the collaboration of Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs, one computer geek and one instinctive genius commercial person. Obviously the successful brand did not come out straight away. They had few fiascos before then. It took one more man to establish the success, Jef Raskins the creator of the famous Macintosh computer which was released in 1984. From that point Apple excelled in the personal computer industry and few years later they decided to expand their market in the consumer electronics industry with products such as, IPod, digital music, IPhone, smart phone, IPad, tablet devise and applications with AppStore. Steve Jobs described Apple as a mobile devices company. (marketingminds.com, 11/2011) This certainly means they are not going to stop here I am guessing in few years’ time we will see other Apple babies coming out. I have got just a little concern about the company now Steve Jobs passed away few months ago. Are they going to be able to carry on producing such revolutionary products without him? However for now there are on the market few different brands proposing the same products as Apple,
such as Sony, Microsoft, etc… Those brands are producing computer, smart phone, tablet devise, mp3 player and many more, but none of them are reaching the incredible success of Apple. As the article said on Apple’s Branding Strategy on the website marketingminds.com “Apple’s revenues are bigger than Nokia, Samsung, or Sony’s mobility business.” (marketingminds.com, 11/2011) But here is the trick to an enormous success beyond the classic electronic industry marketing strategy. Apple turned his consumers to fanatics by creating a devotion to the brand such as a devotion to a religion.

The reality is joining the fiction. The monster has been released and now he is taking more and more victims. Apple is one of many monsters in our capitalist society. The brand developed to an uncontrollable phenomenon of attraction turning the audience into Apple fervent.
On January 24th,
Apple will introduce
Machintosh
And you'll see why 1984
won't be like "1984"
I do not know anyone who does not like movies or books. We seem fascinated by those fantastic stories. There is maybe here a desire to escape the reality for few hours and explore new possibilities. So what if brand marketing strategy was using some epic story to catch our attention and create an emotional attachment to their products like we could do to movie characters.

In the BBC documentary, Alex Riley comes across the mystic devotion around Apple. Riley takes an example of an Apple addict, a person obsessed with Apple products, and brings him to a neuroimaging Centre to analyze his brain reaction while he is confronting to Apple product photographs. The result is quite surprising as the brain activities of the Apple fan are similar of a religious person’s brain reactions. So can we really compare the new technology as Apple to a new form of religion? (Superbrands, TV programme, 2011)

In the same documentary ran by BBC, they ask the question: “how does a brand to become a religion?” they answer to their own question by dividing a religion by the four steps to the creation of the devotion. Step one: a story, the story of the two computer geek who started creating computer in a garage. Step two: An antichrist, in the case of Apple the antichrist is IBM, Apple saved the World from a boring destiny as they advertise in the 1984 advert. Step three: “The place of Worship, most of Apple stores are built as a temple, a place where you can sit down and meditate around Apple products. Step four the messiah, Steve Jobs was Apple’s messiah, most of his presentations about Apple products were amazingly convincing, just listening to him talking making the consumer want to buy the holy product.” (Superbrands, TV programme, 2011)

In the book Mythologie de marques (brands mythology) Georges Lewi wrote about a strategy called storytelling used by brands marketing, he refered to an article wrote by the North American educational
“Since people began to communicate with each other, “Tell me a story” has been a request of both children and adults. Storytelling is one person telling others of something. The story can be of a real event or it can be made up. Storytelling probably first consisted of simple chants that praised the dawn, expressed the joy of being alive, and were used to ease the drudgery and boredom of laborious tasks. In recent decades, there has been a renewed interest in the art of storytelling, conferences and festivals about the subject attract a wide audience. Folklore stories such as myths, epics, legends, and fables continue to be favourites.” (42explore.com, 11/2011)

Storytelling is a more attractive way to pass information and to make it more understandable for the listener. Also our society is fascinated by gossip, stories, movies, TV-show, etc… So the use of a myth around a brand can show a strong interest by the audience and to lead up on a fanatic addiction and a desire to be part of the story by buying the product. We can see the same phoneme on teenagers with the impact of the Twilight mania. Movies or books are just telling a story far from reality but we can observe the desperate way for those teenagers to part of it, by buying goodies, dressing like vampires or whatever else. Those brands want the audience to be obsessed with their products and it works. The French writer for the new paper Le monde, Christian Salmon, wrote in his book Storytelling, la machine a fabriquer des histoires et formater les esprits” (Storytelling, the machine who build story and format minds), “The storytelling management is now considering necessary to the decision-maker which affect different section, politic, economy, new technology, university and diplomacy.” (Salmon, 2009) For original French version refer to appendice 3.

I always find it easier to base a presentation or a concept design on a story. My audience seems to be more receptive to what I am saying when I introduce my work by a little anecdote. Of course, most of my presentations are given front of my class and cannot be compared to a company marketing strategy. But from a smaller scale I can already observe the action of
storytelling on an audience. By using the storytelling strategy Apple is pushing the consumer to create a sort of religious bond with the brand. In consequence, the consumer will serve an exclusive devotion to the brand products to the point of buying something which it is not Apple would appear like a sin.
A family of monsters

When I was a child I had few fanatics obsession with TV-shows. It was not really far from the excitement around the Twilight saga we can observe today with young women. My thing was Buffy the Slayer. Sorry, I was thirteen it can be excuse. However I was completely addicted to this show. I wanted the posters, the episodes cassettes, the t-shirts, the bed sheets, basically anything do with the show. I also remember to stick and draw pictures of the actress on different objects such as pens, rulers, school bags. Now I have grown up and it will be hard for me to admit that I still do those things. But yes I do. I do it with Apple. Of course not in same degree of teen crazy passion but I will still buy Apple product because I love the brand. As I wrote in my first chapter, if I can find the product I need under Apple brand I will buy it without hesitation even if it is double of the cost.

When I bought my first MacBook and my IPhone I noticed that in each packaging there were Apple logo stickers. At the time, I was asking myself for which purpose did they supply those stickers. It seems silly to want to add a sticker on my brand new laptop so I just left them in the packaging. Thought the years I saw those stickers again but surprisingly at the back of cars or at the back of some Windows laptops. I did a bit of research and I realized that my observation was confirmed. Also I was not the only one to ask about the utility of those stickers. Surprisingly on Google appears many forums about the subject. When the question “what do you do with the stickers?” has been asked the answer is always the same “They can be placed anywhere you feel compelled to put them-in your window, on your car, on your friends windows laptop, middle of your forehead, refrigerator, toilet seat, etc.” (Apple.com, 2009) This process reminds me strangely of my teen habits to customize my everyday objects with my fanatic addiction of the moment. You are not able to buy yourself a MacBook but do not
worry you can stick an Apple sticker on the back of your ugly PC. It seems really pathetic saying it like this but people do it. We can also compare this act to the religion custom of wearing a cross around the neck. Put an Apple sticker on the back of your car is like declaring: “I am faith in Apple religion!”

I remember very well my first visit in Apple store I was like a child on Christmas morning. I was really excited because I loved the brand for years. At the point in my little French town there were no Apple stores. It was like coming into a store full of Buffy the Slayer goodies. But after few minutes in the store I was disappointed. I confess the store was beautiful, modern but it was nothing inside. At the time the only Apple product in the store was the series of Macintosh computers and iPod’s. I was expecting lot of Apple gadgets but no. But here was my mistake Apple is not the kind of brand who will produce a million of little brand extension. No, their strategy is cleverer. As Nicolas Bry, Senior VP at Orange, explains in his article Google versus Apple. Apple has managed a paradox:

“It has widen its portfolio from PC to entertainment devices, and it has kept at the same time a strong innovation focus, concentrating on a small number of products: iMac, iPod, iPhone, and now iPad. Together, these products form a family and have been designed within a very strong ecosystem: the range of accessories continues to grow and is now being promoted in the Apple Stores.” (Bry, 2011)

By selling only a small amount of products, the company can probably focus better on developing future devices which will have a large impact on the technology market. I think if Apple was producing different products every month the launch of a new one will not get the revolutionary impact and the audience will get bored. This way Apple keeps the audience waiting for more. In a way of keeping TV viewers waiting for the next episode of their favourite show. Also their products are cleverly linked to each other. As Bry wrote in his article “Apple products draw their customers into the Apple world, they ensure acknowledgement, they leverage accomplishment and give their users a feeling of freedom.” (Bry, 2011) In consequence when you buy one Apple product you are pushed to buy another.
I stock my music and films into my computer through iTunes and then pass it easily to my iPad or iPod. The brand create an agreeable and easy experience of the use of the technology, it is difficult to give it up to go for the competition.

In many ways Apple creates a fascination around the brand and pushes the customer to want more. In the despairing desire to possess an Apple product, consumers hide their shame by covering their Windows laptop with Apple logo stickers. As their brand parent the little babies of the monsters do their jobs. By creating a unique experience thought their product the consumer feels surrounded by a perfect Apple universe. The experience becomes then an addiction. Apple is good and their products are beautiful. The monster charmed me. I am an Apple addict.
In this chapter, I approached the brand seen as a religion. It seems to be a thorough desire in each consumer to believe in something. I guess now our society is becoming less and less spiritual. The journalist, Dan Harris, reported for ABC news than Americans were less believers:

"According to the poll, which came out today, the percentage of Americans who define themselves as Christian has dropped from 86 percent in 1990 to 76 percent in 2008."(Abcnews.go.com, 2009)

It might mean that we prefer to not believe in something spiritual but something material. Are those marketing strategies to make people believe in something strong as a religion is healthy for the society?
Chapter 3

The power of creation
“Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.” (Shelley, 2000 p24)

Victor Frankenstein realised how scary the thought of a human being mocking the power of God would be. Playing God would it be without consequences?
I watched this amazing film few months ago directed by Lars Von Trier, Melancholia. I do not remember any movie that had such impact on my way of thinking. It made me opened my eyes on the world. Melancholia is a planet heading directly towards the Earth. There is no chance of escape. This is the end of our world. The movie seems so real and authentic I was felling asphyxiated at the same time the characters was when Melancholia penetrated in Earth's atmosphere. I also felt this emotion of hopelessness when one character runs with her son her arms hoping to find somewhere to hide; facing the horrible truth, there is nowhere to hide. I remember perfectly those astronomy lessons at school when I was a child. We were learning about the universe, the galaxy, the solar system and our planet. Melancholia brought me back to those lessons. I actually remember that outside my life of everyday I live on a planet which rotated around the sun surrounded by a vast universe. Lars Von Trier brought me to reality. The society we are living in is futile. So are all those materialistic needs I got. I guess now because I am getting older and I have a different approach of the world I am becoming more critical about what I observe around me. Before I will never ask myself questions about the society. If it is right or wrong to live in a capitalist world. But now I do.

I sit down every day on the train; I observe my own species going to work. They put themselves into small tube deep underground to get to work faster. They look like robot with no expression. Most of those people are going to a job where they do not get any pleasure or passion from. They are going there five days a week and probably they will spend most of their life working for the same company. They are sacrificing their life to work for an only reason: money. Money an ideology, a concept which pays the bills, the rents, the food shopping, the holidays in Egypt, the new IPhone and any other necessary or optional needs. It is true,
it is really difficult to resist to the perpetual temptation from the adverts which bring to our minds new needs we would never thought about. This is the society was born in and I will grow old in. I was born in a spoiled society which does not care of anyone. I was born in a spoiled society which concentrates on making the multinational corporation richer. I was born in a spoiled society which does not have any respect for the planet. I sit there in the train, thinking: “Is that right? Do we really need to live like that?” If the world ends tomorrow none of those things will have any importance. So why could we live in a world where everyone get food and water or where is no abuse of the planet. I feel trap by the system, I have no choice I need to follow it.

I might be right or wrong in my observation of our society. I might be too harsh, too critical. Maybe I do not have enough experience of life to have the right to judge the heritage of my grand-parents and parents. But there is a Native American Proverb saying: “we do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” (Solomon, 2003 p11) This is mean what we are creating today will have an impact tomorrow. So who is behind of those liars of promising a better life by destructing the world?
A world runs by monsters

200 years before Jesus Christ, the historian, theoretician Greek, Polybe wrote that “before the events happening in the world were not linked to each other; now they are all attached together.” (Brunel, 07/2011)
The cause is the globalisation. Before my grand-parents had a garden where they were growing vegetables them-self, now I just need to go to Sainsbury’s to buy my expensive courgettes imported from Spain. Before my grand-parents had one telephone at home, now I got an iPhone always on me, I can communicate any time by phone or by internet to the rest of the world. I like the process, I do not mind it. I am just really scared about the future about the consequences of the consumer society.
The author Jeffrey M. Solomon wrote an interesting introduction in his book Playing in the Mind of God, which is joining my previous observation:
“The beneficiaries of this ravaging of our planet are a few hundred huge corporations worldwide, and the even fewer super wealthy families who are the principal beneficiaries of government largesse and political cronyism, which allows the pillaging and pollution to rage unchecked across the globe.” (Solomon, 2003 p17)
It seems to appear that the corporation are partly responsible for this spoiled society. They are looking to make more money every day. They are oppressing and manipulating people to consume more and in the other hand they are polluting and ravaging the planet. In the part of his introduction in his book When corporations rule the world, the American economist David Korten react on an article wrote in the Business Week: “Business Week article noted that people are experiencing a sharp disconnect between the warm and caring images that corporations attempt to cultivate for themselves and what people actually experience when corporations invade their privacy, provide poor service pay less than living wages for jobs that exhaust
than and leave no time for loved ones, show disregard for their health and safety, and corrupt democracy with huge campaign contributions.” (Korten, 2001 p6) Corporations are selling a promise of a better life to the consumers but in result they are trapping them in a life where they will never be satisfied about what they got, pushing them to work more to get a better purchasing power.

In my second chapter I showed that Apple, this huge multinational company are using different strategies to get the consumer addicted to their brand. In consequence, we can observe consumers queuing hours before the opening of a new Apple Store or people, on Facebook, who demonstrate sadness because Steve Jobs have passed away. In the book brand mythology George Lewi wrote “The two words the most known by the human being - at any corner of the globe - are OK and COCA COLA.” (Lewi, 2009 p260) For original French version refer to appendice 4. This observation makes me feel sad. That means our culture around the World is rule by selfish corporations. They change our culture, influence the way we live and makes this imperfect society carry on turning. Now as a future graphic designer where to I place myself?
My future designer role

I am at the point of my life where I am asking a lot of questions about the future. It is now a difficult moment, I finish my graphic design degree in few months and start a career in the industry. But the same question comes again all the time. What do I really want to do?

Few months ago I was front of a dilemma; I was looking to carry on my studies with a master and I was looking for which master will bring me to a successful career. I thought branding was the one. But I became more critical about our society and the way big corporations are damaging our life instead to make it better, I am asking myself is this master the right choice for me? Earlier in this chapter I have been really cynical about the system running our World. I wish I could propose solution to make it better but from my scale it is no possible to change it. So how can I make the world better and make things right with my graphic designer position? Pierre Bernard, co-founder of Grapus and Atelier de Creation Graphique references and quotes Maxim Gorky in his main argument in his essay Design I: AGI’s Designers of Influence:

"Life will always be hard enough to prevent men from losing the desire for something better," Maxim Gorky said. The graphic designer’s social responsibility is based on the wish to take part in the creation of a better world. It seems simple to declare such a principle, but given the contradictions of real life, the principle does not lead readily to practical rules of behaviour.” (Bernard, 1997)

Sometimes I just think it would be better to go travelling around the World and help to save the dauphins for example. I would like to save the world with my design. I want to design for a right purpose. I want to bring sensitivity and emotion to the audience like Lars Von Trier film did on me. I like to take example as such great designer as Stephan Sagmeister who believe that the belief that graphic design can be just as
powerful as a painting:
“You can have an art experience in front of a Rembrandt… or in front of a piece of graphic design,” (Sagmeister, realestatearts.wordpress.com, 12/2011)
I cannot put my finger yet on what exactly I want do with my power of creation. I am only sure of two things I will never use my design to serve bad purposes and I will always follow my heart in what is right to do.
In this chapter I expressed my personal observation about the society we are living in. I have been critical about the fact that our world is run by huge corporations and they are not making anything look better. I also expressed my worries about my place in the society as a graphic designer. I think graphic designers have got an enormous responsibility behind their creations. In the story of Frankenstein, the crazy doctor had the dream to defy the power of God by thinking he could bring to life his own creature. At the end of the story, the creature is strong and incontrollable and kills all Dr. Frankenstein loved ones. This was his punishment. His own creation destroyed his world. The moral I can get from this story is the power of creation need be used for good purposes. Graphic designers are meant to influence the masses in a purpose to sell. Marketing design is the tree hiding the forest. Designers are creating those little monsters ready to influence the audience and are becoming huge multinationals corporations ravaging our planet.
My last ...
This dissertation brought me to a conclusion I was not expecting. My starting point of my work was a reflection about the process of creation by the human being and the way we seem necessary to give humanity to our creation. This reflection brought me to the question: are we designers trying to imitate the power of God? I found it more relevant to examine this question with an example already existing. I choose Victor Frankenstein because he was the perfect example of the crazy designer who believed he could defy the power of God by giving life to his own creature. Frankenstein’s story ends with a nightmarish vision when his own creation turned against him. My metaphor with the doctor’s story allowed me to compare his story with our reality and understand the consequences of the power of creation. I first asked myself four questions: Why? How? What are the consequences? And what is my position as a designer in all that?

My first chapter answered to the question: why? Why do we need to create brands, not anymore as a brand roc with no identity and soul, but as a brand persona with human being characteristics? In my research on this point I have come across the conclusion that the human being needs to identify to a social example to be able to develop his own identity. A brand seen as person enrolls the social reference desired by the audience to belong from.

My second point of research was: How? How do we get the fascination of the audience for a brand? How do we victimize then? From a desire to belong to a social group to a religious fascination. I discovered the marketing strategy called storytelling. People seem to have lost their faith in God and the church but their desire to believe in something is still here. So the brands are using this desire to create an addiction, a fanaticism to get to them. My reflection around those facts is: is that really necessary?

In my last chapter I did an observation of our society...
and I do not really like what I see. I am asking the ques-
tion to myself if I really want to be part of the develop-
ment of the brand which will have bad consequences
on people lives and our planet.
To answer to my first question, “is there a Dr. Frank-
enstein in each designer?” my answer is yes. I believe
we can relate our reality to Frankenstein’s story. I think
as designers we have to act with caution because our
work will have an impact on the society. So we need to
be conscious if it feels right to be behind the creation
of a monster which will have only one purpose to use
and abuse.
When I started writing this dissertation I was ready
to start a Master in branding and Identity. I was per-
suaded that I really wanted to go to work for a big
company where I will contribute to make this capi-
talist machine works. I was not expecting to finish
my dissertation on this argument but I guess my mind
has changed. Now I realized that the power to influ-
ence the masses with design was a power to use with
cautions. This dissertation allowed me to ask myself
what position I should take in the consequences of
my observation of the society. Should I participate to
the creation of huge corporations monsters or use my
design to help causes I believe in? A few more months
before I get launched in the industry; I hope I will not
get corrupted. Story to be continued…
Appendices

Original version in French:


2 “chez les Samo du Burkina Faso, toute personne humaine est faite de neuf composantes (le corps, le sang, la chaleur et la sueur, le souffle, la vie, la pensée, le double et le destin individuel)”. [Strauss 1983 p52]

3 “Le storytelling management est désormais considéré comme indispensable aux décideurs qu’ils exercent dans la politique, l’économie, les nouvelles technologies, l’université ou la diplomatie.” [Salmon 2009]

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