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The Fallen Adams: An Intertextual Analysis on *Frankenstein* and *Yaratılan*

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ABSTRACT

Frankenstein (1818), written by Mary Shelley, has been relentlessly adapted for all forms of art since it was written. One such form is a recent television drama series that has re-envisioned *Frankenstein* for a Turkish audiences. To this end, this paper examines an intertextual analysis of the dialogical relations between a literary text and its adaptation into a television series, with a focus on the fidelity approach in adaptation studies and the premise that all modifications are essentially rewritings in which the original content may be remade and recontextualized. Within this scope, the Turkish adaptation of Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) into a Netflix series as *Yaratılan (Created)* (2023) by Çağan Irmak is analysed to present to what extent the hypertext recalls and mirrors the hypotext, regarding the "fidelity criticism" in adaptation studies. Although the novel involves the societal, historical, and ideological issues of the 19th-century British culture, it is proper to claim that Irmak not only ingeniously conveys Shelley's messages to the 21st-century Turkish audiences but also provides new perspectives for a popular source material while being "faithful" to the novel.

Keywords: Dialogic Relations, *Frankenstein*, *Yaratılan*, Adaptation Studies, Intertextual Analysis

Introduction

Mary Shelley's gothic piece *Frankenstein* (1818) has been a rich source for artists, authors, and directors since it was written. A recent television drama series that reimagined Frankenstein for a Turkish audience is one example of this type. With an emphasis on the fidelity approach in adaptation studies and the idea that all changes are essentially rewritings in which the original content could be remade and recontextualized, this paper investigates an intertextual analysis of the dialogical relations between a literary text and its adaptation into a television series.

In light of the "fidelity criticism" in adaptation studies, the Turkish adaptation of Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) into a Netflix series, *Yaratılan* (Created) (2023), by Çağan Irmak, is examined to show the degree to which the hypertext echoes and reflects the hypotext. It is appropriate to assert that Irmak not only cleverly adapts Shelley's messages to Turkish audiences in the twenty-first century but also offers fresh viewpoints for a well-known source material while remaining "faithful" to the novel, despite the fact that it deals with the societal, historical, and ideological issues of 19th-century British culture. In the analysis section of the study, the main focus is on how Irmak preserved the messages of the original text by appropriately reshaping them in the cultural, historical, and social contexts of the Ottoman-Turkish society.

Theoretical Background

Rooted in film analysis, adaptation studies involve recontextualized versions of prior texts to explore the dialogical relations between the source text and the new text. Adaptations could be found "on the television and movie screen, on the musical and dramatic stage, on the Internet, in novels and comic books" (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 2), and cinematic adaptations have provided audiences with visual representations of classics and well-known books (Corrigan, 2017). However, adaptation studies have enhanced debates on whether a literary piece is superior to its adjusted form or "a wilfully inferior form of cognition" (Newman, 1985, p. 129). However, whatever the discussions are based on, it should be noted that there is an intertextual relationship in literary adaptations and that literature and cinema have equal significance for audiences.

Derived from Bakhtin's concept of "dialogism," Julia Kristeva (1986) coined and defined the term "intertextuality" as "any text [that] is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (p. 37). Hence, intertextuality refers to "[A]ll possible relationships of a text with other texts" (Baldick, 1990, p. 112) or the transformation of new texts in accordance with prior texts (Fairclough, 1992). For Bakhtin (1981), words are in relationship with each other, and the fusion of words in a dialogue causes "dialogic intertextuality … [which] removes the hierarchical relationship between the source text and adaptation" (p. 279). Hence, embracing all cultural and artistic productions, including music, painting, sculpture, visual arts, mass media, architecture, and cinema, intertextual relations are accepted as "an attempt to understand literature and culture in general" (Allen, 2000, p. 174).

Similar to Kristeva, Robert Stam (2000) referred to Bakhtin's concept of "dialogism" and "dialogic intertextuality" in adaptation studies, advocating that an adaptation is not a mere imitation of a source text but rather a combination of all prior or other texts. Hutcheon (2013) also clarifies that adaptation is "not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing" (p. 9). The adapted text is the extended or altered intent of the original source. Dialogic intertextuality, thus, eliminates the hierarchical positioning between the hypertext and the hypotext[1] and focuses on the similarities and differences between a source text and an adapted text. Similarly, Palmer (2017) asserts that film adaptations are samples of hypertexuality, which fuses a hypertext with a hypotext. Therefore, derived from Bakhtinian dialogism, this new approach to adaptation studies provides the belief that each adaptation is unique and should be evaluated separately from a source text.

According to Bazerman (2004), intertextuality is observed not only between written texts but also among all forms of art, and Andrew (1984) asserts that "adaptation is the appropriation of a meaning from a prior text" (p. 97). The original source (hypotext) is enriched with the involvement of the audience in this endless process:

> We read a novel through our introjected desires, hopes, and utopias, and as we read we fashion our own imaginary mise-en-scene of the novel on the private stages of our minds …we feel the loss of our own phantasmatic relation to the novel, with the result that the adaptation itself becomes a kind of 'bad object'. (Stam, 2000, pp. 54-55)

Through rewriting or reproducing a literary text, the reader/audience can become an active endeavour, and interpretation becomes a "growing, evolving, never-ending process" (Irwin, 2004, p. 232). Rather than eliminating the essential elements of the original text, adaptation disseminates a literary text through a transformative process (Ray, 2000, p. 45). Based on this perspective, adaptations renew and recreate what was initially developed within a different context, in addition to expanding and diversifying it.

This diversity in adaptation studies is interpreted and exemplified by Barthes (1977), who considered a literary work as "stereophony of echoes, citations, [and] references" (p. 160). The fidelity in adaptations is evaluated through a "compare and contrast"

1 The hypotext is the original/earlier text that serves as the source text, and the hypertext is a new text that derives from the hypotext (Brownen & Ringham, 2006, p. 100).

strategy (Kline, 1996); thus, adaptation involves the concept of intertextuality, which provides comparative studies among texts and films (Genette, 1997, p. 5). Therefore, films are resourceful for adaptation studies in retrospect as "[r]e-vision-the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (Rich, 1972, p. 18). Nevertheless, the adapted version of a literary text might create frustration for the audience: "[a]daptation as a pale copy of the real thing is an entrenched belief prevalent in popular press reviews of film adaptations, where the final paragraphs almost always contain an obligatory return to the inevitable 'not as good as the book' conclusion" (Cartmell & Whelehan, 2007, p. 3).

The field of adaptation studies has enhanced debates and conflicting ideas in literary studies since its emergence in the late 1950s. Bryant (2013) clarifies adaptation as "an announced retelling of an originating text… transgression of the originating work… [and also] a liberation (pp. 48-49). While Stam (2005) used "reading, rewriting, critique, translation, transmutation, metamorphosis, recreation, transvocalization, resuscitation, transfiguration, actualization, transmodalization, signifying, performance, dialogization, cannibalization, reinvisioning, incarnation, reaccentuation" (p. 25) as synonyms for adaptation, Sanders (2006) listed its scope as "variation, version, interpretation, imitation, proximation, supplement, increment, improvisation, prequel, sequel, continuation, addition, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, re-vision, reevaluation" (p. 3). Similarly, Hutcheon (2013) explained adaptation as "repetition, but repetition without replication [and] an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works" (p. 7). Through adaptations, literature becomes accessible to larger groups, and as stated by Desmond and Hawkes (2006), "[T]he novel may help us understand the film more thoroughly, much as the film may help us understand the novel more fully and guide us to see the book in new ways" (p. 99).

There are distinctive categories and forms of literary adaptations, and Andrew (1984), for instance, categorised adaptation modes into three: "borrowing, intersection, and fidelity of transformation" (p. 98). Borrowing is "the most frequent mode of adaptation. Here the artist employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea, or form of an earlier, generally successful text..." (Andrew, 1984, p. 98). When "the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation" (Andrew, 1984, p. 99), it intersects. Finally, transformation occurs when "the skeleton of the original can, more or less thoroughly, become the skeleton of a film" (Andrew,

1984, p. 100), which preserves the "spirit" of the original work. In other words, although the content of a literary piece constitutes the skeleton of a film, sociological and historical varieties enhance the background of a movie.

Another film theorist, Geoffrey Wagner (1975), also groups adaptations into three categories: transposition, commentary, and analogy (p. 222). Transposition refers to a method "in which a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference …[while] commentary occurs where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect … [with] creative restoration [and through] analogy, the film becomes 'another work of art'" (Wagner, 1975, pp. 222-227). One of the main concerns in adaptation of fiction into screens is the "fidelity" (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 6) which "depends on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct 'meaning' which the filmmaker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tempered with" (McFarlane, 1996, p. 8). For a considerable amount of time, the discussion surrounding literary adaptations to the big screen revolved around issues of source faithfulness and the preference for the literary versions over their film counterparts (Whelehan, 2006). The majority of adaptation theorists believed that adaptations lacked the symbolic depth and "spirit" of the original texts and that they were "minor," "subsidiary," "derivative," or "secondary" productions (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 10).

With the rise of adaptation studies in the late 1950s, the main criticism in adaptation studies was "fidelity criticism," which is considered to be "a critical tool to interrogate the relationship between an adaptation and its source text" (Bialkowski, 2001, p. 203) or to compare the hypotext with the hypertext. Numerous film critics consider adaptation as a threat to literature, claiming that "[T]he book is always better than the movie. A movie based on a literary source is often seen as a secondary work and consequently of secondary value" (Chair, 2006, p. 13). Hence, preserving "the spirit rather than the letter of the text" (Sinyard, 1986, p. x) prevents the adaptation to be "a second-hand product, a copy, an originless entity" (Kiraly, 2013, p. 179) because "...the literature comes first as source, the film comes later as derivation. The literature is regarded as the original (a supreme value in art), and the film is regarded as a copy" (Desmond & Hawkes, 2006, p. 41). Hence, regarding the fidelity of adaptations, the film has oddly been accepted as inferior to literature by certain film critics.

However, it is also essential to remember that a great adaptation is the one that succeeds in replacing the novel's memory with its visual representation (Ellis, 1982, p.

3). With this perspective, an adaptation, "like any translation, is a separate entity, with a life of its own ... a medium with a separate and independent life" (Chair, 2006, p. 97). A filmmaker who adapts a literary text creates an original text by adding new interpretations rather than copying the source text:

> ... it shouldn't be necessary ... to insist that fidelity to the original text ...is a wholly inappropriate and unhelpful criterion for either understanding and judgment. ... it is hard to suppress a sort of yearning for a faithful rendering of one's own vision of the literary text ... every reading of a literary text is [a] highly individual act of cognition and interpretation; that every such response involves a kind of personal adaptation on to the screen of one's imaginative faculty as one reads. (McFarlane, 1996, p. 15)

In other words, "[F]idelity to its source text—whether it is conceived as success in re-creating specific textual details or the effect of the whole-is a hopelessly fallacious measure of a given adaptation's value because it is unattainable, undesirable, and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense" (Leitch, 2003, p. 161).

As "adaptations are distinct from mere copies or reproductions, they must also be intentionally made to diverge from the source in crucial respects" (Livingston, 2010, p. 105), the audience is "interested in comparing their images with those created by the film-maker" (McFarlane, 1996, p. 7). In other words, the fidelity approach in film adaptations leads to a false comparison that could lead the audience/viewer to a persistent obsession with fidelity, leading to "false expectations about the film's intentions and form …judging it [the film] by the standards of the book" (Cardwell, 2007, p. 52). Thus, while some filmmakers respect the original work, many others tend to transform the source text into a different form.

In adaptation studies, film critics advocate that evolving from numerous analyses of literary texts to film adaptations, the adapted versions should be considered as distinct and individual representations. Both forms possess unique styles (Aras, 2017, p. 35) as interrelated subsets:

> For the reader, spectator, or listener, adaptation […] is unavoidably a kind of intertextuality if the receiver is acquainted with the adapted text. It is an ongoing dialogical process, as Mikhail Bakhtin would have said, in

> which we compare the work we already know with the one we are experiencing. (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 21)

From another perspective, adaptations can also be seen as "mutations" that help their "source novel 'survive'" (Stam, 2005, p. 3). However, at this point, cultural, historical, and social contexts should also be reconsidered. According to Scognamillo (1973), a film or a play can be rewritten or reproduced by adding local names and environments to recall or remind us of the source text, as seen in the adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) into a series as *Yaratılan* (2023) by Çağan Irmak. Ultimately, this paper examines an intertextual investigation of the dialogical relations between a literary text and its adaptation into a television series, with a focus on the fidelity approach in adaptation studies and the premise that all modifications are essentially rewritings in which the original content may be remade and recontextualized. Within this scope, the Turkish adaptation of Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) into Çağan Irmak's *Yaratılan* (Created) (2023) streamed by Netflix was analysed to gauge the extent to which the hypertext recalls and mirrors the hypotext, regarding the "fidelity criticism" in adaptation studies. Although the novel involves the societal, historical, and ideological issues of nineteenth-century British culture, it would be proper to claim that Irmak not only ingeniously conveyed Shelley's messages to twenty-first-century Turkish audiences but also provided fresh insight into a popular source material while being "faithful" to the novel.

Recreating *Frankenstein*

Before scrutinising the intertextual and dialogic relationship between *Frankenstein* and *Yaratılan*, it would be proper to provide an overview of the historical periods and plots of the source text and its adapted version. Initiating the series with the statement "Inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,*" Çağan Irmak informs and reminds the audience about the originality of his story within a Turkish context. *Yaratılan* narrates the story of Ziya, a doctor candidate in İstanbul during the last periods of the Ottoman Empire, when Turkish society witnessed the developments in both religious and positive sciences and the reforms brought with "Westernization" (Perin, 1946, pp. 56-7), when there was severe dualism, regarding science, religion, and values in the society (Özsoy, 2020, p. 252).

Derived from a novel, *Yaratılan* exhibits fidelity in adaptation in terms of the events, characters, settings, thematic and narrative persistence, and the messages of Shelley.

Shelley's novel begins when Captain Robert Walton meets Victor Frankenstein, who is in a pitiful circumstance, at the North Pole. On his deathbed, Victor narrates the whole story to Captain Walton; how Victor left his home in Geneva to pursue studies in chemistry and natural philosophy at the University of Ingolstadt; how he was fascinated with the mysteries of life, eternity, God, and the universe; how he developed an intimacy with his professor, who experimented with the "creation of a being;" and how his tragedy began after the creation of the monster. The novel ends with Victor's death, as the monster walks towards its own death to the north. A similar pattern is observed in the series: The series starts as İhsan carries Ziya to a distant snowy mountain and begs a group of treasure hunters to cure him. The story is told to the leader of the group by Ziya: how he left his home in Bursa[2] to study medicine; how he was impressed by his Professor İhsan who experimented with the "creation" of a (human) being; how Ziya convinced İhsan to pursue the experiments; and how his tragedy began with the recreation of İhsan. *Yaratılan* ends as Ziya and İhsan die together on the ice.

In *Yaratılan*, the setting is between Bursa and İstanbul during the nineteenth century, during the last periods of the Ottoman Empire, recalling the Enlightenment period, reflected in *Frankenstein*. Shelley's novel questions the impacts of the collision caused by the Enlightenment period and "gives vivid expression to what many regard as the evils of modern science-dehumanizing, destructive, mechanistic, malevolent-a monstrous, masculine birth of the male mind" (Hutton, 2011, p. 17). Shelley's critique of the conflict between science and religion, rooted by the clash between the ideals of Romanticism and the Enlightenment period, is rewritten as a critique of the "false modernization" during the last phase of the Ottoman Empire. Victor is fascinated with the ideas of his professor, Mr. Waldman, who is obsessed with "the elixir of life" (Shelley, 1993, p. 45) and desires to "pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation" (Shelley, 1993, p. 46).

Fidelity to the original text can be observed in the character depiction in the series *Yaratılan* as "characters are crucial to the rhetorical and aesthetic effects of both narrative and performance texts because they engage receivers' imaginations through […] recognition, alignment, and allegiance" (Smith, 1995, pp. 4-6). Both Victor and Ziya are curious and in search of eternal life by challenging God and Nature. While in the novel,

2 Bursa was the capital of the Ottoman Empire, and the first university İznik Orhaniye was established in 1335. The city contributed to the cultural, historical, religious, and educational areas of the Empire until İstanbul was conquered. In the series, the story is narrated in Bursa, where modernization and Westernization initiated.

the monster has no name, in the series, the recreated being is İhsan, reminiscent of the word "insan," which means "human" in Turkish (Karadağ, 2003).

The series artistically provides the audience with the messages conveyed in Shelley's novel. First, the constructed motif in the novel, "science clashing with religion/Nature/God," is rewritten as the dualism between science and religion in many scenes in *Yaratılan*: "What you call science is beautiful, but it is a monster at the bottom of the well of ghouls[3] (Irmak, Episode 2, Track 11). Similarly, Mr Krempe, the college professor in the series, reminds the students about the superiority of God over science:

> Professor: Man proposes and God disposes. You must accept death and know that we are helpless against it. We should not change what has existed since Ibn Sina.
> Ziya: Why not pursue solutions? Islam encourages research on treatment, so we should look for a cure[4]. (Irmak, Episode 2, Track 41)

Second, in many scenes, "man's desire for the unknown" strengthens Shelley's message regarding the clash between science and Nature/God. Victor's hunger for uncovering "the elixir of life" (Shelley, 1993, p. 36) symbolizes his desire to be immortal (Thornburg, 1984), as he confesses at the beginning of the novel:

> My temper was sometimes violent, and my passions were vehement; but by some law in my temperature, they were turned not towards childish pursuits but to an eager desire to learn, and not to learn all things indiscriminately. I confess that neither the structure of languages nor the code of governments nor the politics of various states possessed attractions for me. (Shelley, 1993, p. 32)

Similarly, Ziya's obsession with the unknown and immortality is triggered after reading his father's forbidden book *Kitab-ı Kıyam* (Book of Doomsday) and losing his mother to the plague. Consequently, the scene depicting Ziya's tendency to persuade İhsan for experimentation recalls Victor's desire for immortality:

3 "İlim dediğin güzel ama ucu gayya kuyusunun dibinde bir canavar".

4 Profesör: Tedbir elden, takdir Allah'tan. Ölümü kabul etmelisiniz ve karşısında çaresiz olduğumuzu bilmelisiniz. İbni-i Sina'dan beri var olanın üstüne koymamalıyız.
Ziya: Neden çarelerin peşine düşmeyelim? İslam'da hastalıkların araştırılması konusunda teşvik vardır. Allah derdi ve dermanı birlikte verir, o halde dermanı arayalım.

> Let everyone remember us, let no one forget us. I did not come here to be thankful for the thrown bone. I did not come to be a doctor and a coward like my father. One must have an adventure in this life. One should not say goodbye and die; in fact, people should not die[5]. (Irmak, Episode 3, Track 20)

Although it is argued that "adaptation is repetition…but repetition without replication" (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 7), it is highly crucial for the reproduction's fidelity to involve the cultural context in which it is created: "Stories do get retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; […] they adapt to those environments by virtue of mutation – […] in their adaptations. And the fittest do more than survive; they flourish" (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 32). The creation scene, for instance, differs in the series and lacks the act of "creation," instead, Ziya does not create a living being. While Victor steals the body parts of the dead people on the streets and uses the brain of Professor Waldman to place "the best quality of brain" for his creature, Ziya revives İhsan, whose body and face are burnt in the fire during the experiment.

Furthermore, the series is clearly preconditioned by the emphasized motif of the "clash between nature and nurture," which is foregrounded by Shelley in the novel. Both the monster in *Frankenstein* and İhsan in *Yaratılan* are abandoned by their creators and humiliated by the people. As the monster helps the farmers, İhsan aids the woman who is blind and her pregnant granddaughter Esma while hiding in their cottage. However, the reasons for the deeds of İhsan and the creature are both society and Ziya and Victor. After being refused by his "god," the monster seeks retribution: "I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind" (Shelley, 1993, p. 169); "revenge kept me alive; I dared not die and leave my adversary in being" (Shelley, 1993, p. 249) and "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. "Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous" (Shelley, 1993, p. 114). When, in *Yaratılan*, İhsan kidnaps Ziya on his wedding night and forces him to return Esma back to life: "You will either rebuild the machine, or dig graves for both of you"[6] (Irmak, Episode 8, Track 10).

What is more, Irmak presents the meeting scene of the created and its creator in *Yaratılan* reminds the viewers of the dangers of human ambition in such an efficient

5 "Herkes bizi hatırlasın, hiç kimse bizi unutmasın. Ben önüme atılan kemiğe şükretmeye gelmedim. Babam gibi hem hekim olup hem de korkak olmaya gelmedim. İnsanın bir macerası olmalı bu hayatta. Eyvallah deyip ölmemeli, hatta insan ölmemeli" (Irmak, Episode 3, Track 20).

6 "Ya makinayı yeniden yaparsın, ya da ikinize birden mezar kazarsın".

way that he creates a dialogical relation with the original text: "Instead of protecting, preserving, re-teaching, you chose to consume and throw away"[7] (Irmak, Episode 8, Track 19). Both İhsan and the monster are fallen beings, or rather fallen Adams. They are the products of human ambition, science, and consumption during nineteenth-century industrialization. In the confrontation scene in *Frankenstein*, the monster outrages as follows:

> Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded…I remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator. But where was mine? He had abandoned me, and in the bitterness of my heart I cursed him. (Shelley, 1993, p. 156)

İhsan, similar to Shelley's monster, is indignant because Ziya has left him alone in the world: "You have satisfied your desire to discover, your pride, your hunger to be a creator. You didn't want a barren land like mine when there were hundreds of places to explore. I was left alone, lonely, lonely"[8] (Irmak, Episode 8, Track 20). To emphasize how the ambition of humankind destroys Nature and life created by God, the series once again encompasses the concept of consumerism and the consumption of the modern individual.

In brief, there are three striking differences between Shelley's novel and Irmak's series: while İhsan has the chance to have a family with Esma, the monster in *Frankenstein* is all alone throughout the end and Shelley's novel ends as Victor dies and the monster fades away on a snowy mountain, whereas the series ends as İhsan and Ziya die together on the mountain.

Conclusion

All in all, two centuries after its publication, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* abstains from the contextual relation with its adapted version for a Turkish audience. Çağan Irmak presents the devastating impacts of industrialization and science. Whether directly or indirectly, Shelley's motifs, such as the clash between science and religion, man's desire

7 "Korumak, kollamak, yeniden öğretmek yerine tüketip atıp gitmeyi tercih ettin".

8 "Keşfetme arzunu, kibrini, yaradan olma açlığını doyurdum. Keşfedilecek yüzlerce yer varken, benim gibi çorak bir toprağı istemedin. Tek başına, kimsesiz, yapayalnız kaldım".

for the unknown and nature and nurture, are skilfully modified and adapted to *Yaratılan*, which instigates the survival of its source content. Although they resonate through repetition, these versions take on a distinctive quality that makes them seem "new" and "Turkish". Based on this analysis, it would not be wrong to claim that while presenting a proper example of the "fidelity of adaptation," Irmak ingeniously conveyed Shelley's messages to the twenty-first century Turkish audience. Although created and produced for different cultures, İhsan and the monster are the fallen Adams of the 19th century because they are the products of science and human ambition to challenge God.

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