

Cultural Daily

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Brides of Frankenstein

Elisa Leonelli · Saturday, March 7th, 2026



Jessie Buckley, Christian Bale © Getty images-WB

The Bride!, written and directed by [Maggie Gyllenhaall](#), stars Jessie Buckley as the bride, Christian Bale as Frank, the monster.

The story is based on Mary Shelley's gothic novel *Frankenstein*, written in 1818, published under her name in 1831, and taking place in the late 1700s. The new movie is set in 1936 Chicago, and the doctor who reanimates dead bodies is not Victor Frankenstein, but Dr. Cornelia Euphronius, played by Annette Bening.



Christian Bale, Jessie Buckley © WB

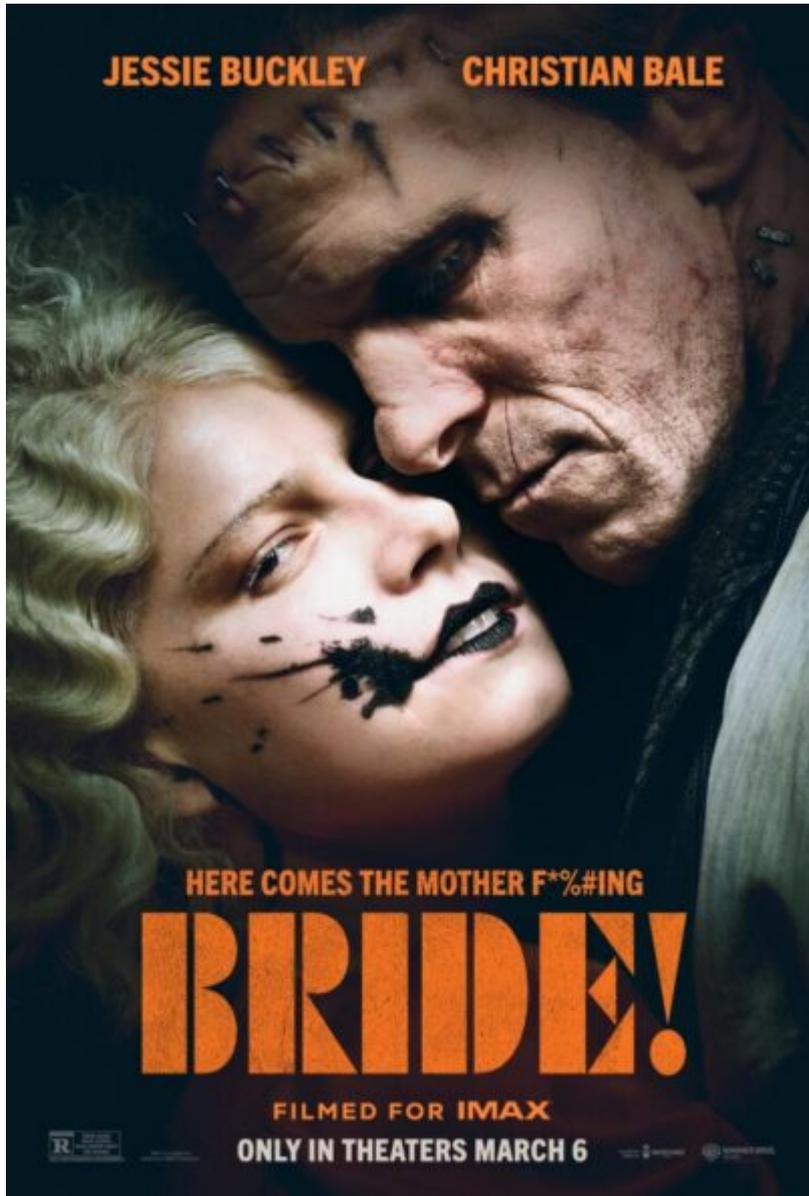
Buckley had worked with Gyllenhaal in her first film as a director, *The Lost Daughter* (2021) based on Elena Ferrante's 2006 novel *La figlia oscura*, where she played the younger version of Olivia Coleman. *The Bride!* was filmed before the Irish actress amazing performance as Agnes, William Shakespeare's wife in *Hamnet* directed by Chloé Zhao.



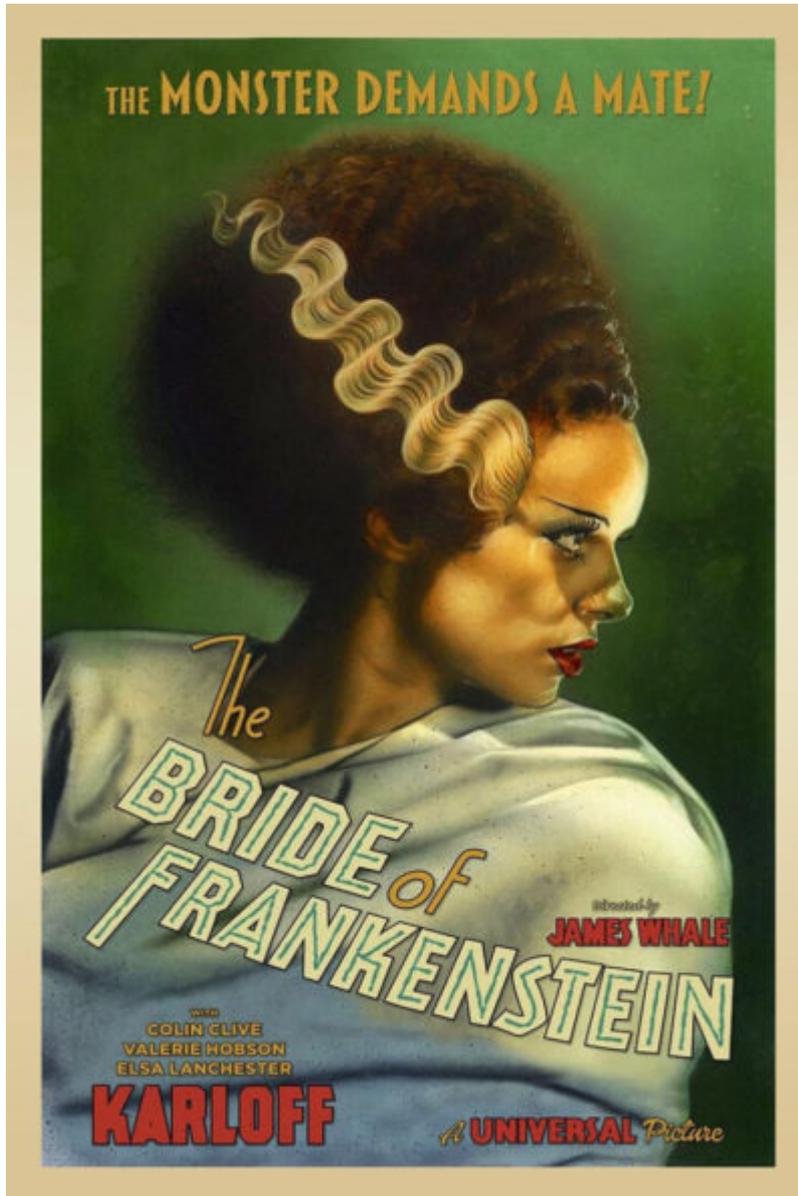
Maggie Gyllenhaal, Jessie Buckley © WB

Read my article [Hamnet/Hamlet](#). Read [here](#) the English translation of my interviews with [Jessie Buckley](#) and [Paul Mescal](#) that I wrote for Best Movie, Italy.

In *The Bride!* Maggie's younger brother Jake Gyllenhaal plays the fictional dancing and singing star of B&W Hollywood musicals that Frank is obsessed with. Peter Sarsgaard, Maggie's husband, is a detective on the trail of the murderous pair of "monsters" who drive across country like Bonnie and Clyde. Penelope Cruz is his "girl Friday" and smarter than her boss.



I will not spoil any plot points of *The Bride!*, which I recommend you see in the theaters, but I will mention other movies that revisited the fascinating story of the female monster, and I rewatched for this article.



Bride of Frankenstein (1935) directed by Frank Whale, sequel to his *Frankenstein* (1931) with Boris Karloff as the monster and Colin Clive as Frankenstein.

While rewatching these two classic movies, shot in glorious Black and White, I noticed that Frankenstein's first name is Henry, while, of course, in the novel he is Victor. In the 1931 *Frankenstein* Victor is the name of Henry's best friend, not a Frankenstein.

[Elsa Lanchester](#) (wife of Charles Laughton in real life) is introduced as Mary Shelley, a beautiful young lady dressed in white conversing with poet Lord Byron and Percy Shelley, her husband, telling them that she has written a sequel to her successful novel. Then we are shown scenes from the first movie, and see that the monster survived the windmill fire by hiding in the water underneath. When Lanchester reappears at the end she is unrecognizable, but she is still a beautiful woman in a long white gown, hissing horrified at the monster who wished her created to be his wife.

I had featured *Bride of Frankenstein* in [my article](#) about *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, a campy take-off of the Frankenstein story.



Jennifer Beals-Sting

The Bride (1985) directed by Franc Roddam starring Sting as Baron Charles Frankenstein, Jennifer Beals as Eva, his creature, who is not an ugly monster, but a beautiful young woman with a slender body and long curly hair. Clancy Brown is Viktor, the monster, who goes on a road trip to join the circus in Budapest with the midget Rinaldo (David Rappaport).

This is a feminist take on the classic story, forty years before Maggie Gyllenhaal's movie, where the upper class baron claims that he wished to create "the new woman, independent, free, as bold and as proud as a man, an equal." But in the end he just wants his ward to obey him and attempts to have sex with her without her consent.



Mary Shelley's Frankenstein 1994

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1994) directed by Kenneth Branagh, who also plays Victor Frankenstein, with Robert De Niro as the monster and Helena Bonham Carter as Elizabeth.

This movie starts with Captain Walton (Aidan Quinn) obsessed with finding the Northern passage in 1794, and the story is told in flashback, like in Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* (2025), except that in the end the father does not ask the son/his creation for forgiveness, but the monster weeps after his father's death.

Read here the English translation of my interviews with Del Toro and cast that I wrote for Best Movie Italy.

What I did not remember, having seen the movie thirty years ago, was that Frankenstein, desperate after the creature rips out his bride's heart on their wedding night, reanimates her body, with the same facial scars as the monster.

Branagh said when I interviewed him in 1994:

“By recreating Elizabeth, we address that, because this is a man who, having rejected his own son (if you like to call the creature that), because he finds him so hideous, he then puts together his dead wife in an equally hideous way; and now he finds no problem in the cuts and bruises in her appearance.”



Kenneth Branagh © HFPA 1994

Another recent movie that I have not watched is *Lisa Frankenstein* (2024) directed by Zelda Williams and written by Diablo Cody.

Read about other [Frankenstein movies](#) in my previous article, and there are countless more versions of this fascinating myth, where the monster is more human than the human beings who wish to kill him.

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