REFLECTING ON MONSTERS (AFTER FRANKENSTEIN)

ACTATE CONFERENCE

10 MAY 2019

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REFLECTING ON MONSTERS (AFTER FRANKENSTEIN)

• ENGL3008: Introduction to Literary Theory
• Frankenstein 2018: Two hundred years of monsters (NFSA/ANU)
• Secondary Students Workshop: Frankenstein’s Monster Reinvented
• Nineteenth Century Contexts 41.3 (2019) and Continuum
• Frankenstein in the Automatic Factory
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Beginning Theory</th>
<th>On Frankenstein</th>
<th>Theoretical texts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>23 Jul</td>
<td>Mary Shelley, <em>Frankenstein</em> and the Limits of the Human</td>
<td><em>Frankenstein</em> (1818)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 2    | 30 Jul  | Liberal Humanism and Liberal Humanist Feminism | Chapter 1: Theory before ‘theory’ | George Levine, *Frankenstein and the Tradition of Realism* (Norton/UPenn)  
Ellen Moers, *Female Gothic: The Monster’s Mother* (Norton/UPenn) |
Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Wattle) |
| 4    | 13 Aug  | Post-structuralism and deconstruction | Chapter 3: Post-structuralism and deconstruction | Lawrence Lipking, *Frankenstein, the True Story; or, Rousseau Judges Jean-Jacques* (Norton)  
Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (Wattle) |
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<td>7</td>
<td>17 Sep</td>
<td>Post-structuralist Feminism</td>
<td>Chapter 6: Feminist criticism</td>
<td>Mary Jacobus, <em>Is There a Woman in This Text?</em> (UPenn)</td>
<td>Diane Hoeveler, <em>Frankenstein, feminism, and literary theory</em> (Wattle)</td>
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### ENGL3008: INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY THEORY

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<td>9 1 Oct</td>
<td>Marxism / Postcolonialism</td>
<td>Chapter 8: Marxist criticism</td>
<td>Paul O’Flinn, ‘Production and Reproduction: The Case of Frankenstein’ (UPenn)</td>
<td>Marx / Postcolonialism</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 8 Oct</td>
<td>Humanism / Posthumanism / Transhumanism</td>
<td>Chapter 15: Posthumanism (335-341)</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frankenstein in 1818: historicising the monster (Professor Sharon Ruston, Lancaster)
Frankenstein as scientific fable: from grave-robbing and galvanism to synthetic biology and machine learning (Genevieve Bell, Australian National University)
Adaptation and experimentation: Frankenstein in film and other media (Shane Denson, Stanford)
Frankenstein’s queer family: gender, sexuality, reproduction and the work of care (Julie Carlson, University of California, Santa Barbara)
Australian Institute of Anatomy
Under construction 1929-1931
Australian Institute of Anatomy, 1931
Australian Institute of Anatomy
Museum, c.1931-1932
Australian Institute of Anatomy
Museum, c.1931-1932
Magic Lantern Show
Five scenes for a modern Prometheus

5:30pm Thursday 13 September
ARC Cinema, National Film and Sound Archive, free entry
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER REINVENTED

• The novel and the myth
• Frankenstein 1818
• Frankenstein 1931
• Frankenstein 2018?
**INDUSTRY 1.0**
Mechanization, steam power, weaving loom

**INDUSTRY 2.0**
Mass production, assembly line, electrical energy

**INDUSTRY 3.0**
Automation, computers and electronics

**INDUSTRY 4.0**
Cyber Physical Systems, internet of things, networks
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER REINVENTED

• The ‘core story’ of the myth: scientific experiment/technological development creates human-like entity that escapes control, threatens creator, human race

• Essential aspects of Mary Shelley’s novel are inessential to the myth:
  • The monster is assembled from pieces of dead bodies
  • The monster is eloquent, and engages the sympathy of both Victor and the reader
  • The monster is not inherently evil but becomes vengeful due to isolation and neglect
  • The novel is neutral about science per se
**FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER REINVENTED**

*Frankenstein* is ‘the first modern narrative about ALife’ (5)

ALife’s ‘thematic’: in what sense is this entity ‘alive’?

ALife’s ‘problematic’: does this entity participate in a life-cycle: grow, learn, die, and, most importantly, reproduce? (6)

‘ALife’s thematic became possible as a fictional interest with the beginnings of the properly scientific study of life, that is, with the emergence of biology in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, whereas AI, with rare exceptions, became a serious fictional interest only after the birth of the computer. ... For the first time in human history, intelligence is divorced from life, making it possible to be intelligent but not alive.’ (5, 7)

FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER REINVENTED

Frankenstein (1818) in context

• The materialist-vitalist debate at the Royal College of Surgeons between William Lawrence and John Abernethy (1814-1819)

• The Industrial Revolution, the Luddite disturbances (1811-1817) and the Frame Breaking Act (1812)

• The reception of the novel as a political allegory of the dangers of broadening representation
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER REINVENTED

*Frankenstein* (1931) in context

- The ‘Second Industrial Revolution’ (mass production, electricity) culminating in Henry Ford’s introduction of the assembly line (1913)
- The Great Depression (1929-1932)
- The advent of sound in cinema (1929)
- Hays Code in place (1930) but not yet enforced (1934)
- Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in late 1920s, campaigns against lynching
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER REINVENTED
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER REINVENTED

After the ‘Third Industrial Revolution’ (automation, computers, electronics)

*Frankenstein* becomes a story more about AI than ALife:

- robots (automata)
- androids (anthropomorphic robots)
- replicants/mecha/synths/hosts (indistinguishable from humans)
Her
Ex Machina
MADE IN OUR IMAGE
OUT OF OUR CONTROL

HUMANS
NEW SERIES PREMIERE
SUN JUNE 28TH 9/8C
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER: KILLER ROBOT?

• Hapless Boston Dynamics robot in shelf-stacking fail
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzlsvFN_5H1

• New dog-like robot from Boston Dynamics can open doors
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXxrmussg4E

• Black Mirror S4 E5, Metalhead
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER: MUNDANE AI?

- Financial management (Flash Crash 2010)
- Social security (Centrelink ‘robo-debt’ 2017-)
- Loans and mortgages, health insurance (My Health Record), job applications
- Cambridge Analytica, Brexit, Trump, AI ‘sock puppets’
- Surveillance, privacy, big data, black box algorithms, algorithmic discrimination: Assistance and Access Bill 2018 will give government agencies access to encrypted data, and allow direct covert access to your device
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER: MUNDANE AI?

Tom Warren, ‘Amazon explains how Alexa recorded a private conversation and sent it to another user’, The Verge 24 May 2018:
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER: MUNDANE AI?

‘With keystroke biometrics, typing style could identify you and even know your mood’, One World Identity 11 May 2017: https://oneworldidentity.com/keystroke-biometrics-typing-style-identify-even-determine-mood/
FRANKENSTEIN’S MONSTER: MUNDANE AI?

‘the computer model could judge someone better than a friend or roommate by analyzing just 70 likes, and do better than a parent or sibling with 150 likes’

Steve Dent, ‘Researchers can profile Facebook users to a 'T' with just their likes’, Engadget 13 January 2015

https://www.engadget.com/2015/01/13/facebook-like-psychometric-research/
Dylan Curran, ‘Are you ready? Here is all the data Facebook and Google have on you’, The Guardian 30 March 2018:
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/28/all-the-data-facebook-google-has-on-you-privacy

A: everywhere you’ve been; everything you’ve searched and deleted; every email you’ve sent; contacts; calendars; every website you’ve visited, everything you’ve clicked; and much more…
Alexander Cook, ‘Perfecting Monstrosity: Frankenstein and the Enlightenment Debate on Perfectibility’
Sharon Ruston, ‘Chemistry and the Science of Transformation in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein’
Thomas H. Ford, ‘Frankenscription, A Natural History of Poetry’
Julie A. Carlson, ‘Just Friends? Frankenstein and the Friend to Come’
Russell Smith, ‘Frankenstein in the Automatic Factory’
Martin Willis, ‘Scientific Self-Fashioning after Frankenstein: The afterlives of Shelley’s novel in Victorian sciences and medicine’
Tiffany Basili, “It’s Alive!”: Women’s Objectification and Subjectivity in Film Adaptations of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

Russell Smith, ‘Ex Machina, *Frankenstein*, and the History of “Computer as Woman”’

Katie Cox, ‘Age of the Supersoldier: Subversive cyborgs in *Iron Man* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*’

James Donald, ‘More Human Than Human: From *Frankenstein* to *Blade Runner 2049*’

Gemma King, “I’ve Found a New Voice. Now we Use it.” *Westworld*’s Multilingual Hosts


Tania Evans, ‘The Monstrous Queer Male Mother in *Game of Thrones*’
FRANKENSTEIN IN THE AUTOMATIC FACTORY

Russell Smith
Australian National University
13 September 2018
The cotton explosion.
Growth in index numbers of real production for five British manufacturing sectors, 1730-1820. 1780 = 100.

Giovanni Aldini (1762-1834): ‘The Original Doctor Frankenstein’

On 18 January 1803, Giovanni Aldini, nephew of Luigi Galvani, conducted a series of galvanic experiments at the Royal College of Surgeons in London on the body of George Forster, hanged for murder an hour earlier at Newgate Prison.

Bread has been made (indifferent) from potatoes,
And Galvanism has set some Corpses grinning, …
What wondrous new Machines have late been Spinning!

Byron, Don Juan, Canto I, stanza 130, written September 1818
Dr Andrew Ure, F.R.S. (1778-1857)

X. An Account of some Experiments made on the Body of a Criminal immediately after Execution, with Physiological and Practical Observations. By Andrew Ure, M. D. M. G S.

Fig. 333. — Le docteur Ure galvanisant le corps de l'assassin Clydsdale.
PHILOSOPHY OF MANUFACTURES:
or,
AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
SCIENTIFIC, MORAL, AND COMMERCIAL ECONOMY
OF THE
FACTORY SYSTEM
OF
Great Britain.

By ANDREW URE, M.D., F.R.S.,
M.G.S., M.A.S. Len., M. Acad. N.B. Philad.,
S. Pharm. Soc. North Germany,
&c. &c. &c.

LONDON:
CHARLES KNIGHT, LUDGATE-STREET.
MDCCCLXXV.

LONDON:
CHARLES KNIGHT, FLEET STREET.
1822.
That the master manufacturer, by dividing the work to be executed into different processes, each requiring different degrees of skill or force, can purchase exactly that precise quantity of both which is necessary for each process; whereas, if the whole work were executed by one workman, that person must possess sufficient skill to perform the most difficult, and sufficient strength to execute the most laborious, of the operations into which the art is divided.

(Babbage, *Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* 175-6)

It is … the constant aim and tendency of every improvement in machinery to supersede human labour altogether, or to diminish its cost, by substituting the industry of women and children for that of men; or that of ordinary labourers, for trained artisans

(Ure, *Philosophy of Manufactures* 15)
Although Ure’s work appeared in 1835, at a time when the factory system was still comparatively little developed, it remains the classical expression of the spirit of the factory, not only because of its undisguised cynicism, but also because of the naïveté with which it blurts out the thoughtless contradictions of the capitalist brain.

(Marx, *Capital* Vol. I, 563-4)

Dr Andrew Ure showed that if children and young persons under 18 years of age, instead of being kept the full 12 hours in the warm and pure moral atmosphere of the factory, are turned out an hour sooner into the heartless and frivolous outer world, they will be deprived, owing to idleness and vice, of all hope of salvation for their souls.

(Marx, *Capital* 336-7, n.11)
The main difficulty did not ... lie so much in the invention of a proper self-acting mechanism ... as in the distribution of the different members of the apparatus into one co-operative body, in impelling each organ with its appropriate delicacy and speed, and above all, in training human beings to renounce their desultory habits of work, and to identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automaton. To devise and administer a successful code of factory discipline, suited to the necessities of factory diligence, was the Herculean enterprise, the noble achievement of Arkwright.

(Ure, Philosophy of Manufactures 15)
AUTOMATIC: A term used to designate such economic arts as are carried on by self-acting machinery. The word is employed by the physiologist to express involuntary motions.


Seven editions through to 1878.
A machine apparently instinct with the thought, feeling, and tact of the experienced workman—which even in its infancy displayed a new principle of regulation, ready in its mature state to fulfil the functions of a finished spinner. Thus, the Iron Man, as the operatives fitly call it, sprung out of the hands of our modern Prometheus at the bidding of Minerva—a creation destined to restore order among the industrious classes, and to confirm to Great Britain the empire of art. The news of this Herculean prodigy spread dismay through the Union, and even before it left its cradle, so to speak, it strangled the Hydra of misrule. … This invention confirms the great doctrine already propounded, that when capital enlists science in her service, the refractory hand of labour will always be taught docility.

(Ure, Philosophy of Manufactures 367, 368)