Studies in Global Science Fiction

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Global Frankenstein

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For Kestrel Zandra Davison, Charlotte and Emma Evans,
and girls and young women everywhere
and their waking dreams, wild and visionary.

FOREWORD

Many people have a story of how they first came across *Frankenstein*. Here's mine. I was about ten, and the books for adults in my parents' modest-sized living-room bookcase were beginning to interest me more than Enid Blyton's weekly magazine *Sunny Stories*. The bookcase contained a stout Casket-of-Literature kind of production called *The World's Best Books*, compiled in about 1934 by a literary man, Wilfred Whitten, who called himself John O'London. I have it still, its binding cracked by the tropic sun, its hinges loose. *The World's Best Books* went from Plato on the Death of Socrates to James Barrie's *The Little Minister*, taking in *Macbeth* and *Adam Bede* on the way—and *Frankenstein*. Of course, it did not contain the whole of the World's Best Books, only thrilling highlights from some of them, strung together with plot summaries and many, many fuzzy pictures, some taken from old British silent movies. This abridged *Frankenstein* was embellished with a portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, her piercing, lashless eyes staring from the page. Her middle name was sinister to my ears, suggesting the craftiness of a wolf and a heart of stone. The James Whale film was not mentioned, but an illustration by an unknown artist showed the Creature, gaunt and bony, cackling with glee, bounding downhill with barefoot leaps, his black hair and tattered tunic streaming in the wind, casting a huge shadow on the opposite mountain slope. As a result, the lumbering fellow with the bolt through his neck has always struck me, I regret to say, as a bit of an imposter.

Frankenstein did not scare me out of my wits, but it did leave me with a recurrent waking dream in which a bony phantom hand would grab me by the throat and strangle me without leaving a mark. Retrospectively, I

realised it also left me bothered by the sense of a world gone wrong for which there was no redress. Life was not fair, I knew, but books should be. The fairy tales that I had recently left behind me were full of outrageous creations and transformations, people being turned into asses, statues coming alive, and so on. But they usually ended in some kind of restorative justice. The good might not always prosper, but they would be vindicated in some way. The wise Socrates in *The World's Best Books* was made to drink hemlock, but the record of his calmness in death lived on to show that the good die bravely.

The Creature, however, had murdered innocent people, including a child. Having cheerfully led Frankenstein on to his death, he now declared that he was going to exult as he died in agony on his self-built funeral pyre, so ending up being even braver than Socrates. But as the story finished there, perhaps he was just boasting and had no intention of carrying out his promise. It was very perplexing. But if my moral world was rattled, John O'London's headnote was clear on a crucial point. It warned readers in no uncertain terms against the popular error that Frankenstein is the name of a monster. This was NOT TRUE, for "the only person who ever created a Frankenstein was Mary Shelley, the second wife of the poet." That, at least, was straightforward. A selection of famous poems by the poet in question was also included in *The World's Best Books*. So there they both were, Mary Wollstonecraft and Percy Bysshe, equals in John O'London's eyes.

As Mary Shelley would have said, it was that day that decided my destiny, or a good part of it. Which is how, in 1997, I found myself coconvening "Mary Shelley: Parents, Peers, and Progeny", a conference celebrating the bicentenary of Mary Shelley's birth, at the present Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge. By this time, the perplexities that bothered my ten-year-old self had been reconfigured. Recuperating Mary Shelley's reputation as an author of many different kinds of writing, and situating her in the literary world of pre-Victorian Britain, was the work that (it seemed to me and others) most needed to be done at the time. It still continues. Twenty years ago, the emphasis was very much on "The Other Mary Shelley," "Mary Shelley in Her Times," and "Mary Shelley Beyond *Frankenstein*." It is a sign of those times that Marie Mulvey-Roberts, then best known for her groundbreaking study of Rosicrucian fiction, *Gothic Immortals,* contributed one of the only papers on *Frankenstein*, "The Corpse in the Corpus: *Frankenstein,* Rewriting Wollstonecraft and the Abject," splendid in title, original in content.

(Many of the conference papers, including Marie's, were later collected by Michael Eberle-Sinatra and published by Macmillan, just before it became Palgrave, in 2000 as *Mary Shelley's Fictions: From Frankenstein to Falkner.*)

That was 20 years ago. But now, in 2018, the bicentenary of *Frankenstein* refocuses attention on Mary Shelley's first and best book. In his day, John O'London was unusual in valuing Mary Shelley's horror novel as a classic of literature, but he could not have predicted that it would become the most taught of all novels in the world. During the 1970s and 1980s, *Frankenstein* was revalorised as a feminist psychobiography, the first true science-fiction novel, a *chef-d'oeuvre* of female gothic, and a political allegory about the origins of the French Revolution. Attention was paid to close reading of *Frankenstein* as text; the first edition, out of print since 1818, was reprinted several times, and a debate ensued as to the degree to which Percy Shelley's interventions in the text had improved the writing or perverted Mary Shelley's intentions. Later, it turned out that Mary Shelley was not the first person to make a Frankenstein. In 2009, Julia Douthwaite discovered a precursor, Félix Nogaret's political allegory, *Le Miroir des événemens actuels* (1790), in which a scientist called Frankénsteïn makes a full-sized mechanical man who plays the flute. In the third millennium, it has become a commonplace to say that *Frankenstein* continues undiminished as a modern myth, speaking to many fears and burning issues of the twenty-first century. Elements within *Frankenstein* are found to anticipate modern ecocriticism, disability studies, transgender concerns, posthumanism, and anxieties about robotics. There has been a notable shift of scholarly interest towards the afterlives of *Frankenstein*. *Frankenstein* studies have fractured into disparate areas of expertise. The extraordinary proliferation of texts, contexts, and adaptations has surpassed the capacity of any single person to encompass them all. All the more reason to take the opportunity to mark *Frankenstein*'s bicentenary by opening up spaces where specialism can converse with specialism, as Marie Mulvey-Roberts and Carol Margaret Davison, globally known for their work on the Gothic, have done in assembling this collection. The contributors, established names and new ones, bring fresh insights to traditional areas such as Frankensteinian science, medicine, and monstrosity, or uncover fresh evidence of *Frankenstein*'s influence. It is hard to imagine a *Frankenstein* buff who will not learn something new—the sizable corpus of *Frankenstein* adaptations for children, for instance, or what happens to *Frankenstein* when it becomes a digital game. It is both a celebration and a guide to the cutting-edge areas in *Frankenstein* studies today.

Running through the collection is a thread of thought-provoking enquiry: are we approaching the limits to which *Frankenstein* can be adapted and still retain any meaningful relation to the original? The question is both pertinent and ironic: *Frankenstein* is itself a patchwork of other writings, an adaptation of (among other things) Greek myth, Shakespearean drama, the Godwinian novel, and perhaps even *Harlequin and Asmodeus,* the Covent Garden Christmas pantomime for 1810. William Godwin went to the Christmas show at Covent Garden theatre annually. It was his wont to take his family with him, including his daughter, Mary. In the 1810 season, they would have seen the master-clown Joseph Grimaldi beaten and chased off the stage by a pumpkin-headed man that he had created out of Covent Garden vegetables. It was a famous turn of Grimaldi; after *Frankenstein* was published, he began to be called Joe Frankenstein. Years later, people still remembered his fight with the Vegetable Man as one of the funniest things that they had ever seen. But if *Frankenstein* began with a pumpkin, the whirligig of Time has brought the pumpkin round again. Today, farmers looking for a seasonal novelty crop produce Pumpkinsteins for the Halloween trade, squashes grown in moulds in the shape of the head of Karloff's monster.

I am interrupted in these reveries. What do these sounds portend? I must arise and examine. What is this? It is an email about Frankenreads, a worldwide planned celebration of *Frankenstein*, sponsored by the Keats-Shelley Association of America, involving readings of the novel and other events worldwide on the model of the Joycean Bloomsday, to take place during Halloween 2018. Readers, teachers, and devotees of *Frankenstein* will be able to do more than put a scary Pumpkinstein in the window. As I write, 140 participant institutions in 30 countries are signed up to the project. A literalisation of the title of Mulvey-Roberts' and Davison's scintillating and timely collection—*Global Frankenstein* indeed!

Anglia Ruskin University   Nora Crook
Cambridge, UK
January, 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Notes on Contributors

Emily Alder is Lecturer in Literature and Culture at Edinburgh Napier University, where she teaches nineteenth-century literature, popular culture, children's literature, and ecocriticism. Her research interests are interdisciplinary and lie in literature and science, environmental humanities, and weird, Gothic, and science fiction especially of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Recent publications include a special issue of *Gothic Studies* on Nautical Gothic, and she is at work on a monograph, *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin de siècle*. She is an assistant editor for *Gothic Studies* and is a member of the Young Academy of Scotland.

Fred Botting is a professor in the School of Humanities, Kingston University, London. He has written extensively on Gothic fictions and literary theory and has published several books including *Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory* (1991), *Sex, Machines and Navels* (1999), and *Limits of Horror* (2008).

Scott Bukatman is a cultural theorist and Professor of Film and Media Studies at Stanford University. His research explores how such popular media as film, comics, and animation mediate between new technologies and human perceptual and bodily experience. His books include *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (1993), one of the earliest book-length studies of cyberculture; a monograph on the film *Blade Runner* (2012) commissioned by the British Film Institute; and a collection of essays, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century. The Poetics of Slumberland:*

Animated Spirits and the Animating Spirit (2012) celebrates play, plasmatic possibility, and the life of images in cartoons, comics, and cinema. *Hellboy's World: Comics and Monsters on the Margins* (2016) investigates the "adventure of reading" that comics offer. Bukatman has been published in abundant journals and anthologies, including *October, Critical Inquiry, Camera Obscura,* and *Science Fiction Studies.*

Nora Crook Jamaican by birth and upbringing, is Professor Emerita of English Literature at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. She has published widely on Romantic Period subjects and is best known for her editing of the Shelleys. She is a general editor of 12 volumes of the novels, biographical work, and miscellaneous writings of Mary Shelley (1996, 2002) and editor of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *Valperga*. She is co-general editor of the *Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (three volumes published of eight planned), with special responsibility for poems that Mary Shelley published after Percy Shelley's death.

Carol Margaret Davison is Professor at the University of Windsor and a former Canada-US Fulbright Scholar. She is the author of *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature, 1764–1824* (2009) and *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan 2004). The editor of essay collections on *Dracula*, Marie Corelli, and the Gothic and addiction, her most recent edited collections are *The Gothic and Death* (2017) and *The Edinburgh Companion to the Scottish Gothic* (2017), co-edited with Monica Germanà. She is the author of dozens of articles and book chapters on the Gothic, Victorian literature, African-American literature, American literature, and cultural teratology, and remains the Director of the sickly taper website, the world's largest and most comprehensive website devoted to Gothic bibliography (www.thesicklytaper.ca). She is at work compiling a multi-volume collection devoted to the reception history of British and American Gothic literature.

Courtney A. Hoffman is a PhD candidate at the University of Georgia. Her dissertation project focuses on the interactions of temporality and affect in the exchange of letters in epistolary fiction of the eighteenth century, arguing that after *Pamela*, literary understandings of time passing become deeply entwined with expressions of feeling in epistolary novels. She is a past visiting fellow at the Chawton House Library and has an essay entitled "How to Be Woman in the Highlands: A Feminist Portrayal of Scotland in *Outlander*" to be published in a forthcoming volume, *The Cinematic Eighteenth Century*.

Jerrold E. Hogle is Professor of English and University Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Arizona in USA. A past president of the International Gothic Association, he has been honoured with Guggenheim, Mellon, and other Fellowships for research, as well as the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Keats-Shelley Association of America, and has received several local and national awards for excellence in teaching as well. His books include *Shelley's Process*, *The Undergrounds of the Phantom of the Opera* (Palgrave), and (from Cambridge University Press) both *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (2002) and *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic* (2014).

Tanya Krzywinska holds the chair in Digital Economy at Falmouth University, Cornwall, and has a background in the computer industry, as well as in literature, film, and art. She has developed new methods and concepts designed to further our understanding of the formal uniqueness and potential of games. She is the author of a range of papers and books that sought to distinguish the formal and aesthetic differences of games from other media and has written extensively on the Gothic and Horror in games and other media. Since 2012, Krzywinska is editor-in-chief of the journal *Games and Culture* (Sage). She has designed and convened a range of games development courses in the UK. Krzywinska is Director of the Games Academy, which provides incubation-based and innovation-led game development, computing, and game art courses (www.falmouth.ac.uk/games). Given time, Krzywinska continues to practise as a fine artist.

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Kirstin A. Mills specialises in Gothic, Romantic, and Victorian Literature, with a particular interest in the relationships between dreams, alternative states of consciousness, optics and vision, space, and the supernatural, and the ways in which these intersect at the borders of literature, psychology, and science. She has published on the literary and cultural representations of these ideas in authors from Horace Walpole to George MacDonald and Lewis Carroll, and is finalising her monograph on the ways that these ideas evolved across the nineteenth century in a context of speculative investigation into the spaces of the supernatural and the sciences of the mind. Mills' research also considers these concepts at work in broader contexts from medieval literature to twenty-first-century media. She teaches English Literature, Children's Literature, and the Gothic at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, where she also completed her doctoral thesis on Dreams, Space, and Victorian Fantastic Literature.

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Nowadays, this project has become the most extensive online catalogue and archive of illustrated *Don Quixote* editions. He has published extensively regarding this subject and fully analysed the relationship between image and text. He co-directs the interdisciplinary research group LyA, which explores the relations among the different arts, and he also co-directs the research project "Edgar A. Poe On-Line. Text and Image" (ref. HAR2015-64580-P) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

Marie Mulvey-Roberts is Professor of English Literature at the University of the West of England, Bristol. Her teaching and research interests include Gothic and gender. She is the co-founder and editor of *Women's Writing* on historical women writers for which she co-edited a special issue on Mary Shelley. Her single-authored publications are *British Poets and Secret Societies* (1986 rpt 2014), *Gothic Immortals: The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (1990 rpt 2016), and *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal* (2016), winner of the Allan Lloyd Smith Memorial Prize. She has written numerous chapters and edited dozens of books including *The Handbook to the Gothic* (1998 rvd 2009) and *Literary Bristol: Writers and the City* (2015). Recently she made a film on *Frankenstein* and its links to Bristol and Bath for a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on the literary South-west.

David Punter is an academic, writer and poet, and Professor of Poetry at the University of Bristol. He has published extensively as a literary critic, much of his work being on the Gothic, including *The Literature of Terror* (1980), *Gothic Pathologies* (1998), and *The Gothic Condition* (2016) but also on other themes and areas—*Writing the Passions* (2000), *Rapture: Literature, Addiction, Secrecy* (2009), and *The Literature of Pity* (2014). He has also published six books of poetry, *China and Glass* (1985), *Lost in the Supermarket* (1987), *Asleep at the Wheel* (1996), *Selected Short Stories* (1999), *Foreign Ministry* (2011), and *Bristol: 21 Poems* (2017). In 2014, he released a CD of his poetry, *Flashes in the Dark*, and he maintains a blog at www.davidpunter.wordpress.com.

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