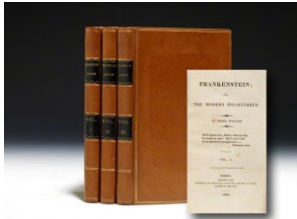


## The Bicentenary of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: cultural history across media

Two hundred years ago, the nineteen-year-old Mary Shelley published a novel called *Victor Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818). Of all the literary works written during the romantic period, the gothic novel and proto science fiction *Frankenstein* is the one whose continuing presence is most obvious. Shelley's tale about a scientist's experimental creation of artificial life has travelled widely across different media, taking on distinctly new meanings in changing cultural networks and historical environments.



The anniversary offers an occasion to return to the novel's context of production in the wake of the French Revolution and to revisit Mary Shelley as the member of a group of young poets and intellectuals who were highly politicized and scientifically knowledgeable. This will frame our investigation of the novel itself — the topics it addresses, such as education, the relations of scientist and community, and those between self, other and monstrosity. How does the medium of the *novel*, specifically, shape these topics as it draws on classical mythology, confronts contemporary social taboos and raises fundamental ethical and political issues?



Drawing on theoretical texts on transmedia storytelling and media specificity, we will trace, in the remaining sessions of the seminar, the narrative's journey across different media by focussing on individual examples in their cultural contexts. After observing a crucial shift to the stage (Brinsley Peake, *Presumption; Or, The Fate of Frankenstein* 1823), still in the nineteenth century, we will move on to cinema, which will include James Whale's iconic film *Frankenstein* (1931) and Hammer Studio's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) directed by Terence Fisher; the final choice of later examples will be decided in in class.

### *Texts:*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818). Please make sure your edition uses the 1818 text. Recommended edition: *Frankenstein* (Norton Classical Edition) 2011.

### *Course requirements:*

Regular attendance, excellent knowledge of the set texts, films etc., course assignments during the semester and (to receive the maximum credit points) a term paper.