

From the *Nordlit* Archives

Eleven years ago, in *Nordlit* 23 (2008), Polly Gould noted on pages 106–108:

Arctic Frankenstein—Doctor Frankenstein trains in the art of medicine, which Bauman (1992) describe[s] as the ‘modernist strategy’ in reaction to mortality. Like the Pygmalion myth, *Frankenstein* is the story of a man creating life without sexual reproduction, not with the craft of a sculptor but with the skill of a surgeon; however in this case the outcome is physically monstrous. The story can be read as a story of gender and difference, of production and reproduction, creation and recreation, and a search for origins, beyond the maternal body. The ‘monster’ that has no name, escapes the attic laboratory, stealing the Doctor’s coat, and crucially, the doctor’s journal. He is a nameless, speechless being, full-grown but having to learn the world anew. He comes into awareness and speech and starts to question: “But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; [...] What was I?” (Shelley 2003 [1818]: 124). He learns to read, and can then decipher the writing in Viktor’s diary, which reveals to him that he was stitched together from pieces of the dead. The monster, our monster, sutured, patch-worked together from old corpses, brought to life as a new being, has a consciousness of his own made-ness which triggers a search for his origin that replicates the experience of post-modern subject: fragments, parts, frictions and fictions, collected into a whole, montaged, collaged together. The monster searches for the man who made him. Behind the story of the life of the monster, is the story of his fictional creator, the scientist-man. Behind them all is the biography of the life of the author, the woman-writer Mary Shelley, whose own birth led to the death of her mother, Mary [Wollstonecraft], the great advocate for women’s rights. Shelley lost three of her four children.

Excerpt taken from:

Gould, Polly. 2008. “Sexual Polarities: Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Polar Exploration as a Search for Origins Beyond ‘Woman’”, *Nordlit* 23 [12:1], 103–118. (The text above has been slightly re-formatted.)

Mentioned secondary sources:

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1992. *Mortality, Immortality, and Other Life Strategies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. 2003 [1818]. *Frankenstein [or, The Modern Prometheus]*. Reprint edition. London: Penguin.

Eleven years earlier, in *Nordlit* 2 (1997), Christina Sandhaug noted on pages 37–38:

Linguistic Monsters—Our failure to acknowledge the ‘in-betweens’ is our fallacy and what turns our ‘outsiders’ into monsters. And as we don’t allow ourselves to think about them, we don’t talk about them, a denial by which the modern mind hopes to press monster out of existence. I would hazard to say that if we didn’t construct these categories in our mind and in our language, there wouldn’t be any hybrids at all, in that there wouldn’t be any categories to mix. If we chose to call them, us and everything, hybrids after all, as does Latour (1993 [1991]), in a non-modern world ‘hybrid’ wouldn’t be a bad word. Rather, it would be the acknowledged norm. But we *do* purify between culture and nature, human and non-human, and by labelling the former ‘us’, or ‘the One’, and the latter ‘the Other’, we ensure our power. “The self is the one who is not dominated, who knows that by the service of the other, the other is the one who holds the future, who knows that by the experience of domination, which gives the lie to the autonomy of the self” (Haraway 1991 [1985]: 177). To be One becomes to be powerful. What happens when the modern mind is confronted with incidents or beings that resist purification, something not easily marked as the One or the Other? We label ‘it’ monstrous, because it poses a threat to our Modern Constitution by which we make and dominate Others. ‘Monster’ becomes a metaphor for all that doesn’t fit our categories. Their monstrosity lies in that they both invite and resist purification.

Excerpt taken from:

Sandhaug, Christina. 1997. “Caliban’s Intertextual Refusal: *The Tempest* in *Brave New World* and *Galatea 2.2*”, *Nordlit* 2 [1:2], 23–44. (The text above has been slightly re-formatted.)

Mentioned secondary sources:

Haraway, Donna. 1991 [1985]. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”, in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, edited by Donna Haraway. London: Free Association Books, 149–182.

Latour, Bruno. 1993 [1991]. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Translated by Catherine Porter. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

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aims at

mapping the
manufacture
of monsters.

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Dedicated to our students.