The English Department Advent Calendar 2016: Beginnings

“You know that the beginning is the most important part of any work.” (Plato: Republic)

If you like literature – or if you like to read out loud – and especially if you like beginnings, then …

… be part of the English Department Advent Calendar.

From Dec 1, we will have the beginning of a famous text (prose, drama, and longer poetic texts) every day to listen to online – read by students as well as members of staff of the English department. *

For more information, please contact:
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* A list of texts will be provided – or suggest your own!
Introduction to Literary Studies
WiSe 2016/2017
Lecture 5:
The Gothic Novel
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818/1831)

Prof. Dr. Matthias Bauer
Session Plan

Context: Author, Oeuvre, Moment

Basic Coordinates: Central Topics and Concerns

Aesthetics: Narrative Strategies

Reception and Theoretical Perspectives
Session Plan

1. *Frankenstein*: The Reputation
2. The Author and the Book
3. *Frankenstein* and the Gothic Novel
4. The Narrative
5. Creation and Crime
Session Plan

1. *Frankenstein*: The Reputation / Reception
2. The Author and the Book / **Context: Author, Oeuvre, Moment**
3. *Frankenstein* and the Gothic Novel / Theoretical Perspectives
4. The Narrative / **Aesthetics: Narrative Strategies**
5. Creation and Crime / **Central Topics and Concerns**
1. Frankenstein: The Reputation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKyiXjyVsfw
2. The Author and the Book


The recommended annotated online edition is.
Mary Shelley (1797-1851), portrait by Richard Rothwell (1840)
2. The Author and the Book

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)
*Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792)

William Godwin (1756-1836)
*Caleb Williams* (1794)
2. The Author and the Book

Mary Shelley (1797-1851)

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1782-1822)
Title page of the first edition
Draft of what became ch. 5 of *Frankenstein*
From Mary Shelley’s preface to the 1831 edition:

I shall thus give a general answer to the question, so very frequently asked me – ‘How I, then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?’ (Penguin ed. 5)

I busied myself to think of a story, -- a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror -- one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart. (Penguin ed. 7-8)

Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. (Penguin ed. 8)
From Mary Shelley’s preface to the 1831 edition:

I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handy-work, horror-stricken. (Penguin ed. 9)

And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have an affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart. (Penguin ed.10)
3. *Frankenstein* and the Gothic Novel

Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)

Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs, said Manfred, advancing again to seize the princess. At that instant the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast. Isabella, whose back was turned to the picture, saw not the motion, nor knew whence the sound came, but started and said, Hark my lord! what sound was that? and at the same time made towards the door. Manfred, distracted between the flight of Isabella, who had now reached the stairs, and his inability to keep his eyes from the picture, which began to move, had however advanced some steps after her, still looking backwards on the portrait, when he saw it quit its panel, and descend on the floor with a grave and melancholy air. Do I dream? cried Manfred returning, or are the devils themselves in league against me?

The gloom of these shades, their solitary silence, except when the breeze swept over their summits, the tremendous precipices of the mountains that came partially to the eye, each assisted to raise the solemnity of Emily's feelings into awe: she saw only images of gloomy grandeur, or of dreadful sublimity, around her; other images, equally gloomy, and equally terrible, gleamed on her imagination.

(ch. 18 / Vol. II, ch. 5)

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(ch. 18 / Vol. II, ch. 5)
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818/1831)  
ch. I.5:

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! - Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The Passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. (Pt. II, Section I, p. 101)

I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power. (Pt. II., Sect. V, p. 107)
Genette (1980):

The narratives of *Frankenstein* are …

homodiegetic
autodiegetic
intradiegetic
hypodiegetic
1818 text:

[Preface by P.B. Shelley]

Vol. 1, Letters I-IV (by Walton to his sister Margaret)
  Vol. 1, Chapters I-VIII (Frankenstein’s account)
    Chapter VI (Elizabeth’s letter)
    Chapter VII (Letter by Frankenstein’s father)
  Vol. 2, Chapters I-II (Frankenstein’s account)
    Chapters III-VIII (the Monster’s/Creature’s tale)
  Vol. 2, Ch. IX (Frankenstein’s account)
  Vol. 3, Chapters I-VII (Frankenstein’s account)
    Chapter V (Elizabeth’s letter)
Vol. 3, Chapter VII (in continuation by Walton to Margaret)
Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history: he asked to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. ‘Since you have preserved my narration,’ said he, ‘I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity.’
Plot versus story

*Frankenstein*, ch. I.2 (1831 version):
While my companion contemplated with a serious and satisfied spirit the magnificent appearances of things, I delighted in investigating their causes. The world was to me a secret which I desired to divine. Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to me, are among the earliest sensations I can remember.

The most learned philosopher [...] might dissect, anatomise, and give names; but, not to speak of a final cause, causes in their secondary and tertiary grades were utterly unknown to him.
Criscillia Benford (2010) 325: “Most simply: the inassimilable is an element (e.g., a character, event, narrative technique) that calls attention to a text’s constructedness by simultaneously activating two or more competing, yet equally plausible, sense-making frames.”

Marshall Brown (2005) 195: “If critics cannot agree on the morality of the novel, cannot decide whose side, if any, Shelley is on, that is because of the epistemological collapse inherent in the conception of monstrosity. What is gothic about Frankenstein is the fact that it is – not just that it is about – a monster.”
5. Creation and Crime

From Mary Shelley’s preface to the 1831 edition:

I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handy-work, horror-stricken. (Penguin ed. 9)

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Ch. II.2 (ch. 10; Penguin 102):
‘I expected this reception,’ said the dæmon. ‘All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends.’

‘Abhorred monster! fiend that thou art! the tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil! you reproach me with your creation; come on, then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed.’
FRANKENSTEIN;

OR,

THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?

Paradise Lost.

VOL. I.

London:
PRINTED FOR
LACKINGTON, HUGHES, HARDING, MAJOR, & JONES,
FINSBURY SQUARE.

1818.
Prometheus *pyrphoros*

Prometheus *plasticator*

(cf. Ketterer [1979] 19, referring to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* I.11.101-12)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Prometheus-Hymne* (1772-74)

Lord Byron, “Prometheus” (1816)

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-19)

Heinrich Füger, *Prometheus* (1817)
John Milton, *Parade Lost* (1667)

Book X.743-45:
Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me Man, did I solicit thee,
From darkness to promote me?
Ch. II.2 (ch. 10, Penguin 102-03)

‘I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Every where I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.’
I was answered through the stillness of night by a loud and fiendish laugh. It rung on my ears long and heavily; the mountains re-echoed it, and I felt as if all hell surrounded me with mockery and laughter. Surely in that moment I should have been possessed by frenzy, and have destroyed my miserable existence, but that my vow was heard, and that I was reserved for vengeance. The laughter died away; when a well-known and abhorred voice, apparently close to my ear, addressed me in an audible whisper – ‘I am satisfied: miserable wretch! you have determined to live, and I am satisfied.’

[...]

I was cursed by some devil, and **carried about with me my eternal hell**; yet still a spirit of good followed and directed my steps;

[...]

All my speculations and hopes are as nothing; and, **like the archangel who aspired to omnipotency, I am chained in an eternal hell**.
Ch. III.7 (ch. 24; Penguin 206)
I was cursed by some devil, and carried about with me my eternal hell; yet still a spirit of good followed and directed my steps; [...] All my speculations and hopes are as nothing; and, like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell.

*Paradise Lost* IV.18-26 [on Satan]
[...] horror and doubt distract
His troubl'd thoughts, and from the bottom stirr
The Hell within him, for within him Hell
He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
One step no more then from himself can fly
By change of place: Now conscience wakes despair
That slumberd, wakes the bitter memorie
Of what he was, what is, and what must be
Worse;
Bibliography


https://blackboard.lincoln.ac.uk/bbcswbday/users/dmeyerdinkgrafe/archive/haneyshelley.html
