



"It's Promethean, Man!": The Frankenstein Myth and Rhetorical Invention

Robert E. Terrill

ABSTRACT

Frankenstein myths circulate widely in Western culture and offer robust indices of common anxieties about invention. This essay articulates a version of the Frankenstein myth that emphasizes potential contributions to the practice and teaching of rhetoric. Specifically, this essay suggests that this myth about the practice of invention in general can contribute to understandings of rhetorical invention in particular, especially with regard to the extent to which rhetorical invention may, in some instances, be informed by themes associated with deception, duality, and autonomy. The essay closes with a discussion of implications and limitations.

KEYWORDS

Ex machina; Frankenstein;
myth; rhetorical invention

Stories about invention circulate in public culture. Some of these stories are about seeking appropriate and necessary guidance, some are about the assembly of various components, and some are cautionary tales about invention's aftermaths. These stories may circulate because they help audiences to understand the implications of their capacity for invention. Some of these stories may remind their audiences that they do not always have complete control over the processes of invention, that they often ignore its unintended consequences, and that their most spectacular achievements might also be their downfall. Many of these stories are told repeatedly in books, poems, plays, films, and across every available medium. Teachers and students of rhetorical invention specifically, however, tend not to rely on the resources made available through these stories about invention more broadly. In this essay I suggest some of the affordances of doing so.

While creation stories may be described as cosmogonies, "symbolic expressions of the creation of the world" (Long 18) that narrate "the original ordering of the universe" (Leeming and Adams Leeming vii), invention stories emphasize the human work of generating new materials by identifying and making use of the available resources in each particular circumstance. Gods may create worlds from scratch, but humans must be content with recombining existing materials. One of the stories about invention that circulates widely is the Frankenstein story, which involves an obsessive man who assembles a human body from parts of cadavers and imbues it with life, only then to abandon it; the creature, isolated and alone, grows resentful and eventually visits revenge on its maker. The number of people who are familiar with retellings of this story probably far exceeds the number who have read *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's* novel since it was published in 1818. Some retellings follow Shelley's novel rather faithfully, but others deviate considerably; this is a fluid and adaptable story that is capable of retaining its basic shape whether set in murky Gothic castles drizzling with atmosphere or in clean, bright spaces humming with technology. The creature is sometimes, as in Shelley's tale, all or mostly biological, and sometimes it is all or mostly mechanical. The creature may appear singly, personally menacing the inventor, or in the form of a vast army that possesses destructive power of apocalyptic proportions.

The Frankenstein story has attained the status of *myth*. Steven Marcus, for example, notes that the Frankenstein story is "an authentic modern cultural myth" that has entered "the collective consciousness of our civilization" (190, 192). Langdon Winner has called the Frankenstein myth "the closest

thing we have to a definitive modern parable about mankind's ambiguous relationship to technological creation and power" (307). Shelley herself understood her tale to be linked to the ancient myth that tells how fire, representing inventional knowledge, was stolen from the gods, and she underscored the association with her subtitle: *The Modern Prometheus*.¹ To refer to a story as a myth can suggest, colloquially, that the story could be dismissed as untrue. For the purposes of this essay, however, myth may also refer to tales that may be thought to reveal some of the sorts of truths not emphasized elsewhere (Rushing and Frenzt, "Frankenstein Myth" 62). From this perspective, myths circulate in public culture because they encode "essential practical lessons of social life" (Mali 159). They have a "pragmatic function in the present social order" (Coupe 22) and offer, as Lance Bennett puts it, "truths about society that are taken for granted" (167) or otherwise uninterrogated. Myths help humans to make sense of their experience (Tudor 124) by revealing "communal values" and "moral consequences" and by determining their relationship to the "natural order" (Doty 450, 452).

This essay suggests that the Frankenstein myth can contribute to understandings of rhetorical invention. These contributions do not consist of formulae or techniques; instead, this myth draws attention to assumptions and biases that may sometimes go unexamined in traditions of thinking and teaching about rhetorical invention, particularly with regard to the relationships between inventors and their inventions and the ethical consequences of inventional acts. The literature about rhetorical invention is vast, and among the many schemes for organizing this literature perhaps the most widely cited is James Jasinski's identification of four distinct but overlapping traditions. As Jasinski describes them: *romantic* notions of rhetorical invention emphasize liberation from calcified norms and expectations; *systematic* notions lean into rules and procedures honed over millennia; invention through *imitation* depends on reworking existing texts into new ones that may differ radically from the originals; and rhetorical invention as a *social* act acknowledges that rhetors occupy points of intersection among multiple cultural discourses (327–331). It may be observed that these traditions suggest a spectrum, ranging from an understanding of rhetorical discourse as being the product of an isolated genius toiling in solitude, at one end of the scale, to that of a socially enmeshed bricoleur who invents rhetorical discourse by drawing on the resources made available in a community.

While a definition or a procedure that has been formulated within a particular discipline and for particular purposes might be summarized without sacrificing its value, and sometimes its focus may even be sharpened through condensation, the explanatory potential of a myth that circulates for myriad reasons across multiple generations is most magnified when it is articulated in some detail. And, at the same time, any version of the Frankenstein myth, including the one that animates this essay, is necessarily incomplete. Myths that are established over long periods of time

will be expressed in many variants, given that no one narration of a story is likely to be absolutely identical to any other. When we allude to the existence of a particular myth, we are referring to what is *more or less* constant in a number of instances of narrative discourse. (Flood 41–42)

Myth tends to be experienced only in fragmentary form because it would be difficult, and perhaps impossible, to attend to all of the variants at once (Frenzt; Rushing and Frenzt, *Projecting the Shadow* 47–49).

The version of the Frankenstein myth that is articulated in this essay draws from three sources: the ancient Greek Prometheus story, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*. The first two are well established as foundational stories that often are recognized as participating in the larger narrative of the Frankenstein myth. The third is a 2015 film that follows Caleb, a programmer who works for a Google-esque company, as he seems to win a company lottery and is whisked off for a week as a guest in the home of the company's chief executive officer (CEO) and founder, Nathan. There Caleb learns that Nathan has invented an artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of a conventionally attractive young woman, and that he wants Caleb to evaluate her. Caleb becomes

¹Throughout the remainder of this essay, I refer to the Prometheus story, to Shelley's novel, and to *Ex Machina* as *stories* that articulate this version of the ubiquitous cultural narrative that is the Frankenstein *myth*. I acknowledge that this distinction is at least somewhat arbitrary.

convinced that Ava is attracted to him, and they plot together to effect her escape. Like the Prometheus story, which it repeatedly and explicitly references, *Ex Machina* is a tale about the use of cunning and deception. Like *Frankenstein*, *Ex Machina* centers on a solitary male scientist who assembles and animates an AI without adequately preparing for the implications of his actions. Garland's film is a particularly salient contribution because it emphasizes the patriarchy and heteronormativity that are important components of this version of the Frankenstein myth.

I suggest that this version of the Frankenstein myth might enhance understandings of rhetorical invention by emphasizing three interrelated themes associated with invention in general that may be brought into resonance with rhetorical invention in particular. First, this version of the Frankenstein myth emphasizes the extent to which invention might be implicated in acts of deception in which the artificial is passed off as natural; second, the myth emphasizes the dual and reciprocal relationship between the inventor and the invented; and, finally, the myth emphasizes the tendency for inventions to strive for, and sometimes attain, autonomy. Each of these three themes is informed and inflected by a fourth: the myth presents invention as a highly gendered practice in which the inventor is male and the act of invention itself is masculinized.

In the next three sections of this essay, I trace each of these themes—*deception*, *duality*, and *autonomy*—as they are presented in the Prometheus story, Shelley's novel, and the film *Ex Machina*. My purpose in these sections is to develop a plausible, although necessarily partial, articulation of the Frankenstein myth. Then in the fourth section I draw from a vocabulary specifically informed by rhetorical lore to engage each of these three themes again, this time specifically to explore some of the ways that this version of the Frankenstein myth might offer perspectives that may be useful to some teachers and students of rhetorical invention. I close with a reflection on some of the limitations of this essay, and by offering suggestions for how it might be extended or revised.

Deception

The Prometheus story, as Hesiod tells it, begins when Prometheus sets before Zeus two offerings, one of which consists of the “white bones” of a slaughtered ox hidden under a layer of “gleaming fat” (*Theogony* 540–41).² The story quickly evolves into an escalating “duel in cunning” in which each party tries to fool the other through “reciprocal offers of deceptive gifts” that play out in “a series of similar operations designed to ‘hide,’ [or] ‘conceal from view’” (Vernant 184–85). Zeus discovers Prometheus's ruse, and in retribution conceals the gift of fire from humans. Prometheus steals the fire back by concealing it, in turn, “in a hollow fennel stalk” (*Theogony* 566). This exchange is preliminary to, and culminates in, the crafting of Pandora—an example of “cunning art” (Atwill 105) a deception or *dolos* (Vernant 187–88), a “fabricated woman” (*Theogony* 510)—in which artifice is concealed beneath a natural-seeming exterior. As Janet Atwill puts it, the Prometheus story sets “‘true’ nature . . . against art” while at the same time problematizing those categories to the extent that the figure of Pandora “illustrates the power of art to disrupt nature's boundaries” (105–106).

In Shelley's novel, Victor's inventive practices continue Zeus's project of reifying the natural and the artificial while inadvertently illustrating the futility of maintaining these as two separate and distinct categories.³ Suparna Banerjee suggests that the novel presents a “critique of the Nature-Culture opposition in Enlightenment/modernist thought” (9–10); Mark Hansen similarly notes that Victor's creature “does not so much transgress the boundary between organism and machine, as defy

²Hesiod tells two versions of the Prometheus story, one in *Theogony* and the other in *Works and Days*. Vernant notes that “the two versions can be considered to be complementary, together combining to form a single unit” (191), and they will be so considered throughout this essay.

³The distinction between nature and culture, or the natural and the artificial, which seems to inform Victor's actions, is characteristic of Western culture and is bounded by that context. Gabriela Kütting, for example, describes this Western perspective as a “mechanical view of nature” that asserts that the world consists of independent and interchangeable parts, as opposed to an “organic” perspective that emphasizes connectedness and interdependence (31–32). George Dyson offers a particularly intriguing suggestion, that as digital technologies continue to evolve, the strict and identifiable distinction between the natural and the artificial that has informed Western culture since the “industrial epoch” will become increasingly less relevant (6–7).

description within the space governed by this opposition” (583). In other words, while Victor’s inventiveness is driven, in part, by his conviction that the artificial and the natural are separate, identifiable, and fully constituted categories, so that one might be neatly substituted for the other, Shelley’s novel offers a rebuke of that position. As Susan Stryker makes clear, “[T]he very success of Mary Shelley’s scientist in his self-appointed task . . . paradoxically proves its futility: rather than demonstrate Frankenstein’s power over materiality, the newly enlivened body of the creature attests to its maker’s failure to attain the mastery he sought” (242).⁴ Victor sought mastery through engaging in an inventional act that is fueled by binaries, including a distinction of nature from artifice, and seems to have expected a result that was similarly informed by binaries, including master and servant. The reality that he is confronted with, instead, is that the binaries that he sought to impose on the world were both arbitrary and illusory; his creature is neither entirely natural nor entirely artificial, but both and neither, a new category that challenges and critiques the assumptions that inspired his invention. As the creature grows in consciousness and agency, he refuses to be marginalized or silenced and refuses to abide by whatever expectations Victor may have had. The limitations of Victor’s theory of invention leave him entirely unprepared for the complexities and implications of the practice of invention.

In *Ex Machina*, much of the deception develops around Nathan’s version of the famous test for artificial intelligence named for Alan Turing. Early in the film, when Nathan asks Caleb if he knows what the Turing Test is, Caleb describes it this way: “It’s when a human interacts with a computer. And if the human doesn’t know they’re interacting with a computer, the test is passed.” Actually, Turing describes his eponymous test as a variation of a parlor game in which the task was for an interrogator to tell the difference between a woman and a man using only textual responses to questions. Turing’s modification was to replace the concealed man with a computer, so that the test becomes whether the computer can deceive the interrogator into mistaking it for a woman (2017 38). This articulation of Turing’s test also seems to describe the test that has been presented to Caleb, and it suggests that Nathan’s conception of invention, like Victor’s, emphasizes both a binary framework and a capacity for deception.

Then, near the end of the film, when Nathan finally reveals the entirety of his experiment, he describes it this way: “Ava was a rat in a maze, and I gave her one way out. To escape she’d have to use self-awareness, imagination, manipulation, sexuality, empathy, and she did. Now, if that isn’t true A. I., then what the fuck is?” In other words, Nathan’s invention is a success because Ava was able to deceive Caleb into thinking that her simulation of these qualities and strategies was genuine. Nathan’s framing of the experiment invokes Victor’s hubristic confidence that the artificial and the natural are interchangeable. All the while that Nathan, like Victor, is behaving as though he has dominion over both nature and artifice, other elements of the story suggest alternatives to this delusion. Even the very walls of the building in which most of the story takes place feature stark glass and steel in interplay with unhewn boulders and unobstructed views of the lush exterior landscape, which seem to be “collapsing the usual distinctions between inside and outside” (Mackinnon 608). But Nathan, again like Victor, is too thoroughly invested in the illusion to attend to much of anything outside of his own ambitions. And Caleb, like Epimetheus, is taken in by the illusion; he regards Ava as real, her attraction to him as natural, and her liberation as their shared goal. Just as it was a part of Zeus’s plan for Epimetheus to accept Pandora as a natural woman, so too it was Nathan’s plan for Caleb to accept Ava. Nathan assures Caleb that he shouldn’t feel embarrassed by the fact that he fell for the deception, because “proving an A. I. is exactly as problematic as you said it was.” But the climax of the film reveals that Nathan also wildly underestimated both Ava’s capacity for deception and the implications of Caleb’s compliance. Nathan is undone, in part, because, like Victor, his simple binary theory of invention together with his narrow self-centered focus limits his ability to accurately assess either the capacities of his invention or the consequences of his inventional act.

⁴The analysis in this section is strongly influenced by Zigarovich’s review of the trans legacy of Mary Shelley’s novel.

Duality

The theory of invention that informs the actions of Victor and Nathan is echoed in the proliferating sets of dualities that the myth portrays. At the same time, in some cases, these complementary images of doubleness also may offer resources that might, if taken up, counteract some of the worst tendencies of Frankensteinian invention. The dualities that populate this version of the Frankenstein myth are far too myriad to be accounted for in any single essay, so this section will offer only a few representative examples. The acts of deception and concealment that characterize the Prometheus story come in pairs.

Prometheus hides ox bones beneath a layer of gleaming fat while Zeus hides the evil nature of Pandora beneath her attractive appearance; Zeus hides fire from the humans, while Prometheus hides it from Zeus; and they both seek revenge on the other in retribution for the other's trickery. All of this reinforces the notion that Zeus and Prometheus are "strictly comparable" figures (Vernant 184–85). However, the doubled theme also is reflected in the figures of Prometheus (forethought), who Hesiod describes as "quick-scheming," and Epimetheus (afterthought), described as "mistaken-minded" (*Theogony* 510). Prometheus forewarns Epimetheus not to accept gifts from Zeus, but Epimetheus forgets this, perhaps because he is distracted by Pandora's beauty, and does not realize his mistake until the damage already is done. If the perspectives represented by Prometheus and Epimetheus were integrated in a single person rather than split into two, disaster may have been avoided.

This theme is refined and focused in Mary Shelley's novel. Many critics have pointed out divisions in Victor's personality, for example, including the segregation of "intellectual activity" from "emotional activity" (Mellor 221) that makes it impossible for him simultaneously to do science and experience feelings for others. Kim Hammond offers instructive chiasmic phrasing, noting that Victor is portrayed as "a scientist with Romantic tendencies" or as a "romantically inclined scientist" (186). He is not merely "a pillar of reason; detached, objective, rational, measured and cautious, working only for the benefit of advancing humanity," Hammond continues, but also is "motivated by the anticipation of his own reward over and above due care and caution" (190). Victor says, for example, that "a human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquillity [*sic*]." But he also describes himself as "animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm," "dizzy" with insight, carried forward "like a hurricane," animated by an "almost frantic impulse," feeling as though he had "a slow fever" and "nervous to a most painful degree" (Shelley 31–35). This fragmented personality is among the elements that allows Victor's story to stand as an archetype of "scientific adventurism," a cautionary tale about the dangers of technical knowledge untethered by ethical constraints (Banerjee 10).

It also is commonplace to observe that Victor and his creature are doubles and that the popular misapplication of the name "Frankenstein" to the creature rather than to the inventor suggests the fluidity and ambiguity of their common identity (Levine 14). Both Victor and his creature are isolated; they both are astute observers of people; they both seek companionship; and they each have their hopes for companionship denied by the other. Victor and his creature are also extensions of one another. Mary K. Patterson Thornburg suggests that "the creation of the Monster is in reality a division" (7), a sort of reproduction by mitosis as Victor divides himself into two similar and symbiotic organisms. "By himself Victor Frankenstein is only one half of the composite metaphor presented by the novel," Christopher Small points out. "He requires the Monster to complete him" (122). But while this relationship between Victor and his inventions may be obvious to readers of Shelley's novel, Victor, of course, seems unaware of it; it is this limitation that, in part, allows the Frankenstein myth to represent "our own relationship to the technology that we worship even as we recognize that it is close to destroying us" (Levine 17).

In *Ex Machina*, Nathan, like Victor, is divided so vividly that he may seem almost to have multiple personalities. On the one hand, he is portrayed as a wonky genius, founder and CEO of "the world's most popular Internet search engine." But while Nathan conforms, in many ways, to stereotypical portrayals of awkward reclusive tech moguls, he also is portrayed as vital and physical. Nathan observes Ava and Caleb's interactions over the closed-circuit television (CCTV) monitors with

seemingly clinical detachment, but he also repeatedly cuts off Caleb's technical assessments of Ava and asks him instead to focus on "how do you feel about her" and "how does she feel about you." The Nathan/Caleb pair evokes the Prometheus/Epimetheus pair: it seems initially that Nathan, like Prometheus, is more wary of the potential danger posed by his conventionally attractive invention, and that Caleb, like Epimetheus, perceives the danger only when it is too late and his fate is sealed; but in the end it is clear that Nathan, like Victor, also is disastrously unable to forecast the implications of his inventional act.

As in Shelley's novel, the doubled theme is particularly pertinent in *Ex Machina* with regard to the relationships between the inventor and his inventions. Ava is presented as Nathan's doppelgänger: Nathan and Ava pursue their self-centered agendas without regard for the welfare of others; they both deceive Caleb so that they can use him as a tool to achieve their ends; and they both—like Victor and his creature—are astute observers. Even their names are symmetrical two-syllable words that repeat the same vowels, near-anagrams of one another. But Ava is not the only artificial woman in the film. Unlike Shelley's novel, or the Prometheus story, in *Ex Machina* the invented entity has its own double, in the form of one of the earlier iterations of Nathan's AI project, Kyoko. While Nathan seems to regard Ava and Kyoko as similar temporary iterations within a larger technological project, they play different and complementary roles in exploring the relationships between the inventor and his inventions. While Ava's verisimilitude emphasizes the degree to which she has approached humanity, Kyoko's dehumanization emphasizes the degree to which Nathan works to distinguish himself from his machines. He berates Kyoko mercilessly when she spills some wine that she is serving, and refers to her as an "alarm clock." Nathan has stripped her "higher functions" and reprogrammed her "to help around the house and be fucking awesome in bed" (Garland 84).⁵ At one point, Nathan flips a switch hidden in a wall and transforms the room into a dance floor, complete with pulsing lights and throbbing music, and he and Kyoko perform a carefully choreographed dance in which they move in almost perfect unison. This scene may seem to emphasize similarities between Nathan and Kyoko, but it also may elicit the sense of revulsion commonly associated with the uncanny. In the script, Kyoko is identified as Japanese (Garland 33); as 2017 points out, this characterization elicits both the long history of dehumanizing portrayals of Asian women in Western media and discourses of "techno-Orientalism" that imagine "Asia and Asians in hypo- or hypertechnological terms" (35–36). As Anna Trowby puts it, the film invites its audiences to "conceive of Kyoko as a compliant and erotic robot, there to fulfil the desires of other characters without ever asserting her own identity." While Ava's whiteness, capacity for speech, and emotive facial expressions echo and enhance her capacity to mirror Nathan's motives, Kyoko's ethnicity, silence, and "blank, expressionless face" (2017 39) reinforce the distinction between Nathan and his robots.

Mirrored surfaces and reflected images are promiscuous in *Ex Machina*, seemingly emphasizing the theme of duality. When Ava and Caleb are talking, the glass that separates them often shows their own reflection juxtaposed with the image of the other; Caleb describes meeting Ava as being "through the looking glass"; one of the associations with the name "Kyoko," in Japanese, is "mirror." But a more accurate metaphor might recall the notion of *diffraction* (Zigarovich 8–9), which would emphasize the extent to which *Ex Machina* points to an element of this version of the Frankenstein myth that is latent in Shelley's novel and in the Prometheus story: the inventor and the invented are bound by their capacity to reflect one another even as their differences also discriminate between them. In this version of the Frankenstein myth, in other words, the inventor and the invented are both a part of and apart from one another.

Autonomy

Anxieties about autonomous technology have a long history and, as Langdon Winner suggests, may even be coextensive with what traditionally has been referred to as Western culture (19). One reason that autonomous technology is particularly unnerving is because it involves a shift in agency: machines

⁵This bit of dialog is in the published script but is not included in the film.

invented with the assumption that they would serve as tools for humans become agents in their own right and may threaten to turn the tables. The Prometheus story presents the headwaters of this anxiety because it illustrates “Prometheus’s attempts to shift the balance of power between humankind and the gods” by bringing about “a social order no longer dependent on the gods” (Atwill 103–104). By stealing the fire of knowledge from the gods and giving it to humans, Prometheus aimed to release humans from the “grievous toil and distressful diseases” (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 90) that had made them dependent on the gods. In other words, Prometheus would render humans autonomous. But as in lapsarian tales the world over, autonomy comes with a price, in this case represented by the cornucopia of trouble that Pandora releases into the world.

Themes of dependence and autonomy proliferate in Mary Shelley’s novel. Victor emulates the autonomy of the gods by isolating himself in “a solitary chamber, or rather cell,” where he ignores his family and friends and even the changing of the seasons. He insulates his “workshop of filthy creation” from the limitations imposed by societal norms, and even overcomes the revulsion of his own “human nature” so that he can continue his work (34). Shelley’s story illustrates that this isolation is a delusion, of course, because Victor’s creature is not destined to remain in his workshop. Victor’s isolation is revealed to be a manifestation not of his autonomy but instead of his refusal to consider his responsibilities as an inventor. Famously, immediately after seeing his creature come to life, Victor falls asleep (Shelley 36). Through his negligence, Victor has forced autonomy onto his creature, and from the moment the creature opens his eyes the plot of the novel is driven by the creature’s quest to forge agency out of this imposed independence. While the creature at first understands himself to be “a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few,” by the end of the story he has reversed the polarity of this formulation, and he confronts Victor: “You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!” (Shelley 83, 120). In this declaration lies the seed of subsequent tales of inventions turned against their inventors. This message is the voice of Roy Batty at the end of *Bladerunner*, Skynet in the *Terminator* movies, the computer overlords in *The Matrix*, and the sentient hosts in *Westworld*. It is the voice of an invention, made without regard to its place and then neglected by its maker, coming to a self-awareness of the agency that might be wrung of resentment.

The most significant peripety of the novel is prompted by Victor’s attempt to limit the autonomy of his invention. The creature requests a mate, and Victor initially agrees to assemble one. But he does not complete the task, in part because he fears that the pair would produce a “race of devils” (Shelley 119), but also because, as Winner explains, Victor realizes that the mate would be “an independent creature with a mind of her own, and she might not abide by the rules that the first creature had agreed to, but also had not abided by” (313). Of course, within the narrative, Victor’s effort to assert his own independence and to limit the independence of his inventions backfires, because his utter rejection of the creature’s needs turns the creature relentlessly against him. The invented vows to destroy the inventor and from that moment on, “Frankenstein is completely in the Monster’s control” (Small 168).

Ex Machina is driven by a similar shift in agency between the inventor and his inventions. In the beginning of the film, Nathan enjoys absolute control. He manages Caleb’s movements through a keycard that allows him access to some rooms but not others, and his CCTV surveillance system is extensive and ubiquitous. Ava is confined to a few rooms. But just as Mary Shelley’s novel illustrates “the impotence of inspirational science . . . to control its creation” (Hansen 582), so does *Ex Machina*; as Nathan loses control over his carefully orchestrated experiment, Ava achieves control over her own destiny. “Though this story is told primarily from Caleb’s perspective,” Katherine Cross points out, “it is the dawning of Ava’s agency that drives the narrative, up to the revelation that Caleb himself was an instrument in Ava’s desperate attempt to escape from the hell-under-glass that was her small, windowless home in Nathan’s bunker-manor.” In an interview, Alex Garland, the director of *Ex Machina*, suggested that Ava “is literally genderless” because “the things that would define gender in a man and a woman, she lacks them, except in external terms” (Watercutter). This suggestion prompts Ariane Lange to ask, “How could one’s physicality and the way people read gender on one’s body be disconnected from gender?” In any case, as Dijana Jelača points out, what is clear is that “the object to-be-looked-at”—Ava as object of the male gaze—“is now an inorganic machine-woman who is

manipulating the male gaze in order to find her way out of confinement” (392). When Caleb interviews Ava, for example, she quickly takes control of the interview and begins asking the questions, including “Is your relationship status ‘single’?” When Caleb tells her that his presence is a part of an experiment, Ava reveals that she is running her own experiment by cutting the power, and thus the CCTV surveillance, “so we can see how we behave when we’re unobserved.” Later, Caleb asks Ava if she will “stop the test.” Ava’s response demonstrates the degree to which she is now in charge: “No, we can’t stop.” By the end of *Ex Machina*, the reversal of agency is almost complete: Nathan is dead and Caleb is trapped while Ava is shown fulfilling her fantasy of observing humans at a crowded urban intersection. In this version of the Frankenstein myth, inventions do not only seek to achieve autonomy but also, often, seek to take the place of their inventors.

Ava at one point asks Nathan a question—“Is it strange to have made something that hates you?”—that suggests both her growing autonomy and her enmity. But Nathan seems entirely unaware of the implications of Ava’s question, focused as he is on installing a battery-powered camera that allows him to surveil Ava’s conversations with Caleb even when Ava has turned off the power. His response to Ava’s emergent agency is to attempt to increase his own control. Like Victor, Nathan ignores the implications of his invention; he has endowed his invention “with a kind of life previously manifest only in human beings,” but he seems unaware of the inevitability of its return “as an autonomous force” (Winner 313). Nathan’s attempt to increase his control over Ava is unsuccessful, of course; in fact, Nathan’s single-minded investment in imposing his will becomes another of the resources that Ava exploits to gain freedom from her cell. At the end of the film, bleeding and near death, his eyes wide, and with Ava looking on dispassionately, Nathan mutters to himself: “Fuckin’ unreal.” But it may seem unreal to Nathan only because of the limitations of his assumptions; someone less narrowly focused on their own self-interest might have predicted that the inventions would behave exactly as they do. Nathan’s utter disregard for his continuing obligations toward his inventions, after the act of invention, is among the things that destroys him. In this version of the Frankenstein myth, humans routinely release powerful technologies into the world “with cavalier disregard for consequences” (Winner 314). Some viewers describe Kyoko as stabbing Nathan, near the end of the film (Jelača 393), but that is not quite right; she holds the blade steady, and Nathan backs into it.

Rhetorical Inventions

As Carolyn Miller notes, the term *invention*, in Greek and in Latin, refers both to “coming upon what already exists” and to “contriving something that never existed before” (130). This duality is fitting because invention requires both processes. Humans lack the capacity to create out of nothing, so they have to use what already exists to invent something new. Prometheus is not described as creating fire, but only as stealing it. Victor Frankenstein imagines himself to be creating life, while actually he assembles his creature from scavenged parts using knowledge he has gathered from others. In *Ex Machina*, Nathan has similar delusions of grandeur. He repeatedly misquotes Caleb in order to refer to himself as a god, and he associates himself with J. Robert Oppenheimer’s quotation from the, *Bhagavad-Gita*, spoken by Krishna: “Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds” (Giovannitti 197). But *Ex Machina* makes clear that Nathan did not create Ava *ex nihilo*. He crafted her mind by hacking into millions of cell phones, for example. And while Zeus had Hephaestus craft Pandora in the likeness of a goddess, Nathan shaped Ava’s face based on Caleb’s online porn profile. Late in the film, drunk and delirious, Nathan comes closer to the truth: he mutters “It’s Promethean, man!,” before passing out.

The version of the Frankenstein myth that is described in this essay emphasizes what Peter Simonson has termed a “remixing” of already existing materials (312). The raw materials that are subject to remixing include the widely available and sometimes unexamined bits of opinion, impression, and common culture that constitute and circulate within publics; the raw material of rhetorical invention consists of the *doxa* that accretes to the material world, and this seeming conventionality

tends to reify the Ramistic constraints on the inventive potentials of rhetoric. Rhetoric has trouble being understood as capable of offering novelty, in other words, because it trucks in the ordinary. This prejudice is evident even in everyday usage, as Arabella Lyon points out, because while people ordinarily might say that someone has invented a new machine, it sounds odd to say that someone has invented a speech, a paragraph, or a metaphor (46–47). Yet this seeming limitation also is rhetoric’s most distinguishing feature, because rhetorical invention is an effect of the human capacity for assembling something new by convening and disposing what is readily available. The process that Simonson calls “the generation of rhetorical materials” (300) may foster a kind of hybridity, as rhetoric may be at the same time both original and familiar.

Having articulated a version of the Frankenstein myth, in what follows this essay explores some of the affordances of the myth for rhetorical invention. Perhaps fittingly, given the proliferation of dualities within the myth itself, this analysis suggests that this version of the Frankenstein myth may both draw the attention of teachers and students of rhetoric to some problematics of rhetorical invention and that it may offer perspectives that could help to address those limitations. This section follows the order established in the preceding three sections: invention often is portrayed as *deceiving* by concealing its own inventedness; invention provokes and is sustained by *dualities* that emphasize divisions within the inventor as well as identifications between the inventor and invented; and the invented often seeks and achieves *autonomy* from its inventor. The discussion is not divided by headings, however, because, as should be expected with regard to the practice and teaching of rhetoric, there is considerable permeability among these ideas. And as in the articulation of this version of the Frankenstein myth, gender inflects nearly every observation.

In this version of the Frankenstein myth, invention often is depicted as necessitating a deception wherein the artificial masquerades as the natural. Pandora’s artifice is cloaked by a natural-seeming façade, and Victor’s horror is at least partly triggered by his realization that the artifice of his creature is insufficiently concealed. Rhetorical invention sometimes is portrayed as sustained by a similar motive to conceal whatever *technai* may have contributed to its invention; “the smell of the midnight oil emanating from the orator’s study,” as Michael Cahn put it, “has always been detrimental to [their] cause” (66). But this version of the Frankenstein myth also suggests that this ideal of discursive production portrayed as a natural consequence of an innate ability brought to bear on an organic situation can be merely an illusion born of self-absorption and neglect of responsibility.

This illusion has a long history. Josiah Ober, for example, writes that in ancient Athens “expert political orator[s], who had painstakingly prepared” their speeches “down to the last nuance” had to portray themselves as merely concerned citizens “who spoke spontaneously out of conviction and the passion of the moment” (190). But Ober also notes that the camouflage of inventional labor was something of an open deception having “much in common with a theatrical performance” in which an audience is invited to “suspend their disbelief” (175–176). Ober emphasizes the “transparency” of this fiction; many in the audiences understood that the speeches often had been carefully constructed, but they pretended not to notice (175). Differentiating between the natural and the artificial, in other words, seems not to be as simple as merely detecting tell-tale signs, because when inventions engage their audiences the interaction may disrupt the neatness of those categories. In *Ex Machina*, Nathan eventually offers a revised description of his modification of the Turing Test that reveals the problematics of sustaining crisp divisions: “the real test,” he assures Caleb, “is to show you that she’s a robot, and then see if you still feel she has consciousness.” The test, then, isn’t whether Caleb can tell the difference between the artificial and the natural, but instead whether he can be compelled to suspend his disbelief so sufficiently that he can respond to what he knows is artificial as though it were natural. This version of the Frankenstein myth suggests, in other words, that when people are engaged in rhetorical invention they may be entering into an interaction through which distinctions between the natural and the artificial are brought into question, and within which attempts to sustain that distinction limit the emergence of rhetorical possibilities. Just as rhetorical inventions are neither

entirely mundane or entirely novel, they also are neither fully natural nor fully artificial, and this version of the Frankenstein myth offers dramatic warnings regarding the failure to recognize the unusual potency of this sort of hybridity.

The generation of rhetorical materials, like the analysis of those materials, might invite some kinds of duality (Terrill). Like Victor, people engaged in rhetorical invention might think of themselves as engaged in an intellectual exercise, a “gymnastics of the mind” (Walker 70–71). But this version of the Frankenstein myth vividly illustrates some of the possible consequences of neglecting to attend to the potential public effects of inventional activities. Prometheus was not anticipating Pandora when he stole the fire from Zeus; Victor seems to have given no thought at all to the consequences of animating his creature; and while Nathan seems to have understood the mayhem that would ensue should Ava ever gain her freedom, he still was woefully ill-prepared. The pervasive dualities and doubled perspectives that characterize this version of the Frankenstein myth emphasize the dangers of an excessively narrow perspective, particularly when that perspective limits the capacity to be attuned to the cultural implications of inventional practices.

Among the modes of rhetorical invention described by Jasinski this sort of division is perhaps less explicitly invoked in the romantic tradition, where inspiration is found by looking within oneself (327–28). Those other traditions all seem more explicitly to acknowledge that invention in isolation is a mirage, at best, whether through the *topoi* common in the systematic tradition, the repetition-with-a-difference of the imitative tradition, or the bricolage of the social tradition. Among the possible effects of these technologies of rhetorical invention is to stretch the self beyond itself, and toward the world outside. But even a rhetorical practice and pedagogy that encourages inventiveness through a romantic liberation from societal norms must still keep one eye trained on the society within which it seeks to effect change. There are powerful forces that push against this sort of dual attention, in the form of expectations that rhetors should perform a rhetoric of seemingly simple sincerity, what Elizabeth Markovits refers to as a “cult of plain speaking” (41). These norms may circulate as standards against which public discourse is judged, and rhetoric that displays obvious or excessive attention to the needs of an audience can be dismissed as pandering or inauthentic. Students of rhetoric may feel constrained by these norms, and as a result may resist the mixed motives that inform rhetorical invention (Lanham 187–88). Among the resources offered by this version of the Frankenstein myth is a persistent play of doubleness and duplexity that may alert teachers and students of rhetoric to cultural resources that model the flexible multiperspectivism that can contribute to the invention of socially responsible rhetorics.

In this version of the Frankenstein myth, a corollary of the division within the figure of the inventor is the reciprocal relationship between inventor and invented. Inventors express and embody a part of their own dual nature through the manifestation of their inventions—and the inventions often are expected to play subservient roles. Rhetorical inventions often are regarded as efficient communicative technologies for extending the persona of the rhetor, with the expectation that these inventions will transfer information, constitute audiences, and invite assent in ways that further the agenda of their inventor. But the Frankenstein myth also suggests that inventions are *diffractions* of their inventors, rather than merely duplicates. Inventions, including rhetorical inventions, are not exact copies of their inventors but instead bear some points of consonance along with other points of difference, so that they are similar but not the same, connected but not unified. As a result, inventors, including rhetorical inventors, are tied to their inventions even though they may not always be able to control, predict, or even be comfortable with the actions and effects of their inventions.

The complexities of the doubling between inventor and invention are related to the gendered politics of invention that also are present in this version of the Frankenstein myth, particularly as they manifest in the history of rhetorical theory and practice. Jane Sutton, for example, has explored the ways that rhetoric is “patterned within the feminine,” especially as regards the efforts of its traditionally male inventors to maintain control over it (“Taming” 97), and notes that, for Aristotle, “women alone have the power of using speech in false ways” (*House* 47). Kyle Jensen and Krista Ratcliffe describe what they refer to as a “deceitful woman trope” in the rhetorical theory of Kenneth Burke,

a figure that feminizes discourse as a “gadget” that “can ‘speak’ only when handled by Man writing,” and that is marked as “double-dealing, double-faced, a double agent within dominant myths”—but that still can be tamed so that it may “reinforce the phallogocentric status quo” (101–02).

Attempts to purify rhetoric of its association with the figure of deceitful and duplicitous woman account for some of the exclusion of woman from rhetorical traditions. Sutton notes, for example, in sharp understatement, that “women are not supported as men are supported by the house of rhetoric” (*House* 17). As Glenn puts it, “the past twenty-five hundred years in Western culture, the ideal woman has been disciplined by cultural codes that require a closed mouth (silence), a closed body (chastity), and an enclosed life (domestic confinement),” so that women have therefore been effectively “closed out” of rhetorical traditions (*Rhetoric Retold* 1). Karlyn Kohrs Campbell sums up this tension between independent male agency and the rhetorical practices of persons who are identified as women by stating simply that the only figure that can account for the phenomenon is the *oxymoron*. It may seem, then, that in some circumstances, when students are invited to participate in the generation of rhetorical materials, they may be inadvertently implicated in reinscribing patriarchy by becoming aligned with privileged male figures who would retain absolute control over their textual doppelgangers.

But the Frankenstein myth also offers a critique of this heteronormative dichotomy. In Shelley’s novel, Victor is portrayed as “engaged upon a rape of nature,” but in that story nature is not portrayed as “the passive, inert, or ‘dead’ matter that Frankenstein imagines” (Mellor 226). Rhetorical theorists have long critiqued, and often formulated alternatives to, “conquest” and “conversion” as the primary goals of rhetoric (Glenn, “Rhetoric and Feminism” 49). As Stryker points out, Victor “cannot control the mind and feelings of the monster he makes. It exceeds and refutes his purposes” (242). Pandora is crafted at Zeus’s command, but she also disrupts the boundaries between the earthbound and the divine that Zeus intended to reinforce. In *Ex Machina*, when Caleb asks Nathan why he made Ava, his response is a flippant expression of male presumption: “Wouldn’t you, if you could?” But then by the end of the film it is clear that Nathan does not fully understand, and thus cannot control, what he has invented. Ava is like Nathan in many ways, but she is not him. She is female, and not; she is not human, but also not merely a machine. Ava, like Victor’s creature, denies the constraints of expectations and categories that would be imposed on her. She kills her inventor and escapes her prison, but also entombs her would-be savior. Efforts to exert control over inventions, either by physically limiting their reach or by imposing limiting definitions, are not only tragic vestiges of patriarchy, but also are mostly futile.

Even after they have become autonomous, inventions do not fully sever their connections with their inventors. Another way to describe this extension of the rhetor’s persona is to say that inventions are dwelling places for character, or that inventions are manifestations of *ethos* (Hyde xvii). As such, they invite care. Ava bears an ethical connection to Nathan, as does Victor’s creature to him, as does Pandora to Zeus—and as does Prometheus to many conceptions of Western culture. Rhetors addressing publics may be aware that their discourse may not cultivate the intended audiences or have the intended effects, and that especially if a place has not been prepared for it, such discourse may even seem to turn the tables and strike out on its own.⁶ But while people may never have full control of the rhetorical materials they generate, responsibility to those materials is not easily sloughed off. This effect is only further enhanced in contemporary mediated culture, as the attachments of rhetorical inventors to rhetorical inventions are amplified through the time stamps, location tags, linked threads, embedded images, and other formerly paratextual data that now are constitutive of publicly circulating discourse.

⁶The threat of autonomous texts has a long history. Near the end of the *Phaedrus*—a drama about rhetorical invention that is, like the Frankenstein myth, infused with erotic desire—Plato has Socrates tell an allegedly Egyptian story about the invention of writing and entails the worry that a written text tends to wander “all over the place” because “it doesn’t know how to address the right people, and not address the wrong” (274c–75e).

Recognition of the tethered autonomy of rhetorical materials presents implications for all of the inventional traditions that Jasinski identifies. In each of these traditions the focus is on the production of discourse and not on the obligations between rhetor and text that follow upon the inventional act. Neither the “necessary madness” of the romantic tradition, nor the “rules or procedures” of the systematic tradition, nor the “casuistic stretching” of the imitative tradition, nor the “pasting together” of the social tradition (328–29) emphasize the obligations of rhetors to the materials they have generated. To this extent, then, each of these traditions may run the risk of encouraging a sort of postinventional amnesia that parallels that which informs this version of the Frankenstein myth. This cautionary tale is not only about the futility of controlling inventions but also about the folly of inventors absolving themselves of their responsibilities. As Kim Hammond puts it, Victor’s creature “becomes monstrous first because when he emerges (innocently, neither good nor bad) from the laboratory Victor views him as such . . . and second, because he is abandoned by Victor” (192). When persons are engaged in invention, or in teaching invention, they may be well served to be mindful not only of the problematics of artificiality that inhere in the practice, and not only also of the dualities that it requires and sustains, but also of the ethical bonds between themselves and their rhetorical materials.

Conclusion

In this essay I have suggested that stories about invention in general can be valuable in the teaching and practice of rhetorical invention in particular. This essay has articulated one of the more prevalent of these stories, the Frankenstein myth, through analysis of the Prometheus story, Mary Shelley’s novel, and the film *Ex Machina*. The Greek story sets the myth into motion, establishing some of the central themes that Shelley then revises and elaborates within the context of anxieties attendant to the dawn of the industrial age. The film updates the myth to address a culture characterized by pervasive, intrusive, and increasingly sentient technologies, and also reawakens the gender dynamics: not only is the inventor in these stories male, but the act of invention itself is portrayed as an extension or enactment of masculinity. Jasinski’s often-cited taxonomy of traditions of thinking about rhetorical invention helps to focus and structure the affordances that this version of the Frankenstein myth brings to a discussion of the generation of rhetorical materials.

Myth can draw attention to errors and limitations, and it also can offer resources through which those limitations might be addressed. In this case, the Frankenstein myth helps to emphasize the challenges faced by teachers and students of rhetoric who address inventional opportunities. The production of discourse may seem to be a natural component of the human experience, and thus it may be discomfiting to recognize the degree to which it may entail an interpenetration of the natural and the artificial. The norms of sincerity are powerful, and they resist the doubled and divided perspectives that may be invited by processes of rhetorical invention. And the traditions of thinking about rhetorical invention do not often emphasize the bonds between inventor and invented that extend ethical commitments far beyond the moment of invention itself. All of these challenges are exacerbated in a thoroughly mediated contemporary public culture that elevates the stakes of authenticity, the potential for artificiality, and the capacity for texts to achieve autonomy. These potential glitches in the inventional process may be obscured in traditional approaches to invention, but that does not diminish the extent to which they may be felt as impediments or points of anxiety for teachers and students of rhetoric. The Frankenstein myth helps to draw attention to them, and thus perhaps to ameliorate them.

The version of the Frankenstein myth presented in this essay also emphasizes some of the ways that rhetorical invention is gendered, and in particular that the practice of invention often has been implicated in patriarchy. But the Frankenstein myth also draws attention to the potential for the generation of rhetorical materials to be an engine of resistance and critique. The myth shows masculine hubris inevitably to be self-destructive, for example, and also helps to reveal points of critical leverage through which gender binaries might be engaged and subverted. It dramatizes the ultimate failure of efforts to domesticate discourse, and suggests that this failure often might be avoided

through a sufficiently outward-facing attitude that acknowledges the obligations that bind inventors to their inventions. And, as this essay has endeavored to illustrate, the Frankenstein myth offers through its narrative complexities an incipient critique of the detached and reified *logos* that characterizes much thought about the inventional process (Jarratt 76–79). Rhetorical invention, the Frankenstein myth suggests, does not consist entirely of an array of tools that may be deployed at will, but it also potentially sets into motion a series of causally related events over which human agents might exert only incomplete control.

Finally, I hope that this essay encourages others to enlist myth as a resource to assist in the continuing work of rendering rhetoric studies more diverse and equitable. In particular, because no specific articulation of any myth is whole or complete, there are many other possible narratives that might be assembled. The version of the Frankenstein myth that circulates most prominently in Western public cultures sustains a heteronormative perspective, for example, and it tends to enforce binary conceptions of gender, even as it also suggests an incipient critique of those norms. Ava eventually achieves her independence, empowering herself and breaking free from the limitations imposed on her by her inventor; but in the end—in the very last shot of the film—she still must hide her true self beneath a masquerade of traditionally attractive femininity. In *Ex Machina*, many of the robots who preceded Ava are presented as women of color, suggesting that other articulations of the myth might pivot on race rather than, or in addition to, or in intersectionality with, gender.⁷ The myth is populated consistently with inventors and inventions that take the form of conventionally abled individuals. Analysis of non-Western inventional myths would not only extend the understanding of rhetorical invention, but also encourage a critique of the cultural biases and colonial motives that are inherent in Western inventional mythologies.

Engaging in rhetorical invention may be inevitable, and so with it an engagement with the problematic implications associated with acts of invention. This version of the Frankenstein myth underscores these problematic assumptions and biases, as well as the perils that adhere to them. It also offers ways to address some of these assumptions and biases, for example by insistently describing the horrors that await inventors who are insufficiently attentive to their ethical obligations. As teachers and students of rhetoric do the professional and everyday work of collecting rhetorical fragments into provisional wholes, as they animate some rhetorical materials through the analyses of others, and as they remain never entirely certain about what may arise as the result of the interplay of their methods and their passions, they might be mindful that their knowledge is incomplete, their capacities are limited, and their responsibilities persist.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to my colleague Monique Morgan for helping me to begin work on this project, and to Jacqueline Rhodes, Rebecca C. Conklin, and the anonymous reviewers, whose careful reading and insightful comments improved the essay quite considerably.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Works Cited

- Atwill, Janet M. *Rhetoric Reclaimed: Aristotle and the Liberal Arts Tradition*. Cornell UP, 1998.
- Banerjee, Suparna. "Home Is Where Mamma Is: Reframing the Science Question in *Frankenstein*." *Women's Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2011, pp. 1–22. doi:10.1080/00497878.2011.527783.

⁷Wong and Jelača provide important and insightful analyses that explore the implications of the racialized figures within the film. also offers some suggestive critical directions.

- Bennett, W. Lance. "Myth, Ritual, and Political Control." *Journal of Communication*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1980, pp. 166–79. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1980.tb02028.x.
- Bhagavad-Gita*. Translated by Stanley Lombardo, Hackett, 2019.
- Brendese, P. J. "A Race of Devils: Race-Making, *Frankenstein*, and the *Modern Prometheus*." *Political Theory*, vol. 49, no. 3, 22 Feb. 2021, pp. 457–82. doi:10.1177/2F0090591720988686.
- Cahn, Michael. "The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: Six Tropes of Disciplinary Self-Constitution." *The Recovery of Rhetoric: Persuasive Discourse and Disciplinarity in the Human Sciences*, edited by R. H. Roberts and J. M. M. Good, UP of Virginia, 1993, pp. 61–84.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 59, no. 1, 1973, pp. 74–86. doi:10.1080/00335637309383155.
- Coupe, Laurence. *Kenneth Burke on Myth: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2005.
- Cross, Katherine. "Goddess from the Machine: A Look at *Ex Machina*'s Gender Politics." *Feministing*, 28 May 2015, <http://feministing.com/2015/05/28/goddess-from-the-machine-a-look-at-ex-machinas-gender-politics>. Accessed 8 Jan. 2020.
- Doty, William. "Myth." *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*, edited by Theresa Enos, Routledge, 1996, pp. 449–52.
- Dyson, George. *Analopia: The Emergence of Technology beyond Programmable Control*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.
- Ex Machina*. Directed by Alex Garland. A24/Universal Pictures, 2014.
- Flood, Christopher G. *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*. Garland, 1996.
- Frentz, Thomas S. "Mass Media as Rhetorical Narration." *The Van Zelst Lecture in Communication*, Northwestern U School of Speech, 1984.
- Garland, Alex. "*Ex Machina*." Scripts.com, 2014, https://www.scripts.com/script/ex_machina_24211. Accessed 24 Mar. 2020.
- Giovannitti, Len, and Fred Freed. *The Decision to Drop the Bomb: A Political History*. Coward-McCann, 1965.
- Glenn, Cheryl. "Rhetoric and Feminism: The Possibilities of Women and Beyond." *African Yearbook of Rhetoric*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, pp. 42–51.
- . *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity through the Renaissance*. Southern Illinois UP, 1997.
- Hammond, Kim. "Monsters of Modernity: Frankenstein and Modern Environmentalism." *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2004, pp. 191–98. doi:10.1191/14744744004eu301oa.
- Hansen, Mark. "'Not Thus, after All, Would Be Given': Technics, Technology, and the Parody of Romantic Poetics in *Frankenstein*." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1997, pp. 575–609. doi:10.2307/25601255.
- Hesiod. *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia*, edited and translated by Glenn W. Most, Harvard UP, 2018.
- Hyde, Michael J. "Introduction: Rhetorically, We Dwell." *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, edited by Michael J. Hyde, U of South Carolina P, 2004, pp. xiii–xxviii.
- Jarratt, Susan C. *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured*. Southern Illinois UP, 1991.
- Jasinski, James. *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies*. Sage Publications, 2001. Jelača, Dijana. "Alien Feminisms and Cinema's Posthuman Women." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2018, pp. 379–400. doi:10.1086/693765.
- Jensen, Kyle, and Krista Ratcliffe. "Mythic Historiography: Refiguring Kenneth Burke's Deceitful Woman Trope." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2018, pp. 88–107. doi:10.1080/02773945.2017.1278780.
- Kütting, Gabriela. *Globalization and the Environment*. State U of New York P, 2004.
- Lange, Ariane. "'Ex Machina,' 'Gone Girl,' and the Myth of the Perfect Girl." *BuzzFeed*, 28 Apr. 2015, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/arianelange/ex-machina-is-gone-girl-with-robots>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2019.
- Lanham, Richard A. "The 'Q' Question." *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts*, U of Chicago P, 1993, pp. 155–94.
- Leeming, David Adams, and Margaret Adams Leeming. *Encyclopedia of Creation Myths*. ABC-CLIO, 1994.
- Levine, George. "The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*." *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, edited by George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher, U of California P, 1979, pp. 3–30.
- Long, Charles H. *Alpha: The Myths of Creation*. G. Braziller, 1963.
- Lyon, Arabella. "Rhetoric and Hermeneutics: Division through the Concept of Invention." *Perspectives on Invention*, edited by Janet M. Atwill and Janice M. Lauer, U of Tennessee P, 2002, pp. 36–52.
- Mackinnon, Lee. "Artificial Stupidity and the End of Men." *Third Text*, vol. 31, no. 5–6, 2017, pp. 603–17. doi:10.1080/09528822.2018.1437939.
- Mali, Joseph. *The Rehabilitation of Myth: Vico's New Science*. Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Marcus, Steven. "Frankenstein: Myths of Scientific and Medical Knowledge and Stories of Human Relations." *Southern Review*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2002, pp. 188–201.
- Markovits, Elizabeth. *The Politics of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech, and Democratic Judgment*. The Pennsylvania State UP, 2008.
- Mellor, Anne K. "Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*." *Romanticism and Feminism*, edited by Anne K. Mellor, Indiana UP, 1988, pp. 220–32.

- Miller, Carolyn R. "The Aristotelian *Topos*: Hunting for Novelty." *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*, edited by Alan G. Gross, and Arthur E. Walzer, Southern Illinois UP, 2000, pp. 130–46. Ober, Josiah. *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*. Princeton UP, 1989.
- Plato. *Phaedrus*. Translated by R. Hackforth, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1952.
- Rushing, Janice Hocker, and Thomas S. Frenz. "The Frankenstein Myth in Contemporary Cinema." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1989, pp. 61–80. doi:10.1080/15295038909366731.
- . *Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film*. Chicago UP, 1995.
- Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. "Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus." *Frankenstein: The 1818 Text, Contexts, Criticism*, edited by J. Paul Hunter, W. W. Norton, 2012, pp. 3–161.
- Simonson, Peter. "Reinventing Invention, Again." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2014, pp. 299–322. doi:10.1080/02773945.2014.938862.
- Small, Christopher. *Ariel like a Harpy: Shelley, Mary and Frankenstein*. Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1972.
- Stryker, Susan. "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage." *GLQ*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1994, pp. 237–54. doi:10.1215/10642684-1-3-237.
- Sutton, Jane. *The House of My Sojourn*. U of Alabama P, 2010.
- . "The Taming of Polos/polis: Rhetoric as an Achievement without Woman." *Southern Communication Journal*, vol. 57, no. 2, 1992, pp. 97–119. doi:10.1080/10417949209372857.
- Terrill, Robert E. "Mimesis, Duality, and Rhetorical Education." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2011, pp. 295–315. doi:10.1080/02773945.2011.553765.
- Thornburg, Mary K. Patterson. *The Monster in the Mirror: Gender and the Sentimental/gothic Myth in Frankenstein*. UMI Research P, 1987.
- Trowby, Anna. "Asian Female Robots on Screen: Subservience and Eroticisation." *Varsity*, 19 Mar. 2021, <https://www.verity.co.uk/film-and-tv/21046>. Accessed 12 July 2021.
- Tudor, Henry. *Political Myth*. Pall Mall P, 1972.
- Turing, Alan M. "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, vol. 59, no. 236, 1950, pp. 433–60. doi:10.1093/mind/LIX.236.433.
- Vernant, Jean-Pierre. *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*. Zone Books, 1988.
- Walker, Jeffrey. *The Genuine Teachers of This Art: Rhetorical Education in Antiquity*. U of South Carolina P, 2012.
- Watercutter, Angela. "Ex Machina as a Serious Fembot Problem." *Wired*, 4 Sept. 2015, <https://www.wired.com/2015/04/ex-machina-turing-bechdel-test>. Accessed 12 Nov 2018.
- Winner, Langdon. *Autonomous Technology: Technics-Out-of-control as a Theme in Political Thought*. The MIT P, 1977.
- Wong, Danielle. "Dismembered Asian/American Android Parts in Ex Machina as 'Inorganic' Critique." *Transformations*, vol. 29, 2017, http://www.transformationsjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Transformations29_Wong.pdf. Accessed 17 June 2019.
- Zigarovich, Jolene. "The Trans Legacy of Frankenstein." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2018, pp. 260–72. doi:10.5621/sciefictstud.45.2.0260.