



Reading *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* with Dr. Vivian Zuluaga Papp

The Last Man's Lionel Verney stares forlornly at us from the solitude of his cave in Naples, warning us of the dangers of complacency: "To survive is not enough, we must rebuild and reinvent ourselves." Haunting the murky perimeters of modern society since 1818, Shelley's much more well-known Monster laments: "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall be virtuous again." What can these two solitary humans teach us about what it means to be alive, to live, to be a person, or merely to just be? How do we navigate ever-evolving modes of existence, modes which blur the constantly shifting lines which tenuously separate humanity from technology? These are only a few of the questions posed in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Last Man* (1826) that remain unanswered. In this class we will map a chronological route through these two texts from 1818 to today. Shelley will have us rethinking our positions as human beings in a world where the giddy rate of technological advancement far exceeds our potential to maintain even the slightest semblance of balance.

Required Readings:

Frankenstein Or, The Modern Prometheus by Mary Shelley Annotated for Scientists, Engineers, and Creators of all Kinds (MIT Press) ISBN 9780262533287 (pdf is also available for purchase, if you prefer).

The Last Man by Mary Shelley (Oxford Edition) ISBN 978-0199552351

Selected critical essays will be provided to you sporadically throughout the course (as guided by the vigor and nature of our discussions).

Tentative Reading Schedule (to be read in advance of class meetings)

Tuesday, 2/11 *Frankenstein* Volumes 1-2

Tuesday, 2/25 *Frankenstein* Volume 3- end (plus selected essays tbd)

Tuesday, 3/11 *The Last Man* Chapters 1-14

Tuesday, 3/25 *The Last Man* Chapters 15-24

Tuesday, 4/11 *The Last Man* Chapters 24-end