FrankenZine: Voice, Copyright, and Women Authors

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Welcome!

This zine is about women authors, and the importance of the proper legal and cultural recognition of their voices, and their right to be acknowledged as the author of their creative works.

These are four women authors who have fought to keep their copyright, to be attributed as the author, and who have experienced gender and racial discrimination in having their voices heard equally.

Our voices and stories are very important, and so is having our name spoken and remembered with those stories.

"There is my hope and my expectation; yours are in this world; may they be fulfilled."

Contents

Mary Shelley and Frankenstein

An Icon of Culture and Copyright

More than 200 years after Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein,* it remains iconic, within literature, feminism and pop culture.

Thousands of authors and creators have been inspired by Mary and Frankenstein. Films, books, plays, songs, artworks, tattoos, TV shows, radio adaptations, fashion, pop culture and even our language have been influenced by Frankenstein (with things being "Franken" if they are monstrous).

Dr Frankenstein's monster has become part of our cultural consciousness, becoming a modern myth recognised around the world. The novel has been reimagined in the context of the US occupation in Iraq in Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad.* It has been beautifully reimagined in Winterson's *Frankissstein,* which explores AI, the transhuman future, and the experiences of transgender people.

The novel and Mary Shelley should also be included amongst the great landmarks of intellectual property, based on its enduring cultural and literary afterlife. Copyright and creativity owe a considerable debt to Mary Shelley; as without Frankenstein, the thousands of inspired cultural and creative works would not have existed.

"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."

Mary Shelley, 1831

Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world.

The Fight for Copyright Attribution

When it was first published in 1818, Frankenstein was published anonymously. Her husband, Percy, had written the preface, leading everyone to assume he had written the book. No one considered that it could have been Mary.

Gordon's (2015) biography of Mary Shelley and her mother beautifully articulates the inequity and irony of the situation. Continuing to this day, there have been many critical arguments made that Mary is not the author of Frankenstein, and instead the author was Percy.

These are mostly rooted in the fact that Percy edited her draft, contributing approximately 4,000 of the 72,000 word novel. This amount is very normal for editing. Gordon notes that the brilliant *The Great Gatsby* was far more heavily edited, and yet we do not see Fitzgerald questioned as the author of the work.

Indeed, when Mary edited her husband's poems, she contributed more edits than he had done for her work; however, no one has challenged Percy's authorship of these poems.

Mary republished the novel in 1831, having revised it. Percy had died in 1822, and so the authorship of the novel is even clearer: only Mary could have possibly written it.

When Mary's novel was republished in 1831, she was named as the author. Doubt that a young woman could have written such an influential and macabre novel persists to this day.

Mary's fight for her authorship and for her defiance of gender norms at the time remain part of her iconic feminist, literary and pop culture legacy.

The issue of attribution remains as crucial for authors today as it was in 1818 when Frankenstein was published, and the difficulty in Mary Shelley being attributed to the work emphasises the heightened difficulty that women authors face in being viewed as brilliant authors.

We have made a short-film, *Beloved,* that reimagines Mary Shelley's creation of Frankenstein. Please do watch it. Available at: https://vimeo.com/563605293

He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance.

Hannah Crafts

Hannah Crafts was the pen name of Hannah Bond, who wrote the bestselling *The Bondwoman's Narrative* in the late 1850s. Hannah was living as an enslaved person on a North Carolina plantation. The novel is autobiographical, closely following Hannah's own experiences as an enslaved person during this era, and the racial discrimination and injustices of the time.

She eventually escaped from the plantation, disguised as a man. She became a schoolteacher, living in a community of people who had escaped or been released from a life of enslavement. Her pen name was a tribute to a farmer, Horace Craft, who helped hide her as she escaped her enslavement.

It is believed to be the first novel written (not published) by an African -American woman, as well as the only known novel by an African-American woman who was a "fugitive", having escaped the enslavement.

Almost 150 years elapsed between Hannah writing her novel and it being published and read. The book was not published until 2002, after being bought at auction by Henry Louis Gates Jr.

. . . though my perishable body was at their disposal, my soul was beyond their reach.

Louisa May Allcott

Louisa May Allcott's *Little Women* was published in 1868 and remains a literary classic and feminist icon. The story of the four sisters, including the powerful Jo March, was semi-autobiographical, based on Allcott's life and family.

Since its publication, it has remained in print and continually influential. *Little Women* entered the public domain in 1923, and has inspired authors, filmmakers, and playwrights, particularly women, in the century since.

Her relationship with the copyright is well known; as she chose to accept, after guidance from her publisher, a far smaller book advance to retain the copyright. It was the right decision, and *Little Women* was a financial and literary success for Allcott.

She commented in her journal about this – that it was "an honest publisher and a lucky author, for the copyright made her fortune, and the 'dull book' was the first golden egg of the ugly duckling."

Greta Gerwig's recent film adaptation includes a scene with Jo March and her publisher, with Jo deciding to keep her copyright, echoing Alcott's own decision: "It seems like something I would want to own, no?"

I make so many beginnings there never will be an end...

"Every few weeks she would shut herself up in her room, put on her scribbling suit, and 'fall into a vortex', as she expressed it, writing away at her novel with all her heart and soul, for till that was finished she could find no peace. Her 'scribbling suit' consisted of a black woollen pinafore on which she could wipe her pen at will, and a cap of the same material, adorned with a cheerful red bow, into which she bundled her hair when the decks were cleared for action.

This cap was a beacon to the inquiring eyes of her family, who during these periods kept their distance, merely popping in their heads semi-occasionally to ask, with interest, "Does genius burn, Jo?" They did not always venture even to ask this question, but took an observation of the cap, and judged accordingly.

If this expressive article of dress was drawn low upon the forehead, it was a sign that hard work was going on, in exciting moments it was pushed rakishly askew, and when despair seized the author it was plucked wholly off, and cast upon the floor. At such times the intruder silently withdrew, and not until the red bow was seen gaily erect upon the gifted brow, did anyone dare address Jo."

Keep near the shore. It isn't safe in the middle.

Bernardine Evaristo

Bernardine Evaristo is one of the best and most celebrated contemporary British authors. She won the Booker Prize in 2019, sharing it with Margaret Atwood, for *Girl, Woman, Other* (Hamish Hamilton/ Penguin UK, May 2019). She was the first Black woman, and the first Black British person, to ever win the Booker Prize.

She has written 7 other novels, including *The Emperor's Babe*, and many other creative works.

The moving half-prose half-poetry in *Girl, Woman, Other* explores Black British heritage, with a number of characters who are predominantly women.

> *Ageing is nothing to be ashamed of*
>
> *Especially when the entire race is in it together*
>
> *Although sometimes it seems that she alone among her*
>
> *friends wants to celebrate getting older*
>
> *Because it's such a privilege to not die prematurely*

The multiplicity of experiences and faceted characters from different backgrounds explores a number of issues including race, gender, age and aging, politics , class, sexuality and love. At its heart

celebration of the fact that there is not one singular Black British experience, or Black woman experience.

Women authors continue to face issues relating to full and proper attribution of their works. This is more pronounced for women writers of colour.

When discussing the Booker Prize winners in 2019, Magaret Atwood was named, and Evaristo was referred to as “another author” by the BBC. Evaristo is a Black woman and Atwood is a white woman.

Attribution and being named therefore remains a core and fundamental right and desire, both socially / morally and legally. The right to attribution gifted to authors by copyright; and for many people this attribution is valued more than the economic rights attached to copyright.

“We need to see ourselves reflected in the society we're living in. The fact that I have to draw attention to the fact that we are pretty absent from literature is a real problem because I think a lot of people don't notice that.”

To leave a whisper of myself in the world, my ghost, a magna opera of words.

Further Reading

Bernardine Evaristo, *The Emperor's Babe* (Penguin, 2002)

Bernardine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other* (Hamish Hamilton/ Penguin UK, May 2019)

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Wordsworth Editions, 1992)

Hannah Crafts, ed. By Henry Louis Gates Jr, *The Bondwoman's Narrative*, (Grand Central Publishing, 2002)

Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, (Oxford University Press, 1994). See the Introduction to this edition for a brief discussion of her choosing to keep the copyright to her book.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

Mary Shelley, *Matilda*, (Penguin Classics, 2010)

See Project Gutenberg, for free digital copies of some of the books.

Greta Gerwig "*Little Women*" (2019)

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Charlotte Gordon, *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft & Mary Shelley* (Windmill Books, 2015)

Lisa Kröger and Melanie R. Anderson, *Monster, She Wrote: The Women Who Pioneered Horror & Speculative Fiction* (Quirk Books, 2019)

Taisia Kitaiskaia and Katy Horan, *Literary Witches: A Celebration of Magical Women Writers* (Seal, 2017)

Marion Talbot, "Glimpses of the Real Louisa May Alcott" [1938] *The New England Quarterly* 11(4), pp. 731-738

Ann Bartow, "Fair Use and the Fairer Sex: Gender, Feminism, and Copyrght Law" [2006] *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* 14 (3), pp. 551-584

Emily Chaloner, "A Story of Her Own: A Feminist Critique of Copyright Law" [2010] *Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society* 6(2), pp. 221- 255

Carys J. Craig, "Feminist Aesthetics and Copyright Law: Genius, Value, and Gendered Visions of the Creative Self" in Irene Calboli and Srividhya Ragavan (eds.), *Protecting and Promoting Diversity with Intellectual Property Law.* (Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Jeanette Winterson, *Frankissstein* (Jonathan Cape , 2019)

Ahmed Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (Oneworld Publications, 2018)

Rey Terciero and Bre Indigo, *Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy: A Graphic Novel: A Modern Retelling of Little Women* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019)