

Frankenstein's Legacy across Science, War, and Posthuman Identity

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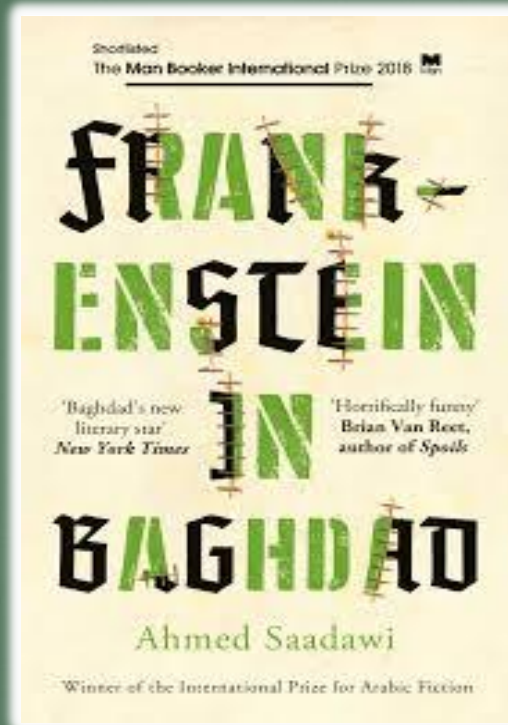


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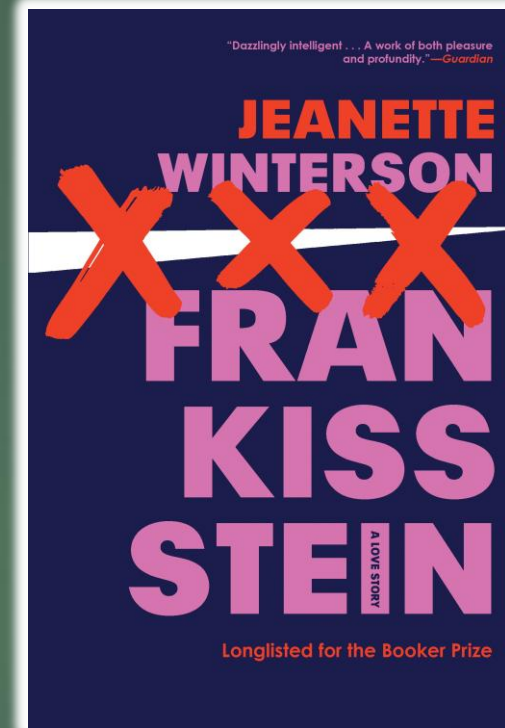
From Galvanism to Algorithms: The Mutable Body of Frankenstein



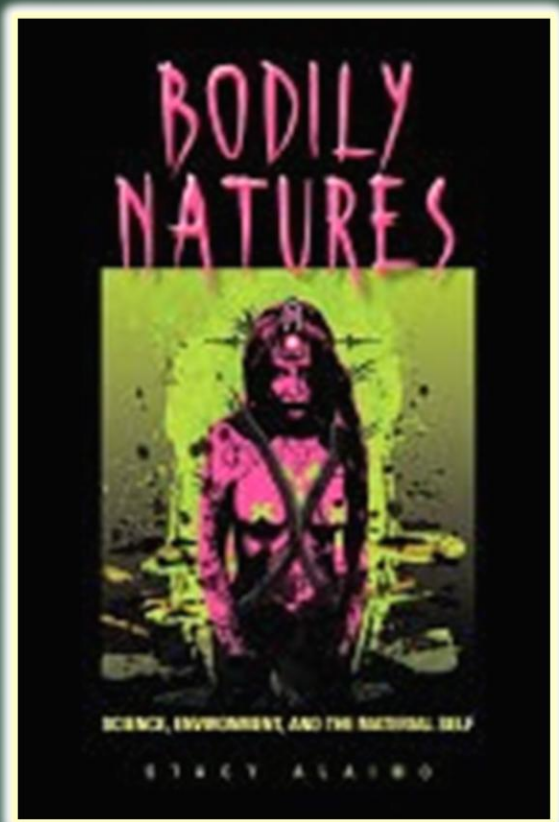
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus*
1818 → Science & creation



Ahmed Saadawi,
Frankenstein in Baghdad,
2003 → War & fragmentation



Jeanette Winterson,
Frankissstein: A Love Story
2019 → AI & instability



Stacy Alaimo (2010).
*Bodily Natures:
Science, Environment,
and the Material Self.*

Theoretical Lens — Transcorporeality

“Imagining human corporeality as transcorporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from “the environment.” (p. 2)

Frankenstein in Baghdad — Transcorporeality and the Composite Body

- ▶ Made up of disparate body parts and the soul of the hotel guard who had lost his life.

- material remains of bombings
- spiritual residue



- memory
- and political violence

- ▶ Flesh carries traces of different lives, identities, religions, ethnicities, and social classes.
- ▶ An assemblage of human material that has crossed bodily boundaries: transcorporeal circulation of matter between bodies.

Identity: Naming, Memory, and Recognition

He stood up immediately. So this was the command that the dead boy with the silver bangles in the cemetery in Najaf had talked about the night before. With her words the old woman had animated this extraordinary composite — made up of disparate body parts and the soul of the hotel guard who had lost his life. The old woman brought him out of anonymity with the name she gave him: Daniel. Daniel saw the old woman standing in the upstairs room that had collapsed. (p. 51)

Elishva opened up to Daniel about her conflict with her husband, Tadros, who buried an empty coffin for Danny against her wishes. Tadros, a junior clerk in the public transport department, went with some relatives, friends and acquaintances to the cemetery of the Assyrian Church of the East in eastern Baghdad and buried a coffin containing only some of Daniel's clothes and pieces of his broken guitar. They prayed for him, then laid a gravestone reading in Syriac and Arabic, 'Here lies Daniel.' (p. 59)

The Body and the Environment are not separate

Hadi went back home. He felt around on the floor of the courtyard for blood or bits of the body parts he knew he had held in his hands when he was cutting them up or stitching them together to get the body into a reasonably finished state. He couldn't find anything: the heavy rain that had fallen the day before had washed everything away. (p. 56)

- Blood seeps into the ground.
- Rain redistributes bodily traces.
- The courtyard absorbs violence.
- Nature erases evidence.

Violence becomes ecological: it spreads, diffuses, evaporates, moves into infrastructure, climate, soil.

Tomorrow the One Who Has No Name, he mused, might become He Who Has No Identity, and then He Who Has No Body, and then He Who Can't Be Caught and Thrown in Jail. (the astrologer. (p.107)

If identity dissolves, the body follows. “He Who Has No Body” suggests:

- no fixed material form
- no stable biological unity
- no single, accountable organism




If there is no stable body, where does responsibility sit?

Frankenstein and the Techno-Body

- AI, cryonics, uploaded consciousness.
- Victor Stein's vision of transcending mortality.
- Body becomes optional / replaceable.
- Identity/consciousness detached from flesh.

The body is no longer fragmented—it is obsolete.





“Of course, says Victor, what I would prefer is to be able to upload myself, that is, upload my consciousness, to a substrate not made of meat. At present, though, that is not an effective way to prolong life because the operation to scan and copy the contents of my brain will kill me.

Isn't content also context? I ask him. Your experiences, your circumstances, the time you live in? Consciousness isn't free floating; it's enmeshed .

That is true, he says, but you know, I believe that the modern diaspora – that so many of us find ourselves somewhere else, migrants of some kind – global, multicultural, less rooted, less dependent on our immediate history of family or country to shape ourselves – all of that is preparing us for a looser and freer understanding of ourselves as content whose context can change.” (p.86)

“We're all global travellers, aren't we? We're all somewhere else. Did you know that there are thirty-six Manchesters in the world? Thirty-one of them in the USA?” (p.84)

“My name is Victor Stein. I shook his hand. Ry Shelley.

He held on to my hand: Have we met? And the strange, split-second other-world answer is yes.

No, I say.” (p.83)

- Ry Shelley / Victor Stein — transformed reappearances, not copies.
- They have met before — two centuries ago, at the Villa Diodati.
- Ry's transgender identity deepens this: the self is not fixed to one biological form.
- Identity migrates across time, bodies, and contexts.
- The double narrative does not just describe mobile identity — it enacts it.



Ethics and Responsibility in the Post-human Age

- ▶ If consciousness can be copied — what survives the transfer?
- ▶ If AI develops autonomy — who is accountable?
- ▶ Technology is not external to the body; it shapes embodiment and identity.
- ▶ Responsibility does not dissolve when agency is distributed —
it becomes more urgent.



Conclusions

- ▶ Shelley → body assembled, singular → responsibility belongs to the creator.
- ▶ Saadawi → body composite, collective → responsibility shared and unresolved.
- ▶ Winterson → body optional, obsolete → responsibility distributed, urgent.



Each era produces new bodies — and new ethical questions.

The more the body dissolves, the harder responsibility becomes.

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Thank you for your attention!