

Research Overview

My research is interdisciplinary by design and fuses literary studies, media theory, and critical making. I have collected degrees in seemingly disparate areas that orbit English studies. With an undergraduate degree in the literature of the long 19th Century and two master's degrees in creative writing and medical humanities, respectively, I chose NC State University's (NCSU) PhD program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media because it offered me the chance to merge my past areas of inquiry and apply my ideas to cutting-edge technologies and texts. My predominant area of expertise is electronic literature with an emphasis on born-digital creative texts. I employ monster theory to examine the fields of electronic literature and digital humanities—two fields that remain on the fringes of literary studies due in large part to their sheer size and lack of definition. Much of my research revolves around Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and I am particularly interested in the metaphorical power of Frankenstein's creature in digital contexts. Digital texts—and the machines we write them on—are piecemeal wholes made by suturing individual, interchangeable parts together, and all of us are Victors toiling to make them work. On a big-picture level, I am interested in the ways technology is harnessed to generate and house literary texts and how scholarly and popular audiences conceptualize authorship—ideas that are particularly poignant and relevant now that technological “authors” like the infamous ChatGPT are backed by huge amounts of money and growing in sophistication. The definitions of “writing” and “creativity” are still expanding, and it is a very exciting time to study the historical and contemporary overlaps between the two.

Past and Published Research

The interdisciplinary methods and substantive focus of my PhD dissertation established the scope of my past and published research. My dissertation argues for the use of monster theory as a catalyst for navigating and analyzing the interstices between digital humanities and electronic literature. In it, I examined digital re-mediations of Frankenstein's monster using a methodology I call Interactive Close Reading, which inspects the interplay between the visual, literary, and user-experience components of a given artifact. Interactive Close Reading can be applied to many types of texts, be they analog or digital (or, in the coolest cases, simultaneously analog *and* digital), and it takes all forms of writing as multimodal. I published an expanded analysis of my dissertation chapter on Shelley Jackson's hypertext novel, *Patchwork Girl*, as my first peer-reviewed research publication in the journal *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia* in July of this year. A handful of prominent electronic literature researchers declared hypertext fiction “dead” at the turn of the century, but my article counters that *Patchwork Girl*—a hypertext novel that is routinely resurrected by scholars—proves otherwise. I then execute an Interactive Close Reading of *Patchwork Girl* to demonstrate the novel's relevance in relation to contemporary intersectional feminist theory coming from digital humanities scholars. *Patchwork Girl* is a prime example of the type of literary artifact whose digital components are inseparably intertwined with its literary nature. My article highlights the interdisciplinary nature of my research, and its contribution to digital humanities and electronic literature have been recognized in my receipt of a 2021–2023 HASTAC Scholar fellowship from the Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory and a 2023–24 Early Career

Research & Creative Fellowship from the Electronic Literature Organization. Publishing in *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia* has allowed me to establish Interactive Close Reading as a method for studying and writing about digital texts, and my current research employs it liberally.

Current Work / Research

Another piece of my dissertation is captured in an in-progress research article I am leading with my collaborators (Dr. David Rieder and Dr. Kelsey Dufresne) from NC State University. Our article, titled “Creative Destruction: A Pedagogical Process with the FrankenProject,” is under tier-two revision at *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. In this webtext, we theorize FrankenProject, a touch-based physical computing project we built during the pandemic that is discussed in my dissertation, and we package pieces of the creation process for pedagogical replication. Along the way, we demonstrate how experience-based learning, which is so often non-linear in nature, echoes the themes and tensions of *Frankenstein* and emphasizes an interdisciplinary and multimodal pedagogical approach and method to reconsider and reevaluate literature through critical and digital means. In not so many large words, we show how learning happens when scholars create digital and/or physical artifacts of many kinds and how evoking the patchwork nature of Frankenstein’s creature facilitates the creation and analysis of those artifacts. This work centers my investment in critical making within interdisciplinary study as a means to expand the impact of digital humanities and generate new forms of praxis within English and writing studies.

My current active research is substantively geared around video games. I am building on James O’Sullivan’s 2019 monograph, *Towards a Digital Poetics: Electronic Literature and Literary Games*, by advocating for video games to be considered literary texts and continuing to apply my Interactive Close Reading method to those games. Bringing video games into the purview of literary studies is proving to be a substantial and, therefore, longer-term project (see future research, below), but I have a lively pipeline of in-progress articles that implement my methodology as their principal form of analysis. I am collaborating with Dr. Matthew Jungsuk Howard of Loyola University Chicago’s School of Communication on several articles that examine Ubisoft’s *Assassin’s Creed* video game franchise. We have a book chapter and an article under consideration at *Race/Gender/Class/Media* (Routledge, 2026) and *The Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*. Both pieces revolve around Asian representation in the game *Assassin’s Creed: Shadows* that launches next month. In addition to Ubisoft’s official game specifications, the Internet is already replete with pre-released playthrough videos and online discourse, so the first of these articles—“Nobody’s Samurai: Turbulent Representation in *Assassin’s Creed: Shadows*”—performs an Interactive Close Reading on playthrough videos of *Shadows* to demonstrate the pedagogical power of my method, and the second article—“A Two-Edged Sword: Yasuke’s Contestation within the Ubisoft’s Genealogical Contexts”—enacts a historical aesthetic analysis of the *Assassin’s Creed* franchise to examine the subaltern protagonists of *Shadows* in relation to main and supporting characters that appear in the thirteen games that preceded it. In case you’re not familiar, the two protagonists in *Shadows* are a Black samurai and an Asian shinobi woman, so the game offers a one-two punch that counters what Roopika Risam calls the exclusionary universal subject (meaning white male protagonists and participants) that still

dominates digital humanities spaces. This research sets the stage for me and Dr. Howard to continue investigating representation in the *Assassin's Creed* franchise, and we are drafting a third in-progress article to further broaden our scope to include Triple-A games (video games with large budgets, high production value, and artistic risk-taking, to name a few classifications) more generally. Looking forward, I hope to continue my momentum in this area, as indie games are of huge interest to me due to the diverse artistic and cultural content found therein (plus, my OSU students love them).

I am also independently working on a few projects that view video games not only as literary texts generally but as Gothic literary texts specifically while using Interactive Close Reading. Of particular interest to me are the “boss-level” castles that appear across Nintendo franchises like Super Mario and The Legend of Zelda. I will be presenting a paper titled “Big, Scary Castle in the Sky: Gothic Hypervisibility in Nintendo’s *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*” at the MLA convention in January 2025—a presentation that I will deliver while playing the game in real-time—and I am preparing an article for the inaugural issue of *American Gothic Studies* whose working title is “The Monster Mash: Bowser’s Castle and the Remediation of Gothic Fiction.” Within these projects, I am also experimenting with looping in elements of medical humanities research to solidify Interactive Close Reading as a refined and recognized pedagogical method. Sara Wasson has done some foundational work in the intersections between Gothic studies and medical humanities, and modern technology has allowed video game developers to construct more and more realistic and horrific monsters, many of which can be traced back to *Frankenstein*. (If you haven’t just eaten lunch, a Google search for ‘Godrick the Grafted’ from Elden Ring [2022] will illustrate this point perfectly.) I can see inroads to be made by considering the death and/or defeat of video game monsters in relation to player agency, and I am excited to see how that mashup evolves in my future work.

Proposal for Future Research Plan as a Faculty Member

For my first large project, I plan to revise and expand my dissertation into a monograph. I am keen to flesh out my ideas regarding how Frankenstein’s monster acts as an efficacious trope for facilitating interdisciplinary scholarship amid the messy interstices between academic fields (including, but not limited to electronic literature and digital humanities). I aim to expand on my in-progress work around the FrankenProject (under review at *Kairos*) by applying it to writing studies with a specific emphasis on how the writer/text relationship mirrors the Victor/creature relationship in *Frankenstein*. I believe this is an excellent way to “sell” students on revision practices in academic writing courses—a process I am still working to optimize after a decade of teaching revision. As an example of praxis on this front, I have my English 2367.08 students print the penultimate draft of their term paper and literally cut it into paragraph-sized chunks, after which they trade paper piles with a peer to see how well that person can reconstitute the creature to fit together the same way it did when it was whole. Among other things, this helps students understand how well the pieces of their essay fit together and which ones need to be recalibrated before the whole essay can come alive for its readers. I am preparing to explore the pedagogical implications of this idea in an academic article on revision and peer-review, and I’m learning to integrate in-class data collection into upcoming courses in service of that undertaking.

I also plan to further the budding conversation surrounding the conceptualization of video games as literary texts intrinsically worthy of academic evaluation. Video games are perhaps the most predominant form of storytelling in contemporary digital media—certainly the case if we consider popular media from a financial standpoint—and they are both literally and figuratively multifaceted. Players come up against myriad, simultaneous sensory inputs and outputs (visual, haptic, aural, etc.) in the games themselves, and they actively participate in the cultural zeitgeist that is greatly influenced by the gaming industry. I am interested in the cultural significance of video games, as evidenced by my current work looking into Asian representation in video games, but cultural analysis will fall short if not tethered to the in-game experience. I recognize that not every video game is going to rise to literary status, so I would argue that instead of waiting for video games to get “up to par” in terms of literary quality, scholars should consider video game components as trade-offs between the literary and the ludic and take time to consider in detail how the literary functions of digital artifacts are housed in and among a series of other multimodal contexts and thereby push the boundaries of what can be considered literary. I have encountered multiple points of friction and many threads to pull by asking “What overlap exists between video games and notions of the literary?”, which I take to mean that mine is a research question that runs deep. The game is afoot; or, if you and Mary Shelley will forgive me, perhaps the game is a foot.