



The Centre for Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature at the University of Wrocław in cooperation with Erasmus Mundus International Master: Children's Literature, Media, and Cultural Entrepreneurship has the honor to invite you to the 33rd lecture in the series "International Voices in Children's Literature Studies"

**Prof. Rick Gooding**

## ***Frankenstein, Astro Boy, and the Genealogy of the Narrative of Posthuman Adolescence***



**DATE:** 13 January 2026

**TIME:** 19.00 (CET)

**VENUE:** MS Teams

If you are interested in taking part in the lecture, please register [here](#)



By the 1990s, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) had emerged as a foundational narrative of posthuman identity. One offspring of Shelley's novel, Osamu Tezuka's "The Birth of Astro Boy" (1975), refines this posthuman origin story in ways that are particularly compelling for young readers. By tracing the robot child's origins to a fatal car crash, Tezuka ties Astro Boy's identity to the automobile, a powerful emblem of independence among adolescents and an equally powerful site of anxiety for their parents. While Tezuka's tale does little to explore the fraught relationship between young people and cars, the narrative addresses children's misgivings about parental expectations, setting in motion questions of consent that apply equally to the unemancipated minor and the artificial being whose status has yet to be codified into law. Although Peter Dickinson's *Eva* (1988) is the first YA novel use a car crash to explore these concerns from the perspective of a teen cyborg, it is two decades before another generation of texts—Mary E. Pearson's *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* (2008) and Robin Wasserman's *Frozen* (2008/2011)—constructs the young survivor's subjectivity in the computational terms that reflect the phenomenological, social, and legal implications of integrating humans with intelligent machines. In this talk I trace the trajectory of the Frankenstein creation narrative from Tezuka's work through Dickinson's to Pearson's and Wasserman's, with an emphasis on the evolving appeal of the non-survivable car crash as a thought experiment about the implications of imposing posthuman subjectivity on non-consenting teens.

**Rick Gooding** is an Associate Professor of Teaching in the Department of English Language and Literatures at the University of British Columbia, where he also works in the Master of Arts in Children's Literature and runs the Vancouver International Summer School in Children's Literature. His research focuses on posthumanism in young adult literature. He has published research in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *Children's Literature in Education*, and *International Research in Children's Literature*.