

# Mary to lead the replacement of women and

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Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' (1831) is a novel that explores the life of a young scientist and the effects of science, watching him create a living being in a scientific experiment.

The theme of science is central to this novel as we watch the drastic consequences that follow misusing it. Shelley uses the misuse of science as blasphemous, acting against the word of God and trying to play him, also, it is used to warn the reader of the need for women and is used to question the standards of the time, through using the misuse of science to lead the replacement of women. Lastly, despite the fact she uses the misuse of science to lead the replacement of women and also presents the sin behind it, drawing comparisons between Victor and God, ultimately Shelley portrays the misuse of science as lacking in power, it is nothing compared to the strength and power of nature. Shelley presents the misuse of science as sinful and acting against the word of God, this is immediately clear as it states in the Bible only God has the power to take away and give life. Victor Frankenstein encroaches upon this and, had he been alive during this period, his practices would have been considered blasphemous; Frankenstein's intentions were good, his motive being to "banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death" but even during this century the story of his creation remains entirely evil.

The plot of 'Frankenstein' focuses on the ramifications of playing God, seen through the repercussions that follow the creation of his 'monster'. As soon as his creature is 'born', in the sense that he is filled with life, Frankenstein falls asleep and is haunted with a dream, he is horrified at the sight of his beloved Elizabeth morphing into the "corpse of my dead mother". This is the

first of many consequences – to a number of Christians today IVF treatment is considered unnatural and playing God, and, at the time the book was written it is apparent that Victor's work was blasphemous and he had attempted to equate himself with God; in doing this he has destabilised nature and perverted the natural order of life, the dream of his lover being transformed into his deceased mother is the first symbol of his hubris. It is clear that Shelley is using the misuse of science to present the idea of sin as she was surrounded by sin and blasphemy in her own life, firstly William Lawrence, Shelley's doctor, faced allegations of blasphemy, and, more importantly, Percy Bysshe Shelley (her own husband) was expelled from Oxford university because of his pamphlet 'The necessity of Atheism'.

Furthermore, arguably the death of Victor Frankenstein is the ultimate repercussion, from the 16th century to the mid-19th century, blasphemy against Christianity was held as an offence against common law in England, as well as this, in the Bible blasphemy is a sin that is punishable by capital punishment, usually through hanging or stoning as justified by the words of Leviticus 24: 13-16. Also, perhaps the extravagant amount of death that follows is not the creature revenging the failures of Victor Frankenstein as a parent and guardian but is actually due to the natural balance of the world and nature having been tampered with, and, God's method of restoring balance is taking life elsewhere. Overall, Shelley presents the misuse of science as sinful and acting against the word of God, this is poignant and leaves a resounding effect on the reader as they watch Frankenstein reap the consequences. The misuse of science is also presented to lead the replacement of the female. The lack of importance that women have in this

entire novel is evident and the hubris within denies the natural order and implies there is no need for women. Having science and retaining control over it allows for Victor Frankenstein to usurp the laws of natural procreation and therefore the traditional role of women. During the 19th century women were greatly considered to be the head of the house and nothing more than that, without the need for women to procreate it would've meant there is no place for them.

The female characters in Frankenstein are directly linked to Victorian ideals of women as familial care-givers; Elizabeth, Frankenstein's lover and cousin is described as "docile and good tempered" as well as having "loveliness surpassing the beauty of her childish years", she is immediately conveyed as a model Victorian woman whose sole concern and duty is to tend to her husband. Equally, after the death of Frankenstein's mother he states Elizabeth "was continually endeavouring to contribute to the happiness of others, entirely forgetful of herself.", the use of 'entirely' here perfectly denotes the role of women in this novel, Elizabeth forgets herself, much like Frankenstein has forgotten the role of females, conveying the effects of the misuse of science. Moreover, Victor is arranged to be married to Elizabeth, but, he only speaks of her beauty and never imagines her in a sexual manner, further enforcing the idea that science has replaced females in this novel.

When Victor dreams of Elizabeth, upon going to kiss her, she turns into the corpse of his dead mother - the transformation of young beauty into a corpse may symbolise the death of women, not only has women's sexuality been stripped of them but their role within society has been too, the <https://assignbuster.com/mary-to-lead-the-replacement-of-women-and/>

traumatic effect that this dream has on Victor is the effect a world without women has on society. Also, Victor cannot fulfil the role of a mother to the creature, he can't even fulfil the role of a father, proving the negative effects of attempting to replace women; this is clear as the creature massacres a great deal of people, yet, momentarily softens at a picture of Frankenstein's mother in William's locker, explaining his malign desires as he is deprived of a motherly figure. Overall, Shelley cleverly uses the misuse of science to present the replacement of the female and the negative connotations of this, provoking her reader to question the standards of the time and causing them to realise the worth of women. Shelley also presents the misuse of science as lacking in power, it is nothing compared to the strength and power of nature. This is clear as the creature, a product of Victor Frankenstein - a man who is obsessed with the unnatural, and, who ultimately goes against the will of God and breaks down beliefs about the natural world - turns to nature.

Upon being abandoned by his creator he is cast out into nature, he speaks of a time when filled with misery " a gentle light stole over the heavens and gave me a sensation of pleasure", the effect nature has on him is profound and effective, the way in which he talks is pure and he appreciates God's creation, although not one himself. He then goes on to say " the only object that I could distinguish was the moon and I fixed my eyes on that with great pleasure", this idea of ' pleasure' and how he has found it in nature is repeated twice in the same paragraph, emphasising the power nature has. Not only this, but, nature becomes a parent to the creature, as a witness to Victor's hubris and abandonment it, in a sense, adopts the creature.

Nature oversees the development and growth of the creature, as it learns valuable lessons such as the dangers of fire, when he first sees a flame he is “ overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it.”, however he gets too close and “ In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain.”, he learns through his surroundings and through touch, much like an infant. Although Frankenstein created him through unnatural methods, the way in which he learns and behaves is natural, proving, again, the power that nature has over science.

Moreover, although there are parallels between the creature and Victor Frankenstein, when Frankenstein reflects (which is rare) he is selfish and blames others rather than himself, whereas, when the creature ‘ reflects’ it looks to scenes of nature, it first sees its flaws in a pool of water. The power of nature evidently exceeds the powers and effects of science. At the end of the novel, the Monster hints that he will end his life by committing suicide on a pyre (a funeral bonfire), this is quite smart, his ashes will return to the Earth and give back to nature, which is what gave to him, if he had wanted a burial, he would’ve been giving back to Frankenstein as his limbs would still be accessible, this way he ends Victor’s process of experiments, his body cannot be experimented with as he will become ash. To conclude, Shelley presents the misuse of science as sinful and acting against the word of God, she does this with poignancy and leaves a resounding effect on the reader as they watch Frankenstein reap the consequences of blasphemy. In addition to this, through presenting the replacement of the female, by presenting Victor Frankenstein as usurping the laws of natural procreation and traditional role of women Shelley has used authorial intrusion to prove the worth of women.

Finally, Shelley also presented the misuse of science as lacking in power, as it is nothing compared to the strength and power of nature as described throughout the novel.