

Frankenstein's colonialism essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* sits in the collective conscious as the ultimate scary story; the seminal text on what the Western monster manifests itself as. When analyzing the complex relationship between the monster and Frankenstein, and together the effect of sexuality, a lesser said, more engrained message comes forth, which involves Shelley's investigation of the fears of her era. The monster is created as the ultimate incarnation of Otherness, where he is seen as so far different from "us" that our own identity is formed in reference to the monster.

Victor's identity is formed in a similar way, as the monster symbolizes everything that Victor tries to not be, but at the same time is a manifestation of all that Victor represents. Shelley reveals this dynamic characterization through scenes that involve sex and death. In the end, the two themes of omnipotence and procreation are tied together as Frankenstein's ultimate desire, while the monster represents not only a manifestation of those wants, but an opposing symbol of the projection of society's fears and beliefs regarding sexuality.

Frankenstein remains isolated from his family for months while creating his monster. Having finished his creation, Victor dreams that he is kissing his true love, Elizabeth, but as he kisses her she turns into the dead corpse of his mother. He awakens to the sight of his monster staring at him, framing Frankenstein as an object of desire. "He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me." (59) This fixed gaze that the monster has on Frankenstein parallels the very gaze in Victor's dream, during his first and only sexual contact with Elizabeth.

Although bringing up the recurring theme of domestic love, his dream reveals less about a repressed desire of love for his mother, than an inability to accept the domesticating aspects of a nurturer. Essentially he creates a mirror image of himself, but the major difference is the monster's ability to subvert the culture which would otherwise force Victor into a father and husband role. Frankenstein through this scene shows his narcissistic view of his creation. " A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me.

No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. " (55) Frankenstein places himself so highly on his own scale of importance, that it becomes clear his creation is very much a reflection of his own wishes to be able to procreate without a woman, and in the case of the monster, creation without life. This projection of desire ultimately ties the theme of sexuality with death. At the same time, the monster serves to kill every connection Victor has to a domestic life.

In many ways, it as if the monster " frees" him from this societal responsibility that he is not prepared for. His creation, mirroring Frankenstein, cleans up what he fears of kinship. The monster, having cause damage, promises nonviolence in exchange for a mate, revealing another side of sexuality. Frankenstein changes his mind to create a mate after thinking, "[S]he might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate, and delight, for it own sake, in murder and wretchedness... and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for when it came before his eyes in the female form? (170)

Frankenstein's deeper fear of women is displayed in his reasoning that the female form inherently is or has the potential to be more evil. "[Y]et one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children. " (170) Additionally, Frankenstein's desire for biological control surfaces, in his fear of allowing two monsters to have this power. In other words, Frankenstein could reason with multiple monsters, despite the potential destruction, as long as he is the only one that can create them.

At the same time, the monster seems to be completely naive to love between him and his female equal. " You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. " (146) The monster simply sees what society has said male and female relationships are, and this is his attempt to copy that. In this representation, society's predominant ideology of sex is revealed. The monster frames the mate in terms of his possession, as he uses " we" when discussing her. Frankenstein's obsession over reproductive control is reflected in what the monster hopes his mate to be.

The monster almost robotic tone mirrors and request is mirrored by Frankenstein, when he is speaking about Elizabeth. "[She] alone had the power to draw me from these fits; her gentle voice would soothe me when transported by passion, and inspire me with human feelings. " (194) His comment is almost monstrous, saying that she gives him human feelings, amidst his fits of passion. Ironically similar passionate feelings are called unnatural and monstrous by Frankenstein himself, in talking about the monster's murderous ways.

Frankenstein's deliberations surrounding the creation of the female monster further connect procreation to danger, and show his fears regarding other races and the role of colonization. Frankenstein fears that the two monsters could create a new race which would "inhabit the deserts of the new world... and a race of devils would be propagated upon earth." (170) The irrational fears of an endlessly spreading race of people, common in the time of the novel, arise from Frankenstein's worries. His comment connects the monsters back to the ultimate figure of otherness.

Frankenstein, much like a colonist, accepts the race as long as he is in control of it. The totality of their taking over could threaten all people. "Who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror." (171-2) Frankenstein sees his own omnipotence, and his own racial power threatened by the idea that another race could be free to procreate. Therefore the monster is not solely a mirror of Frankenstein's desires, but also a blank slate for which society's fears can be projected onto and then played out through the actions of the monster.

The twining of Frankenstein and the monster continues as the monster retaliates and kills Elizabeth, as he promised, on their wedding night. Just as Frankenstein becomes fed up and destroys the monster's companion, the monster kills Victor's love, Elizabeth. The killing finalizes the duality of the two characters in the sense that they are both chasing the same thing; each other and a love that does not exist. Frankenstein is naturally extremely upset, shouting "Great God! Why did I not then expire!

Why am I here to relate the destruction of the best hope, and the purest creature of earth? " (199) Great contrast between this death scene and the monster's mate's death, are drawn in order to underscore both the doubling of the characters, and Frankenstein's fears surrounding race. His main focus is that the monster killed the most pure human in existence, and not on any sadness of not getting to spend the rest of his life with his love. This blurs the line and begs the question of where Frankenstein is actually coming from in his love.

On one hand it seems legitimate, but at the same time he seems to be only doing it for familial security, and his own self sees it as a threatening aspect of him losing control over himself. Frankenstein and the monster very much bear resemblance in terms of their mates, in that that they both seem utterly confused about their own misplaced sexuality. Frankenstein's reasoning for returning to his homeland and wedding Elizabeth essentially comes about as a necessity to protect his family, not out of love.

Yet one duty remained to me, the recollection of which finally triumphed over my selfish despair. It was necessary that I should return without delay to Geneva, there to watch over the lives of those I so fondly loved. " (187) His realization comes after his father convinces him that his relationship with Elizabeth is integral to the preservation of the homogeneity of the family. Their border-line incestuous relationship, "[she] became the inmate of my parents' house-my more than sister," (37) only underscores the deep desire to preserve family love, and nothing more.

For the monster, he feels that the necessary emotions he needs rest in a female companion, without any real idea that this is the case. In this way the monster is a manifestation of Frankenstein's mind, for even Victor has no real concept of what his love will bring him. In fact, his marriage ultimately brings further death upon him and his family. Frankenstein's fears of the monster's ability to procreate only manifest themselves when he denies the monster that ability.

He puts the blame on the monster, but his own decisions and pursuit of knowledge causes the deaths in his family. Ultimately, in his quest to ensure his own omnipotence and ability to create life, he has destroyed all life that is dearest to him. Frankenstein and society's fears of domesticity, and decreasing male power, are projected onto the actions of Victor and the monster. The monster, on the other hand, comes to slightly different conclusion, but no doubt the two characters mirror each other in their misguided views about what their sexuality with a mate is.

Colonization sought to extend control over other races, but immediately Europeans saw that this control was far too much. Replicating this process, Frankenstein must intervene to assert his authority, in order to maintain his desires while suppressing those of his creation. Although the paternalistic and colonialist language forms the underlying text of the book, there is no doubt that Shelley uses such language as a critique for the modern period of industrialization that her society is experiencing.