

Violence, Politics and Sexuality in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

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Abstract: *A common theme emerges as the novel moves from worries about personal relationships to distress over more significant social issues, from Walton and Victor Frankenstein to the idea that humanity may be in danger of extinction. The relationships and language in Shelley's book highlight how problematic nineteenth-century discussions of race and family were. There is a problematic relationship between sexuality and procreation at play in both the domestic and international arenas. Four relational trajectories—familial, homosocial, sexual, and racial—are identified by incorporating allusions to modern criticism of Frankenstein, indicating that Shelley was acutely aware of the social and political tensions surrounding these issues. Anyone seeking knowledge is bound to come across sex at some point. When sex was forbidden in the early nineteenth century, fiction writers developed a taste for the unknown. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein has become a standard bearer for the Gothic genre due to its inclusion of the abnormal and slightly supernatural. Victor Frankenstein makes a fatal mistake in his attempt to do God's work. He deserts Adam, who returns to plague and destroy his life.*

Keywords: Sexuality, Self - representations, Superhuman, Relationship, Homosexuality

1. Introduction

Frankenstein begins with a brief account of his idyllic childhood, told through the framed account of a Captain Walton, who meets Frankenstein while pursuing his monster across the frozen northern sea. At the university in Ingolstadt, Frankenstein starts his grand experiment by creating his terrifying creation. A year after panicking and abandoning the monster, Frankenstein discovers that his brother, William, has been murdered. Frankenstein is certain that his monster is the murderer after he meets it in the mountains outside of Geneva. The monster narrates his life story in another framed narrative layer, including his unfortunate birth, how he learned language and knowledge from the deserving but poor De Lacey family, and how he came to reject humanity's goodness.

The monster offers a truce in return for Frankenstein's help in producing a female partner for the monster. About halfway through the project, Frankenstein has a change of heart and destroys the new creature. The monster, filled with rage, murders Henry Clerval, Frankenstein's dear friend, and declares war on everything he values. Frankenstein continues his plans to wed Elizabeth, his de facto foster sister, following the death of Clerval. Frankenstein swears to find the monster and exact his vengeance after he kills Elizabeth on the night of their wedding. Walton wraps up the tale with his description of Frankenstein's demise. The monster stands over Frankenstein's corpse when Walton gets back to his cabin. Broken-hearted, the monster says goodbye to Frankenstein and swears to take his life.

Shelley's text is filled with endless variations on the human condition, but one noteworthy absence is sex. Although Elizabeth, the foster sister he was raised by, and Frankenstein are engaged, we hardly ever see them together, and when we do, their relationship is characterised more by sibling love than by the passion and commitment of a couple

engaged to marriage. Frankenstein is exceptionally cold and sterile. His unequivocal rejection of everything sexual is indicative of the prevailing mindset at the time. On the other hand, sexuality and sex are purposefully left out of Frankenstein's story, which only serves to emphasise their presence. In the background of Shelley's writing, sex is included among the unimaginable horrors. Frankenstein's creation is most notable for having human instincts from birth, including sexuality. When it comes to his longing for a partner, Frankenstein's monster displays more pronounced human desires than Frankenstein.

Many interpretations and reimagining of Shelley's original story have focused on the relationship between Frankenstein and his monster, and it has taken many different forms.

According to Rigby, sex is a "privileged site of 'truth,' " which we intentionally exclude from our self-representations, thus allowing it to permeate even more into our lives. Frankenstein is, above all, a magnificent representation of the era in which it was written. It was dangerous, in Rigby's opinion, to be open about sex in the early nineteenth century, especially gay sex. Moreover, Foucault suggests that sexual behaviour deemed abnormal is "more subject to the demand for truth"; the text's omission of any mention of sex highlights its secrecy, pushing it even further ahead of the reader's consciousness.

Nick Dear's book *Frankenstein: A Study in Politics, Heterosexual Love and Violence*

Frankenstein's narrative repeatedly alludes to his quest to uncover the mysteries of nature, characterising himself as someone who is "always having been imbued with a fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature." Comparing scientist Frankenstein's relentless pursuit of knowledge to rape makes sense, as rape is primarily connected to the exercise of power and the forced disclosure of a person's

most private secrets—their body secrets. Frankenstein "pursued nature to her hiding - places, " revealing secrets that had been kept hidden and manipulating them to suit his needs. Frankenstein's rape of nature follows a similar path to classical literature.

Like the Roman myth of Lucretia or Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, this first violent act sets off a series of devastating events. Not only does Frankenstein's transgression led to his own death by undermining nature's sovereignty, but it also brings misfortune upon everyone around him.

Using this interpretation, playwright Nick Dear has crafted a brief, violent dramatic retelling of Shelley's original text from the viewpoint of Frankenstein's monster, referred to as the Creature. Dear's script refers to the creature as such throughout. But throughout Shelley's work, the Creature is called by a number of names, including "thing, " "daemon, " "fiend, " and "wretch, " among others. The play starts with the awakening of the Creature and ends with Frankenstein's irrational hunt for his creation. The Creature tells the story mainly through its eyes, which changes Shelley's original story.

Though only through the narration of their consequences—the Creature's stay with the De Lacey family, the killings of William and Elizabeth—many of Shelley's story's events are performed in front of the audience. The encounter between the Beast and Elizabeth, in which the Beast rapes and kills her, is the most famous scene. The culmination of the Creature's own fall from grace is represented by this event. We see as the Creature's moral compass is constructed from nothing and then further reduced. This code is based on the Creature's conception of love. Dear forms a tragically idealistic, almost naive, picture of love and partnership through watching the De Lacey family in his universe, which consists of an elderly man and a married couple.

The Creature's belief that love has the power to mend all wounds is not surprising. He first becomes acquainted with the De Lacey's when he witnesses Agatha and Felix in awe of one of the Creature's covert missions:

Agatha We stay together through good times and bad, never giving up on one another, and amazing things occur!¹³

To the Creature, this idyllic glimpse into rural life represents the height and essence of companionship, yet it presents a terribly incomplete picture of the human experience. Dear's interpretation states that the Creature befriends the elderly De Lacey and learns the principles of humanity, philosophy, and literature from him. The Creature is enthralled with love and the pursuit of it. Says De Lacey, "Yes!" A decent man is worthy of it. You are a good man. Whoever you are, you will be loved by someone. " This concept is comparable to the platitudes offered to young children; as the creature grows, we can observe remnants of De Lacey's watered - down lessons in the Creature's impetuous, defiantly infantile behaviour.

The Creature threatens Victor's family with more damage unless Victor makes the decision to create a female

counterpart for him to mate with. This is an example of the Creature's oversimplified view of human interaction in action: in addition to thinking that love will mend his damaged relationship with society, the Creature also thinks that his threat will be sufficient to achieve his goals. Asking why the Creature wants a mate, Victor challenges the Creature's faulty reasoning. The Creature answers, "Because I'm lonely!" All animals have a partner. I just ask that love be able to exist. " The Creature's fundamental battle to be accepted as a human is strengthened by this encounter. The Creature shares human instincts, wanting more than he has, and loving and being lustful. Like many others, he elevates the idea of love and women to a level beyond his grasp, protecting it from both genuine humanity and destruction. The Creature's dream, in which he encounters an anonymous woman who enchants and captivates him, is the first instance of this proclivity. In this sequence, the woman is merely a shell; the only one who speaks is the Creature. The creature wants someone to adore and revere; this is what love is to him.

The Creature has an unsettlingly nice chat with Elizabeth before she is raped. Since it's the first time the creature has used his newfound powers to control and hurt someone else, their first conversation feels natural to the creature. From the beginning, the Creature presents himself as precisely what Elizabeth wants him to be. He allows her to touch him, shattering the physical barrier that has remained in place throughout the text. Elizabeth's hand signals that a violation is about to occur. The Creature takes advantage of Victor's coldness and inaccessibility, which he is well aware of. He asks Elizabeth:

Creature Isn't he coming to bed?

Elizabeth He must learn that he has to take responsibility for his actions, and that—

Creature Surely, he desires you? On your wedding night?

The question accomplishes exactly what the creature wants it to, and it is far too personal. It demonstrates that he is more perceptive, sensitive, and human than Victor. He seizes control of Elizabeth and the discussion. The Creature gives Elizabeth the attention she has been lacking by using his knowledge of Victor to sabotage their relationship. He takes advantage of her kindness and better nature:

Creature. . . I want a friend! That's all!

Elizabeth (tentatively) I'll be your friend. If you'll let me.

Creature Will you?

Elizabeth If you need help, then. . . let's see what we can do.

The playwright's direction, as well as the line punctuation, demonstrate that the Creature is in a different space than Elizabeth. He is in command, and she is giving him the answers he expects. Elizabeth is well aware that what the Creature seeks is more than just a friend, but she still offers herself. It's possible Elizabeth sees sex in the same way the Creature sees love—something it's she lacks, something that, once obtained, will change her entire world.

Unfortunately, it does. The last step in Elizabeth's dehumanisation is the rape. In the Creature's match against Victor, she is reduced to a mere pawn. For a moment, Victor

just stands there, in awe of the evil that his creation is capable of. That is when it becomes evident that neither man views her as a person, much less an equal. Rather, she is merely an additional participant in their dispute. After killing her, the Monster exclaims, "Now I am a man, although he does not truly become a man until he betrays a woman's integrity and confidence during their brief encounter.

Being openly gay was dangerous in the early nineteenth century. This tension, in Rigby's opinion, feeds into Gothic fiction's fixation on the unknown. The ultimate forbidden activity is gay sex, and Shelley's writing eloquently captures the conflict between the natural and the artificial. Victor Frankenstein creates the unnatural and violates natural laws, which also leads to the acceptance of sexuality and forbidden sex.

At the time, fear and anxiety surrounding sex were common (almost thematic) in Shelley's writing. The reader is caught up in the conflict between home, or the natural, and science, or the unnatural, while travelling to and from Geneva. Frankenstein knows full well what he has done. His heedless quest for dominance over nature has resulted in the commission of a second Original Sin. This realization's gravity makes him physically sick and paralysed with fear.

One of the most fundamental and prevalent fears in literature is evoked by this invasion of bodily boundaries: the fear of rape. This undercurrent was transformed by Nick Dear into Elizabeth's story in his adaptation, but it can also be understood as a part of Frankenstein's tale by Rigby. Frankenstein is afraid of natural laws that will punish him for breaking them, in addition to physical harm. Over time, Frankenstein's crime seeps into every part of his life. The monster unleashes the terror that had been confined to his Ingolstadt room when it kills William. Frankenstein's loved ones will suffer as a result of the monster's deliberate abandonment as retribution for his carelessness. Frankenstein fears vengeance most of all, for his accomplishment in creating the monster as well as his own greed and arrogance in doing so. The uncontrollable desire of Frankenstein is similar to the desire for another man in that both are forbidden and face the swift and terrible retribution that homosexuals believed they deserved in Shelley's day.

Not only are the secrets of science kept here, but also the secrets of sex and sexuality. Frankenstein's fear of sex appears to be more persistent than his anxiety upon seeing the monster. Given his advanced age, it is logical to presume that Frankenstein has never engaged in sexual relations, particularly with his fiancée Elizabeth. Frankenstein seems to steer clear of sexual activity entirely in favour of studying. The pursuit of wealth and power by Frankenstein is incompatible with having a family and having sex. He makes the decision to seek power, and as a result, he creates a being who is fully separate from the female body. Elizabeth and sex are made unnecessary, frivolous, and demeaning by Frankenstein. Frankenstein's sexual anxiety, in Rigby's opinion, is a kind of "homosexual panic" typical of Gothic literature.³⁰ Frankenstein views sex as a terrifying experience because he can never safely admit his curiosity

or even the fact that the male body can be used as a sexual object.

2. Conclusion

The way we currently view sex both informs and is informed by these depictions of sex and rape. Because homosexual sex in the arts is often hidden, it makes for great material for fan fiction, which gives readers access to information that is difficult to find in even modern literature. Nick Dear, on the other hand, uses the gendered nature of rape to tell the story of Frankenstein's Creature, who is desperate to become a man, while writing for a broad readership. The stigma that still surrounds gay rape and sex is reflected in the mainstream distribution of Nick Dear's adaptation and the marginal status of homoerotic fan - fiction. The National Theatre of London presents scenes of heterosexual rape, but the monster of homosexuality still haunts men's minds. The secretive and taboo character of homosexual relations is still imprisoned in the Foucaultian paradox: its erasure from our consciousness has turned it into an obsession. Readers can now explore forbidden representations thanks to the rise of fan fiction. When these subversive stories are told and witnessed, we can face and transcend our fears surrounding sex and its enigma.

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