A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

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The story's themes are focused on the social and cultural aspects of society during Shelley's life. One such example is the movement away from the intellectually confining Enlightenment. A majority of the characters in the novel reflect the struggle against societal control. The monster for instance, is an outcast from society and the readers are able to understand why it occasionally resorted to violent means throughout its life.

Nature and science seem to be opposing forces during this time period and are important themes shaping the novel. During the early nineteenth century, human standards in society were associated with the natural sciences. As a result, any deviations from the human standard were considered unacceptable. Even though the monster develops language skills, emotion, and consciousness, he is perceived as unnatural and strange by other people in society because he does not fit any ideal.

During the early days of the monster's life, it fails to grasp what it really means to be human. As he mentions to his creator in a conversation, "I admired virtue and good feelings and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers, but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows". The monster is conflicted with uncontrollable human desires. He idealizes the emotions and interactions of the cottagers yet is unsure of his place among them.

Frankenstein's monster's desire to be accepted and is apparent when he speaks further of his feelings towards the cottagers. "The more I saw of them, the greater became my desire to claim their protection and kindness; my heart yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures; to see their sweet looks directed towards me with affection was the utmost limit of my ambition". The monster further states "I required kindness and sympathy; but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of it". It believes that it's not capable and even worthy of both emotional and psychological control or capable of existing in harmony with the rest of humankind.

Considering that the creature lives outside the bounds of civilized society, and thus lacks the attributes of the common citizen to help ease the thought and perceived conception of God, it becomes clear that Shelley may be trying to relate the idea that only through society and interaction with others can a human being grapple with the enormity of God.

Before the 1970's, a majority of the criticism about Frankenstein focused on Shelley's life and the story behind the novel's authorship. However, as the novel gained more attention, assessments started to focus on its narrative and characters as a reflection of the author. This sudden change was brought about by the emergence of feminist theory in the 1970's and 1980's- a theory that began to shift the public's attention towards the exceptional work of female writers.

Critics have emphasized the work's lack of dominant female characters but have also examined its attention to the idea of the Romantic artist. The romantic period was characterized by movement away from the ideas and techniques of the literary period that preceded it, which were

more scientific and rational in nature. The romantics believed that a better version of human beings could be created through individual and collective visual imagination and would consequently help us lead a congruent life together in society.

Mary Shelley was a contemporary of the romantic poets. Although some parts of the story might question this argument, Mary Shelley was deeply influenced by the romantics, and a number of characteristics of romanticism can be identified in this novel. Frankenstein is viewed as a romantic character to the extent that he reflected the romantic writers' emphasis on a new way of seeing the world.

From the novel's opening, the importance of the reader getting a sense of physical place is established by situating the text within a particular environment, the qualities of which will both mirror and contradict the inner states of the main characters. Victor notes that the landscape of the Orkneys and that of his native country are quite distinct. His description of the Orkneys is cold, barren, gray, and rough.

In contrast, he recalls Switzerland as colorful and lively. He describes the Swiss hills in true Romanticism form as covered with verdant vines and the landscape as teeming with blue lakes that reflect the brilliant blue sky.

The final comparison that he draws is between the winds of each place. In Switzerland, the winds are "but…the play of a lively infant".

Shelley uses dialogue to give the reader insights into the thoughts of every character. Also evident are characteristics of gothic horror, including violent mysterious events and a decaying society. According to critics, Frankenstein revolutionized the genres of gothic literature, science fiction, and horror stories, and elevated the status of the Romantic artist. Written by Shelley when she was only 19 years old, the story offers artistic flare, originality, and a maturity beyond Shelley's age. In the last few decades, her work reached a new status in critical evaluation and still remains an undisputed fictional masterpiece.

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