



Monster's Humanity in Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

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This paper intends to explore Monster and Monstrosity in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein will deal with a few elements of one of the best-selling books ever written by a woman, the novel Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus (first published 1818) by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851). Firstly, the paper will deal with the definition of the word monster as well as the concept of a monster and who exactly represents the monster in the novel Frankenstein. It will try to depict the monster as the result of one man's work that cannot find love so it spreads evil. However, the paper will also emphasise that the word monster not only refers to the product of Victor Frankenstein's work but also to Victor himself. The study will also show the influence of the development in the field of science in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Secondly, another point that will be discussed in the paper is the meaning of the words monstrous and monstrosity. The aim of this study is to define what kind of monstrosity is represented by the characters in Mary Shelley's novel, as well how their role is put forward in the novel.

Although both of the above-mentioned words are mostly connected with negative attributes of people and things, the paper will also shed a positive light on Mary Shelley's style of writing. In regard to the aims of the paper, it will deal with the techniques used by Mary Shelley in her design of the main characters. It is important to point out that the novel Frankenstein is considered to be written in the Gothic novel style. The novel certainly uses the features of Gothic writing that are full of danger, threat, sadness, unusual locations, such as churchyard, and dealings with corpses and coffins that will also reanalyzed. However, the definitions provided by different authors will invalidate such a single-sided argument. Furthermore, the paper will refer to the area of science and its acceptance by society at that time as well as the author's own life experiences. Another feature in the novel that cannot be overlooked is the matter of love and the monster's longing for love expressed throughout the story that will be one of the desired goals of this study. In connection with the monster, the study will reveal why love is so important for him as well as what the lack of love can cause in a general sense.

The paper will try to interpret a collection of ideas about what Mary Shelley wanted to express in her novel when using the monster as the main character as well as what the reasons were behind the monster's behaviour. In particular, this paper will try to ascertain if the story was merely a subject of fiction or if it was predominantly based on real events of that time. Above all, it will attempt to show that a seemingly simple monster story can be more than a fairy tale: it can be considered to provide evidence regarding human relationships and principles. Finally, the paper will directly cite Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and those works which will be relevant for the intended study, such as some more recent secondary sources on monsters, monstrosities and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, her life and work, providing information about science, medicine and the habits of society, which will be summarised and evaluated throughout this paper.

Monsters

The aim of this part of the paper is to define the word monster and provide an overview of definitions by different authors in different periods. It will also focus on the features that will be in connection with the novel Frankenstein. According to Merriam Webster's Dictionary the meaning of the word monster consists of three explanations. Firstly, it refers to "a strange or horrible imaginary creature," secondly, it says that "something is extremely or unusually large," and thirdly, it mentions "a powerful person or thing that cannot be controlled and causes many problems." In this point of view, the monster is determined to shock and draw attention with its body at first sight. As suggested in Dana Bizuleanu's (2015) essay "The Monster's Myth: From Ideology to Herta Müller's Imaginary", "the myth of the monster has been constantly reformulated over centuries, especially due to causes leading to the emergence and perception of what is monstrous" (p. 209). Monsters have attracted and fascinated people's minds of both children and adults for centuries and have become the leading characters in many fairy tales, ballads as well as horror stories. The books about dragons have been read to children, followed by "Poled nice" at schools and ended with films about Frankenstein and Dracula.

Monstrosity

This part of the paper will focus on some aspects of the words monstrosity and monstrous but it will also introduce several authors' definitions and ideas about what a monstrosity is. The most important factor, that has to be mentioned, is that monsters like Frankenstein's monster are given some character features that make them different from human beings and that have to be described as features of monstrosity. The monsters like Victor's monster possess supernatural forces, however, they include some elements of horror and terror that make them monstrous as well. According to Merriam Webster's Dictionary, the word monstrosity defines "a malformation of a plant or animal, something deviating from the normal, the quality or state of being, an object of great and often frightening size, force, or complexity," and finally "an excessively bad or shocking example." The on-line dictionary explains the word monstrous as "extremely or unusually large, very wrong" and also "very ugly, cruel, or vicious." In accordance to these definitions, Merriam Webster's classification fits the description of the monster that is designed to be the target of this paper perfectly. As an example, Frankenstein's monster incorporates all the points of the definition; he comes to the world as a result of his creator's experiment, deformed, made of bones, with enormous strength as well as a huge frame and killing its creator's family members and friends. A detailed analysis of this will follow in another part of the paper.

Alexa Wright's work *Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual Culture*, published in 2013, refers to the word monstrosity as to a "visual phenomenon" (p. 48) in a cultural and historical context. The author offers an explanation that the human body represents society and that there has been an instant modification of the body by society. To understand the "deviant or monstrous bodies" (p. 48), it is highly significant then to understand the "dynamic between body and society" (p. 48). She distinguishes between a "normal" (p. 48) human body as a "certainty and order in society" (p. 48), and a monster's body "which is disproportionate, or out of place" (p. 48). In her opinion, "the body of the monster visibly manifests troubling boundary confusion in the form of excess, deficit or bizarre and illegal combinations" (p. 48).

Frankenstein

It has been a general consensus that the history of the novel Frankenstein dates back to 1816, when a group of representatives of the literary world, namely Lord Byron, poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Polidori and Mary Godwin, spent some time together in Geneva. To entertain themselves, they found interest in reading ghost stories. Susan Tyler Hitchcock summarizes in her book *Frankenstein: A Cultural History* published in 2007 the atmosphere of the summer in Geneva: "Poetry and science, Gothic horror and reanimation [...] tingled in Geneva air that summer of 1816" (p. 34). To challenge

the atmosphere among the writers , Byron suggested that everybody could compose their own ghost story , as the author claims . As a result of that invitation , Mary Shelley's Frankenstein came to light and has become one of the most well-known novels all over the world.

The Conception of the Monster

The following chapter will try to analyze the concept of the main leading power of the story, namely of Victor Frankenstein's monster, from Mary Shelley's and Victor Frankenstein's point of view . The first thing to mention is that throughout the story, as well as this paper, the narration has been about a nameless monster. The fact the monster does not have a proper name is personally connected with Mary Shelley's name, as Robert Olorenshaw (1994) claims. The author states that the name Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley was a compilation of several parts of other people's names and in reality Mary did not have her own family name. Olorenshaw (1994) compares this situation to that of the monster that was created of different parts of other bodies; both of them are a composition of other identities. (p. 169)

The Monster's Monstrosity

This chapter of the paper will employ a few features to demonstrate and give some evidence about the most important subject matter of monstrosity. The novel detects characters that can be regarded as monstrous in connection to their behaviour, but the most significant representative of the word monstrosity is namely the monster itself since it, in particular, attracts the reader's attention with its stature. Mr. Walton describes his first encounters with Victor Frankenstein who achingly searches for someone that "fled"(Shelley, 2012, p. 17) from him. Victor talks about someone who is supposed to be a "daemon" (Shelley, 2012, p. 18). From the moment this sentence was uttered, the reader has to accept the fact the figure is a representative of evil and will include all the negative features typical of such a character in many of the narratives. Both of them, Mr. Walton and Victor Frankenstein, express their fear and attitude while labeling the monster a "being" (Shelley, 2012, p. 15) and a "daemon"(Shelley, 2012, p. 18) and the reader feels that when following the lines of Mr Walton's letters to his sister . Although Victor calls the monster a 'daemon' , he knows that there is nothing demonic in connection with the structure of his monster; the creature "is not literally a paid-up and fork-carrying member of that order" (p. 41), as Baldick (1987) mentions.

The Monster's Humanity

This chapter of the theses will argue that the monster's humanity is manifested through his longing for love. The novel begins with a very poetic citation about love according to Victor's opinion, who thinks the highly appreciated love is when people "love strongly" (Shelley, p. 24). However, regarding the love of the monster, the paper will deal with desperate love, seeking for love, the absence of love as well as the inability to love, instead of fulfilled feelings. When children come into world, it is mostly because they are products of love and love is the first feeling they experience by their parents, who take care of them, worry about them and protect them against the wiles of the world. Parental love does not only mean to bring children to material luxury, however, to show their children friendliness, to support them as well as to understand them. This most essential but also inexpensive emotion is removed from the monster's life . From the very beginning, the monster is excluded from family life, he does not even experience a single-parent family; he lacks a mother and his father is reverting his eyes when seeing a creature in front of him , instead of a child of his infernal effort. In other words, the first emotions that the monster unluckily encounters are misery and panic in his father's eyes.

The theme of loneliness has its roots in Mary Shelley's own experience, as Radu Florescu(1996) mentions in his essay. Mary lost her mother within a few days after birth, so she was supposed to be her father's lovely daughter and the source of his love. However, she failed this position and it was the maleficence she felt against her father, as stated by Florescu (1996, p. 180).The monster blames his

creator of lethargy and recklessness towards his child as well as of the absence of essential feelings that the monster suffers. The monster had to learn a lot about what people are like and according to his research, the monster realises he has been done brown: I heard of the difference of sexes; and the birth and growth of children; how the father doated on the smiles of the infant, and the lively sallies of the older child; how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapped up in the precious charge; how the mind of youth expanded and gained knowledge; of brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds. (Shelley, 2012, p. 120)

Victor Frankenstein's Monstrosity

The main aim of this part of the paper is to outline the concept of the monstrosity of one of the main characters of the novel , of Victor's monstrosity, analysing his personality, interests and his work. Victor's monstrosity mainly manifests his enthusiasm for his work and is also based on the absence of a few and very important aspects, like Victor's inadequate experience when undertaking this experiment, the absence of a real friend that would be a professional in the same field of study and would monitor his purposes as well as the lack of responsibility for his actions that have to be mentioned in connection to this topic. To find the roots of Victor's monstrosity, it is highly important to start with Victor's childhood because his passion for exploration goes back to this period of his life and has its origin in his personality, as Paul Cantor (1984) states in his study *The Nightmare of Romantic Idealism*.

Mary Shelley's Monstrosity

In this chapter, the paper will simultaneously introduce and analyse a few features of Mary Shelley's monstrosity in her writing as well as give examples for its claims to support them and to show why the author can be regarded to be monstrous. One should explain that the word monstrosity has mostly been bound to ugliness and frightening examples; murder and dangerous situations while the word monstrous suggests that a thing or event can be both, terrible but also colossal. As far as Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* is concerned, the aim of this part of the paper will be to show that both concepts of the words, monstrosity and monstrous, are hidden in the story. Furthermore, the presence of a monster, the large number of victims as well as the tragic end of the novel, all of these elements have been hidden in the story and have become the matter of this chapter of the paper that are to be analysed. As many writers have mentioned in their writings, Mary Shelley was the only child of two writers, of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, both of whom were authors. However, she never saw her mother because she died after Mary's birth. As many of the minor characters, Mary Shelley also became an orphan. Chris Baldick (1987) depicts in his study *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth-century Writing* Shelley's relationship with her mother as very significant for her writings. "Her relationship with her mother had then to become a textual one, in rather morbid ways: she took to reading her mother's works at her graveside, and it was here that she kept her tryst with Percy Shelley prior to their elopement in 1814" (p. 31). Mary tried to find out some information about her mother. Her father wanted to create a family for Mary, so he remarried when she was four. In Mary's opinion, her father prepared "a hell on earth" (Britton, 2015, p. 4) for her, including her step-mother and stepsiblings, especially her step-sister Mary's first child, a girl, died a few days after her birth; her second child, a son, got the name William after her father which was the planned name for Mary as well, Mary gave the same name to Victor Frankenstein's youngest brother. Mary's fiance, Percy Shelley, abandoned his wife Harriett when she was pregnant for the second time. These conditions are regarded by Ronald Britton (2015) as "background facts" (p. 4) to Mary Shelley's nightmare.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to analyse the concept of the monster in the novel *Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley and to focus on the features in connection with the themes of monstrosity that were the focal points of the paper. In the first part of the paper an overview of the definitions has been provided,

considering the etymology of the word monster and monstrosity as well as their meaning that has been constantly changing over the centuries. The study demonstrates different ideas by different authors who regarded the monster as an interpreter of unusual processes that became a part of folklore through the ages. The simplest explanation was that the creature mainly expressed negative features and it usually came to a fight between good and evil. Thanks to the development of the meaning of the word monster, the creature turned into a hybrid ; a combination of an animal and a human, and it mostly reflected the state of society , with its problems and imperfections, as it is represented in Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein. The meaning of the word monstrosity principally defines the shape of a body, with its deformation and huge proportions, to spread fear but also to highlight the malformation of society and to warn against its abnormality.

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