

A Feminist Analysis of Frankenstein

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Frankenstein is a novel that reflects a story framed in an epistolary form by English author Mary Shelley in 1818. The plot of Frankenstein revolves around the protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, an ambitious scientist who accidentally creates a perceptive creature as a result of an eccentric experiment. The narrative is based on Victor's suffering and turmoil because of his unorthodox experiment. The English novel envisages Captain Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the sapient creature's narrations from their perspectives. Mary Shelley creates a stereotypical male-dominating novel, envisaging abundant female subordinating characters, giving room for ample criticism as a feminist text. This essay intends to expose the famous novel Frankenstein by reflecting upon the protruding complications encountered by women in the patriarchal society intentionally demonstrated by Shelley, making them disposable, subordinate, and submissive to the male characters.

Victor's love infatuation with Elizabeth, the creature's female companion, and William's murder victim Justine Mortiz and Safie's determined character reveal various feminist paradigms of the text. According to Hoeveler's view, Frankenstein is a literary text that illustrates the societal attitudes of females and the arguments against them (Hoeveler 48). Shelley's incorporation of female roles in the novel reflects the stereotypical domination of patriarchy upon them and projects the oppressing roles of female characters in the plot. Victor's disposal of the female companion of the sapient creature exhibits massive feminist criticism. Victor gives the reason for disposing of the female companion's unfinished body because he (Victor) does not want "upcoming ages to 'curse him as their pest'" (Shelley 174). Therefore, he tears apart the female creature ruthlessly. Shelley deliberately uses vivid imagery to portray Elizabeth's character through Victor's perception. Victor illustrates his love interest in Elizabeth as if she were a teen, comparing her to animals and elucidating the diminishing role of females in the patriarchal society. Victor comments upon Elizabeth as "docile and good-tempered, yet gay and playful as a summer's insect" (Shelley 20). Furthermore, Victor's description of Elizabeth as his favourite animal reflects Shelley's accentuating the dehumanization of female characters in the novel. Shelley intentionally debilitates the female characters to reflect the unjust patriarchy. The character of Victor and the creature provide an in-depth lens of the male oppressors. Furthermore, Victor's elaborate description of Elizabeth's physical appearance, personality, and talent foreshadows the importance of female appearance in their society. However, Shelley momentarily represents the embodiment of the perfect female role and companionship through the characters of Safie and Felix. Safie's willful, self-governing, and determined character reflects the ideal role envisaged by Shelley. The massive deaths of female characters in the novel emphasize feminist criticism. Moreover, Victor's act of creating might leave behind the conventionally necessary female counterpart, and this is revealed by the demises of the women in the tale (Pon 37). Pon validates this point of the notion by viewing Victor's action of deliberately leaving the female counterpart of the creature, reflecting patriarchal dominance. Shelley emphasizes the dehumanization of Elizabeth's character by setting her up as a prop in the Creature's foul play against Victor on his wedding night. The character of

Elizabeth can be perceived as a superficial possession exploited by male power. Similarly, Justine Mortize was wrongfully accused of killing William Frankenstein and sentenced to death without any further investigation. Justine's character is portrayed as submissive, passive, and seldom. Shelley crystallizes the brutal accusations inflicted upon the females in the patriarchal society through the character of Justine. Barbara Johnson elucidates upon Shelley's novel as the demonstration of a "struggle for feminine authorship." (Johnson). Shelley creates Frankenstein to illustrate the egoism of men and the anguish of women in society.

In conclusion, Shelley utilizes the prominent character of Elizabeth, Justine Mortiz, Safie, and the female companion of the creature to project her views related to patriarchal society. Through the feminist lens, Shelley deliberately dehumanizes the female characters of the plot to reflect the patriarchal viciousness upon females. Through the male narration, Elizabeth, Justine, and the female companion of the creature inculcated in the plot reflect the way women are perceived and treated in the patriarchal society. Shelley creates this text inspired by her feminist mother to address the rigid patriarchal society through Victor's perspective. Women are perceived as docile subordinates who only fulfil the pleasure, needs, convenience, and vengeance of men. The main characters of the novel are especially males, portrayed as complex, interesting, and versatile as compared to female characters who are beautiful, gentle, victims, and nurturers of society. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein reflects upon the patriarchal desires and the subordination of females to men, shaping the novel into a powerful feminist text.

Works Cited

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