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ACADEMIC YEAR-2023-24

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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Study materials provided to CLASS: 4TH SEM DATE: 11/08/2024

Topic of Discussion: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

- **CHARACTER OF THE MONSTER**
- **THE MONSTER AS THE 'OTHER'/'THE SUB-ALTERN'**
- **THE MONSTER AS THE PHILOSOPHICAL REBEL**
- **THEME OF MONSTROSITY**
- **Role of Victor Frankenstein (can be written from this note)**

MARKS-10/SEM-4/CC-9

Mary Shelley was familiar with the writings of Rousseau and his idea that if a man is enlightened, he can create a world of his own. Mary Shelley through the character of Frankenstein highlights the rupture that is caused when the individual in his monomania comes to believe in his own mastery over the world. Mary Shelley shows how too much emphasis on individuality can disrupt harmonious co-existence. Victor Frankenstein chemically creates the creature.

Lee Sterrenburg talks about the tradition of anti-revolutionaries depicting revolutionaries as a '**monster**'. Mary Shelley internalizes the metaphor and uses it for new ends. She depoliticizes the monster tradition by putting the '**monster**' in the frame of domestic tragedy rather than domestic frame work. Lee Sterrenburg compares the creature to a '**Philosopher**'. Although, the creature looks hideous, he

talks like a philosopher. He reads Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Sorrows of Werter*, a volume of *Plutarch's Lives*, and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

The Monster proves a very philosophical rebel. He was driven to the route of rebellion by his creator Frankenstein who shunned him on his awakening. The creature wants to be loved and cared for. He wants to be obedient to Frankenstein. But, he is hurt. The creature is not the Radical. He is the product of the same paternalistic ideology that Frankenstein believes in. At the time he was born, he was disowned by Frankenstein and later by De Lacey family. He was rejected by De Lacey family. He starts behaving like a monster when even Frankenstein rejects him.

Mary Shelley was influenced by her mother Mary Wollstonecraft who represents the voices of those women who traditionally have been denied a voice. The creature is symbolic of the **“other”** or the **“oppressed”**. Mary Shelley is trying to show flaws or the oppressive aspects of the nineteenth century British culture. His initiation in the western culture makes him realize that he can never be a part of that culture. One day, when he looks at his own image in the water, he realizes how ugly he is. The creature just like Yahoos in **“Gulliver's Travels”** lives by the value of the dominant culture which has a pervasive hatred with the **“other”**. Ultimately, it becomes self hatred. The creature is not only rejected by Frankenstein, he is also denounced by the people of the society because he does not look like them which results in his self hatred.

Mary Shelly re-imagines the narrative of monstrosity. The **“self”** and the **“other”** collapse into one another. This leads us to question not the humanness of the creature, but the humanness of the culture which relies on the oppression of the **“other”** to construct its own identity. The creature neither has an identity nor a name. The creature's namelessness and identity crises makes him a part of the **“other”**.

Thus, the novel critiques the entire tradition of the nineteenth century culture of empires. The creature's story dramatizes the conflicted relations of the colonized, women, working class and other

marginalized groups (which the creature represents) to the powerful knowledge of the culture that does not belong to them. Frankenstein is the father figure for the creature. He kind of looks up to him. This is the part of the colonial discourse.

Anne K. Mellor in the essay “**My Hideous Progeny**” suggests how by altering the last sentence Percy Bysshe Shelley has altered the meaning. Percy Bysshe Shelley seems to have misunderstood his wife’s intentions. He often sympathized with the character of Victor Frankenstein. He intended, for instance, to see the creature more monstrous and less human than did Mary. Mary Shelley is not simply dismissing the creature as a monster.

Frankenstein was responsible for the physical deformity of the creature. He usurped the female role by physically giving birth to the creature which resulted in the physical hideousness of the creature. The creature was not monstrous because of his physical deformity. He was made monstrous by Frankenstein who disowned him and refused to create a female mate for him. Even, the people of the society were responsible for making him a monster because they rejected him on grounds of his physical deformity. This proves that Victor Frankenstein himself was a ‘**monster**’ and his society ‘**monstrous**’.