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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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**Study materials provided to CLASS: 4<sup>TH</sup> SEM DATE: 11/08/2024**

**Topic of Discussion: Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN**

➤ **REPRESSED SEXUALITY**

➤ **REPRESSED FEMALES IN FRANKENSTEIN**

**MARKS-10/SEM-4/CC-9**

Mary Shelley's "**Frankenstein**" is a novel about repressed female sexuality. By using female sexual repression, Mary Shelley is denouncing a system in which people were not allowed to have illegitimate relations, as Percy Shelley was married when they began their relationship.

In the book women are sexually repressed. In fact it should be noted that Victor cares more and speaks more passionately about men (i.e.: his friends, his professor) than women: "**Poor Clerval! What must have been his feelings? A meeting, which he anticipated with such joy, so strangely turned to bitterness**".

The wedding night has a very important meaning because this is the time when traditional couples are supposed to make love for the first time. However, Victor asked his wife to go alone into the bedroom, but as a result, she is killed by the monster. Her corpse is found in a similar position to a painting that Mary Shelley knew, *The Nightmare*, painted in 1781 by Anglo-Swiss artist Henry Fuseli.

In the picture we can see the erotic desire mixed with death. This image is similar to the nightmare that Victor has at the beginning of the work: "**I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health...I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death...**"

One critic Mellor said, "**Mary Shelley constantly suffered similar nightmares**". The doctor is metaphorically "**raping**" and challenging nature throughout the novel, she (nature) makes him pay: Victor gets ill several times, he suffers from phenomena of nature (storms, lightning, thunder), and he almost drowns in the sea after destroying the female monster.

Another example of female sexual repression is that Mary Shelley did not want a female monster in "**Frankenstein**". The doctor, under the pressure from the monster's threat, decides to accept and create a female monster. He starts to make the monster but suddenly, he begins to reflect again, and when he

realizes what he is doing, he remembers all the suffering that the first monster has caused, and he decides to destroy his female creation. Again, the author places us in a very violent situation: the doctor destroying the female body.

After learning about the life of Mary Shelley, we can analyse what the meaning of this is. A relationship between the female monster and maternity could be established. The mother of Mary Shelley died when she was born and she lived the rest of her life with the lack of a female figure in her life. Mary Shelley was a teenage mother, she got pregnant by a married man, and she gave birth to an illegitimate child. For this reason, when she began to gain weight due to being pregnant, she thought she was a monster. The relationship between the monster and the author is clear. The author and the monster had a creator, a father figure, who flees. The lack of maternal love makes the monster turn violent, so Victor tries to create a new figure, but fails. After the death of his mother, Mary Shelley's father remarried intended his new wife to look after his daughter. However, Mary hated this new woman. Thus, we can see the failed female figure reflected in the work.

Mary Shelley suffered several miscarriages during her lifetime, and additionally, some of her children died at a young age. We could establish a relationship between the changes experienced by the female body during pregnancy and after giving birth, and the image of Victor destroying the body of the female monster. These horrible changes did not result in new births, nor in the life of Mary Shelley or the novel.

At the time when Victor creates life, he is usurping one of the most essential qualities of women: motherhood. A man creates life without a woman. Victor Frankenstein wants to create a world in which women are not required, in which he is a man, he makes a male monster, and he also refuses to create a female monster.

The few women whom we can see in the novel are submissive women, confined to their homes, engaged in housework, caring for their husband and children, or they are simply servants. The fates lives of Caroline Beaufort, Elizabeth, Justine represent the repressed sexuality in the novel.