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FRANKENSTEIN AS A TRAGEDY: BLEND OF PATHOS AND FEAR

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore the tragic elements in Marry Shelley's work 'Frankenstein' subtitled 'The Modern Prometheus'. Outwardly, it has been a study of horror and terror since the renowned work has gothic elements inside. Its first edition came in 1818, then in 1823 and in 1831. Preface to first edition 1818 was written by P.B.Shelley, husband of Merry Shelley. It is apparently a struggle between the monster and its creator. It is undoubtedly a tragedy, arouses the elements of pathos and fear as we witness the deaths of innocent victims one by one. It's not merely a sad tale of Victor's sufferings but also of the wicked, the fiend, and the monster created by Victor He demands our sympathy who is a victim of social alienation.

Keywords: Pity, fear, horror, wicked, death, sufferings.

It is with Horace Walpole's work 'The Castle of Ortranto', that gothic novel took its origin. Later Miss Ann Radcliffe's 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' and Matthew Lewis's 'The Monk' promoted this tradition. Frankenstein is certainly a gothic fiction by Marry Shelle Along with Lord Byron and P.B. Shelley, she had keen interest in reading ghost stories and she decided to write her own horror story which resulted in 'Frankenstein'. It can better be compared to Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and Christopher Marlowe's 'Dr. Faustus' since it depicts the fall of man. So far as its subtitle is concerned, it is related to Greek mythology. In Gree Mythology, Prometheus defied the gods and gave fire to mankind, acts for which he was subjected to perpetual punishment. He was punished by Zeus (God of sky and thunder) for this act as he broke the eternal law of nature. Later Romantic poet P.B.Shelley designed a closet drama named 'Prometheus Unbound' whereby Prometheus is depicted to be released from the captivity of Jupiter/Zeus. Frankenstein or Victor Frankenstein can be called a modern Prometheus who having broken the law of nature gave birth to monster for the sake of his interests. For this blunder he faced punishment.

It is ignorance of environment and its rules in whole. Bate is being quoted here,

"Ironically, the contemporary iconic status of Frankenstein is creature/monster largely ignores his environmental roots. Eco-critics have dealt with Shelley's Frankenstein as a level concerned with the environment, interpreting it as a work debating the enlightenment's assumption of human mastery over nature" (Bate, J: 2000)

Frankstein fulfills the requirements of classical tragedy as it has Aristotle's hamartia. Victor Frankenstein has a fatal flaw leading to his downfall. He had been warned by his benevolent father and professors as well. They suggested him to go for modern science rather than ancient science. He pursued his readings of Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. His father used to guide him, "Ah! Cornelius Agrippa! My Dear Victor,

do not waste your time upon this: it is sad trash” (Shelley, Marry: 1994). But he wanted to pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation. He was guided by M.Waldman to take interest in modern science which have discovered the blood-circulation and nature of air we breathe, on the other side, he was of the view, the ancient teachers of the science promise impossibilities and performed nothing. Victor was agree with his sayings, but he was unable to control his temptations. Having seen his keen interest in natural philosophy, he guided him, “... if your wish is to become really a man of science, and not merely a petty **experimentalist**, I should advise you to apply to every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics”(Shelley, Marry: 1994). To his displeasure, he neglected his advice and performed the experiment which resulted in his downfall.

Tragedy is a blending of emotions of pathos and fear. Frankenstein suffers a lot. He faces the tragic death of his sweetest younger brother William, whose smile delighted and warmed his heart, who so gentle and gay, death of poor Justine, who was executed for no reason as she was charged with murder of William. That innocent girl was proved a wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition and he could not utter a groan that was coming from his inmost soul. Situation was very pathetic for Elizabeth and Victor as they knew Justine was innocent. His dear friend Henry Clerval, highly ambitious and youthful in which he saw the image of his former self, in whose company he seeks solace, also faces the tragic end. He could not fulfill his high dreams of completing mastery of the oriental languages. Sweet and beloved Elizabeth was murdered on their wedding night. He cursed his fate again and again, when saw her corpse thrown across the bed, her head hanging down and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair. The shock of Elizabeth’s death was unbearable for his father who met his end. For all these murders Victor was responsible who

“has no time for the eternal cycles of nature or for civilized adjustment to them: he subverts everything to his own selfish needs in the here and now, with no concern for ecology or the morrow.” (Stevens: 1996).

It is not a tragic tale of Victor’s miseries alone but monster’s too. Although he is wicked but we feel pity for him when he feels alienated from society. His passions and feelings of sympathies are visible when he narrates his tale of living in hovel near to the home of Agatha and Felix. He was moved by their sorrow and he in return was shunned by them. In his tale, he confessed to Victor that how he wanted to know why Felix appeared so miserable and Agatha so sad. He wanted to give happiness to these deserving people. It was difficult for him to live with the truth that society hates him due to his wicked appearance. He faced extreme hunger, thirst, cold, people’s attacks. His tale demands our mercy when he says to Victor “Hateful day when I received life! A cursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?...Satan had his companion, fellow-Devils to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred” (Shelley, marry: 1994).

Once he had saved the life of a girl and as a reward of his benevolence, he got the miserable pain of a wound which shattered flesh and bone.

“The people are unable to think that there may be softness in some corner in the mind of the monster. And we perceive it when we see that the monster saves the girl in spite of his being spurred by humans before.” ([http:// www.studymode.com](http://www.studymode.com)).

Appearance of monster was horrible as Frankstein himself admitted that a mummy again endued with animation could not be as hideous as that wretch. He was the ugliest. His eight feet height, yellow skin, hair of lustrous black color, teeth of partly whiteness were dreadful. His appearance nightmares, grave-worms crawling, superhuman speed all are horrible. Morten states,

“Victor Frankenstein did create a new species. Both he and his creature agree on this and it is important to keep in mind that rather than being one of its kind *lusus naturae*, the monster is created as the prototype of a new humanoid species that is harder than human beings, a species that as Victor later fears might come to endanger ordinary human existence” (Morton : 2016)

Tragedy has its ending with death and destruction as with the Frankenstein. Both Victor and his monster have their tragic ends. They had been wrestling for their lives. They endured hard and miserable hours in the name of vengeance. It has the similarity with the miseries of Adam and Eve

“The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God, and the loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation, than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet” (Shelley, P.B : 1993)

Above all, Frankstein is a gothic fiction, depicts the fall of man which arouses the passions of horror, agitation, pity, fear, sympathy altogether.

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