

Moers, Ellen. "Female Gothic: The Monster's Mother." *Literary Women*. Garden City, Doubleday, 1976. Rpt. In Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein. Norton Critical Edition. New York: Norton, 1996: 205-208.

Moers studies the various female authors whom she feels contributed to the Gothic period of writing, she also studies more closely what personal causes could have been behind Shelley's writing of Frankenstein. She cites Jane Austen and Joanne Baille for contributing to Gothic literature; however, she feels one of the shining female Gothic authors was Hazlitt Ann Radcliff. Moers feels Radcliff's power over her reader comes from her, "incantatory prose style, her artful stretching of suspense over long periods of novelistic time, her pictorial and musical imagination...". Furthermore Radcliffe's writings, according to Moers, seemed to have the purpose of creating a story of a young female heroine both victimized and yet brave.

However, Mary Shelley would come along and break this mold completely. For Shelley was able to create an entirely new genre (Science Fiction), still bring the heart pounding fear and yet have no female heroine or victim, which was certainly a break from the female Gothic authors of her time. Moers bases her analysis on the various factors in Shelley's life that can be seen in her literary elements but focuses especially on the role of motherhood and birth in the book. However, as Moers points out Shelley focuses not on the birth of the monster but the "after-birth" where Frankenstein is so horrified he abandons his own creation.

Moers makes the point that many of the other happenings in the book can return to the specific moment Frankenstein abandons his creation leaving it to discover the stages of life on its own, thus shaping the "person" the monster it turned out to be. Along with the focus on the "after-birth" is Shelley's focus on the parent-child relationship, which according to Moers, stems not only from her own relationship with her parents but from the relationships she shared with

her children for as long as they lived. According to Moers' Mary Shelley's personal life and experience help to create one of the best pieces of Gothic work by a female author ever created.

Small, Christopher. "(Percy) Shelley and Frankenstein." *Ariel Like a Harp: Shelley, Mary and Frankenstein*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1972. Rpt. In Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein. Norton Critical Edition. New York: Norton, 1996: 205-208.

Christopher Small proposes that the character of Victor Frankenstein was in fact a literary representation of Mary Shelley's husband, Percy. Small also claims Lord Byron played an important role by suggesting the writing of ghost stories but also helping influence Mary through their conversations on "the principle of life." However, according to Small, Shelley's husband was a much larger part acting as an intermediary with the publishing company and also encouraging her to write not just a short story but a novel.

Encouragement was not Shelley's only role; according to Small, he was in fact a basis for the character of Victor. Victor was the name that Shelley liked using; he also used it as an alias early on in his writing. He always seemed to hold a special affinity for Victor because "Victory" is a word that Shelley used often especially in his later works. Another main character, Elizabeth, also seemed to hold a special place in Shelley's life as this was the name of "his mother and favorite sister". There also seems to be a deeper connection for according to Small, "If he is not Shelley he is a dream of Shelley...". Frankenstein is described as a high-spirited adventurous youth who is full of "passion", which is how Shelley described himself as a young boy. Furthermore, Victor's father is described as a kind older gentleman, who deeply loves his children and wants only the best for them. This, however, is completely opposite from Shelley's own father who was a cold authoritarian type, but Small points out this may have been the father figure that Percy and Mary Shelley both yearned for believed that they had deserved.

In addition, the father resembles a “hermit” in one of Shelley’s *The Revolt of Islam* who is believed to be representative of Dr. Lind an elderly man whom Shelley befriended at Eton and says protected him from his father’s attempts to institutionalize him. While Victor Frankenstein may not be a direct representative of Percy Shelley he is, according to Christopher Smalls the basis for the infamous character.

Levine, George. “*Frankenstein* and the Tradition of Realism.” *A Forum on Fiction*. Vol 7, No. 1 (Fall 1973). Rpt. In Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein. Norton Critical Edition. New York: Norton, 1996: 205-208.

George Levine makes the case that Frankenstein is one the greatest realistic myths in nineteenth century literature despite its sensationalism and moral implications. However, Levine also states that the story is a piece of Gothic myth thus allowing it have evil that is “both positively present and largely inexplicable” which Levine believes is in contrast to most other pieces of Realistic writing.

Levine parallels Frankenstein to two other stories by pointing out that Frankenstein is often criticized for having the hero and the antagonist as one, although he feels this adds to the book rather than subtracts. The hero and the antagonist in Frankenstein, Frankenstein and the monster are one just as Leggatt and the captain are on in The Secret Sharer. Levine also parallels Frankenstein’s character to that of the Ancient Mariner because both have to share their stories because it is too terrible to keep inside and in Frankenstein’s case in an attempt to stop Walton from repeating his mistakes.

Levine also explores, however, his original point that in Frankenstein many of the characters can be seen as one. An example he uses is that of Clerval whom Levine believes echoes an aspect of Frankenstein’s “self”. Levine also draws a parallel between Justine and

Elizabeth for both are rescued from poverty by the family and both hold immense guilt over the death of Frankenstein's brother.

Levine also discusses the role that the parent plays in Frankenstein. Whether it be Frankenstein's mother or father, his own role as a father (although this relationship is a perverse one), that of Safie's father or that of the elder De Lacey each parent plays a particular role in the story.

Levine, however, believes that Shelley's greatest accomplishment with Frankenstein is that her story took, "shape of the writers' most potent imaginations and desires". This in the end helps to allow the reader to make up their own mind on the monster after hearing his impassioned speech to Walton an outsider, who will play an important role.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "Frankenstein's Fallen Angel." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 10, No. 3 (March 1984), 543-554. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343306>> (28 December 2008).

Joyce Carol Oates believes *Frankenstein's* blending of many elements including Romantic ideas, borrowing from Milton's ideas, the unquestioning love of the demon for his creator and the unlikely plot account for the novel's "enduring celebrity".

An example of a romantic ideal is that Frankenstein's journey begins with a bolt of lightning and fire that will spur him on his way to his eventual discoveries on "generation and life" (544). Furthermore, the author's description of nature, especially that of the Valley of Chamounix, come the Romantic foundation.

However, some of the most compelling elements of the book can be found to have roots in the mind of Milton's Paradise Lost ideals. One of the points Oates makes on the topic is that Frankenstein is "a demonic parody or extension of Milton's God" (545); however, at the same time, Frankenstein freely admits that he is unable to control his demon. Also, like Satan and

Adam in Milton's work, the demon, not his creator, has some of the most compelling speeches and in a way endears himself to the reader much more than his creator. Furthermore, Oates parallels the demon to Eve except when the demon sees himself, he is horrified not pleased by what he views. Oates, however, also parallels the demon to Christ for he is sinned against by humanity but is willing to die in order to redeem himself.

Another aspect that Oates finds interesting is that despite all that happens to him the demon has an enduring love towards Frankenstein. Oates cites when Frankenstein is in the Arctic chasing the Demon, the demon seems to be helping him search, even leaving him food. However, Frankenstein is too blind to realize who is helping him and seems to completely ignore the love the demon still holds for him. This leads to the demon becoming increasingly more like a person to the reader, while Frankenstein seems more a monster in his "rigorous denial" according to Oates. Oates believes that Shelley's ability to blend together elements is what has caused Frankenstein to have the enduring success it has seen.