

“Frankenstein – Homosexual Necrophilia Oedipal Complex”

BIRTH

A twisted sexual excursion began when death took a loved one away. The impact of Victor’s mother’s death triggered the desire to complete a denied sexual encounter. Taking into account the theory of the Oedipus complex explored by Sigmund Freud, this essay analyzes the character of Victor Frankenstein as he unknowingly chases his sexual desires. The sole purpose of Victor Frankenstein’s scientific pursuit is to fill the void his mother left. Using dead body parts demonstrates Frankenstein's unconscious desire to have a sexual relationship with his dead mother as he attempts to bring to life that which has passed on but cannot properly do so. These facts found in Frankenstein display to readers how a misplaced and imbalanced individual stumbles into false sexual realities, which cannot be completely satisfied. This paper addresses each deviated sexual tendency Victor experiences to establish the psyche of the character. When each thread is expressed, the truth about Victor is explained: the truth that, because of these psychosexual tendencies running rampant, Victor is the true monster, not his creation, in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

AWAKENING

Death takes its toll on everyone. The death of Victor’s mother was a turning point in his life. Who once was a loving, well natured man, Victor changed to an isolated, dark, and brooding individual after the passing of his mother. This change triggered Victor to become the “mad scientist” readers take him for as Will W. Adams, psychologist at Davis & Elkins College discusses, “Freud also found a crucial connection between death-denial and psychological suffering” (65). This statement reveals much about the character of

Victor. Victor did not correctly process the death of his mother, which led to a decrease in physical and mental health. This deterioration of mental health breaks down Victor's inhibitions, causing him to do things he would not normally, in full mental capacity, perform. Because Victor lost his mother, his psyche was shocked and all the dormant sexual tendencies he had been suppressing awoke within him. The majority of these tendencies revolve around his mother and the love he would no longer receive from her. Thus, the death of Victor's mother was the awakening of all the deviant sexual desires laying dormant in Victor's mind and that causes him to pursue radical means to fulfill them.

Textual evidence gives more light to the idea that Victor's mother's death caused a breakdown in Victor as well as an emotional hole to fill. Victor described his mother's death: "dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil, the void that presents itself to the soul..." (25). Destruction and emptiness were Victor's explanation of the relationship with his mother that was "rent" apart by Death's forceful hands. Victor attempts to fill the "void" he experiences soon after his mother's death through scientific endeavors. However, while initially expressing his pain poetically, after time Victor's true grieving begins, "the reality of evil, then the actual bitterness of grief commences" (26). These statements of pain and sorrow from Victor reveal that, "he repeatedly associates her death with malevolence and evil" (65). Grieving is a natural and essential step in dealing with loss. In no way was Victor at fault for grieving his mother's death rather Victor had not completed his grieving process before traveling to Ingolstadt. Evidence to support this idea is expressed, "when a mother's blessing would have accompanied me" (26). Victor still felt the pain of loss as he departed. The pain, grief,

and inability to properly deal with the death of his mother drove him to isolation upon reaching Ingolstadt. Hence, Victor's inability to deal with death is the first step in his unhealthy sexual desire involving his mother.

OEDIPAL COMPLEX

Further implication from the death of his mother is the arousal of Victor's Oedipal complex, which had been dormant until the moment of her death. Understanding what the Oedipal complex consists of allows readers to connect the points between the theory and the attributes manifest in Victor's character. Doctor Sigmund Freud noticed a tendency in males: a desire to replace their father and marry their mother: essentially competing for affection, both emotional and sexual, from the mother. While occurring in the early stages of male development, this psychosexual tendency can lay dormant in males, such as it was with Victor Frankenstein. A possible explanation as to why this tendency laid dormant in Victor is the arrival of his younger siblings. No longer was he in competition with only his father, now Victor had two younger brothers who would likewise contend for possession of his mother. In order to deal with the emotional tug to overtake his mother, Victor pushed the thought deep into his subconscious where it stayed until it was shaken loose when his mother died. Therefore, textual and scholarly evidences reveal why Victor began to display symptoms of the Oedipal complex as an adult to shine light on traits that indicate to readers Victor's psychosexual state.

Frankenstein's titular character demonstrates characteristics of one existing with an Oedipus complex displaying to readers his obscene sexual deviations. Clues in the text exhibit Victor's feelings for his mother such as, "fortitude and benignity of this admirable woman" (25). The way Victor fancies the personality of his mother is a sign of how he

had some level of attraction to her. While reminiscing about his mother Victor says, “brightness of a beloved eye...voice...dear to the ear...” (26). These memories deal with the physical attributes that his mother possessed. Readers see that Victor was impressed with both the character of his mother and her physique. Romano Biancoli, Ph.D. quotes Erich Fromm when talking about the Oedipal complex and what it could mean: “the continuation into adulthood of the childhood attachment to the mother” (6). This attraction, while not argued as a conscious attraction, exists under the surface. Victor, in his early years, would not have thought about his mother sexually, nor would he have ever acted out the fulfillment of the Oedipus complex. The triggering event, the catalyst, causing this to become a conscious thought process was his mother’s death. Victor is unable to satisfy the desire to have a sexual experience with his mother and this inability to do so leads him to pursue the science of alchemy and chemistry in attempt to return his mother to a living state. Victor’s sole aim, rather than grieve his mother’s death is to attempt to reverse death and bring his mother back to life to receive love from her once again. Thus, death sparked the unconscious Oedipal complex Victor unknowingly possessed demonstrating to readers the penalty of unfulfilled sexual wishes.

HOMOSEXUALITY

An element of note is the sex of Victor’s monster. Frankenstein creates a male, not a female monster, initially. The reason for the creation of a male monster illuminates another deviation in Victor psyche. The Oedipal complex Victor attempts to fulfill is perverted from his underlying homosexual tendency. For those readers who find it preposterous that Victor would not be heterosexual, Eberle-Sinatra indicates, “Shelley incorporates science and sexual orientation within her novel” (186). This idea from a

psychologist allows for the reading that Victor could be homosexual. Considering that: Victor spends little time with females, and is unaccustomed to receiving love from females. Surrounded by brothers and his friend Henry, the majority of Victor's interactions occur with males. The way that Victor describes Henry corresponds closely to a more than friendly infatuation, "Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval." Frequently throughout the text makes comments about the bond he has with Henry. When Victor and Henry meet up in Ingolstadt their physical interaction calms Victor, suggesting a physical attraction on Victor's part. The character of Henry is seen as a symbol of Victor's homosexuality. Though nothing in the text extends to Victor acting out such feelings, other than the creation of his male monster. Hence, Henry is one source of evidence to suggest that Victor lives with a homosexual tendency.

Other sources of male interaction and notable attraction to males either love or respect were those who are in positions of authority over Victor. In an article about homosexuality in *Frankenstein* author Douglas Sadownick expresses, "Male love is the dominant theme of *Frankenstein*" (15). Victor's father was someone that Victor looked up to. His father coached him on science and helped guide Victor to pursue and education. Victor pursuing an education led him to meet Professors Krempe and Waldman. These men were inspirations to Victor. In a way, Victor formed a type of man-crush on these men full of knowledge and understanding of a field Victor was eager to enter. This type of admiration impacted Victor's sexuality as he felt more comfortable and a desire to impress these male superiors. Hence, the male creature Victor creates, in a blind sexual haze, unknowingly expresses his homosexuality and consolation around other males.

Besides Henry and the other males in his life, Victor's relationship with his cousin-sister Elizabeth provides a link to the homosexual aspect of Victor's character. The context of the time in history *Frankenstein* was written would not see Victor and Elizabeth's relationship as wrong, merely as a norm of the time. However, the repercussions of an incestuous relationship take their toll on the psyche of Victor. Many scholars have analyzed Victor's interactions with Elizabeth and provide evidence supporting that idea that Victor is not faithful to her. Michael Eberle-Sinatra from the University of Montreal stated, speaking of Victor's relationship, "Victor reassures [his father] that he loves his cousin, but he does so in terms that leave open the possibility he might love a male other: 'I never saw another woman who excited, as Elizabeth does, my warmest admiration and affection'" (189). This statement by Victor allows for the interpretation that a male holds the place of "admiration and affection" in his heart. Without a sure answer that Victor is in love with Elizabeth, readers and scholars are able to allude to a homosexual attraction to another character. Eberle-Sinatra's argument continues with the idea that Elizabeth herself doubts whether Victor truly loves her. These doubts and the wording of Victor's answer to his father gives readers reason to contemplate where Victor's devotion falls. Therefore, the relationships that Victor participates in provide reason for readers to believe that the reason why the monster he created is male due to homosexuality and not female to fulfill the Oedipus complex.

NECROPHILIA

An overlooked detail in *Frankenstein* is the combination of Victor's Oedipus complex and his desire to reanimate life to achieve sexual fulfillment with his mother.

Unable to fulfill the Oedipal complex with his dead mother, Frankenstein turns to alchemy and chemistry in attempts to discover how to bring the dead back to life. An idea brought forward by Adams explains, “Victor is driven by the unconscious fantasy that her death is not “irreparable” and tries to make reparations by creating a living being” (65). The implications of such a desire may seem grotesque. Victor goes on to attempt to reanimate a corpse to take the place of his dead mother. Textual evidence suggests that Victor knew full well what he was doing and for what reason. For example, “When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it” (32). This quote illustrates that Victor knew the consequences of his work and battled with himself deciding whether or not to go through with the experiment. This implies Victor’s conscience knew the task was unholy and perverted, yet his sexual drive and desire to be reunited with his mother overpowered his reason. Victor states, further in his work, “One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I dedicated myself” (33). Victor’s true secret, the real reason why he was attempting to reanimate a corpse, was unknown to anyone. Secrecy allowed Victor to work in solitude and expose only himself to the gore of his project. The success of his endeavor meant Victor would be able to recreate his mother’s corpse and spark life back to her limbs in order to live out his twisted fantasy. Therefore, the pursuit to reanimate life was more to satisfy Victor’s Oedipus complex by which he could bring life back to his dead mother to fulfill a false sexual reality.

Victor’s creature is the realization of his Oedipus complex and the fulfillment to bring his mother back to life. Both threads are connected when the beast awakens. Victor, shocked back to reality and pulled from the dreamlike state of manic creation, realizes the

horror which stands before him. Speaking of Victor's awakening to the monster, Paul Sherwin puts forth, "What is most strange here is that the Creature is a sleeping beauty until its orgasmic stirring rouses Frankenstein to recognize the monstrosity before him" (885). Lying dormant in front of him, the creature represents so much to Victor: a reunion with his mother, scientific success, and the opportunity to live his desired sexual fantasy. What signified success really perversion and a disturbing realization that Victor is disgusting and twisted. Franco presents the idea that the creature is not the true horror but rather what the creature means: "It seems that Victor is not concerned as much by the Monster's hideous appearance as by the hideousness of Oedipal desire he represents" (83). The creature is then not a symbol of success but rather failure. The shock of seeing this beat brought to life is similar to the shock of his mother's death. Victor's blind haze is shattered and he becomes aware of all of the nasty, gross, and twisted actions he is performing to achieve fulfillment of his Oedipal complex. The humanity that Victor possessed was absent: he has lost of sense of morality, purity, and sense as Victor compiled body parts into his venture into necrophilia with hopes to resurrect his mother.

THE REAL MONSTER

Victor's relationships are perverted because his desires are perverted. The creation of his monster is an expression of the twisted sexual fantasy Victor desires to live out. Dean Franco from the University of Southern California postulates an idea about the true reason behind creation. He states, "In creating the Monster, Victor is acting out a desire for the mother through a narcissistic identification with her, mimicking his mother by fixating his own desire on the creation of his creation" (82). Franco analyzes the relationship between Victor and his mother, to Victor and his creature. The emotional

connection that Victor has with his mother is being projected onto his creature. The care and nurturing Victor received from his mother, is to be passed on to the creature. The problem with this scenario is of course the looming desire to fulfill his sexual desires. Franco addresses this, “Victor fantasizes that he is the recipient of love and gratitude...” (82). Victor, however, receives no love. The monster cannot make up for what Victor’s mother failed to give him. Victor is then left to deal with the consequences of all of his perverted acts and just like when his mother died, Victor runs away to escape dealing with these difficult situations. Had Victor properly grieved his mother’s death, the path to the creation of his creature would not have been started. Had Victor disposed of, or instructed his creature properly rather than running away, his younger brother would not have been murdered, nor his wife-to-be, Elizabeth. The consequences of Victor’s actions are numerous and when viewed in a modern context, frightening.

Victor’s character, his sexual deviations that caused him to raid cemeteries, collect bodies, and then surgically butcher those bodies, would be cause for confinement in a mental institution. In the context of the time that *Frankenstein* was written, surgeons were seen as butchers, for their craft was gross and messy. Victor enters that realm, with such a devotion and desire to achieve his goal, that he could be seen as a sociopath. Victor cares little for others, he doesn’t respond to the letters of his family for two years, and during that time is solely devoted to the creation of his creature. Even upon returning to society, Victor demonstrates qualities that are bizarre and uncomfortable to those around him.

DEATH

Victor Frankenstein possesses many strange sexual desires, which stem from the

death of his mother. Her death triggered the unconscious sexual fantasies dormant in Victor's mind. Improperly dealing with grief caused Victor to isolate himself as well as other mental and physical consequences. Freud's Oedipus complex awakens and textual evidence displays signs of Victor's unconscious attraction to his mother's personality and physique. This means that, unable to fulfill the Oedipus complex, Victor began a pursuit into the realm of alchemy and chemistry in attempt to bring his mother back to life. All in attempt to compensate for a denied sexual encounter, Victor's descent into science was for the purpose of finally satisfying his sexual fantasy with his mother. Thus, illustrating the consequences of one struggling with sexual tendencies yet without a healthy venue to find relief from them.

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