

Book Proposal on Mary Shelley

There are writers admired by their contemporaries but completely forgotten after their death. But there are writers whose books are created to be read and appreciated by next generations. One of such prominent authors is Mary Shelley. She was a famous dramatist, essayist and biographer. During her lifetime she was widely known as a writer. However, after her death she was mainly known only as the Percy Shelley's wife and the author of *Frankenstein*.

Until the last years the main part of her works were out of print and, therefore, weren't available for readers. But nowadays her works regain their value. Nowadays she is considered to be a major Romantic figure, which is significant for her literature contribution and her political works. I would like to write a book on her, because I consider her to be a wonderful example of self-made woman.

My book will consist of three parts. They will deal with Mary Shelley's biography and will contain some detailed analysis of the most famous book of hers, *Frankenstein*.

The first part will contain Mary Shelley's biography. I would write mainly about her young years, because they give us a bright idea of Mary Shelley as a brave woman. I will write about her childhood when she started to write her stories. Being a young girl she left her father and decided to be with the man she loved. When married, she could be Shelley's wife only, but she managed to gain her own fame. I will try to provide some information on her personality and character.

The second part will deal with *Frankenstein*. In the first chapter I would describe the story of creation of the novel.

Mary Shelley began working on her *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, when she was only 19. This all started on Lake Geneva in 1816 when

Mary, her would-be husband, Percy Shelley and their friend Lord Byron invented a ghost-story contest. I will write about their rest and Shelley's first ideas on the novel.

In the second chapter I would give a brief summary of the book, providing quotations and comments of different critics.

Robert Walton, a captain of an English ship, writes letters to his sister Margaret. He tells her about his nautical travel to the North Pole. During a sail near Archangel in Russia his ship gets trapped in ice. There the sailors notice a figure running at superhuman speed and a man pursuing him. They take the man, Frankenstein, on board, and he tells Walton his story. Then Walton includes it in a letter to Margaret.

Frankenstein tells about his childhood in Geneva: about his parents, Alphonse Frankenstein and Caroline Beaufort. Caroline's father was a friend of Alphonse's, and after his death the young people married. Victor was their first child, and he had two younger brothers, Ernest and William. After Alphonse's sister dies, the family adopts her daughter Elizabeth and brings her up together with the other children. Victor and Elizabeth become the best friends, and together with their friend Clerval they have wonderful time.

Victor becomes interested in works by such mystical alchemists and philosophers as Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa. Elizabeth and Henry Clerval do not share his interest. Victor is fascinated by the idea of creating the elixir of eternal life.

Elizabeth falls ill, and though she recovers Caroline Frankenstein catches fever and dies soon. She says she wants Victor and Elizabeth to marry someday. After mourning the death of his mother Frankenstein enters the University of Ingolstadt. There he meets Krempe, the professor of science. The professor offers

him a modern course of reading but Frankenstein is not impressed by it. But when he meets another professor, Waldman, he regains his interest in chemistry.

Frankenstein begins to work hard, making fast progress in his studies.

Obsessed with his studies, Frankenstein neglects his family and friends. In two years he manages to discover the secret of principle of life. He wants to create a new race. On one November night he brings to life a lifeless matter. But when the creature opens its eyes, Frankenstein runs away in horror. He has a nightmare about Elizabeth who turns into his dead mother. The Creature disappears. Frankenstein is seriously ill. With the help of Clerval he recovers.

Soon, they find out about the strangling death of William, Victor's brother. Back in Geneva, Victor spots the Creature. He is sure that it killed his brother.

At the court Justine Morits, the Frankenstein's servant, is found guilty and executed. Victor accuses himself of being a true murderer.

In Mont Blanc Frankenstein meets the Creature who tells his story. He describes his sensory impressions and first experiences. He inspires terror in villagers who happen to see him. He learns some of language and learns to read. The Creature discovers his origin in Frankenstein's journal and decides to meet his creator. In Geneva he encounters a young boy, William Frankenstein, and kills him after the latter refuses to become his friend. The Creature demands Frankenstein to create a female for him.

Frankenstein is going to marry Elizabeth but at first he wants to fulfill his promise and create a mate for the Creature. But he is terrified of creating a race of devils, and that is why he destroys the female. He is relieved to escape the Creature following him but is accused of murder of Clerval. He lapses into fever for months. Then he is free of charges, and he resolves to marry Elizabeth at once. On their

wedding night Frankenstein finds Elizabeth's lifeless body. Victor's father dies. Frankenstein decides to destroy the Creature.

Two days later Walton resolves to return home to England. Frankenstein wants to continue northward but he is ill and dies. The Creature finds him and then springs out of the window into the waves.

In the third chapter there will be some comments of her contemporaries. It would be interesting to compare different approaches to the topic. It is an interesting thing that *Frankenstein* was firstly considered to be more like science fiction book. I would also compare it with the modern look on the novel, when is mainly regarded as a horror-movie staple.

In chapter four, I would give some information about different dramatizations of *Frankenstein*, as they are really numerous.

The novel went on to enjoy immediate although not unequivocal success. However, not until the production of Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* in 1823 would the tale of *Frankenstein* again stimulate the general public enough for a publisher to issue a second edition of the novel. Moreover, Peake's melodrama instigated not only the 1823 edition by G. and W. B. Whittaker, but an equal interest in dramatizing Shelley's novel. Within three years of the first performance of Peake *Presumption*, fourteen other English and French dramatizations had utilized the *Frankenstein* theme. To date over ninety dramatizations of *Frankenstein* have been undertaken. (Forry 9)

In the third part, which will be the conclusion, I will speak about the topicality of *Frankenstein* theme today as it is not merely a horror-movie staple. On some level it is as famous and popular as *Dracula* and the *Wolf Man*. But this monster is a

powerful symbol of the fear of humanity facing the results of technical progress. This problem is extremely topical today, when people regard the technologies which they created. Nobody can predict the results of such high speed of science development. It is especially true when it comes to genetic engineering, potential dangers of which are not studied yet.

This book will be about 60 pages. It can be written in a year.

The book will be interesting for wide audience. As for schoolchildren and students, it will help them in their Literature classes. It will provide interesting information which they can use in their essays and research works. As for grown-ups, who love cinema and literature, it would be interesting to read about different aspects of the story. There are many films based on *Frankenstein*, so it will be interesting for adults to read about these films and, thereafter, watch them.

There are lots of books about Mary Shelley but most of them are too specific. As for my book, it will include a biographical note, some interesting facts about the author's life and comments on her best novel. So you don't have to read many books to find out this information.

Work Cited

Forry, Steven E. *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of Frankenstein from Mary Shelley to the Present*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.