

ARTICLES

1

“Entering into the unknown”: Subverting Mary Shelley in the Teleplay *Frankenstein: The True Story*

Abhijeet Halder

Research Scholar, University of North Bengal, India

Abstract

Since its publication in 1818, the narrative of *Frankenstein* has undergone diverse interpretations and adaptations. Despite the passage of two centuries, the enduring significance of this novel remains undiminished. The span between 1910 and 1975 saw the emergence of a total of thirty-two adaptations of the Frankenstein narrative. Notably, the 1973 adaptation of the novel, jointly written by Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy, has often eluded the thorough examination it warrants. Isherwood and Bachardy reimagined Shelley’s novel, introducing a homoerotic perspective that offers an alternative lens to examine the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his creation. This interpretation of *Frankenstein* differs from the conventional reading of a strictly filial bond between the two characters. This essay aims to closely examine the 1973 teleplay *Frankenstein: The True Story*, analysing Victor Frankenstein’s relationship with his non-human/posthuman creation through the lens of a queer theory. Furthermore, the analysis will explore how the 1973 adaptation subverts the heteronormative ideology inherent in Mary Shelley’s narrative. Drawing from Butler’s theoretical stance, the essay contends that subversion serves as a political instrument to contest prevailing norms from within the framework of the narrative, thereby prompting a restructuring that highlights and questions heteronormative predispositions. This study will take a cue from the insights of

posthumanist, queer, and feminist thinkers such as Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and Lee Edelman for analysing the teleplay.

Keywords: Queer, Monster, Heteronormativity, Sexuality, Subversion.

Since the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, in 1818, countless critics and scholars have worked, reworked, interpreted, and reinterpreted the text. In the words of Susan Stryker "I have asked the Miltonic questions Shelley poses in the epigraph of her novel: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mould me man? Did I solicit thee from darkness to promote me?" With one voice, her monster and I answer "no" without debasing ourselves, for we have done the hard work of constituting ourselves on our terms, against the natural order" (250-51). *Frankenstein* is arguably one of the most researched works of fiction in literary history. From those immersed in literary studies, the cultural critics and even those within the realm of scientific inquiry (for instance, the 2017 book *Frankenstein* especially "annotated for scientists, engineers, and creators of all kinds"), Shelley's magnum opus continues to offer an enduring source of insight and inspiration. The potential of the text to address racial issues, challenge fixities, cross boundaries, and shift the normative understanding of human/nonhuman that leads to various reinterpretations of the novel; some of those interpretations also appeared in the form of film and theatre adaptations. In the process of adaptation, the 'original' narrative invariably undergoes distortions. Drawing a parallel to Frankenstein's monster, the narrative fibres woven by Mary Shelley have been torn, mended, and re-stitched to fit the contours of adaptations. Each adaptation is a rereading of the source text, and reading is, as Stanley Fish says, "an activity, something you do" (70). The reader actively participates in giving meaning to the text rather than being a passive consumer of meaning. Echoing Fish's perspective, each adaptation is new in its own way, an interpretation, a reworking, which plays with the 'purity' of the original form. Shelley's *Frankenstein* has attracted the attention of various readers and academics due to its profound exploration of themes such as monstrosity and excess, its fascination with the potentials and boundaries of power, desire, and transgression, and its inclination to cast doubt upon what is conventionally considered the "normal world" (Rigby 4). Notably, a significant number of films on *Frankenstein*, approximately thirty-two,

were produced solely between 1910 and 1975. Of all these adaptations, only a few received critical attention and wide acknowledgement. Bouriana Zakhariyeva highlights that the 1931 rendition of *Frankenstein* by James Whale stands out as particularly influential among these adaptations, imprinting upon popular culture a stereotypical representation of the monster. However, this article deals with the often ignored and overlooked 1973 adaptation of *Frankenstein*. *Frankenstein: The True Story* (1973) is a reimagining of Mary Shelley's narrative. Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy reimagined the relationship between Frankenstein and his creation, the conflict between nature and culture, the melancholic repression of the self, and finally, the reconciliation between the self and the other. This adaptation is of particular significance as it reveals much about how sexual meanings were interpreted in the 1970s. Moreover, this is one of the few adaptations that reverses the popular tradition of imposing a filial bond between Victor Frankenstein and his creation. This paper will apply the lens of queer theory to analyse how Isherwood and Bachardy subvert Mary Shelley's novel in their teleplay. According to Judith Butler's perspective, individuals who don't conform to heterosexual norms often struggle to articulate themselves using the prevailing heteronormative language, which fails to accurately represent them. Butler contends that although it is impossible to suddenly escape or change the system, it is possible to alter the system from within through subversive, performative, discursive repetitions. Therefore, the act of queering requires a subversion of the system from within. Isherwood and Bachardy's 1973 teleplay thus deals with a familiar story and subverts the normative narrative to provide an alternative space where queer, nonhuman/monstrous individuals may find a voice again. The application of 'queer theory' to any particular work of literature requires an interrogation of normative concepts of sex and gender identity and a critique of heteronormativity in all its manifestations. In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler, following the footsteps of Foucault, argues, "Heterosexuality and homosexuality are mutually exclusive phenomena, that...can only be made to coincide through rendering the one culturally viable and the other a transient and imaginary affair" (112). Following Butler's insights, it can be suggested that a queer reading enquires about the process in which

'heterosexuality' has been set as the norm and 'homosexuality' has been rendered 'abject'. This paper will also take recourse to posthumanist thinkers like Elizabeth Effinger and Patricia MacCormac to investigate further how the subversion is at work in Isherwood and Bachardy's teleplay.

In his essay on *Frankenstein*, George E. Haggerty asserts that the 'masculine birth' in Shelley's novel, among other things, is a queer act itself. But this act of creating life, as compared to 'childbirth', was, nevertheless, imbued with a traditional tone of a filial bond. However, Isherwood and Bachardy appear to have deliberately taken a stance against this heteronormative perspective within their teleplay adaptation. Nowhere in the adaptation, do they make an indication of a father-son relationship between the two characters. A reference can be drawn from the Pygmalion myth to suggest that the relationship between the creator and the creation of the same sex as filial is influenced by the patriarchal culture that has a proclivity for what Adrienne Rich calls 'compulsory heterosexuality'. In the Pygmalion myth, the protagonist, disenchanted with the perceived flaws of the female anatomy, dedicates himself to sculpting an embodiment of his ideal woman. With the lifelike beauty and perfection of the statue, Pygmalion develops a passionate desire for his creation. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, touched by his love and devotion, brings the statue to life. Pygmalion and the statue, named Galatea, marry and live happily together. In contrast, Frankenstein's creation remains unnamed throughout the novel, emphasising its isolation and lack of personal identity. A similar undertone to create a human, assembling the "best parts of the human body", is noticed in the story of *Frankenstein* as well. However, unlike Pygmalion's romantic relationship with his "ideal woman", Frankenstein's relationship with his ideal male creation is never romanticised. The idea of a creator falling in love with the creation, particularly when it involves a male creator and a female creation, resonates well with conventional notions of romance and desire between two "opposite" genders. This narrative aligns more easily with the expectations and frameworks established by, as Butler terms it, the 'heterosexual cultural matrix'. Au contraire, Frankenstein's creation of the male body, and the subsequent interpretations of their bond as filial provide a perfect example to understand how the heterosexual

cultural matrix shapes the discourse by reinforcing and privileging certain relationships while suppressing or marginalising other non-heteronormative possibilities. Even though this paper discourages seeking a filial bond between Victor and his male creation, it is worth delving deeper to propose that even the imposition of such a bond between Victor and his creation does not destroy the possibility of a homoerotic relationship. Butler, in chapter two of *Gender Trouble*, critiquing Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia", argues that even before the desire for the opposite-sex parent is repressed by the child, another repression of the desire for the same-sex parent had already taken place which is not addressed by the Symbolic. That repression is, as Butler calls, "melancholic", the repression which cannot even be "mourned". Butler writes:

In the case of a prohibited sexual union, it is the object which is denied, but not the modality of desire, so that the desire is deflected from that object onto other objects of the opposite sex. But in the case of a prohibited homosexual union, it is clear that both the desire and the object require renunciation and so become subject to the internalising strategies of melancholia... with the postulation of a bisexual set of libidinal dispositions, there is no reason to deny an original sexual love of the son for the father, and yet Freud implicitly does. (Butler 75)

According to Freud, the repression of the desire for the opposite-sex parent, or the Oedipus Complex, is responsible for the formation of an individual's ego and sexuality. Butler argues that since Freud overlooked the possibility of melancholic repression in the child, the return of the repressed might be formative of an individual's queerness. Butler further suggests that an individual's heterosexuality is consolidated only after successfully repressing homosexuality within. Butler's appropriation of Freud's essay and her postulation on the concept of melancholic repression deeply unsettles the traditional nature of the father-son-relationship just as Freud's concept of the Oedipus Complex had unsettled the traditional understanding of the mother-son-relationship. This essay, therefore, is an attempt to discover how Victor Frankenstein was not successful in repressing his homosexuality and find the gaps where his attempts at hiding his queerness slipped out.

The storyline of *Frankenstein: The True Story* does not stay 'true' to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Isherwood and Bachardy reimaged the

true story of Frankenstein, suggesting that the version that Mary Shelley had written was not what “really” happened between Frankenstein and his creation, and it was incumbent upon them to reimagine and rewrite what had happened. The subtitle “The True Story” thus works as a justification for another adaptation of *Frankenstein*. Isherwood’s *Frankenstein* begins with the accidental death of William, Victor’s brother, by drowning. The death of his brother sets Victor on an unusual journey to “raise life out of death” (*Frankenstein: The True Story* 9:10-9:13). On his journey, Victor comes across Dr. Clerval, who introduces him to the possibility of a scientific revolution that Victor has been dreaming of all along. However, before the completion of the project, Clerval dies of cardiac arrest. So, it can be argued that Isherwood works as an advocate to relieve Frankenstein’s monster of at least two murder charges that he has been accused of in Mary Shelley’s novel. In *Frankenstein: The True Story*, Victor does not abandon his creation, unlike Shelley’s Frankenstein, who is frightened at the sight of his creation. Isherwood and Bachardy imagine Victor’s creation, at least for the initial few days of his birth, as a “fresh” and “beautiful” young man. Victor makes public appearances with his creation. Victor’s use of the adjective ‘beautiful’ to describe an apparently masculine subject somehow ascribes a queer undertone to it. The traditional heterosexual cultural matrix does not typically assign the adjective ‘beautiful’ to grown male individuals. That usage of the adjective may also be read as Victor’s mind trying to make sense of his attraction for the male creation, and thus, using a ‘feminine’ adjective and feminising the beauty of the creation may allow him to make peace with the patriarchal symbolic order of his psyche. Victor collects the best body parts from fresh dead bodies and stitches them together to make his creation. A white European “ideal man” is what he aspired to create. Victor teaches him different languages, gives him lessons on table manners, and takes him to operas. However, Victor never introduces the creation as his creation to the world. On one occasion, when a lady asked Victor about his relationship with the ‘handsome young man’ (i.e., his creature), his reply, “a friend of mine from a distant country,” suggests that a filial bond with his creation was never aspired by Victor (*Frankenstein* 1:05:54-1:05:59). Moreover, the use of ‘friendship’ to describe the relationship between

the two suggests Victor's dismissal of typical roles assigned to the creator and the creation, for example, master and slave, father and son. The homoerotic nature of their relationship is best appropriated in the bond of friendship. As patriarchy allows a non-erotic bond between friends of same-sex individuals, the description of the nature of their relationship as 'friendship' helps Victor justify his bond with the "handsome young man" to the patriarchal society.

Victor hides the stitching marks on the body of his creature with pieces of clothing. However, hiding the scars soon proves futile as the creature's body starts rotting; as Dr. Clerval phrases it, "the process is reversing itself" (*Frankenstein* 46:53-46:56). However, Victor's attitude towards his creation changes as the process reverses. Unlike Shelley's monster, whom his master abandoned, Isherwood's creature escapes from his master due to Victor's agitation to accept his physical changes, his transformation into a monstrous being. Isherwood's monster is not out on a murderous rampage in search of his master. In fact, the only characters the monster intentionally kills are Dr. Polidori and Agatha/Prima (another creature made by Polidori using Frankenstein's methods). Isherwood's monster does not want a female companion for himself; thus, any attempt at "heterosexualising" the creature has been abandoned by Isherwood and Bachardy. Unlike Shelley's monster, Isherwood reimagines the monster as an entity untethered by the Lacanian Symbolic order of state since the monster never learnt the language ruled by patriarchy, although he was victimised by patriarchy and its rejection of him as who he is.

The body of Frankenstein's creature requires special attention to understand how Isherwood and Bachardy attempted to subvert the traditional understanding of Shelley's monster. Victor Frankenstein created his creature collecting the "best body parts" of humans, by stitching them together. Some critics, such as George L. Mosse, have interpreted Victor's passion for assembling beautiful body parts as originating from a homoerotic sensibility. However, Victor's concept of the ideal man is quickly shattered as he becomes aware of imperfections in his creature's skin. As Jack Halberstam has suggested the monstrosity of figures like Frankenstein's creation is carried in the skin, indicating that monstrosity becomes manifest in the physical form. Jones and Harris contend that monstrosity

transcends mere physical appearance; it serves as a warning about the potential consequences of unbridled desires and the unpredictable nature of an undisciplined and unrestrained body. Victor rejects his creation not because of its hostility towards him but because his skin shows signs of imperfection. The mirror becomes an important metaphor here: the creature sees his reflection in a broken piece of a mirror and notices how different his skin is from Victor's. This can be read as the creature's mirror stage as he has been brutally forced to realise his separation from the world, from Victor. And this realisation made him stab himself, in an attempt to destroy himself. The mirror serves as a metaphorical explanation for the shift in Victor's attitude toward the creature. Jones and Harris write, "For many gender-creative and other queerly identified people, mirrors — like families — can be sites/sights of not only the painful work of seeing the self as a creation — an unfinished becoming...but also the sites/sights of betrayal and loss" (523). Victor's rejection of his creature as his body is changing and transforming is read by many transgender theorists as the world/society's rejection of a trans individual. Frankenstein's monster represents a dynamic, living embodiment of qualities that families and society have labelled as 'ugly,' 'dangerous,' and 'perverse' — qualities that continue to fuel the policing and vilification of queer individuals today. Elizabeth Effinger reads the creature's body as a posthuman body, "a body that situates itself along the liminal zone between species, and between human and nonhuman communities" (155). Isherwood and Bachardy's posthumanist critique of the story is quite evident: Victor, as the creator of the white European Vitruvian man, can be considered an upholder of Enlightenment liberal humanism. However, Victor's horror at the transformation of the creation is a reminder that the humanist ideals are crumbling down. Even though Victor is seen as a posthuman character who "refuses to live within the boundaries of the human", his humanist ideologies become apparent in the way he treats his posthuman/nonhuman creation when "the process starts reversing", and the flesh decays. Consequently, the fissures on the creature's skin can be interpreted as culture's inability to conceal nature, in line with Timothy Morton's proposal that "Frankenstein is an ecological novel precisely not because it compels us to care for a pre-existing notion of nature, but it

questions the very idea of nature" (qtd in Effinger 155). Morton goes on to suggest that "we identify with the monstrous thing; we ourselves are 'tackily' composed of assorted bits and pieces" (195). Victor's monster is made monstrous because of Victor's inability to accept him. Thus, Frankenstein's monster is a construction — a figure that signifies selves and ways of living the world cannot bear to see. The monstrous is misunderstood, deformed, destructive, and queer. As Effinger says, Frankenstein's monster "is our posthumanist kin, someone or something with whom we identify on the uncanny grounds of our shared messiness" (155).

Victor's relation to Dr. Clerval is also subject to many speculations. The relationship between the two can be read as queer, not adhering to the traditional understanding of relationships between two men. Since the very introduction of the character, Clerval has been described as a "strange man" (14:42). Victor succeeded in giving birth only because of Clerval's extensive research. Metaphorically, Clerval's creative fluid made the birth of "a living, breathing man" possible. It has to be noted that Clerval first takes Victor to a secluded place, a "haunted" place that tends to evade public attention. This space assumes a queer quality as Victor ventures into it alongside Clerval. Clerval's discomfort at the presence of Elizabeth could suggest his preference for male companionship and reluctance to share Victor with a woman. Victor's act of transferring the brain of Clerval to his creature may be read as Victor's attempt to bring Clerval back to life, as a lover's attempt to bring his beloved back. Ulla Kerren, in her thesis, argues that the space shared by Victor and Clerval was homosocial in nature. According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, homosociality and homosexuality exist in the same continuum, with social bonding at one end and homosexuality at the other. The fear of homosexuality is averted in male-dominated homosocial spaces mostly by increasing imposition of homophobia. Therefore, a queer reading would suggest that Victor's engagement with Elizabeth is an attempt to avert the attention of a homosocial, homophobic culture in which heterosexuality is "compulsory". So, Elizabeth seems to represent a closet in which Victor seeks safe refuge from the homophobic world. Sedgwick argues that "a woman often appears in scenes where two men are represented together in order divert the threat of

homosexual possibility” (qtd. in Rigby 103). The scene where Elizabeth suddenly shows up at Clerval and Victor’s place and kills a butterfly that they had created seems to serve a special purpose. The killing of the butterfly can be read as the act of killing a queer possibility between the two men. Elizabeth’s fear of the butterfly suggests the horror of heteronormative society at the sight of a queer act. Kerren argues that Sedgwick’s continuum makes it “possible to think of men as having homoerotic desires while still being heterosexual” (39). Therefore, Victor’s relationship with Clerval and later with his Creature (as the Creature is an extension of Clerval) can be considered homoerotic and thus queer. According to Halberstam, Victor’s homoeroticism becomes evident through his “voluntary exclusion from friends and family in pursuit of the secret of creating life” (qtd. in Kerren 41). Building on Sedgwick’s theory, which posits that homosexuality was the most significant secret in the nineteenth century, Kerren interprets Victor’s rejection of his creature as a rejection of his homosexuality. In other words, Kerren contends that “Victor’s homosexual desires turn into homophobia” (41).

Victor’s visit to a church and his confession seems to be crucial to understand Victor’s trouble in dealing with his guilt, the guilt of being a posthuman, the guilt of giving male birth, and more specifically, the guilt of being queer. Soon after Victor notices the signs of decay in the creature’s organs, he visits the church to absolve himself of his sins. It should be noted that Christianity always considered homosexuality a sin. Victor’s creature worked as his reflection for quite some time, so the imperfection in the creature’s body might have also made Victor aware of his imperfections. Victor’s forsaking of his creature can be interpreted as the forsaking of his queerness. The sense of guilt, the constricting result of the Superego, ultimately found a way to repress Victor’s Ego and Id, particularly his homosexuality. However, as Freud has argued, the repressed does not always stay repressed—Victor’s creature returns, and with him, the horror of Victor’s homosexuality. In Victor’s creature, Victor saw his failure, his imperfections, and his impurity. Critics like Eric Daffron and Mair Rigby suggest that the monster results from Victor’s inability to accept the “ugly” side of his creation and, in effect, the “ugly” side of himself. The creature becomes an abject figure, a “terror-inspiring receptacle for social fears and deep

personal revulsions" (Jones and Harris 520). The monster is a part of Victor and also not a part of Victor. The monster is a threat to Victor's façade of heterosexuality. Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection is relevant here. She suggests that abjection occurs at the margins of a culture where established meanings become destabilized. These marginal spaces, according to Kristeva, can "disturb identity, system, order". The recurring presence of the creature in Victor's life serves to disrupt the meanings and norms constructed by a heteronormative society. Understanding the concept of abjection is crucial in grasping the horror associated with the creature and the broader horror linked to queerness in the narrative.

'Abjection' comes from the Latin 'Abicere', which means to 'throw away' or 'to cast off, away, or out'. Rina Arya notes in her book *Abjection and Representation*,

The terms 'abject' and 'abjection' can be used in different but related senses to refer to an operation (to make abject) and a condition (abjection). In the first sense, abjection refers to an impulse or operation to reject that which disturbs or threatens the stability of the self and is unassimilable...secondly, it refers to the 'wretched condition' of being in this state, when one has experienced the abject or has been rendered abject. (Arya 3)

The monster threatens the stability of Victor's self. In the monster, Victor identifies his own self, which he renders abject. The abject does not fit neatly into the categories of subject or object but embodies qualities of both. It exists in an intermediate state, where it cannot be completely separated from the subject (as an object would be) and lingers in an object-like manner without becoming an object. Victor's neatly formed boundaries are under threat because of his creation, which he cannot get rid of as an object, as an 'other'. The sight of the monster at Victor's wedding thus horrifies Victor as his 'heterosexual' structure, as symbolised by his marriage with Elizabeth, is under threat. Isherwood and Bachardy twist Shelley's narrative and refuse to make another vengeful Frankenstein monster for the world. In the teleplay, Dr. Polidori takes the monster to Victor's wedding. However, the monster is not allowed entrance to the wedding venue. The guards' reaction, "get this monstrosity out of here" (1:52:22 – 23), captures the sentiment of heteronormative society at the sight of queer 'others'. The creature is dubbed

'monstrous' because of the deformity of his flesh and skin. However, after the wedding party, as Polidori shocks Victor, taking him to the carriage where the creature is waiting, the creature greets Victor by pulling the mask off his face. The mask seems to be quite a literal symbol here, which represents the mask Victor has put on to hide from the eyes of patriarchy. Isherwood and Bachardy imagine telling the 'true' story of Frankenstein by unmasking Victor's monster, Victor's "other self", the abject. Arya, drawing on Kristeva, notes:

The abject hovers at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable but is itself unassimilable, which means that we have to contemplate its otherness in its proximity to us but without it being able to be incorporated. It is the 'other' that comes from within...that we have to reject and expel in order to protect our boundaries. We are unable to rid ourselves of it completely and it continues to haunt our being. (Arya 4)

Victor tries to reject and expel the monster to "protect" his boundary, but the monster has returned to haunt his being. The inability to get rid of the monster and the awareness that it is a part of him (his creation) horrifies Victor. Abject things are unable to be ingested or incorporated into the Symbolic; they always remain a threat. The monster, as abject, defines Victor's identity. The monster embodies elements that are at the heart of Victor's being. Following Arya's argument, "Fear of the other is central to abjection" it can be suggested that Victor's fear emerges from his "deep-rooted" fear of the monster-in-the-self, his queer self that he wants to expel. However, the last scene of *Frankenstein: The True Story*, the "reunion" of Victor and the monster, as they walk towards each other with wide arms as if to embrace each other, suggests that Victor finally accepts his Creature before his final moment of death. This ending implies that Victor can only be truly free in death; only before death could Victor look at the heart of his 'self', and by embracing his creation, Victor could "feel alive". Various moments in the teleplay indicate that even though Victor is repulsed by his creation, Victor is unwilling to take away his life. Victor runs after his Creature to prevent him from jumping off a cliff, and when Polidori hypnotises the creature, inducing a deep sleep, Victor wakes him up and saves him just before Polidori's servants attempt to kill him by throwing him into a large tub of deadly chemical potion. Victor's unwillingness to kill his creation and his saving the monster from death suggests his

unwillingness to destroy his queer self, the self that he does not want to acknowledge.

Queer and transgender theorists have appropriated Kristeva's theorisation of abjection to understand how queer and trans* individuals are rendered abject and thrown to the margins. Victor's cause of horror at the sight of the monster can be read as the horror of patriarchal society at the sight of queer and trans* individuals. Meredith L. Ruff notes, "The lack of a complete symbol causes horror. In order to combat fear, subjects invest in meaning-making" (Ruff 11). Patriarchy embodies the Symbolic order, the language, and the meaning-making process. Patriarchy, in order to render queerness abject, keeps it away from the Symbolic. The self's inability to understand the abject causes horror in the being. Another crucial aspect of Victor's creature is that it does not have a name, implying that it was denied entry into the Symbolic. Victor's creature is impure, and impurity upsets order (the Symbolic). "Impurity as something that upsets order, is a cause of abjection" (Ruff 12). The monster is a collection of different bodies and entities, an assimilation that is 'unassimilable'. Ruff writes,

Impurity...is often accompanied by disgust which typically relates to the mixing of separate entities...undoing borders culminates in intermingling of different elements now impure. The resulting instability, the fact that the elements can no longer be separated out to make sense as singular pieces, is an aspect of abjection. (Ruff 12)

When Polidori asks the monster his name, the monster's reply, "My name is Legion, for we are many" bears the Christian undertone that dubs the queer body as 'evil' and 'impure' (*Frankenstein* 1:49:41-1:49:45). The monster thus becomes a symbol for many (trans individuals, queer, disabled, black, the marginalised others). The "monster" has to be otherwise, marginalised, and 'cast away' so that the boundary of the Law and Order can be marked. The monster, the abjection, cannot be found inside or outside that order; it belongs to a liminal space and destabilises the Law.

In his book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman posits the social abject, the queer as an isolated figure, what he terms 'the sinthomosexual'. For Lacan, 'symptoms' or 'sinthomes' are those fissures in the Symbolic where its very structure is revealed. These fissures can be likened to dark holes within cultural coherence;

peering into them reveals the entire rationale behind that culture. Edelman's sinthomosexual serves as a vehicle for exposing everything that culture seeks to conceal. In this sense, the sinthomosexual acts as the very mask that unravels culture's foundations. The fissures on the creature's body thus may be considered Lacanian 'sinthomes', which revealed the true nature of his skin to Victor. For these fissures, the creature was dubbed 'monstrous', and consequently, a 'monster'. Like the queer, the monster can be regarded as Edelman's sinthomosexual, the entity the culture wants to expel. The monster resists any possibility of cultural articulation. The monster, the sinthomosexual, is driven by the death drive, which threatens the Symbolic order. Queer is thus a threat to patriarchal society. And the monster is, therefore, a manifestation of what society has created and thrown away. The monster is thus unapologetically a symbol for queer, trans* individuals who have been oppressed systemically by the society. This paper, therefore, is an attempt to show how essentialist concepts such as heterosexuality and humanism are full of inherent contradictions and ambiguities. Queering the teleplay, therefore, results in the unmasking of the very structure of society with its 'ugly', impure sites. The posthuman aspect of the teleplay is revealed in the deconstruction of the category of the human. Isherwood and Bachardy point out how the 'nonhuman' is dubbed 'monstrous' because of its physical differences from the ideal human. This teleplay is a comment on the dehumanisation aspects of humanist ideologies, which marginalises any individual who deviates from the norm. However, the teleplay ends on a hopeful note with Victor and the monster walking towards each other with arms wide open, which might be a symbolic representation of a life where humans finally accept their nonhuman and queer selves and lives in harmony with each other.

Notes

1. "Entering into the Unknown" is a quote from *Frankenstein: The True Story* (1973), directed by Jack Smight, Screenplay by Don Bachardy and Christopher Isherwood. 49:26-49:28.

Works Cited

- Arya, R. *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
- . *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. Routledge, 1993.
- Effinger, Elizabeth. "Romanticism and Critical Posthumanism". *Palgrave Handbook of Critical Posthumanism*, Springer International Publishing, 2022, pp. 145–165. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04958-3_5
- Fish, Stanley. "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics." *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Ed. Jane P. Tompkins. Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1980, pp. 70 - 100.
- Haggerty, George E. "What Is Queer About Frankenstein?" *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*, by Andrew Smith, Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 116–27.
- Halberstam, Jack. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Durham UP, 1995.
- Isherwood, Christopher and Don Bachardy. *Frankenstein: The True Story*. Directed by Jack Smight, 1973.
- Jones, Stacy Holman, and Anne Harris. "Monsters, Desire and the Creative Queer Body". *Continuum*, vol. 30, no. 5, Informa UK Limited, Sept. 2016, pp. 518–530, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2016.1210748>.
- Kerren, Ulla. *Victor's Body: Male Hysteria and Homoeroticism in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Kenneth Branagh's Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. 10 Jan. 2014. Linnaeus University, Master's Thesis.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Rigby, Mair. *Monstrous Desire: Frankenstein and the Queer Gothic*. 30 Mar. 2006. Cardiff University, PhD thesis. <https://core.ac.uk/download/443999106.pdf>.
- Ruff, L. Meredith. "Rude Noises": *Homocore, Unsettling the Symbolic, and Enjoying Abjection*. 2016. Whitman College, Dissertation.
- Stryker, Susan. "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1994, pp. 237-254.