Frankenstein's Fixations: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Childhood, Sexuality, and Outsiders

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By using Frankenstein by Mary Shelley as a case study, my project explores readers’ and characters’ experiences with others that might appear as a threat. Furthermore, I intend to deconstruct the ambiguity of relations with others and the self based on the concepts of the sublime and uncanny affect. My argument displays how isolating a living being from society recapitulates a cycle of unconscious abuse. Due to the different critical approaches in relation to the unconscious and the unreachable double, it is difficult to find research in literature that approaches familial and sexual relationships that incorporate the two simultaneously. I attempted to fill this gap. Victor Frankenstein creates a child-like figure and becomes disgusted when his feminine parental role begins. Moreover, the creature is the submissive double who yearns to overcome his master and perpetuates rage in the cycle of abuse. Victor’s own issues with neglect manifest from trauma that he then subjects the creature to. The lack of womanhood and the lack of a mother for Frankenstein and his creature create the need to, respectively, dominate and destroy the feminine presences they can never fully obtain. While expanding upon Freud’s notion of the uncanny and Lacan’s explication of the sublime, my research explores Dr. Frankenstein’s womb envy, a concept from Karen Horney’s studies, and Frankenstein’s monster’s place within the Lacanian mirror stage. The uncanny affect is that which arises from all that is similar unconsciously to the point of becoming consciously peculiar. Frankenstein experiences this phenomenon in regards to his creature. The sublime is represented through Frankenstein’s creature since he is the double of Frankenstein who is simultaneously impossible for Frankenstein to completely conquer and destroy. The readers’ critiques of the literature is represented by real life occurrences of abuse in critics’ and the author’s own lives.