"Unveiling the Concept of Androgyny in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein"

Marjana Mukherjee. M.A[1] & Dr. Joydeep Banerjee[2]

Abstract

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) has been critically analyzed from both masculine and feminine aspects.In this paper, my focus will be to highlight the fact that all the characters do try to conform to their socially assigned roles of being a male or a female but very often they are not able to hide their androgynous state of possessing both male and female characteristics. This paper tends to highlight the endeavor on the part of the female author to seek equality by consciously diminishing the concept of male superiority over the female and portraying that both function simultaneously in an individual and thus there is a conscious blurring of the differences. It focuses primarily on the imbalance that is caused if one tries to negate the role of androgyny. Harmony can be attained only in unification.

In 1890, Florence Fenwick Miller (1854-1935), a midwife turned journalist, described woman's position concisely:

"Under exclusively man-made laws women have been reduced to the most abject condition of legal slavery in which it is possible for human beings to be held…..under the arbitrary domination of another's will, and dependent for decent treatment exclusively on the goodness of heart of the individual master".(From a speech to the National Liberal Club).

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[1] Research Scholar at National Institute of Technology, Durgapur, India.
Email id: marjana.mukherjee86@gmail.com, Ph.no.-+91 9874325295
[2] Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at National Institute of Technology, Durgapur, India. Email id- jbnitdgp@gmail.com, Ph.no.-+91 9434788054

Middle-class women who wanted to write were hampered by the conventional image of ladies as submissive, pious, gentle, loving, serene, domestic angels; they had to overcome the conventional patronizing, smug, contemptuous sentimentalizing of women by reviewers like George Henry Lewes, who looked down on women writers:

"Women's proper sphere of activity is elsewhere [than writing]. Are there no husbands, lovers, brothers, friends to coddle and console? Are there no stockings to darn, no purses to make, no braces to embroider? *My* idea of a perfect woman is one who can write but won't… Your path is the path of perdition; your literary impulses are the impulses of Satan. Burn your pens and purchase wool"(68).

Those women who overcame the restrictions imposed by their social roles and did write found it more difficult to challenge or reject society's assumptions and expectations than their male counterparts. Women authors wrote in the discourse of their male contemporaries because the patriarchal education system had trained them to read from the men's point of view as they are promoted as universal even though they are clearly male-centered. Women's texts were rejected by the male critics because of lack of originality or substance. Thus, if women authors wanted their works to be accepted then they had to write in accordance to the male generated concept of writing. Another way adopted by women was to opt for a masculine pen name or stay anonymous and thus keep their identity hidden. In a world wrought with a history of sexism and gender inequality, female writers have hidden their true gender behind the veil of masculine pen names for centuries so that their work was taken seriously in an era when authoresses were looked on with severe prejudice. A few instances are Mary Ann Evans writing under the pen name of George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte published her works under the masculine name Currer Bell, Emily Bronte opted for the male name of Ellis Bell and so on.

As observed by Daniel Lewis, representations of masculinities found in texts written by women authors highlight the dire need to negotiate a place for female authors within a male-dominated industry specifically and within a male-dominated society in general.In male-dominated society, female-authored representations of masculinity must deal with the dominant representations of male gender identity represented by men, and that they must do it, as Pratt describes, through a process wherein they —select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture. This follows Judith Butler's theory of how texts work against hegemony by repeating and perverting the language found in the dominant discourse.

Occasionally, we also find that these texts written by female authors adopt thesematerials to reinforce patriarchy rather than attempting to destabilize and warp the gender hierarchy. These texts are not merely progressive or reactionary, they are representing masculinities that sometimes reflect aspects of the current patriarchal order while simultaneously attempting to disrupt other aspects of that system. Early in the article Pykett asks, "[w]hat kinds of narratives about women, gender and sexuality did women write once they had the advantage of telling their own story in fiction, poetry, magazine articles, conduct books, pamphlets, biographies and autobiographies? Were these stories in fact their own, or did the women writers of the nineteenth century still write to a male or masculinist script?"(78).

Pykett argues that women's writing was —to a great extent shaped by male-controlled or masculinist institutions of publishing and by a gendered critical discourse which was fairly comprehensively internalized by female writers and reviewers. A look at female-authored representations of masculinity shows that these texts, at times, contest as well as support hegemonic definitions of masculine gender identity for the working, middle, and upper-classes. Thus, Pykett appeals to move beyond the restricting binaries help us to gauge the labyrinthine role played by women authors and the cumbersome and opposing ways in which literature has tried to change or consolidate the traditional notion of gender roles.

Women authors were not in a position to defy the conventional norms of patriarchy considering their position in the male-dominated society. Most lived in a state which was a little better than slavery. They had to obey men, because in most cases men held all the resources and women had no independent means of subsistence. Girls received less education than boys, were barred from universities, and could obtain only low-paid jobs. Women's sole purpose was to marry and reproduce. If a woman was unhappy with her situation there was, almost without exception, nothing she could do about it. Signs of rebellion were swiftly crushed by fathers, husbands, even brothers. Judge William Blackstone had announced that husbands could administer "moderate correction" to disobedient wives, and there were other means: as late as 1895, Edith Lanchester's father had her kidnapped and committed to a lunatic asylum for cohabiting with a man. In her *Autobiography*, Margaret Oliphant makes clear her awareness that she participated in a tradition of female authorship rather than accepting the roles sketched out by society for women:

"I had no table even to myself, much less a room to work in, but sat at the corner of my family table with my writing-book, with everything going on as if I had been making a shirt instead of writing a book…. Miss Austen I believe wrote in the same way…. The family were half ashamed to make it known that she was not just a young lady like others, doing her embroidery."(23-24)

Thus, the social scenario made it difficult for women to assert their individuality. Rebelling against the norm was simply out of the question for a work to gain recognition. So it was seen that most women authors tried to opt for a balance in their writing by either promoting masculinity or equating man and woman on the same platform. The latter was veiled and rarely done. A close analysis of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*helps us reaffirm this view.

*Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*was first published in 1818by the small London publishing house of Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones. It was issued anonymously, with a preface written for Mary by Percy Bysshe Shelley and with a dedication to philosopher William Godwin, her father. It was published in an edition of just 500 copies in three volumes, the standard "triple-decker" format for 19th-century first editions.The second edition of *Frankenstein* was published on 11 August 1822 in two volumes (by G. and W. B. Whittaker) following the success of the stage play *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* by Richard BrinsleyPeake; this edition credited Mary Shelley as the author.On 31 October 1831, the first "popular" edition in one volume appeared, published by Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley.This edition was heavily revised by Mary Shelley, partially because of pressure to make the story more conservative, and included a new, longer preface by her, presenting a somewhat embellished version of the genesis of the story.

This takes us back to my previous discussion where I have already noted that a woman had to write anonymously for her work to gain recognition. She reveals her identity only when she feels that the ground beneath her feet is strong enough for her to disclose herself. An acknowledgment of Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Godwin is obligatory to acknowledge her acceptance of male supremacy. Mary Shelley, daughter of the feminist philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft, was born with the seeds of defiance although her father ensured that she was kept away from the philosophy of her mother as outlined in works such as *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* Mary Shelley was well aware of her financial dependence on her husband and thus gives the entire credit of her work to her husband:

"I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet but for his incitement, it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world" (xi)

Shelley began writing *Frankenstein* in the company of her lover Percy Shelley, Lord Byron and his physician John Polidori. It has been suggested that the influence of this group, and particularly that of Shelley and Byron, affected her portrayal of male characters in the novel. As Ann Campbell writes:

"[The] characters and plot of <u>Frankenstein</u> reflect . . . Shelley's conflicted feelings about the masculine circle which surrounded her."

The author's introduction in the novel highlights her passion for writing and her repugnance at the social norms which prevented her perceptions from taking a place in her writing for the fear of rejection. Shelley writes:

"It is not singular that, as the daughter of two persons of distinguished literary celebrity, I should very early in life have thought of writing….My dreams were at once more fantastic and agreeable than my writings….What I wrote was intended at least for one other eye – my childhood's companion and friend; but my dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody; they were my refuge when annoyed – my dearest pleasure when free"(vii).

Percy Bysshe Shelley was undoubtedly the one who used to coax her into writing but it was primarily to guide her in her task and thus reinforce the prevailing notion of a woman's complete dependence on a man. She says:

"….he desired that I should write, not so much with the idea that I could produce anything worthy of notice, but that he might himself judge how far I possessed the promise of better things hereafter" (viii).

Mary Shelley's writing of *Frankenstein* is probably her effort to break away from the traditional ideas of superiority of one gender over the other and to fortify the proposition of Carl Jung who postulates that each individual has both masculine and feminine components of the psyche.

For a male the feminine component is the anima, and for a female it is the animus. Part and parcel of human biological and psychological development is this mixture of masculine and feminine energies (124).

For MacInnes,masculinity's ever-widening adoption is an irrelevance which solves nothing andmay even create a whole new raft of confusions. He argues that masculinityexists in the first place only as a fantasy about what men should be like, achimerical construction to help people order and make sense of their lives.Shifting to the plural form makes absolutely no difference, therefore, since'just as there is no such thing as masculinity, neither are there any such thingsas masculinities'(40).

According to John Beynon, although in the past it was held that men were naturallymore powerful, competitive and successful in sport, business and far better equipped to operate in the 'real world' outside the home thanwomen. The west still resonates this where atough, heroic, mythic masculinity is deeply ingrained in the national psyche,ironically at a time when its limitations have been cruelly exposed by feministsand others. In thinking of 'masculinity-as-enactment' it must be remembered thatthose who do not perform their masculinity in a culturally approved mannerare liable to be ostracized, even punished (22).

It is often now asserted that the modern concepts of masculinity and femininity are becomingmore fluid and that, men and women are increasingly occupying a sharedmiddle place. The evidence for this assertion that men are becoming morelike women and women more like men is somewhat tenuous and is usuallybased on isolated instances. For example:

- Housefathers' taking responsibility for home and hearth while the femalepartner goes out to work.
- Women breaking through the 'glass ceiling' and attaining high positionsin the professions, running organizations and institutions and adopting a 'masculine' demeanor.
- Groups of young women drinking heavily and behaving in a 'laddish' manner in city 'night spots'.
- Strong men breaking down and crying (especially in sport, as witness theEnglish footballer Paul Gascoigne (Gazza) and the German world motorracing champion Michael Schumacher) (23-24).

Margaret Fuller questioned the categories of gender. There cannot be a completely 'masculine' male, just as there is no truly 'feminine' female; each contains a bit of the other. Fuller was the first who propounded the concept of androgyny that later took a major theoretical move in the late 20th century criticism. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* Fuller says:

 "Let us have one creative energy, one incessant revelation. Let it take what form it will, and let us not bind it by the past to man or woman, black or white."(76).

Androgyny is a theme that saturates much of Margaret Fuller's poetry. This was asubject of great interest to Fuller, as she deeply believed that woman and man "are the twohalves of one thought [. . .] [and] the development of one cannot be effected (*sic*) without that of the other"(192). One of Fuller's most memorable quotes on the theme of androgyny can be found in the text of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*:

"Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman"(75).

Although this was a very progressive and controversial notion during the mid-nineteenth century, Fuller completely believed that the "masculine traits" she possessed were an essential part of her physical makeup, and without them she would not be a complete person (288). She was considered to be a progressive feminist who devoted her life in altering the traditional norms and placing females on a more equal premise with their male analogue.

Virginia Woolf argued, building on the psychological theories of Carl Jung, that – "in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought"(623).

The best artists were always a combination of the man and the woman, as Virginia Woolf termed it:

"Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mindthat is purely feminine [. . .]. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must bewoman-manly or man-womanly"(623).

This androgynous state is further explored in Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*, where the masculine and feminine as mind take different turns in the same body. Later French feminists such as Helene Cixous in *les lettres de monpère* would embellish this notion of androgyny.

Mary Shelley was not in a position to openly defy the traditional patriarchal system because she was abandoned by her society due to the reputation of her famous parentage and later because of her relationship with Percy Shelley and Lord Byron. She was castigated by her father, who felt that she "had been guilty of a crime". This left the seventeen year old Mary, who was not yet a wife and no longer a mother, insecure and tremendously dependent on Percy for emotional support and familial commitment. But he was eager to live out his theory of "free love". Thus, her disgust and defiance had to be veiled under a garb of obedience and adulation as she was left with only a few kindred souls whom she couldn't bear to lose. Upon close examination we find that all the works of Mary Shelley contain some amount of autobiographical elements which help us to decipher her outlook towards life in general and more specifically towards men.

Written during the late summer and autumn of 1819, when Mary was struggling with the depression from the deaths of two children in nine months, *Mathilda* is depicted as angry, elegiac, full of self-accusations, and filled with self-pity. Like Mary Shelley, Mathilda's birth causes the death of her mother, who has only shortly before been euphorically wedded to Mathilda's father. Mathilda is abandoned by her father and left forsaken and detested, growing up with an unrelenting aunt in Scotland. Though Godwin had forgiven Mary for her elopement, he still remained impassive and failed to lessen her pain of losing William in 1819. The portrayal of the relationship of Mathilda with the poet of "exceeding beauty", whom she meets in Scotland, clearly brings forth Mary Shelley's awareness of her contribution to the distance that had developed between her and Percy at this time.

As Neumann points out, *Valperga* shares with *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda* the theme of "initiation--or fall--from the innocent, happy illusions of childhood into the reality of adulthood with its knowledge of loneliness, pain, and death". In the novel Euthanasia apprehended that her lover, of whom she had "made a god ... believing every virtue and every talent to live in his soul," was in reality deceitful, cruel, and self-serving. Conceived partly out of a desire to immortalize Percy, the figure of Adrian, Earl of Windsor, is a Romantic idealist, lofty, full of courage and self-sacrificing beliefs. He is a republican who dreams of the day when countries will "throw off the iron yoke of servitude, poverty will quit us, and with that, sickness." In the midst of epidemic and disease he expresses hope for liberty and peace, the union and cooperation of all mankind. But, though he is a paragon, he remains single, unable to find his soul mate. Mellor points out the ambivalence toward Percy Shelleymanifested in the portrait of Adrian. Adrian resembles Percy in appearance. He is a "tall, slim, fair boy, with a physiognomy expressive of the excess of sensibility and refinement"; he seems angelic, with his gold "silken hair," and "beaming countenance." Benevolent, sincere, and devoted to love and poetry, he nevertheless is impractical and excessively emotional. Implicit in the portrait, argues Mellor, is a criticism of Percy as a narcissistic egoist insensitive to the needs of his wife and children.

Shelley's most appreciated work and my main area of investigation is *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus.* The book, upon close scrutiny, highlights Mary Shelley's endeavor to disrupt the traditional perception of gender roles and formulate another by showing both masculine and feminine attributes in the same individual. This was her way of defying the patriarchal system and asserting the invincible role played by women in society.As Elizabeth Fay writes, Shelley shows the 'realistic weaknesses and frailties' of men in the novel.

Societal framework has taught us certain rules which we consider as normal as far as issues of gender are in question. Writers such as Pleck and Sawyer argue that men learn too well to repress joy and tenderness, so much so that 'the eventual result of our not expressing emotion is not to experience it'(26). Therefore, expressing emotions, showing tenderness, shedding tears, feeling scared and so on are all feminine traits. A man must be able to support a woman both emotionally and financially. A woman is always the 'damsel in distress' who has to lean on the strong shoulders of her man for support and sustenance as he is the more intelligent one. She is the 'mother' whose sole duty is to take care of the man.

The first character introduced in the novel is Robert Walton. His ambition to discover 'uncharted territories', is opinionated because his chief ambition is to achieve 'dominion…over the elemental foes of our race'. He desires adoration and power. Walton possesses certain feminine characteristics, such as his distaste for violence: '. . . my best years [having been] spent under your gentle and feminine fosterage, has so refined the groundwork of my character that I cannot overcome an intense distaste to the usual brutality exercised on board ship' (19). In his letter to Mrs. Saville, his sister, he states-"I may receive your letters on some occasions when I need them most to support my spirits" (21). He writes adoringly of 'the stranger's' 'conciliating and gentle' manners, 'unparalleled eloquence', nobility and 'cultivated' mind. Shelley is commenting on the stupidity of male hubris, which she 'sensed in the scientific ambitions of Romantics such as her husband,' as the critic James W. Maerten has suggested. Maerten writes also of Anthony Easthope, who has drawn: 'a circular fortress as a model of the . . . masculine ego. Ego . . . is entrapped in its own defenses, unable to escape the barriers it has raised against a universe [which is] an enemy." Towards the end of the novel, we find Walton emotionally breaking down while narrating the fate of Victor to his sister: "All that I should express would be inadequate and feeble. My tears flow; my mind is overshadowed by a cloud of disappointment" (207).

Caroline Frankenstein 'possessed a mind of uncommon mould' which was also 'soft and benevolent'; she is compared to a 'fair exotic' flower which is sheltered by Alphonse. She is the idealized mother, a figure that Shelley viewed wistfully, as her own mother died when she was ten days old to be replaced by a disinterested stepmother. Caroline efficiently looked after her father during his illness. She stuck to her feminine role and "attended him with the greatest tenderness". She defied the social conventions and immediately opted for her "animus", i.e. her masculine role, when "she saw with despair that their little fund was rapidly decreasing and that there was no other prospect of support….her courage rose to support her in her adversity. She procured plain work; she plaited straw and by various means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life" (32). The term "courage" was probably veiled as a synonym for her masculine persona.

Alphonse, from the very beginning stuck to his masculine role of behaving as "a protecting spirit to the poor girl (Caroline)" (32). His magnanimity is portrayed in his love for Caroline as "everything was made to yield to her wishes and her convenience" (33).

But he was not devoid of a deep rooted fear, which usually goes against the norms of masculinity. Here Shelley does not leave the opportunity of mentioning that Alphonse was previously jilted in love- "perhaps during former years he had suffered from the late discovered unworthiness of one beloved"(32) and all his tenderness might be due to his fear of being rejected again.

In Annis Pratt's words, "androgyneity is a delightful interchange between qualities usually set in opposition to one another"(442). Woolf's description of the androgynous aims for a compatible and universal way of thinking: "If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her (624). Woolf shows that there are indeed acts that make up a gender, and consequently she seems to deny the existence of a gender core, following Butler's statement that "the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all"(522).

Victor Frankenstein, the male protagonist of the novel, unabashedly exhibits his feminine traits. He blatantly states that his parents decided his course of action – "When I had attained the age of seventeen my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt" (42). Both Anne Mellor in "The Female in Frankenstein" and William Veeder in "Frankenstein: Self-Division and Projection"discuss Victor Frankenstein's hubris in trying to eliminate the female as he attempts to win eternal fame as the founder of a new line of superhuman. But I feel that it was Victor's realisation of the feminine within him which led to this experiment. He feels "Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world….No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs," as he would also play the role of the mother (52). This 'dark world' is unaware of the dualities that exist within an individual. Hence, the 'light' would help people peep within and look at the presence of the other entity. To avoid controversy and assert her capability as a writer, Shelley had to conform to the tradition and thus portray the failure of Victor's experiment.

After the death of William, Alphonse urges Victor to 'return and be our comforter', the kind of role usually assigned to a man. But Victor observes – "At these moments I wept bitterly and wished that peace would revisit my mind only that I might affordthem consolation and happiness. But that could not be" (87).

We find various instances where Victor weeps bitterly and leans on the female characters for support. Throughout we see Victor as the 'damsel in distress' and thus subverts the concept of masculinity.

Victor's acknowledgement of his feminine traits dominating over his masculine nature leads him to crave formale company more than that of the female. Victor is more attached to Henry. When he departs for Ingolstadt we see that Henry holds the hand of Victor whereas Elizabeth entreats him to write to her often. Physical intimacy between Victor and Elizabeth is purposely avoided and shown with Henry to subvert the traditional notion of gender roles. Victor's love for Henry again comes to the forefront when he comes to meet Victor at Ingolstadt – "Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval….I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune" (58). This idea is further strengthened when we find that Victor constantly delays his marriage with Elizabeth. Robert Walton confirms the same motif when he desires a male companion. Walton exclaims – "I desire the company of a man who could sympathise with me, whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend" (18). The description of his friend also highlights the presence of the duality – "…gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind…."(18).

Elizabeth, 'the angel in the house', conforms to her feminine characteristics supported by her 'saintly soul'. Victor considers her to be his trophy, a thing to be proud of, a place to assert his superiority – "Elizabeth as mine – mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her I received as made to a possession of my own" (35). But throughout the novel we find that Elizabeth is the one who constantly acts as the pillar and mentorof the male characters in the novel. The death of Caroline shatters Victor whereas Elizabeth 'veiled her grief and strove to act the comforter' (43). She opts for the masculine role of repressing emotions – "She forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make us forget" (43). There isn't a single instance in the entire novel where we find Victor comforting the distressed Elizabeth. But it is Elizabeth who bravely holds the hand of Victor to embolden his spirits. "Even as she spoke I drew near to her, as if in terror, lest at that very moment the destroyer had been near to rob me of her" (89).

Henry Clerval, friend of Victor, dreamt "to become one among those whose names are recorded in story as the gallant and adventurous benefactors of our species" (37). But this masculine trait was over clouded when he failed in his endeavour to persuade his father to allow him to go with Victor for academic enrichment. Thus, Henry's desire being dependent on his father's decision reminds us of the famous maxim which states that a girl is to depend on her father, then husband and in later ages her son.During Victor's illness, 'Henry was my only nurse' (60). He even shuns Elizabeth and confidently opts for the feminine role as "he knew I could not have a more kind and attentive nurse than himself" (60).

Justine, although a minor character, wonderfully plays her part in projecting her masculine traits of courage and perseverance. Even on the verge of death she "assumed an air of cheerfulness, while she with difficulty repressed her bitter tears" (84). She provided comfort to others and was able to repress her own depression in a brave manner. She projects herself as one having a sense of perseverance greater than any man, as Victor says – "The poor victim, who on the morrow was to pass the awful boundary between life and death, felt not, as I did, such deep and bitter agony" (84). Thus, we see a reversal of the masculine and feminine roles as outlined by society.

Felix and Agatha conform to their individual roles as dictated by custom. "The young woman (Agatha) arranged the cottage and prepared the food, and the youth (Felix) departed after the first meal….The young man was constantly employed out of doors, and the girl in various laborious occupations within" (105). Thus, the domestic sphere remains closely tied to the ideas of feminity. Shelley takes a further step in merging the differences between the roles performed by the sexes when she states - "The young man and his companion often went apart and appeared to weep" (105). Here, Felix is the one who is rescued by the arrival of Safie and finally "every trait of sorrow vanished from his face" (112).The feminine characteristics of Felix again come to the forefront when the monster observes – "at that moment I thought him as beautiful as the stranger" (112).

Safie, introduced as "a lady on horseback" (111), defies the traditional roles of feminity.

She expostulates with her father and "taking with her some jewels that belonged to her and a sum of money,she quitted with an attendant, a native of Leghorn" (121) to join Felix, her lover. Shelley comments upon the state of 'bondage' inflicted on females in Islamic society at the time, which Safie objects to, encouraged to 'aspire to the higher powers of intellect, and an independence of spirit'(119) by her mother. She "sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia and being immured within the walls of a harem"(119). She desired to be in a place "where women were allowed to take a rank in society" (119).

The creature has no real gender, despite being created physically as a male. He is denied male dominance over females by Victor, who has made him too ugly to be accepted into human society. This highlights the myth of superiority of the man as Victor contemplates that the monster's female counterpart might possess greater power than the monster. The creature, like Victor, has feminine characteristics, being profoundly affected by literature and nature, and being sensitive to emotion. Beauty cannot result of only masculinity. This truth was realized by the creature when he mentions – "God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring" (125). The term 'beautiful' is generally used to define a lady. Here is a deliberate use of this term to blur the gender discriminations.

Shelley's portrayal of even a minor character is not exempted from highlighting the amalgamation of feminine and masculine traits. The Genevan Magistrate, a criminal judge by profession, whose mind is supposedly full of courage and devoid of devotion surprises us when he switches to the role of a 'nurse', a role designated for women, as Victor observes – "He endeavored to soothe me as a nurse does a child…."(191).

Thus, we see that this novel was Mary Shelley's way of opposition against the traditional roles assigned to gender. By merging the binaries and presenting it as a single component she tried to blur the difference of the sexes and ultimately achieve equality. Therefore we find that Virginia Woolf, although unconsciously, aptly justified Mary Shelley's opinion in her observation - "… All who have brought about a state of sex-consciousness are to blame, and it is they who drive me, when I want to stretch my faculties on a book, to seek it in that happy age … when the writer used both sides of his mind [the male and female sides of his mind] equally. One must turn back to Shakespeare then, for Shakespeare was androgynous; and so were Keats and Sterne and Cowper and Lamb and Coleridge.

Shelley perhaps was sexless. Milton and Ben Jonson had a dash too much of the male in them. So had Wordsworth and Tolstoy" (627).

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