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Thou Cannot Create Perfection

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Ms. Townsend

Literary Explorations III

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Thou Cannot Create Perfection

Listen! I entreat you to hear me, before you give vent to your opinion, for there are children and creatures alike brought forth into life each day. Some of them are born into the arms of happiness, and some, shunned by their creator at the moment of their first breath, are deemed unworthy and thrown savagely into the pits of unforgiving hell. And now, thou can listen to me and grant me thy agreement. One day, tormented ages thereafter still by the unforgiving murder of my creator, I happened across a piece of paper lying on the ground that possessed the title of 'Designer Babies.' As I read this paper, I presently found a great alteration in my sensations, for I had never come across anything like this before in my readings as I wandered about on earth. A momentary rage filled my soul as I realized the wickedness of attempting to create a designed child since nothing can turn out perfect, as exemplified by my own dammed creation.

You see, many fear that these babies will soon be designed solely to fit the desires of their creators. I looked more into this matter and stumbled upon the idea of preimplantation genetic diagnosis. I soon learnt that humans had been using this technique since the 1900s to diagnose genetic diseases or characteristics in embryos after *in vitro* fertilization; it serves as an alternative to prenatal diagnosis and to avoid abortion when only the embryo without defects is placed back into the womb (Sermon, Steirteghem, and Liebaers 1633). Thus, this has placed the power into the hands of men to determine the sex of the baby by classifying the embryo for its sex chromosomes and appropriately dealing with the embryos that run risk of being born with a

sex-linked disease. Yet, this power has been abused in countries like that of the Indians and has instead been used to select the baby for their gender and discard the undesired embryo (“Ethics of Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis” 102). Instead of using this brilliant diagnosis solely to avoid bringing creatures with diseases into this unaccepting world, humankind has already begun abusing this novel technology and using it for its own means. Hence, to what extremes may men be driven with the power placed into their hands?

Here then I continued examining this issue and discovered ‘savior sibling’ as another purpose for these designer babies. There are times when a mother may decide to ‘design’ another child in order to save her first-born. If her first child has a serious illness, she may wish to utilize preimplantation genetic diagnosis during her second pregnancy as a means of identifying which of her embryos are free of disease and match the HLA types of her ailing child. Therefore, the appropriate embryo may be selected and later on the umbilical stem cells of this new child will be used to treat the older sibling (“Designing Babies: What the Future Holds” 26). From here arises the morality of designing a baby to serve as a savior sibling. By initially intending to create this child as a method for saving the older sibling, this baby has become an instrument. The main purpose of this creature is to satisfy the needs of her family, and once the child discovers that initial purpose later on, there will be possible psychological repercussions. From this view, one may as well declare the designed baby a victim; her parents only create her accordingly to their desires and neglect her best interests. Although this may not mean that the parents will not love and care for the designed baby as they would for any other child, does the purpose of her conception debase the birth of this baby?

Having thus established the background on this issue, I proceed to relate my own opinion on the matter. My brilliant Frankenstein created me “of gigantic stature; that is to say, about

eight feet in height, and proportionably large” (Shelley 32) and my “limbs in proportion, and [he] had selected [my] features as beautiful” (Shelley 34) in order to fulfill his desired image. Having thus been created as a design of Frankenstein, I am, ultimately, a version of the designer baby. Although the concept of designer babies is not yet fully a reality for humankind, I have become a prime example of this possible technology. I beg for you to look at my abhorred creation as a warning against acting upon this idea.

From the very beginning, the action of my creation proved to be a fatal mistake for Frankenstein. As he cast his first look upon my revived body, “the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled [his] heart” (Shelley 34). From this very moment, I was robbed of any chance of gaining the love of my creator and instead was immediately deemed as the object of his repulsion and hate. My figure disappointed him, and I fear that the same will prove for the parents of these future designer babies. Although they will be picked for their favorable characteristics, the outcome may not please their idealized design. Thus, there is a possibility that their lives will be tarnished with the disappointment, although disguised, of their parents, such as what happened with Frankenstein and my birth.

I spent almost an entire changing of seasons examining as many writings that the humans had produced on this controversial subject. My thoughts now became more active, and I longed to discover the justification behind the opinions of the lionized doctors. Thus, I soon perceived that the ethical dilemma did not lie solely on the method that would be used to create the designer babies, but the repercussions of such an action. Parents already have a substantial role in nurturing their child and hence influence their traits merely by creating the appropriate environment. They control what these children eat, how they behave, what they learn- almost everything that impacts the traits of the child during his early development (Steinbock 1294). All

of this is done to provide a life that the parent reckons to be the best for the child; as his creator, he has “no right to withhold from him the small portion of happiness which was yet in [his] power to bestow” (Shelley 100).

My own creator, Frankenstein, neglected to nourish me, leaving me to wander the cold lands confused and indistinct. I was left as “a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but, feeling pain invade me on all sides,” thus I continued trek on miserably. The environment in which I flourished was not provided by my creator, but rather by my own hands. With books, I was inspired with strange feelings not known to me before. Yet, I also “cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge” (Shelley 81). It is the hope of parents for their children to have the traits most esteemed by your fellow-creatures, yet, although I was designed to please my creator, “what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friend, no kind of property. I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome” (Shelley 80).

Although I was created to be the first of a superior species, “no father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses” (Shelley 81) and “I was dependent on none, and related to none” (Shelley 86). Soon, because of my desolate state, vice “degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No crime, no mischief, no malignity, no misery” (Shelley 154) could be found comparable to mine and I soon decided that “if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear” (Shelley 98). Thus, I propose to you to halt in your hopes of designing babies; it is not acceptable to design a creature to satisfy your desires if you will later neglect them because they have failed your idealized image. And, this will most likely be the case, because, as shown by my own loathed existence, it is not what the creator picks out for its

creation that will define the creature, but it is the home in which that creature will be nurtured that will create his character.

There still resides a bitter sensation in my being; although my creation resulted from Frankenstein's genius, this repulsive figure that I possess has left me no choice but to live in despair as an outcast. Frankenstein has robbed me of any chance of happiness, sympathy, or friendship when he ignited the spark of existence that he so wantonly bestowed on my monstrous body. I have no choice but to live with the consequences of having the monstrous figure that my creator bestowed upon me- I fear that the designer babies will have to suffer through the repercussions of their parents' choice as well.

I entreat you to listen to my reasoning; if a child's genes are chosen by his parents in order to have a desired trait, that child will be forced to pursue the talent associated with that trait. Their talents will not necessarily be natural anymore, but predetermined; thus, since the parent chose a specific set of genes for him, he "ignores the child's own talents and abilities, and instead forces the child to do what will satisfy parental dreams and aspirations" (Steinbock 1295). This encourages "parental tyranny" because "when parents attempt to shape their children's characteristics to match their preferences and expectations, such an exercise of free choice on the parents' part may constrain the child's prospects for flourishing" (Steinbock 1295). I, a designer baby, am an example of this lack of free choice as a consequence of choosing your creature's traits. I was doomed to live this miserable life as soon as my wretched creator put the gruesome parts of my body together. At the beginning of my existence, I was full of kindness, willing to live in harmony with humans and cultivate loving relationships and "I falsely hoped to meet with beings, who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of bringing forth" (Shelley 154). Yet, I soon realized that these humans

would not be willing to look past my demonic exterior, thus I proposed to Frankenstein to bring forth to life another of my kind because I was “alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me, but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me” (Shelley 97). Being thus denied this possibility by my creator, I have been forced to live my life in miserable solitude. Thou cannot doom these future creatures to a fate as wretched as mine by designing them, such as I was, and depriving them of endeavors they could otherwise pursue! I seek not a fellow-feeling in my misery, but I plead to you to let these creatures choose their own fate, which I could not do.

Listen! I must part soon and I entreat thou shall consider my warning. Thy dreams of designing these future babies are doomed to fail and result in miserable lives, such as mine. My creator hoped for me to represent the best of humankind; however, having being thus abandoned by him due to my disgusting form, I soon became a vile creature. These creatures you hope to design will not satisfy your expectations, like the result of my creation disappointed Frankenstein. Creatures evolve in harmony with their environment and by forcing upon them a set of desired traits, you will not only take away their freedom to pursue their passions but also diminish your moral character. As a creator, thou must “accept [your creatures] as they come, not as objects of our design or products of our will or instruments of our ambition” (Steinbock 1295). These children cannot not be enslaved to meet you desires. I beg for you to not let them live a damned life like mine!

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