



Monsters

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This is an outstandingly good book, so congratulations to Charlie Sheppard for commissioning it and to Sharon Dogar for then coming up so splendidly with the goods. Already described by Philip Pullman as 'a talented storyteller,' she exceeds even these high expectations in this story about the complicated and often tragic life of Mary Shelley, author of **Frankenstein** and lover of the famous poet. It is their relationship, rather than the genesis of the famous title, that forms the basis for this current novel.

Mary met Shelley when she was 16 and the poet only five years older. The young love that followed was passionate and intense, even surviving a series of appalling setbacks along the way. Mary herself comes over as desperately earnest as well as incurably romantic. Shelley, in return, shares her idealism and reciprocates her love while never quite escaping a type of thoughtlessness stemming from owning a place in British aristocracy plus the expectations of money eventually to come. Other important characters play their part too. There is Mary's father, the insufferably self-righteous social reformer William Godwin, and also her mother Mary Wollstonecraft, who died twelve days after Mary was born but whose ground-breaking feminist ideals were to remain with her daughter all her life. Enter too Jane, later known as Claire, Mary's half-sister of equal age who also falls for Shelley, as did so many others. And lastly Lord Byron, very much mad, bad and dangerous to know in life as well as in these pages.

What a cast, then, and what a story ensues as the couple contends with extreme poverty, prejudice and the problems of trying to live along with others while following ideals that sound better on paper than when experienced for real. Dogar lets this turbulent narrative largely tell itself. Artfully dropping hints on the various origins of Mary's great novel found within her own life, she remains fair to all parties involved. Also packed with minutely researched historical detail, not to mention all the complications of inheriting closely guarded money, there is so much going on here. Always interesting as well as emotionally involving, what's not to like?

Read our [interview with Sharon Dogar](#) [4].

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