

Monday, April 3, 2017

THE SHABBAT - by Marjane Satrapi



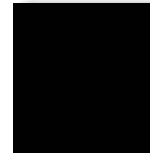
When I read this graphic novel, it immediately reminded me of a Twitter feed that I have been following recently. It is written by a young girl and her mother who were in Syria and who have luckily gotten out of the danger zone. However, when I first started following her there was a mix of emotions to be placed "in the middle of the fight" with them through their tweets. The girl's name is Bana Alabed and in this modern, technological age the world was able to see things as never before...and through a child's view. Just like in this story, there is a mix of emotions. You have a picture of war in your mind, but war is never that cut and dry. You do not think there is any smiles during war time, but that is untrue. On the news, we see small chunks of time. In reality, it is never ending.

In the novel, we see Marji sitting in a home that seems like any normal, westernized home. We see her relationship with her parents and we see her go shopping with her friend. We think, "It's not that bad there." However, then we see the results of a nearby bomb. The destruction of their neighbors home and most likely the death of their family friends. As I followed Bana and her tweets, I had similar feelings. One day she would be coloring and smiling with her siblings, and the next they would be hiding in the basement due to bombing.

The one image that really hit home for me was when she was going to school and it was after there had been an attack. She showed pictures of kids who had been killed and you could see their lunch boxes they were carrying with Dora the Explorer on them. Some of the thoughts that ran through my mind is how many times Americans try to get out of school and here are kids dying and under attack, and school is still that important that they risk their lives to go. Another thing is how senseless war is.



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I was in the Army for a long time. I kept a journal when I went to Desert Storm and in it I wrote, "Isn't war silly!? We try to destroy the 'Enemy' and then we go out of our way to give them proper first aid."

I think I may have gotten off on a tangent a bit, but back to the graphic novel. I found it to be very interesting. On this particular one I didn't have to really take a lot of notes I think because I could see the whole thing. I thought the visual pictures made the story easy to follow and understand. I think that I put more feeling in to it than other readers might, but I think that is from following Bana and having been in that part of the world in the past. I have sympathy for Marji when she realizes that her neighbors have perished. When she sees the bracelet (on the arm I am assuming), I could feel her heartbreak. It is a lot for an adult, and for a child to have to live through such trauma is unthinkable. I think it was powerful that the story ended in a black box and the description of the scream in her head. I also think that is a sign of the times in 2000, before social media made nothing off limits.

Powerful!!!

Works Cited

Satrapi, Marjane. "The Shabbat" - 2000. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, ed. Kelly J. Mayes, Shorter 11th ed, New York: Norton, 2013, pp. 21-28.

Twitter. 

Posted by  at 8:00 PM 2 comments:



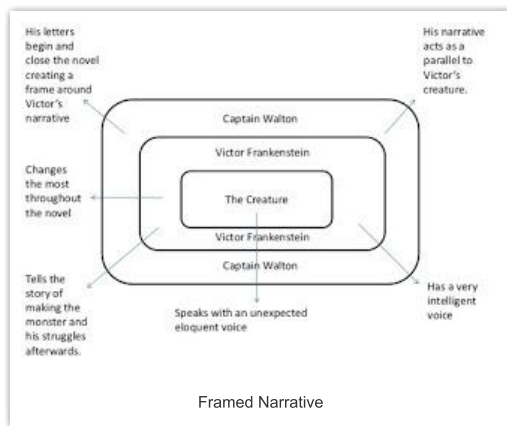
Wednesday, March 22, 2017

FRANKENSTEIN - Part 1 by Mary Shelley





Frankenstein is a story that is set in a framed narrative. Captain Walton is telling the story of his travels to the North Pole which includes telling the story that Victor Frankenstein told him. It also includes a point of view from the monster, but that is beyond Part 1. As I looked into Framed Narratives, especially for this story, I found images that helped to clarify this process. One image is shown below which I found to be very useful in understanding the complex workings of the story lines:



Now, in discussing the story, Part 1 in particular, the first part I found to be really interesting was when Victor Frankenstein was doing his research into how bodies undergo the decomposition process. This had to be a very time consuming process of just sitting in crypts watching and observing bodies decay and get eaten by worms. I am getting my minor in Thanatology (Study of Death) and I found this point to be both interesting and freaky. I just cannot imagine the smell that Victor would have been exposed to since I assume there was no embalming process during that time period. Pretty gross research and I believe that he became crazed during this period. With that state of mind, it would be hard to say that his narrative is reliable in any way.

The second picture above was the closest one I could find that was similar to what I pictured in my mind. I think that the movie monsters all give him too much attractiveness. If he was made of clay and dead body parts, he had to be a very gruesome creature.

Towards the end of the story when Victor and Elizabeth are visiting Justine in jail, Victor brings up the subject of worms again. He said, "But I, the true murderer, felt the never-dying worm alive in my bosom, which allowed of no hope or consolation" (Shelley, pp.59). I found it interesting that he compared his body to that of the rotting corpses he observed in his research. I think those images were forever in his mind and had obviously become part of him.



On an end note, about the beginning of the story and to answer the question posed by Dr. K, I believe that Captain Walton is travelling to the North Pole simply to learn more about travelling the seas. He wants adventure on his own and he trained up by working with other boat captains. He seems to want to learn beyond his meager education that he received when he was younger.

Works Cited

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. New York: Norton, 2012. Print.

Narrative Framed Image, <https://www.slideshare.net/kehoskin/frankenstein-narration>

Posted by [REDACTED] at 8:21 PM 3 comments:



Tuesday, February 21, 2017

MY LIFE HAD STOOD - A LOADED GUN

by Emily Dickenson



My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun -
In Corners - till a Day
The Owner passed - identified -
And carried Me away -

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods -
And now We hunt the Doe -
And every time I speak for Him -
The Mountains straight reply -

And do I smile, such cordial light
Upon the Valley glow -
It is as a Vesuvian face
Had let its pleasure through -

And when at Night - Our good Day done -
I guard My Master's Head -
'Tis better than the Eider-Duck's

Deep Pillow - to have shared -

To foe of His - I'm deadly foe -
None stir the second time -
On whom I lay a Yellow Eye -
Or an emphatic Thumb -

Though I than He - may longer live
He longer must - than I -
For I have but the power to kill,
Without--the power to die--

I know that there are a lot of other interpretations of this poem, such as a woman in a state of rage, but I looked at this as a poem from the "Guns" point of view. I had written poems such as this when I was younger, imagining what something inanimate might say or do. I wrote one from the perspective of my truck talking to a semi-truck, so that is what initially went through my mind. That and, in the first stanza when it describes the gun as being in the corner, I thought of an old gun I found in the back of my grandmother's closet that was my grandfathers and she never knew was there...or had forgotten about it. (I wish that I had been older and convinced them to keep it, because I have a feeling it was an antique and valuable.)

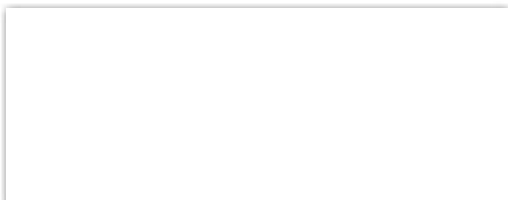
In the second stanza, I imagine the hunter, or owner, shooting the gun and the sound is what reverberates from the mountains. The gun is speaking for the hunter and the sound of the gun firing is what echoes in the peaceful mountains. In the third stanza, I imagine a glow from the gun as it fires which brings it pleasure. Contentment. The fire of the gun and that of the Vesuvius glow are similar in the mountains. The gun is content to be fulfilling it's purpose after being in the corner for so long, and that contentment is shown in the glow of the fire...fire of the bullet, or fire of the hunter's cigar match.



Vesuvian Glow



Speaking to Mountains & Reply





Eider Duck

The role of the gun when the day is done is to guard the hunter. As the hunter lays on the feathers of the eider-duck, the gun is there to protect him from any enemies. The

gun does not feel, but knows that when it's "Yellow Eye" meets the enemy, the enemy dies.

The gun only has the power to kill, not to die. It also know that it's power to kill is unmatched and is a perfect shot. I really liked the line, "None stir the second time - on whom I lay a Yellow Eye -" I feel a real power in the last stanza.



"The Yellow Eye"

Works Cited

Dickenson, Emily. "My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun - 1863. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, ed. Kelly J. Mayes, Shorter 11th ed, New York: Norton, 2013, pp. 783-784.

Posted by [REDACTED] at 9:34 AM

2 comments:



Wednesday, February 8, 2017

My Last Dutchess

My Last Dutchess
by Robert Browning (1842)

Dutchess Lucrezia (di Cosimo)



Alfonso II d'Este



Robert Browning's Poem is written about a Duke who is describing a painting of his first wife, or in his words, "my last Duchess." The text book talked about how the poem was loosely based off of Alfonso II, duke of Ferrara. He is pictured above, as is his first wife, Lucrezia. Knowing what these two looked like helped to picture the poem even more.

Alfonso II was about 25 years old when he married Lucrezia. As I read the poem, I had an older man pictured originally. However, the duke actually died at 64, so he was never that old. He had been married three times. His first wife was 14 when they married, and she died 2 years later. It is rumored that it could have been from poisoning, but it could also have been tuberculosis. He married his next wife 5 years later. She was 24 and died when she was 33. He married his third wife 5 years later and she was only 15 when they married. He would have been 46. There was not a huge age gap between him and his first wife...but there certainly was between himself and the third wife.

Back to the poem. I found it intriguing that if you believe the duke had a hand in the death of the duchess, then this poem takes on a much darker aura. I think that because the duchess is so young and vibrant, the duke feels like she is flirting with everyone and that is why he focuses on the blush of her cheeks. He is talking about her cheeks to the stranger in a way that I feel he is seething. He is talking about how he was not the only person who could make her blush, but other men as well, and it made him angry. Line 13 begins his viewpoint as it reads, "Sir, 'twas not Her husband's presence only, called that spot Of joy into the Duchess'cheek:" Line 20 goes on to say, "Was courtesy she though, and cause enough For calling up that spot of joy. She had a heart - how shall I say? - too soon made glad, Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er She looked on, and her looks went everywhere."

I also believe that the duke knew the duchess did not love him, but she would never tell him such a thing, which seemed to be worse for him. Knowing but not hearing it from her. The poem says on line 43, "Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt, Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without Much the same smile?" I think that he could tell that she was smiling at him to be polite, but with no love in her heart for him.

He then says, "I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands as if alive." Going back to the true accounts, it is unclear if the duke could have had a hand in the death of the real duchess, but in the poem, it alludes to that fact that he did. Somehow, he had a role in the death of the duchess.

At the end of the poem, the duke goes on as if he never cared for the duchess as his wife and that her image on the painting is just another piece of art to be discussed in casual conversation. It is as if he slipped into deep thoughts that he realized he was saying aloud, and then tried to move on as if he had not just been telling a story filled with his anger at how things turned out.

Mays, K.J. (2013). *The Norton introduction to literature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co

Wikipedia. Retrieved February 8, 2017 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfonso_II_d'Este,_Duke_of_Ferrara

Posted by [REDACTED] at 7:46 PM 1 comment:



Monday, January 23, 2017

LONDON by William Blake

LONDON
William Blake

Unexpectedly, this poem took on new meaning when I recognized the name of William Wilberforce as I researched what was going on in 1789. I love the movie "Amazing Grace" that basically tells the story of his life and how he worked to abolish the British Slave trade. This kind of set up the background picture for me a little bit more as I re-read the poem by William Blake.

<https://youtu.be/Q6Cv5P9H9qU> Of course, the story ended a little better than the end of the poem did.

I believe that William Blake felt disheartened by the state of London in 1789. All of his descriptive words paint a picture of weariness and unhappiness. Words such as weakness, woe, fear, hapless, curse, plagues. I think the poem definitely depicts sadness and disappointment.

Chartered means regulated by a controlling body, such as the Royal establishment in 1789. The streets and the river Thames are controlled by the government, but the people are tired. There are things going on during that time period that cause the "mind-forged manacles" that Blake talks about. In 1789 the last woman was burned as punishment for a crime. The slave trade is going on, as mentioned before, and the reality of what is going on is being brought to the attention of everyone. I found a picture that also describes what I pictured when I heard the phrase "mind-forged manacles."



This was in addition to the manacles, or wooden yokes, I also had envisioned from the slave trade going on at the time.



"Chimney-sweeper's cries" is another type of "mind-forged manacle" in that during that time period this job was done by young children, boys usually. Often they died because of the work in the small chimneys and the damage it did to their bodies. These kids were basically slaves to their masters, even though they were English. Hapless means unfortunate and it seems that the chimney sweeps are hapless, so are the Soldiers. I do not know exactly why the blood runs down the palace walls in accordance to that time frame, but as a retired soldier, I know that it is truly unfortunate when soldier blood is lost and the soldiers left behind really feel hapless as they do what the government asks of them...or in the case of the poem, what the Royals who live in the palace ask of them.

The last refrain talks about young Harlots, or prostitutes. Blight is disease and so the picture is that of new-born infants, disease, marriage and death all in once short refrain. It is not a nice picture of a baby, but a picture of a hard life in the now and in the future for that child. In fact, that child could end up as one of the chimney sweeps because they will ultimately be an orphan.

Yes, overall I feel that William Blake is sad about London during that time frame.

Posted by [REDACTED] at [8:53 PM](#) 1 comment:



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