

Is frankenstein a critique or admiration of romantic ideology? essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Frankenstein by Mary Shelley is both a critique and an admiration of Romantic beliefs and ideologies. Examples of Romantic Ideologies are present throughout most of the novel, along with both the truthfulness and admiration in such ideals, and the detrimental effects that these ideals impose on society. Mary Shelley uses the story of Frankenstein as a warning of such Romantic Ideals by demonstrating the negative outcomes that have been caused by these ideals. She uses the Romantic idea of an Idyllic childhood, which is represented through the character of Victor Frankenstein and transforms this idea into a warning by making Victor grow into the man who ultimately causes the death of his loved ones.

She also uses the Romantic idea of the desire to elevate human beings into living Gods, and the strong belief in fatalism, in which Victor possesses, and incorporates these desires/beliefs into the causes of the detriment caused by Victor's actions. However she uses the idea of the ' noble savage' represented by the character of Frankenstein's creature in admiration and in a sense of truthfulness. Frankenstein is both an admiration and critique of Romantic Ideology in that it both agrees and disagrees with certain Romantic ideals.

Firstly, it is expected that Victor, with his Idyllic childhood, should grow up to be a great man of kindness and good values. However Victor ends up being the cause of the deaths of his loved ones. The Romantic idea that a man with a good childhood should grow up to be a man of nobility and generosity is contradicted and criticised by Shelley's character of Victor, who develops into a man of selfish motivations and senseless actions. When Victor was

young, he had the perfect childhood. He had parents that loved him dearly, and nurtured him with great affection, along with a certainty about his place in the world. He was brought into a family of honour and reputation, of generosity and benevolence. “ No human being could have passed a happier childhood than myself. My parents were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence.” (p. 39) The romantic childhood expected him to develop into the perfect man.

“ I was their plaything and their idol, and something better- their child, the innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness...” (p. 35) However this was proved wrong. Victor ended up becoming egotistical and inconsiderate. He became critical, prejudging many things based entirely on appearances and self-absorbed, thinking only of himself. An example of this is when he neglected his family and friends whom loved him dearly to pursue an obsession to create a human being through the means of science. He left his family, his best friend Henry Clerval, and even his fiancée, Elizabeth. These were the people that loved him the most, and were always there for him when he needed it most.

But despite this, Victor continued to his project and became self-absorbed, forgetting about everything else that mattered to him. As soon as he had created his creature, he immediately neglects him and leaves him to fend for himself, rather than take responsibility of his creation, as a father would.

Shelley uses this to criticise the idea of an idyllic childhood creating the ideal man, as believed by the Romanticists. “ The Child is the father of the man” -

Wordsworth. Frankenstein is a critique of Romantic Ideology in that it imposes a warning and a disagreement to the idea of the perfect childhood creating the perfect man.

Secondly, the Romantic desire of elevating human beings into living Gods which is possessed by Victor himself, leads to the devastating destruction of him and his loved ones. Shelley has made Victor appear as a Romantic character, with Romantic ideals and Romantic figures of speech. He believes strongly in the idea of fatalism, a Romantic belief where everything that happens in life and in the future is decided by destiny, and that there is only one path created for a human to follow, therefore causing him to shift all responsibility and blame onto the idea of fate and destiny. This also contributes to the deaths of his loved ones. At the beginning of the novel Victor has the desire and dream to create a human being through the means of science rather than naturally.

This demonstrates the idea of Victor hoping to be God, the creator of all life, and the one who will be worshipped and idolised by the new race of immortal beings. However his godlike ambitions and aspirations result in the creation of a monster that he immediately rejects and abandons. “ Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room...” (p. 58) His abandonment of his creation leads to it's own destruction, which then leads onto the vengeful ambitions of the creature to destroy Victor and everyone that he loves. Also his strong belief in fate and destiny causes him to blame all his experiences and losses on fate rather than on himself. He blames destiny for

the creation of the monster, and blames the monster for the death of all his loved ones. “Destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction” (p. 43) He shies away from responsibility by shifting the blame onto fate, and leaving it to resolve itself. Once the creature was created Victor immediately blames fate, perhaps making himself feel better, but not making the situation any better. His neglect of the creature leads to its corruption and eventually the death of Victor’s loved ones inspired by revenge. Victor’s desire to play God, and his powerful belief in fatalism ends up being the cause of all his detriments. Shelley uses this as a warning of Romantic Ideology, and of the effects that these beliefs and desires can have on a person and on society.

Lastly, the creature in Frankenstein is symbolised as the ‘Noble savage’, an idea where a child is born equal and innocent until it is corrupted by society’s ideals therefore causing it to become evil and destructive. (Rousseau’s idea of Romanticism) Shelley uses this as an admiration of this Romantic belief by creating sympathy towards the creature and demonstrating the truthfulness of this belief through the creation of Frankenstein’s creature. When the creature was first created, he was displaced and uncertain of his place in the world. He had not yet been introduced to any of the ideals of society, therefore symbolising the idea of innocent and helplessness. Due to him being neglected by his creator, he is forced to fend for himself, learning from observations of nature, and experiences. This he does with considerable difficulty, experiencing great confusion and torment in having to teach

himself everything. In the novel, he comes across a fire left by beggars and learns how to use it for warmth, light and as a source to cook food.

However, along with these experiences he learns that fires are extremely hot and dangerous by the situation where he burns his hand. Later he comes across a shepherds hut and a village, where he experiences fear, violence and terrified screams of other people. “ Children shrieked...women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled; some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, I escaped to the open country and fearfully too refuge...” (p. 109) These experiences cause the creature to become bitter and spiteful, ultimately leading him to the destruction of many of his helpless victims. The creature experienced many negative emotions such as neglect, fear, desolation, misery, unhappiness, wretchedness, helplessness and loneliness. All these things lead to the corruption of the creature, causing him to become evil. Shelley demonstrates this idea of the ‘ Noble savage’ with great clarity, and therefore creates an admiration for this aspect of Romantic Ideology.

In conclusion, Frankenstein is both an admiration and critique of Romantic Ideology, in that it displays both truthfulness and detriment in Romantic ideas and beliefs. In Frankenstein, Romantic Ideals such as the Idyllic childhood creating the perfect man, the Romantic desire to be the creator of life and the Romantic beliefs in fatalism and destiny have been incorporated into warnings by Mary Shelley, where such Ideologies lead to cases of destruction and death. However Rousseau’s idea of the ‘ Noble Savage’ is admired and supported by Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein by the emphasis that

is placed on this one idea. The idea is represented through one of the main characters, the creature, and is constant throughout the entire novel. Both criticism and support of Romantic Ideologies is evident in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.