

The power of nature over man

Literature, Russian Literature



Nature, especially sublime nature, like grand mountains or treacherous waterfalls, has the power to instill feelings in people that nothing else can bring forth. In the novel Frankenstein, the motif of sublime nature illustrates (idk) nature's dominance over mankind. In the story, beautiful scenes of nature revive the characters, while vengeful nature reflects the conflicts present in the story, while melancholy nature reflects the character's grief.

Nature often revives the characters, bringing them tranquility in place of grief and anger.

For instance, on Victor's journey to Geneva, he stopped, overcome with anguish, and "contemplated the lake", where "the waters were placid, all around was calm, and the snowy mountains, 'the palaces of nature', were not changed." (page 58). This "calm and heavenly scene restored" Victor so much that he was able to "continue [his] journey towards Geneva" (page 58). By filling his emotions with calmness and tranquility, nature was able to restore Victor so quickly from the grief of his brother's loss, revealing its strong control over his emotions.

Later in the story, when Victor travels to the valley of Chamounix, grieving for William and Justine, nature once again soothes him. The "sublime and magnificent scenes afforded [him] the greatest consolation that [he] was capable of receiving." (Page 78). Nothing could have provided Victor with better "consolation" than nature. The fact that Nature swayed over his emotions is greater than that of even his beloved family and friends, indicating its immense influence over the lives of humans. Nature not only "elevated [him] from all littleness of feeling," but also "subdued and

tranquilized”(page 78) his grief. It has power to both invoke man with feelings, and to remove or ‘tranquelize’ them, even those so strong as sorrow. As Victor arrives “at the top of the [valley’s] ascent”(Page 80), and sees the “awful”(Page 80) mountains rising above him, nature once again bestows him with healing. The mountains “... icy and glittering peaks”, which “shone in the sunlight over the clouds.”, resulted in his “heart, which was before sorrowful”(page 80), to swell “with something like joy”(Page 80). Once again nature is able to flip Victor’s feelings around completely, changing them from sorrow, to joy. Furthermore, this beautiful sight causes Victor to say, “wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life.”(page 80). Nature does not only have an hold on Victor’s emotions, but on the monsters as well. Following his creation, the monster felt only “pain invade [him] on all sides”(Page 84). However, when the “gentle light” of the moon “stole over the heavens”, he was given “a sensation of pleasure.”(page 85). The fact that just a meek “gentle light” of nature could transform the monster’s emotions from those of pain and helplessness, to those of “pleasure” and “wonder”, emphasizes the profound power that nature has over man. Furthermore, this light also helped the monster by allowing him to search for “berries” to eat. In these ways, the healing influence that nature has on character’s emotions highlights its power over mankind.

Fierce nature, unlike its healing counterpart, also plays a role in asserting nature’s dominance over mankind. When Victor chases the monster at the end of the story through the harsh and icy lands, nature makes him

"[endure] misery". In addition, nature "threatens his destruction", with the "thunder of the ground sea" and "Immense rugged mountains of ice" that "barred [his] passage"(page 184). These imposing shows of strength reiterate nature's power over man, and in particular, Victor. Later in the story, Nature fully asserts its supremacy, acting on its threats. The waters beneath him "rolled and swelled", becoming "more ominous and terrific" with every moment, before "a tumultuous sea rolled beneath [him] and [his] enemy", and left him "drifting on a scattered piece of ice". While nature is at other times awe inspiring and tranquil, it is now "ominous and terrific", using its power to bring "prepare for [victor] a hideous death."(185). This fierce, hostile nature underlines its great power over mankind. Not only is nature able to create man, but it has the power to destroy {them}. This contrast to Victor, who, while he created the monster, was unable to kill it, part of which was due to nature itself, who stopped him on his hunt. In these ways, the nature's power over mankind is further emphasised by its fiercer and more dangerous version.

Melancholy nature appears as well, reflecting and intensifying the characters heavy grief.

For instance, as Victor grieves in the valley of chamounix, the "pines" are neither "tall or luxuriant", but rather "sombre", adding "an air of severity to the scene". These images contrast greatly to the grand and awe-inspiring scenes of nature describes in the first paragraph. Nature changed Victors emotion from full of "joy"(page), to those of "[somberness]" and "severity". The "vast mists", and the "rain [pouring] from the dark sky",

further add “ to the melancholy impression that [victor] receives from the objects around [him]”(page 79). The speed and strength at which nature brings a “ melancholy impression” to Victor’s heart, highlights the powers that nature holds over mankind’s mind. Moreover, in one night, nature was able to remove all “ soul inspiring” from Victor, and cloud his thoughts with “ the dark melancholy”. Just as nature has the power to remove life it instilled from man, it also has the power to remove the joy that it instilled in man’s emotions. Furthermore, “ thick mist [that] hid the summits of the mountains”(page 78), as also seen in earlier scenes, offers the concept that one of the key ways that nature gives man, or Victor in particular, is by hiding the mountains. Throughout the story, the mountains provide him with healing nature, they are his “ mighty friends”. So, by covering them, nature removes that source of joy and consolation. In the ways explained above, melancholy nature further stresses the power than nature has over mankind.

By creating the monster, Victor breaks the laws of nature, in effect trying to usurp it. As a result of creating life, which is considered to be one of the deepest mysteries of nature, Victor suffers an abundance of consequences. His loss of loved ones, spirit, and will to live, emphasise nature’s everlasting reign over man. Anyone who tries to replace or play with it will be severely punished and destroyed, like Frankenstein was.

In the novel Frankenstein by Mary Shelley, sublime nature holds a mighty power over mankind. This is emphasised in the influence that healing and melancholy nature have over the characters, in addition to the control that

fierce nature has over their lives, having the power to bring death to the life they created.