

The analysis of hidden feelings in frankenstein

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



The desires of discovering the secrets of the universe and becoming famous have always been human vices, but these quests mainly lead to ruin. In some people, these basic human drives escalate to dangerous proportions. Mary Shelly uses Frankenstein to express her views on the dangers of ambition, science, and egotism. The novel introduces three characters, each in his own pursuit of knowledge, who have to face the reality of their own ambitions. The characters of Walton, Frankenstein, and the creature are used to illustrate the consequences of being overzealous in the pursuit of fame and knowledge. Even though it was written at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Frankenstein can be seen as a parable that will always be pertinent to scientists of any century.

The novel starts with a series of letters from Walton, a man on a quest to discover the secrets of the Arctic Circle, to his sister. Through these letters Walton's desire for fame, through discovering the undiscovered, is shown. He writes these letters to his sister to alleviate her fears and to show her his determination to complete his adventure. In these letters Walton shows his disregard for anything other than his possible discoveries. Walton mostly talks about his crew and his hopes for the voyage, and barely shows any concern over what his sister may think or feel towards his absence. When he says that his curiosity is "sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death" (Shelly, page 913), Walton shows that he is so blinded by the quest for knowledge that he gives no thought to the safety of his crew. This blind ambition parallels the ambitions of Victor Frankenstein, and may be the reason why Walton and Victor become such fast friends.

When Victor is found by the ship, half-dead and mad from his pursuit of knowledge, he protests being saved until he is assured that Walton will help him find his creature. After all the suffering Victor has put upon himself, he would truly have to be mad to even think about refusing rescue. With this scene Shelly really proves her point of the danger of knowledge. Walton joining forces with Victor proves his ambition even more, because he now has two grand quests to be a part of.

The tale that Walton is told by Victor only serves to arouse Walton's curiosity about his strange passenger even more. Victor goes on to explain his childhood curiosity over preventing death and the epiphany he receives through his studies. At this point the reader is able to get a sense of his blossoming madness and megalomania. When Victor states that "[he] alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret" (932), he shows how his ego blinds him to the very real dangers of reanimation. With Victor's description of his schooling, he is trying to prove to the readers and to Walton that he is not mad. The reader is supplied with a good amount of foreshadowing in Victor's story of his past; when someone insists that he is not mad, he probably is.

Victor's assembly and reanimation of the corpses he uses to create his creature proves his inability to temper knowledge with discretion. Since Victor had "selected [the creatures] features as beautiful" (935), he has a hard time seeing "the miserable monster whom [he] had created" (935), and takes the creature's imperfection as a slight to his ego which causes Victor to fall into "a nervous fever" (937). Victor will not accept that

perfection can not be created in an imperfect world, so he shuns his creature and forces it to fend for itself. The creature tries to learn humanity through interacting with humans, but his labors are for naught. The creature saves a child from death, but the villagers see the horror of its appearance and drive it away. This leads the creature to ask: " You, my creator, would tear me to pieces, and triumph; remember that, and tell me why I should pity man more than he pities me?" (987)

Even though Victor has created the creature, he will not create a companion for it. This breeds hatred and contempt in the creature towards his creator, and drives the creature to murder those closest to Victor to try blackmailing him into creating a second creature. Victor's madness has taken hold of him by this point, and his ego will not allow him to give into his creation's requests. Victor has put himself in the place of God and will not accept the responsibilities that his new power requires. The creature flees from his uncaring creator, but knows that Victor will follow. It leaves " marks in writing on the barks of the trees, or cut in stone, that guided [Victor], and instigated [his] fury" (1022), because the creature realizes that Victor's ego will not allow him to give up his revenge.

The conclusion of the creator being killed by his creation is one that Victor brought on himself. Victor's madness clouds his judgment and it takes the death of all those close to him make Victor realize his mistakes. Frankenstein follows his creature to resolve the events he has set in motion. " All [Victor's] speculations and hopes are as nothing; and, like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, [he is] chained in an eternal hell" (1026). This is the lesson

for which Victor pays so dearly; it takes madness and death for him to accept it. Through his lesson, Victor comes to the realization that his creation is not evil, but he himself is the evil one that drove his creation to murder. This final realization is what drives Victor to seek revenge on his creation, and destroy the evil he has created. “[Victor] must pursue and destroy the being to whom [he] gave existence; then [his] lot on earth will be fulfilled, and [he] may die” (1027).

When Walton witnesses the conclusion of Victor’s and the creature’s plight, he realizes his quest has been in folly. Walton’s crew asks him to turn back towards London, and Walton relents, learning Victor’s lesson before his ambition can destroy him as it did Victor. Even with the knowledge of the folly of blind ambition, Walton is unsatisfied by doing the right thing and returning to London. Walton now realizes the danger he placed his crew in and must rectify the situation, but his quest still possesses him. In one of his final letters, to his sister, Walton discusses his lack of satisfaction over doing the right thing:

“ The die is cast; I have consented to return, if we are not destroyed. Thus are my hopes blasted by cowardice and indecision; I come back ignorant and disappointed. It requires more philosophy than I possess, to bear this injustice with patience.” (1029).

Walton’s melancholy illustrates the true conflict between science and morality; although he knows it is right to abandon his quest, he is disappointed to not achieve his perceived place in history. The attitude that

Walton exhibits shows that man's egotistical need to find knowledge and be a part of history can cloud him to the real dangers of that desire.

With the events of Frankenstein, Mary Shelly exposes her fear of the quickly advancing scientific community. It is clear that Shelly fears the need for fame will cause the institution of science to become like Victor and turn a blind eye to the dangers of the pursuit of hidden mysteries. Uncaring megalomaniacs whom only want to leave their mark on society would then hold this new knowledge. Although Victor discovers how to cheat death through his creation, the creature is our warning: science is beneficial, but if used by those who want to replace God it will be the downfall of man. Shelly obviously wants society to follow Walton's example and turn back in the face of dangerous knowledge, no matter how badly that knowledge is desired.