

Frankenstein and the enlightenment

Literature



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Mary Shelly's novel, Frankenstein, can be greatly related to many horror novels, no consideration of morality or thought. Shelly writes her story in a real world perspective showing themes of corruption and downfall making it seem frighteningly realistic. It truly is mind-boggling how research can conflict with religion without a thought or care. During the enlightenment, science began to mask over faith and religion, creating a cultural phenomenon. This is still a factor in today's world.

Although experimenting and research can have poor and great affects, the common question comes to mind, " even though it can be done, should it be done? " While Shelly talks of science and technology, it seems to become more predominate that not all experiments should be done. Europe in the 18th century was a time where intellects started a cultural movement. There were questions that needed answers but instead of answering by theory or faith, people wanted hard facts, a real reason. By searching for the power of reason, society could only progress and obtain knowledge they haven't had before.

The enlightenment was sparked by John Locke, Isaac Newton and many others, but in Shelly's novel, Victor Frankenstein, although a fictional character, was deeply affected by the enlightenment in her novel. Ever since Victor was young, he has always been fascinated with science. From his readings as a teenager on natural philosophy to going to school in Ingolstadt and his professor unconsciously convincing him to pursue his interest in the field of science, Victor was born to be a part of the enlightenment.

In other studies you go as far as others have gone before you, and there is nothing more to know; but in a scientific pursuit there is continual food for
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discovery and wonder. " (Frankenstein, p. 52) Victor was intrigued by the creation of life and would hide away in his apartment, studying anatomy, death and decay. He soon began to create his creature and while he was devoted to his work, he continued to ignore his family, friends, schoolwork and social life. As time progressed, he became both lonely and obsessed.

At this point in the novel is where many could agree that even though something as tremendous as reating another human being could be done, shouldn't be done. Victor was obsessed with trying to discover the key to life, but should some things be left unsolved? Back in eighteenth century, there was only one reason why babies were born, people accomplished the things they had, or people deceased, and that was because of God. So technically, is Victor going back on God's will? God did not want another human to be created by Victor, if he wanted another human, he could create one Himself. In a way, Victor defined God's wishes in order to answer his obsession with life.

As a college student, Victor had kept himself locked away in his apartment, searching for answers. The project he had in his hands was stupendous and upon knowing this, he distanced himself away from the people who loved him the most. Is searching for reason all that more important than family? In the end it left Victor mentally unstable. Victor almost contradicts himself, while trying to create life. As he creates a new life, he is slowly losing his as he is kept hidden away. As he collects decaying body parts, his soul is slowly decrepitating.

Maybe the mystery he needed to solve was the reasons of his own life, how to truly value ones self. Victor chooses to continue spending his time running <https://assignbuster.com/frankenstein-and-the-enlightenment/>

with his scientific fascination, to finally becoming successful. As the monster arises, Victor is sickened by his creation. Although he succeeded with his goal, the realization of what he had just created sunk in. " For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. (Frankenstein, pg. 42)

When he awakes the next morning, the monster is no longer in the house and Victor tries to forget all that has happened and hopes to never see the monster. His classes are like torture and his professors seem to almost taunt him with their scientific theories. Just in a blink of an eye, trying to forget the monster soon turns into fearing the monster. Murders begin to take place and Victor is at a loss. He's tossed between whether to tell someone of his creation or to keep it a secret, who would believe him anyway? Through the murders, Shelly displays in her novel how women were assive in the eighteenth century.

Elizabeth and his father contact Victor for him soon to find that his younger brother William had been murdered. He is shocked and upset, already unstable. A girl by the name Justine Moritz has been framed for the murder, having a picture of Caroline Frankenstein that William had on him before the murder. Victor finds out later in the novel that his creation had murdered his brother. While searching for food in the woods, he comes across a girl who seems like she is drowning and saves her; this was Justine.

He then runs into William to find that he is Victor's brother. Angered by this, he strangles William and takes the picture of Caroline Frankenstein out of his

pocket, placing it in Justine's dress. After Justine was framed for William's murder, she comes to talk to Elizabeth. She tells her story and Elizabeth truly believes that Justine had nothing to do with the murder of William. Victor still does not speak up about the monster he created and Justine was executed. The only person who had the power to save Justine was Victor and he didn't.

This demonstrated how women were passive. Elizabeth did nothing to save Justine and Justine said nothing to defend herself. She accepted the crime that she did not commit. Although there were hints of women being passive, there was a young girl who actually turned the stereotype around. When the monster tried to hide himself from humanity, he lived in a cottage that was connected to another families. A crack in the wall is what helped the monster learn to speak, read, and understand others. In the apartment lived a father named De Lacey and his children Felix and Agatha.

A new member of the family soon came and it was a young girl named Safie. She barely spoke their language was she brought happiness to the house. This little girl had a big impact on the stereotype of women being passive. Her mother had passed away and she lived with her father who soon went to prison. Her father wanted her to return to Constantinople but she boldly rejected his attempt. Her willingness to take the initiative and go against her father's wishes makes her a strong character in Frankenstein.

Towards the end of the novel, Victor tries to make a female creation for the onster he created since he complained that he felt lonely. After almost finishing the creation and the monster happily watching through the window, Victor destroys her. " I almost felt," he says, " as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being. " (Frankenstein, pg.) Victor destroying the female

monster shows that it can be seen as an anti-feminist action. The first time Victor meets with the monster, they talk about how he is progressing and slowly learning how to survive, what hot and cold is, the difference between day and night, etc.

The monster talks about his confusion of his creation. " Like Adam," he says, " I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence," but " many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me. " (Frankenstein, pg.) The monster is tossed between the two and it troubles him. Lost between whether his second life will be spent in heaven or hell.

During the enlightenment, a man by the name John Calvin believed in " predestination. This meaning that God controlled all aspects of your life and has already decided whether or not you will be going to heaven. Victor realizes this when he is creating the female monster. He can't control whether or not she'll want to be with the monster he had already created. God created Eve for Adam to not only start life but they were meant to keep each other company, unlike God, Victor doesn't have the power to control what the female creation would want, causing him to have anxiety and further destroy her. Shelly also ties in the romantic movement with Victor, showing his feelings through nature.

Victor began to see more of his father towards the middle of the novel and they would travel to different places together. For Victor, going into the Alps was comforting to him. The high altitudes and cold chill the mountains would bring. The cold represents him wanting to freeze the guilt about the murders

and the creation of the monster. For the monster, he found serenity in the soft colors of springtime in the woods. This represents how he wants to socialize with others and feel comfortable revealing himself to the world. Half surprised by the novelty of these sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them; and, forgetting my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy," the monster says. (Frankenstein, pg.) Any scientist or researcher is dedicated to his or her work. Victor worked hard to answer the question of life. He knew that carrying out this experiment would take responsibility so he followed through until he had completed his project. Upon finishing, he did not follow through with his responsibility, just abandoning the monster.

When the monster disappeared from his apartment, Victor did not go looking for him, not giving a care as to where the monster disappeared. One day Victor goes for a stroll coming across his creation. As the monster approached him, Victor felt fear, not knowing what this monster was capable of. It turns out that all the monster wanted to do was sit down and talk about what he has learned being on his own. He talks about his past in an emotional and sensitive way; just like a human. Victor first saw his creation as a scary, bloodthirsty monster but now sees him as an intellect.

Victor then tries to insult the monster, calling him a demon but the monster simply responds in an eloquent way, demonstrating that he is too a human being with feelings and emotions. Victor then comes to realize that the monster isn't just a scientific creation, he is a living human being with wants and needs just like anyone else and he proceeds to just leave him. The monster begins to understand that Victor isn't the caring owner he seemed

to be. Victor doesn't have the ability to accept those who are different, much like the others in the novel.

While living next door to a family, the monster would study their behavior and learn from them. He is fascinated with Felix and Safie's relationship and longs for Victor to accept him. " But where were my friends and relations? My father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing...What was I? " (Frankenstein, pg. 124) The monster becomes lonely and wants to interact with other people after seeing the significance of social behavior.

He knows he is different but attempts to talk to De Lacey who is blind. Before he could make a change, the rest of the family returned home and ran him out of their house in fear. Victor's lack of responsibility has left the monster with no guidance and the feeling of being alone. If Victor had followed through with his responsibility or thought about what he would do if he succeeded in creating life, he wouldn't be making himself sick, worrying about the monster and his well being. This is when the reoccurring question keeps coming to mind, although it can be done, should it?

In the end, after losing everyone he loves, Victor swears to hunt down the monster and destroy him. On this wild goose chase, the monster would leave hints as to where he was and Victor was persistent in finding him. Victor accompanied the narrator Walton and had passed away before he could find the monster. Walton hears a noise and goes to check on Victor's body to find the monster hovering over him. The monster looks at Walton and tells

him now that Victor has died that there is no point to him living anymore. What did he have to live for?

To seek revenge on Victor and hide himself from the human race? That wasn't a life, which is why Victor seeking to create life shouldn't have been done. After trying to create life, it seems that the scientific experiment had completed flipped on Victor. He destroyed his. He filled his life with stress and sickness, losing his loved ones one by one. Instead of being a part of the enlightenment, he spent the rest of his life avoiding his guilt and chasing down his creation. Was that worth it, because many would agree that it was not.