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Frankenstein Analysis

“Alas! Why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to us.” These are the thoughts of Victor Frankenstein as he is ascending to the summit of Montanvert to try and get some peace from his grief and despair. He finds none, as the monster he created pursues him to this peaceful getaway and brings the consequences of Victor's actions to the forefront by demanding a mate. Science plays a crucial part in “Frankenstein,” being the core of Victor's ambition in life and the reason why the monster is able to be created, but the danger lies in that science only brought Victor despair and death and knowledge only brought unhappiness.

It is telling about the viewpoint the author had about science, when the ultimate expression of science in “Frankenstein” is a hideous, murdering monster. The monster was created purely by Victor's ambition and scientific techniques, nothing about him is natural except for being made of organic parts. The monster, while starting out as a curious being with compassion and a desire for the company of others, becomes consumed by hatred and a desire for vengeance against the human race after he is continually rejected and vilified. When Victor abandoned the monster to the world after its creation, it showed that he had no concept of planning for the consequences of his scientific pursuits. This theme of reckless experimentation with science with no care for the consequences was a major issue at the time of writing of “Frankenstein” and is still pertinent today.

Another point that the author makes about science is that a life dedicated to science does not

lead to happiness. In Victor's case, his life of science only brought him ruin, everyone he knew and loved eventually died because of the monster, and the monster's creation caused him untold grief, despair, and terror for the rest of his life. The only time Victor found any peace was during his ascent to Montanvert. During this travel, he was temporarily able to leave his world of science behind and be at one with nature. Only here was he at peace among the pine trees and rivers of ice. Even in this scene of natural beauty he can't help but ponder the human condition. Here he comes to the conclusion that, as quoted in the beginning, humanity's relentless impulse for knowledge has made us more dependent on nature and less secure from the constant change of life. This is paralleled in the monster's experience observing the De Lacey family. He starts out at the level of a brute, with no ability to speak or understand the world around him. Through his observations, he slowly starts to learn language and comes to view the De Lacey family as wonderful beings superior to himself, and endeavors to do whatever he can to assist them. When Safie comes to stay, he knowledge about human history and achievement grows greatly, but this does not bring him the pure happiness he thought it would. He realizes that humanity has the capacity for great evil as well as great good, and recoils when he finds out that descent and riches are the two qualities modern man most esteemed. This leads him to the reflection that he is a monster and all alone in the world, and at this point he realizes the pain that knowledge has brought him and "wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling." Even when he discovered the satchel of books, the happiness they brought him were far eclipsed by dejection and depression, especially when he found Victor's journal of his creation in his clothing.

In "Frankenstein," science was a significant theme that brought danger, despair, and eventually death to everyone involved. The unintended consequences of reckless scientific inquiry brought Victor and everyone he loved to ruin. To study and be at one with nature, without science and knowledge,

was offered as a counterpoint to this reckless science that brought happiness and peace. The last one hundred years have shown that these themes are still relevant, with science bringing untold destruction and death as well as bringing advancements to ensure a longer lasting and higher quality life for many. Whether science is ultimately a beneficial pursuit for humanity or not is a question yet to be fully answered.