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Pattern of Grief in Frankenstein

The death of Victor's mother introduces a recurring pattern of grief and suffering in Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. In response to his mother's death, Victor states, "The first misfortune of my life occurred- an omen, as it were, of my future misery" (25). Victor foreshadows his future misery but also distinguishes this moment as the beginning of his suffering. The death of his mother severely affects his character and many of his future choices. From this moment forward, the story is controlled by climactic moments fueled by emotional suffering and grieving. These moments lead to the ultimate demise of both Victor and his creation.

The death of Victor's mother is the first appearance of grief in the story. It ignites the desire for Victor to create his monster because he dislikes the impassable boundary between life and death. Victor describes his grief as follows: "I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil, the void that presents itself to the soul, and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance" (26). He is angry and frustrated at the notion of death. This frustration is the driving point towards constructing his monster, as Victor states, "Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first breakthrough and pour a torrent of light into our dark world" (37). He desires to break through the barricade that separates himself from his lost mother.

However, upon succeeding in creating life from a non-living creature, Victor abandons his work completely. He is filled with absolute disgust towards his creation. He realizes his grief has not been quelled by his invention, as he admits, "I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view. I did not dare return to the apartment, which I inhabited" (44). Victor sought something else within the creature that, when he did not find, was overwhelmed and abandoned his creation altogether. His creature was of another life form, one of disgust and horror that was far from his desire (continuation).

After Victor abandons him, the creature takes revenge on Victor for creating him. The creature has to guide himself and meets rejection repeatedly as each attempt at creating good ends with an unfortunate outcome. When he attempts to save a little girl from drowning, he is ridiculed and gets shot. In frustration, he states, "This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and, as a recompence, I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound" (118 pg) The monster begins to experience the same type of grief and suffering as Victor. The monster's existence was the result of his creator's misery and sorrow on the notion of death. In essence, Victor's creature embodied the effects of his emotional drive. Each time his creation seeks something, it brings him only more suffering. For instance, the creature is continually seeking companionship, as he admits, "If therefore, I could seize him, and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be sodesolate in this peopled earth." (118) He wants to feel as if he belongs to humanity rather than live as an outcast. However, when a potential friend rejects him, anger fills his heart. At this point, the level of grief he experiences drives him to end the life of another rather than an attempt to preserve it in the way Victor does.

As a result of his brother's murder, Victor's grief elevates and marks the decline of his character. Victor was not the only one affected by the murder, demonstrating that he not only is experiencing loss but also accountability for his family's grief, as Victor describes, "I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the dead which he had now done, nearly in the light of my vampire, my spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me" (59). Eventually, when he attempts to get away and enjoy the beauties of life, he is met yet again with misery. In his short moment, Victor exclaims, "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" (79). However, when he spots the monster off in the distance, Victor states, "I trembled with rage and horror resolving to wait for his approach" (79). The monster that he has deemed the devil of society visits him with his sorrows. The monster seeks Victor to cure his miseries so that he may live a life of some value. The monster disrupting Victor's happiness becomes a recurring pattern throughout the novel. Each time Victor is met with a joyful moment, the monster which he dislikes and abhors so much appears with his sufferings.

The monster each time puts Victor as the controller of his own emotions. Each time Victor denies the monster of potential joy, the monster's suffering increases. This feedback loop is what drives the pattern of grief. Both blame each other for the source of their suffering. Moreover, near the end of the story, both devote their lives to make the other suffer greatest. Each of them both continually says that they have suffered the greatest at the effects of the other. Towards the end of the novel, however, the appearance of closure is seen at the death of Victor.

The monster mourns so terribly at the death of his creator. It is through this act that the monster displays care for Victor.

Ironically after the murder of Elizebeth, Victor seeks help from humanity to aid in his revenge. Nevertheless, just like the monster, he is rejected by society and left with his commitment to revenge to guide him.

"And I call on you, spirits of the dead and one you, wandering ministers of vengeance, to aid and conduct me in my work. Let the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony; let him feel the despair that now torments me" (168)