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Prompt: Victor creates but then destroys a female being. Explain how his sense of duty shifts in this process. Defend his decision to tear up the second creature.

The popular tale of Frankenstein, as narrated by author Mary Shelley, is a testament to the importance of maintaining the delicate balance between scientific discovery and nature. This story follows the life of Victor Frankenstein, a Genavese scientist, as he attempts to spark an inanimate object with the force of life; he is infamously successful in his pursuits. Frankenstein scourges the necessary parts from various human graves, assembles a disfigured body, and births a creature unlike anything the world has seen. Frightened by his own creation, he abandons the creature, leaving it to fend for itself in the foreign world of man. Miserable after a series of unwelcoming encounters with humans, the creature persuades his creator to grant him happiness in the form of an equally grotesque female companion– one of his own kind. Frankenstein, confident in his pursuit of scientific knowledge whilst creating the first creature, now grapples with an internal conflict between his moral duty to the creature (as its creator) and his responsibility towards society (as an ethical scientist). As he considers the dangers that the second creature could potentially pose towards society, Frankenstein's moral obligation towards mankind clearly trumps his sympathetic feelings towards the creature and he rightfully halts the construction of a second creature.

Lonely and miserable after his first interactions with mankind, the creature confronts Frankenstein and asks him to fulfill the bare minimum of his responsibility towards the creature as its creator; he requests Frankenstein for a female counterpart. Frankenstein, already struggling to acknowledge the murderous aftermath of his original creation, is initially skeptical of the creature's request, "Shall I create another like yourself, whose joint wickedness may desolate the world? Begone!" (Shelley 147). His negative reaction towards the creature's request suggests that Frankenstein may already be regretting his initial creation and will approach future such endeavors with increased caution. Nevertheless, the creature is determined to extract sympathy from him and explains that he is miserable, and thereby evil, *because* he is alone. Since mankind is scared off by his hideous countenance, an amiable companion of his own kind would rescue the creature from a state of eternal loneliness– a blessing which only Frankenstein is capable of granting. Following this line of reasoning, the creature claims that if Frankenstein rewards him with a companion, he will peaceably disappear from the reaches of mankind, "...that with the companion you bestow I will quit the neighborhood of man…" (Shelley 149). Convinced that he is obligated to provide the creature with the bare minimum of happiness, Frankenstein proceeds to set up his laboratory and begin the construction of a female counterpart. At this instance, he believes that he can kill two birds with one stone by both satisfying the creature and rid humanity of it. Since he has not yet begun to consider flaws that could emerge in the second creature, we notice that Frankenstein's moral duty towards his discovery, his creation, has blinded him to his moral duty towards considering society's safety.

One could claim that the creature has wholeheartedly convinced Frankenstein to bring a second creature to life; however, in observing Frankenstein's inner monologue, we can establish that the amount of internal conflict he faces continues to *increase* as the task progresses. One day in the midst of assembling the body for the second creature, he undergoes a lengthy and insightful thought process about the consequences his current experiment could pose to humankind, "As I sat, a train of reflection occurred to

me… consider the effects of what I was now doing" (Shelley 170). A thousand terrible outcomes, all of which were absent when he was creating the first creature, cloud his conscience, "She might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate, and delight… in murder and wretchedness… They might even hate each other." (Shelley 170). He considers the possibility that she may be more despicable than the first creature, that she may despise him, she may entirely ignore the promise the creature made to Frankenstein prior to her conception, or they may even love each other and produce offspring that are evil. In essence, he considers all the possibilities that may yield deadly effects for humanity, until he reaches the pivotal question, "Had I a right, for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations?" (Shelley 171).

In this very instance, Frankenstein pauses his work to reconsider if he has the right to gamble with the safety of the future generations of mankind for the sake of responsibilities that accompany his role as the creature's creator. For one final moment, his internal conflict between his responsibility towards society and the happiness of the creature is more evident than ever. In a split second decision, suddenly aware of the certainty of the implications and disgusted by his project, Frankenstein destroys the creation, "I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. " (Shelley 171). Since he abandoned the creation of a second creature *after* realizing the potential dangers that it could pose to humankind, Frankenstein's actions are a clear indication that his moral duty to society has eclipsed his dedication to his science and to the creature.

Frankenstein's change in mindset is undeniable, and justified by the multitude of reasons that he takes into consideration the instant before destroying his second piece of work. For instance, since the creature will be a living, breathing, sentient being capable of exercising free will, Frankenstein has no way of ensuring that it will be benevolent in nature. On a similar note, nor can he ensure her compliance with the conditional promise of peace made by the first creature. Even the 'ideal' situation has dangerous imperfections! Supposing that the pair of creatures become mates and disappear to a remote location, they may reproduce and yield offspring; if this were to occur, we would repeat the same chain of uncertainties and unknown dangers as were present with the second creature! In tearing up his second creation rather than invigorating it with life, Frankenstein recognizes that he is indulging in a task with a greater probability of bringing destruction than peace, and he rightfully refuses to continue this unfair gamble with future generations.

Prompt: Victor and the creature each hold final dialogues with Captain Walton. What do these conversations reveal about each character? What do they suggest to Walton about ambition and consequence?

As we return to a narration from Walton's perspective in the third Volume of Frankenstein, we behold the focal scene picturing Frankenstein lying on his deathbed and Walton is writing a letter to his sister. Frankenstein's last dialogue with Walton reveals the scientist's newly acquired sense of wisdom and selflessness, and the creature's final interactions prove to be extremely humanizing.

When Frankenstein exchanges final words with Walton, we see that his demeanor has changed significantly in the aftermath of his creation. At this moment, Frankenstein has lost all near and dear to him at the hands of the creature, whether it be directly or indirectly; in fact, Walton rescued him from the brink of death in the midst of Frankenstein's vengeance against the creature. In contrast to Frankenstein's claims referring to his construction of the first creature, "During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me…"(Shelley 169), his perspective towards ambition transitions from that characterized by blind ambition to one laced with caution and a sense of painful wisdom. The latter trait is particularly revealed in Frankenstein's final advice to Walton, "Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition…"(Shelley 220). In this line, he is clearly discouraging his friend from surpassing the scientific limits set in place for man by nature– a feat that proved to be deadly for him. On the other hand, Frankenstein requesting Walton to inherit his task of destroying the creature indicates that a trait of selfishness is still present, as he is encouraging his friend to face a highly unpredictable foe, "I asked you to undertake my unfinished work…" (Shelley 220). Nonetheless, Frankenstein realizes the selfishness of his desire and immediately revokes this request out of consideration for Walton's life, "Yet I cannot ask you to renounce your country and friends to fulfill this task.." (Shelley 220). Both his cautionary and considerate statements suggest that he has grown past the self-centeredness that was present in his pursuits thus far.

The creature's later appearance in the scene, especially the focus on guilt and regret, reveals the sheer depth of its emotional intelligence. Shortly after Frankenstein passes away, the creature (having stalked him) climbs onto the ship and begins to lament the loss in Walton's presence. One of the first cries that erupt from the creature is as follows: "In his murder my crimes are consummated; the miserable series of my being is wound to its close!" (Shelley 221). Evidently, the creature's purpose in life, or lack thereof, has led to his creator being the center of it; now that Frankenstein is gone, the creature feels that his condition is eternal and no longer sees a point to his own existence– perhaps an indication of depression. The creature also displays feelings of regret and self-hatred as he reproaches himself and begs for forgiveness, "What does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me?" (Shelley 221). Since the creature has experienced both depression and anger at this point, it seems to be following the pattern exhibited in the stages of grief– one of the most humanizing series of emotions that a being can experience. To elaborate, this scene reveals just how far the creature is from the monster that the characters perceive him to be, and highlights its emotional proximity to man. The creature's emotional intelligence is further revealed as he acknowledges the maliciousness of his previous actions, and feels guilty– a complex human emotion that indicates the presence of a moral compass.

Walton's interaction with the creature testifies his loyalty to Frankenstein. As Walter witnesses the creature with his own eyes, he is absolutely repulsed by its horrific appearance, "Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face…" (Shelley 221) Although he is sympathetic at first after hearing the extent of the creature's misery and self-reprimandations, he is faithful to the sufferings of his friend and deems the creature a hypocrite, "You throw a torch into a pile of buildings; and when they are consumed, you lament the fall. Hypocritical fiend!" (Shelley 223) To clarify the irony of the situation, the creature led Frankenstein on a chase that proved to be deathly to his health; now, as he begs for forgiveness beside his creator's dead body, he fails to realize that he is the source of the guilt! These negative impressions made by the creature in his state of madness reinforce the advice that Frankenstein had offered Walton. Being face-to-face with the result of Frankenstein's dangerous ambition undoubtedly strengthens the voyager's feelings about the importance of being satisfied with an individual's current peace.