

FRANKENSTEIN:
AN APPEAL FOR THE VALUE OF HUMAN CONNECTION

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Victor Frankenstein is dead. The victim of an extraordinary ambition that surpassed and conquered all other pleasures and goods in his life, the scientist, destined for doom, pursued his Creature to the furthest corner of the world, and perished. Robert Walton, who in many ways is akin to the late Frankenstein, prepares for the long voyage back to England, unsuccessful in fulfilling his own ambitions. It is here that he encounters the Creature himself for the first and only time, and it is here that Shelley, through the Creature, cautions her readers to value one very specific, fundamental aspect of being human: “For whilst I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires. They were forever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned” (Shelley, 278). Throughout Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the loss of and the inability to attain human connection, or family, serves as a catalyst for many of the tragic events that unfold. From Victor to the Monster, the role of such connections is explored in various forms as they struggle with an increasingly dwindling, or altogether nonexistent, ability to connect with others.

For Victor Frankenstein, childhood was nothing less than sublime joy, as he claims himself: “No youth could have passed more happily than mine. My parents were indulgent, and my companions amiable” (Shelley, 39). True to his words, Victor's parents cared deeply for him, as did the rest of his family and companions. And yet, despite the plethora of love, acceptance, and connection Victor enjoyed in his youth, his nefarious ambition and insatiable curiosity pulled him towards isolation. In pursuit of the secrets of life, Victor secludes himself in his work, cutting himself off from those he loves and who love him with a barrier of study and experimentation, until at last he succeeds in reanimation and creates life. But in this moment Victor rejects his creation, and in doing so he also rejects the sacred role of parenthood which he willingly thrust upon himself. Upon returning home, rather than share his burden and admit to his mistakes, Victor keeps his Creation's existence secret, simultaneously denying the deep, irrefutable connection between himself and the Creature whilst maintaining a barrier of pain, shame, and fear between himself and those he loves. Slowly but surely Victor loses his family and friends until at last, when he has lost everyone, when his only ‘human’ connection that remains is with the Creature, he pursues it, intent on its destruction. Victor's near total isolation from human connection at this point is symbolized by the barren arctic

landscape which he had been led to in his pursuit of the only living thing with which there remains a semblance of connection, as corrupted as it may be.

Whereas Victor had been blessed with a bounty of human connection in life, the case was not so for his creation. The Creature had family only in the form of Victor, his creator, who upon his birth recoiled in fear and horror. The Creature's first and only direct relationship with another human is poisoned, tainted, and serves as an omen for any future hope of connection he may desire. Victor's first lessons were of love. His Monster's are of rejection, and we see this rejection again when he encounters the De Lacey's, another model family. The Creature yearns for the intimate, familial connection the De Lacey's have, but they too reject him. What's significant about this rejection, however, is that it only transpires after the Creature is seen. The blind Mr. De Lacey speaks with the Creature at length before they are interrupted by the rest of the De Lacey family. This seems to indicate that the Creature's lack of human connection is less the result of the 'core' of his being, and more so the result of his outward appearance. In being prevented from establishing human connection, the Creature's sense of self-worth plummets: he is a newborn that is confused and in despair, and his understanding of the world and of humanity are entirely founded upon their rejection of him. Whilst this is certainly not an excuse for the multiple murders he commits, it does serve as an explanation for why the Creature devolved to such heinous acts: the lack of human connection, despite his efforts, painted plainly the picture that humanity, for no reason other than his appearance, hates him: "I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an aberration, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on" (Shelley, 279). The monster resolves that the only true connection with another being he can have is with one akin to him, but when Frankenstein ultimately refuses to create him a companion, regardless of his reasons for deciding so, this is seen, in the eyes of the Creature, as Victor denying him this one chance for a 'human' connection. When Victor later dies, the Creature loses the only semblance of a connection he had retained, and with his self-proclaimed vengeance upon his creator fulfilled, the Creature resolves to end his own life.

The importance of human connection within Shelley's *Frankenstein* cannot be understated. The book is bound, written, and told through it, start to finish. When *Frankenstein* first begins, we meet Robert Walton, who writes to his sister as he voyages ever closer to the North Pole. He eventually encounters Victor, whose tale is told via Walton's letters. Like Frankenstein, Walton is isolated, far removed from any intimate human connection save his crewmates. Unlike Frankenstein however, Walton nonetheless still retains human connection in the form of his sister, weak though it may be due to Walton's own ambitions. The novel ends with Walton being spared the same fate as Victor - one of tragedy

resulting from ambitions that outshone the value of human connection. Whether Frankenstein's Monster was always doomed to a short existence of misery with no chance of human connection is up to interpretation. What matters is that the evil he enacts, the unforgivable, monstrous crimes he commits, can be traced back to those rejections of human connection he experiences, time and time again. The Creature was denied a fundamental aspect of being human, and he suffered for it. Unlike the Creature, Victor had at one point possessed many intimate human connections, and it is the loss of these connections through ambition, secrecy, and arrogance that serve as a warning for Shelley's readers, a warning to never disregard the importance of human connection, to never forget its value, to never take it for granted nor deny it of others, for without it we aren't fully human.

WORKS CITED

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, et al. *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*.
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