

“If I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear!” In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley explores the importance of love and acceptance.

For most people, their sense of worth and fulfilment in life is derived from their membership of groups or communities. That affiliation is important because inherent within it is the sense of love and acceptance, which is exhibiting a feeling of affection for oneself or others. Certainly, this concept is at the heart of Mary Shelley’s early nineteenth century Gothic novel, Frankenstein, which features a Byronic portrayal of two souls, the inventor Frankenstein who obsessively pursues his ambition to construct a fully functional human from cadavers and the Monster which he creates. Both characters wrestle with the elusiveness of love and acceptance. This has negative ramifications on Victor as he rejects the love of his family and is unwilling to accept his flawed character. Additionally, his lack of affection for his own creation subsequently imbues a sense of loneliness in the Monster and provokes it to take revenge on Frankenstein and the rest of mankind. Therefore, through the characterisation of both Frankenstein and the Monster, Shelley wishes to express her view that having the experience of love and acceptance is vital to one’s success and wellbeing.

Without a strong love for his caring family, Frankenstein’s scientific desires lead to his downfall. His ‘ardent desire’ remains unchallenged by any other interest in life. As a child, Frankenstein is depicted as an ‘innocent and helpless creature bestowed on [his parents] by Heaven’. By presenting him as such, Shelley implies that Frankenstein was part of a united relationship with his family due to the reference of the Divine. However, despite the pleads by his father and sister to stay in touch while at Ingolstadt, Frankenstein lacks the capacity to care sufficiently for his family from whom he isolates himself. As a result, his pursuit for scientific knowledge becomes limitless and uncontrolled. Initially, Frankenstein seeks to ‘overtake the winds’, but soon he needs to be ‘carried by the wind’ and ultimately is ‘moved by every wind that blows’. Shelley employs this motif for different purposes; while she accentuates that Frankenstein’s failure to love his family acts as a catalyst for a negative pathway of ambition, she also advocates her view that one should not isolate themselves from their close ones when following their dreams. Thus, Frankenstein’s inability to experience familial affection not only leads to his isolation, but also wreaks havoc on his life.

Furthermore, Frankenstein demonstrates no feelings of care and acceptance of the Monster, instead abhorring him which mirrors the detrimental universal consequences of abandoning one’s creation and fuels the spitefulness of the Monster. Frankenstein assumes the role of creator when he brings his creation to life. With this idea of creation, Shelley subtly alludes to the book of Genesis, in which God creates Adam. However, unlike in the Bible, Frankenstein’s abandonment of the creature parallels a moral anarchy. Not only does he challenge the power of nature, but he also displays prejudice towards the Monster, labelling it as a ‘demonical corpse’ and ‘wretch’ repeatedly. Such derogatory language leads the Monster to suffer from deep-rooted unhappiness as he has ‘no Eve [to] soothe [his] sorrows nor share [his] thoughts’. Shelley thus aims to convey her message that it is a ‘duty’ for a creator to take responsibility for that which they create. The absence of parental love later prompts the Monster to have an ‘insatiable thirst for vengeance’ when he compares the luxurious life of Frankenstein to his. If Frankenstein displayed love and accepted his creature, then the Monster’s situation may have been averted altogether, as the Monster declares that he would return the ‘emotions of benevolence’ if he felt compassion.

Frankenstein’s sense of inadequacy and lack of self-acceptance intensifies his suffering. Although he speaks Romantically of himself, he fails to confront his true inner self due to his lack of self-esteem.

Frankenstein views himself as someone who 'aspires to become greater than his nature will allow' and constantly relishes the possibility of 'a new species bless [ing him] as its creator and source'. Evidently, his ego distorts his views of himself and thus prevents him from realising the underlying cause of his downfall. Through such portrayal, Shelley condemns Frankenstein for presuming that a mere man has the jurisdiction to preside over life and death, and thereby advocates that one should embrace their own flaws as opposed to pushing the boundaries beyond the Natural World. Therefore, the author elucidates that Frankenstein's incapacity to love and accept himself as an individual triggers the adversities he faces.

Mary Shelley uses her narrative Frankenstein to examine the complexities of both love and acceptance. She explores the characters of Frankenstein and the Monster in doing so. For Frankenstein, his affection for his family is inadequate in taming the ardour he possesses to be a pioneer in scientific discovery and exploration. By contrast, the Monster is betrayed by Frankenstein and as a result, is inspired to cause harm to society. It is thusly seen that in Mary Shelley's celebrated text Frankenstein, without love and acceptance for oneself and one's creation, one will suffer a host of negative consequences.

