Franknstien, More Human Than Human Essay, Research Paper

More Human Than Human

Society is inevitable. It will always be there as a pleasure and a burden. Society puts labels on everything such as good or bad, rich or poor, normal or aberrant. Although some of these stamps are accurate, most are misconceptions. In Mary Shelley’s, Frankenstein, this act of erring by society is extremely evident. Two of the most inaccurate assumptions of society revolve around the central characters, Dr. Frankenstein and the monster. Society’s labels for these two extremely different characters are on the exact opposite side of the scale of what they truly are. Dr. Frankenstein is more of a monster while the monster is more humane.

Dr. Frankenstein, the so labeled decent, no-fault man, is actually irresponsible, stubborn, and extreme in his actions throughout the novel. From the very first encounter with Victor Frankenstein we get a hint if his insaneness when he asks R. Walton, “Do you share my madness?” (12). That is the first thing that he says when he recovers from his illness. Right from the start we know that something is awry with Victor. Dr. Frankenstein’s irresponsibility shows through many times in his feelings toward his creation. While he was in the process of shaping his creation, Frankenstein gets so caught up in his work and his yearning to be remembered for all time that he does not consider what will happen after life is breathed into his creation. He is so consumed by his work he does not sleep for days on end, go outside, eat meals, or write to his family. Frankenstein even admits that he could not control his obsession with his work, “For this I had deprived myself of rest and health” (35). What sane person puts his work before his own health? After his creation comes to life, he refuses to accept his obligation as the creator to his creation, “Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room,” (35). Frankenstein is just plain cruel and neglectful to his creation. He does not care for it, shelter it, provide it with food or love, nor teaches his creation. This neglecting truly shows that Frankenstein is a self-absorbed monster. Upon Frankenstein’s return to his castle he tells how he searched his house for his creation but found him not, “I could hardly believe that so great a good fortune could have befallen me; but when I became assured that my enemy [his creation] had indeed fled, I clapped my hands for joy,” (38). Frankenstein already refers to his creation as his enemy when is has done nothing to him at all. Frankenstein takes no responsibility for his creation and acts like nothing has happened when he doesn’t find it in his house. A decent, responsible person would not “clap for joy” but rather start looking for his creation. Frankenstein even states that, “A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility” (34) yet when he thinks about his creation, “my hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation?I wished to see him again, that I might wreak the utmost extent of abhorrence on his head” (62). Now does that sound like some one who has preserved a calm and peaceful mind? Frankenstein’s irresponsibility leads to the death of three innocent people, “I called my self the murdered of William, of Justine, and of Clerval” (130). Frankenstein’s irresponsibility ultimately leads to his own demise when his own creation kills him.

The monster on the other hand was dealt a very bad hand by being created in the first place. Society has mislabeled this creature as dumb, savage, and brutal, whereas his is actually intelligent, kind, and quite humane. Right from the first moment of life the creature was treated badly by humans just because of his hideous looks. His creator even runs out on the creature at the first sight of him. The creation has no one to turn to, no one to love even the person that brought him into the world hates him, “All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life?” (68). What’s the creature to do? He has not a single companion in the whole world so he sets out to try and find one. The creature’s second encounter with man is no better than his first, “He turned on hearing a noise; and perceiving me, shrieked loudly, and quitting the hut, ran across the fields with a speed of which his debilitated form hardly appeared capable” (73). Now the creature has had two encounters with man and they both resulted in the men running in pure horror from the creature. The creature soon realizes that he is “a poor, helpless, miserable wretch” (71) that people hate because he is ugly. The creature even shows signs of joy when listening to music, “and to produce sounds sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale. It was a lovely sight, even to me, poor wretch!” (75). When the creature sees the interaction of a true family his yearning to be accepted increases, “He raised her, and smiled with such kindness and affection that I felt sensations of a peculiar and overwhelming nature: they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced?and withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions” (75). The creature longs to be accepted by anybody especially the family that he considers his protectors, “I longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous villagers, and resolved, whatever course of conduct I might hereafter think it right to pursue, that for the present I would remain quietly in my hovel, watching, and endeavoring to discover the motives which influenced their actions” (77). In his determination to be accepted he spends several months watching this family in order to learn how to speak, read and write. He feels obligated to help the family in some way because he is using their house for shelter. So he supplies firewood and helps with some of the familial chores. Here the creature shows that he is very considerate and kind. He even stops taking their food because he sees that it causes them to suffer. He even feels like a member of the family sharing their joy and pain, “The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me: when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys” (79). After spending several months watching and helping the family he decides to make contact but he is greeted with, “Agatha fainted; and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage” (97). Now that every human he has known or loved has rejected the creature he decides to isolate himself. But as he retreats to his desolation he saves a girl from drowning in river. This concern for human life in addition to his love toward the family is evidence to his humanity.

Dr. Frankenstein is a man that cares only of himself and accepts no responsibility for his actions and his creation on the other hand is compassionate and helpful to the humans who despise him. Society has the most influence in a person’s point of view on any given point. Mostly society causes misconceptions about people based on appearance and the unknown. This is especially evident in the novel Frankenstein, where labels are placed on the main characters by society are skewed. Dr. Frankenstein turns out to be more of a monster than his creation while his creation is more humane than Dr. Frankenstein is.