UQTR

Essay on Frankenstein’s book

By

Mélanie Daigneault

November 18, 2009

Course: Survey of English Literature Teacher: Christian Giguère

**What does the creature, in Frankenstein’s story, teach us about the concept of “Humanity”?**

There is no evidence, in the book, concerning the formula used by the creator to give live to his creation. Without this information, it is impossible to know the creation’s true nature in the story. Without knowing the true nature of something; it is impossible to analyse it. How can we understand a creature without determining his vital needs and objectives?

The best way to start investigating about the message, the daemon tries to spread; is to find out what he keeps seeking thorough the book and why he seeks it. Once we know the creature’s intention in the tale, we will realize the author’s main inspiration about it as well as its purpose in the story. This might guide us to the essence of its creation. We will then be able to understand the message the creature tries to teach. In order to confirm it, we must know its origin; we must determine the formula used for its creation. I will then attempt to prove the relation between this same source and the creature. After those steps, we will be able to determine what does the creature, in the book, tries to teach about the concept of humanity.

What does he, Victor’s creation, keeps on seeking?

Could justice be what the daemon tries to grasp? The story shows a great injustice but I don’t think justice really exist in the concept of humanity. We all want justice and we, sometime, seek it... but justice will never be perfectly controlled by humans until humans can be controlled perfectly. The closest way to reach a perfect control on something is to program it. Artificial intelligence may then become an issue as we have seen in many movies... but that is not the point here. The point is the impossibility to program a human... at least, it is not possible yet. So control isn’t an option that mankind can rely on when it come to justice.

Balance, on the other hand, means equality because it is a state of equilibrium which also means: *A stable situation in which forces cancel one another*. That is what Frankenstein is trying to achieve in the story and what human beings need to experiment in order to attain a harmonious state of mind.

Balance instantly leads to opposites. I do not think Shelley only tried to put in evidence the opposite state of mind of Victor by creating a creature so different from him. If we refer to some twins’ issues for instance; one might be considered as the evil one and the other as the good one. You can often, as well, see in a family with two kids; one very mature and the other one very needy. It’s again a state of equilibrium and it doesn’t only consist on finding a different identity from our sibling. It is only the nature of young people to have such an attitude. It is not evil or good but only different which can of course suggest to a good attitude or a bad attitude. It is leaded by the curiosity and the need of provoking different reactions from their parents in order to satisfy their inquisitiveness. Everyone wants to be unique but nobody wants to be the only one.

All this to explain that the creature in the story is newly born; it tends, more easily, to see a competition between his only relative and himself. ***“Are you to be happy while I grovel in the intensity of my wretchedness?”*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book.** I was persuaded that the creature was only a metaphor to Victor’s state of mind concerning a personal battle within his passions and knowledge. But Shelley gave many evidences thorough her book of the existence of the daemon. Therefore the creature, let us call it Frankenstein, was really present in the materiel world of the story. We read about citizens describing the creature to Victor which makes it impossible for Victor to be the assassin and in that case impossible for the creature to only be a second personality of Victor. To sum up; the creature does exist and balance is what it craves for in the story.

What was Shelley’s main idea about Victor’s creation, and what does it have to do with balance?

I do believe that Shelley’s main idea about Victor’s creation was to indicate a personal battle we human must do when it comes to the power of wisdom. We must stabilise our own reason and emotions in order to reach a perfect balance within our wisdom and passions. It is not an easy thing to do for the creature for it was unfairly rejected by his creator and put into a world where he knew he would never be loved or accepted. I don’t think any human being could handle such a mental torture. To be confirmed of God’s existence and then be forsaken by him would probably be enough for any humans to lose their mind at it.

Frankenstein found his own way to stabilise his emotions by turning to vengeance.***“Nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose”*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book**. Vengeance can appease sadness for awhile but what he didn’t know, until the end of the story, was that revenge leads to remorse. Frankenstein was too wise to ignore the pain that remorse was creating in his mind and heart. This lack of reason made him want to end his life. Can you imagine that cruelty, sadness, rejection, violence, loneliness in a whole... never thrive at bringing Frankenstein down but remorse did? It is a very destructive feeling because it leads to hopelessness. His worst enemy fell, not even by his hand and the remorse he felt by this loss was enough for him to commit suicide. Once he had exerted his vengeance and fulfilled his only goal... his mind was no longer tranquillized; it became haunted by grieves.

Is it because he truly regretted his past actions? He probably regretted it but not enough to feel remorse about it. Yet, a creature is nothing without a creator... it has no meant to be. Now to be a creature with a meaningless future on earth was, perhaps, his greatest remorse. Or maybe it only means he’s been, after his creator’s death, erased from life? Frankenstein brought Victor, his creator, to his death and extinction by destroying everything that was good for him. Isn’t God seen as the virtues in human’s beings, the positivity in life and the proton in science? Erase it from existence and all that will remain will be sins, negative and electrons. We know that opposites create the balance in the universe. One thing can’t exist without its opposite. Consequently, after erasing the good in one’s life, the negative explodes and all that remain is the nothingness.

Frankenstein was, before Victor’s death, a victim of humanity desperately trying to achieve something. First, it was his ambition of being accepted by society and after many attempts; he lost faith in this possibility. ***"I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create."*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book.**Instead of giving up, he made a tentative with love. He was smart enough to know that it was impossible for him to find love with a human so he puts all his hopes into the hand of his creator and was deceived. Not even his creator agreed on creating a life partner for him. ***"Had I right, for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations?"*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book.**God agreed on creating an Eve for Adam, even if he knew humans would multiply and in the end, cause their own destruction. God did this in order to respect a certain balance.

Second, Frankenstein realised that the only way to feel contentment was to become the creature humans had been judging him to be. If this daemon was in the beginning a virtuous being; he decided to become the total opposite of it. Does it mean he accepted his faith as a monster? No, it means that he wanted to show to humans what they wanted to see. What’s the point to be good to people when they call you evil? And most importantly... where is the justice in a world in where everyone has a chance for happiness and one person doesn’t? Frankenstein may have been smarter than many by setting in motion a quest to bring a specific balance into his life. Balance, again, plays a major role in the purpose of the creature in the tale.

***“Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book.** It proves Frankenstein’s vitals’ needs for balance and what I mean by balance here is that nobody can develop virtues by being constantly charged by negativity alone.

What is the purpose of the story toward humanity?

***“But I am a blasted tree; the bolt has entered my soul; and I felt then that I should survive to exhibit what I shall soon cease to be--a miserable spectacle of wrecked humanity, pitiable to others and intolerable to myself.”*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book.** This quote, reminds me of my own experience as a human being and I am sure it also reminds many other people who found out through their own knowledge, that they were the object of meanness and viciousness.

We see no end to the torture that knowledge can impose to our mind when we find out how hopeless we are while facing a situation in which we are totally powerless. Powerless; because of the impossibility to program life to be fair to each human being and hopeless because we see no solutions to this same issue. Where is the justice in this world when people and unfair circumstances can contribute to one’s loss of hopes and virtues? This lack of justice lay within our own perception on the issue. That is why balance is the key to unlock the door of our own perception toward what we qualify as hopeless and powerless. There is always an exit door... every poison has its antidote. In Frankenstein’s case... we see no solution to his problem. Mankind never gave him a chance to prove his worth and be accepted. Still, with more balance within his emotions and reasons, Frankenstein would have been able to accept his fate in this world and he would have turned onto an occupation other than revenge.

When we see a human with a fierce handicap in the face, we tend to not look at him cause we feel not only an injustice, but a also a repulsion toward this anomaly. We don’t want to believe such an inequality may exist in this world. We don’t understand it so we tend to reject it. Imagine the creature in Frankenstein to be that same Fortune’s fool, forsaken by his father for its disturbing appearance and feared by mankind for its unfamiliarity with it. It’s too sad to be real even if it is a reaction some humans still happen to have toward inequality. It is easy to figure what someone, with a deformed face, could feel when its appearance brings the worst comments and reactions from other people. What could content someone in this position? We say that beauty is now superficial in this world... but what do we say about misshapen figures that bacterial illnesses can create? Can we say that a minimum of physical beauty is necessary for one’s existence or would it sound too shallow? I don’t believe in that theory... I believe that there is a reason for inequality to be naturally repulsive.

So, would the purpose of the story toward humanity be about the rejection of differences in the society? Not exactly; to be called different, the difference must be known. So it must be something else, something that creates a strong emotion toward humans. What thing would be the most frightening to humans? The unknown is what mankind fear the most so the story must be about the reaction of humans toward the unknown. What is unknown to human? Too many things to name them all but God, death and the end of the world as we know it are three good examples.

Could the unknown leads to not only fear but also curiosity? ***"Learn from me . . . how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow."*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book.** Unknown definitely does lead to curiosity while curiosity leads to knowledge which may leads to fears and loss of hopes when it is only feed by negative circumstances.

Time plays a major role in the presence of negativity in one’s life. If we refer to the Chi; Chinese’s interpretation for Energy... we learn that human beings are born filled with positive energy... but time brings more and more negativity within their Chi. We die when our body’s balance of Energy becomes negative. It reminds me of one of Blake’s verse in the “Proverbs of Hell”: ***Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening. Sleep in the night.* ~ Excerpt from William Blake’s poem “Proverbs of Hell”.**

* Spring = Morning. Birth, childhood (fast learning and reason), East and sunrise. Positive Energy grows to reaches its 100%. Between 6 am to noon.
* Summer= Afternoon. Teenager (experiments, action, changes and power). South. The sun is at its most powerful state. Energy starts to go down to 75% of positive, 25% of Negative. Between noon to 6 pm.
* Falls= Evening. Adulthood (Harvest, knowledge and teaching). West, the sun is going down. Positive and negative Energy are balanced at 50%. Between 6 pm to midnight.
* Winter= Die ***in the night***. North and sunless. The positive Energy drops to its extinction while the negative Energy reaches 100%. Midnight to 6 am.

This is the cycle of the sun (star), the cycle of the Earth, the cycle of a human being and the cycle of time. This was the cycle of Frankenstein... to prove it; we can rely to his obligation to die at the North’s pole. In short balance is the humanity’s main subsistence. The loss of balance leads to annihilation.

What is the origin of Frankenstein?

Now I have been talking about the teaching that the creature gave us about balance. Let us now talk about what it was made of in order to understand his true message.

That brings me to the beginning of the story where Victor leaves his home in order to get an education. He gained knowledge about things he never heard about before. He remembered his curiosity about a bolt of lightning he saw when he was young. ***“And a bolt of lightning striking a tree in the garden and reducing it to splinters fires Victor's imagination.”*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book.** Splinter means: *movement into two*. Victor’s garden may be the Garden of Eden, the tree; the Tree of Life while the bolt of lightning striking in it would mean the knowledge striking in the Tree of Life creating the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It fired victor’s imagination; it brought passion and desire to control the power of the opposite and therefore, explore its deepest secrets.

First, I thought about the composing of lightning. It is *the meeting of cold air and warm air which makes the warm air goes up and creates thunderstorm clouds. Just like a battery, these clouds have a "plus" end and a "minus" end. The plus, or positive, charges in the cloud are at the top. The minus, or negative, charges are at the bottom. When the charge at the bottom gets strong enough, the cloud lets out energy* (lightning, electricity or life in the case of Frankenstein).

The purpose of my question about the lightning’s composing was due to the excerpt about it in the book and my wonders about the fabrication of Frankenstein. First I related it to water since water is the source of life, cold as the negative and warm as the positive. Cold relates to wisdom and north while hot relates to passion/power and south. Then I realised I was indicating both of the earth’s poles. Could this creation suppose the magnetism theory as well?

I was sure the creation of Frankenstein was only due to the mixing of the four elements and I was wrong. Frankenstein, indeed, had wisdom, passions, intelligence and emotions. Knowing that both north (-) and south (+) create electricity; the main essence of his creation was wisdom (negative) and passion/power (positive). He was persuasive using the good common senses that wisdom gave him. Intelligent for learning new things so quickly... but then again we can lay that credit on his passion and curiosity about human beings. Frankenstein demonstrated lots of sign of passions... sometime constructive and other time destructive and that is why he got so emotional over it.

All this wasn’t enough to prove a relation between electricity and Frankenstein and then I ended up while studying about politics and church for another course, on one of Benjamin Franklin’s statement and another statement made by Einstein. It completely directed my thoughts somewhere else. Mary Sheller was probably a fan of them to name her character using their last names.

**What might be the true relation between Frankenstein and technology?**

***“Talking against Religion is unchaining a Tyger, the Beast let loose may worry his Deliverer."*~ Quote by Benjamin Franklin**

Science is the religion’s worst enemy or total opposite. Science gives u power, and in Frankenstein’s case, it also happens to create life. Victor stopped to see God as the supreme creator since he had himself become one. Without the religion, which imposes a God with supreme power on his creations, a creation becomes a Beast out of control and dangerous for his creator.

***"****Science* ***without*** *religion* ***is lame****. Religion* ***without*** *science* ***is blind.”*~ Quote by Albert Einstein**

To me, it proves my explanation of Benjamin Franklin’s quote. Einstein was very fond of theories referring to opposites.

All this, mixed with the theory that electricity (lightning) has something to do in Frankenstein’s creation, made me think about robots and other technologies needing electricity to run. When someone create a software, he is the creator of it right? What if the slave becomes the master when it comes to artificial intelligence? It already exists in the informatics world. Isn’t called daemon just as the creation in the story of Frankenstein? ***“Slave. I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have the power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master - obey !”*~ Excerpt from Frankenstein’s book.** Now I am sure that Mary Shelley made an allusion to Benjamin Franklin’s statement.

Isn’t technology about to destroy the world and inverse the poles? We probably use the powers of electricity and magnetism way too much. And if I am, indeed, right about the mix of wisdom and passion, able to create not only life but also emotions and intelligence; this might turn out to be wonderful when it is into positive influences but in the case Frankenstein or even the Earth... they are constantly loaded by bad influences (negative energy).

There is a lack of balance too great in Frankenstein’s mind. The negative dominate the positive in a too great extend that it made Frankenstein 🡨 (technology) becomes the tool of his own destruction. Nobody wants to look in the eyes of destruction (or something terribly negative). That is maybe why he was so repulsing to mankind. Inequality overwhelms the mind. No matter if this inequality is over fascinating or over disturbing it will be rejected by our perception. For something allowed to be perceived by human’s perception has to be balanced to be accepted within our mind. Our brainpower can’t recognize inequality in a too great extend. I don’t know either it is our mind’s natural defence or if it is only directed by our fear of the unknown; but I am sure that it is the cause of repulsion. A good answer to that question would be that repulsion plays a role as a natural defence for our brain toward strong unknown emotions able to destroy our mind. When we fear a reality, our perception may program itself to make us unconscious of this reality even if it is put in evidence before our eyes. Knowledge makes it hard to reject this evidence... for our own detriment.

Conclusion

To conclude this essay, I would like to refer to the concept of humanity’s definition; Humanity means; *the entirety of individual belonging to human species* but also *the particular characteristics, such as mental and physical, that definite the belonging to this group.* It also represents *the similarity between Humans’ personalities and inner powers.* It makes it clear that the story of Frankenstein is about the fear toward the unknown. Nevertheless, it is also about the curiosity about the unknown which shows the way toknowledge and leads us on knowing about opposites in order to reach the truth... or to believe we have reached it.

It is the story of a forsaken creation, too young and fragile to be set loose by itself into the cruel and unwise world of mankind. It’s also about the state of wisdom that balance creates in one’s mind. Sometime, this balance happens to be delightful and other time frightful. This story is about the harsh reality that knowledge can makes us realise but it is more than anything; about the impossibility for human beings to rely on justice in a world where humans are so easily guided by their own fears.

Yet again, within balance, we could achieve to use technology without forgetting about our precious world destroyed by it. Don’t let technology decides of the fate of the world by letting it loose. We have to reduce our consummation of energy and technology before it starts to control our world. I am not saying it would start to breath... but it would, for instance, replaces mankind and all that will be left in the humans’ society will be dependant people (slave, consummators) without any power (freedom, money). I am sure some wicked people would take advantage out of this lack of balance. Instead, let’s nature or God have the biggest power on our lifestyle and try to keep a good balance within your judgement, emotions and passion in order to make the best decision according to your lifestyle, your needs and most importantly... your state of mind.

So the necessity of **balance** within all creations and therefore... within humankind, is what the creature in the book tries to teach about the concept of humanity.