Topic #5 Essay

The character that which is Henry Clerval serves as a minor character that enables Victor Frankenstein, a major character, to be able to engage his initial ambitions vigorously but towards the conclusion Clerval’s persona enhances Frankenstein’s flaws and it is Clerval’s endearing qualities that make his demise a climactic downward spiral for that of Frankenstein. Shelley structures the novel in such a way that Victor himself might as well be gothic incarnate but what better best friend to one such as Frankenstein than Clerval? Clerval embodies the Romantic era character that builds ties to Frankenstein by complementing the dark brooding attitude with which the author expands upon. Though the story is mostly centered on Victor’s metamorphosis into the miserable state that he’s in, Henry remains the bright figure who invigorates Victor through all stages of the novel and performs as a spiritual buoy while also playing the foil in Frankenstein’s descent to greater sickness.

Henry, as it stands, is a true romantic whom serves to contrast with Victor’s beliefs. As it is with Frankenstein who has a detached façade of humanity and rarely engaged with such, “meanwhile Clerval occupied himself, so to speak, with the moral relations of things”. It could be inferred that Victor’s moral compass has lost its direction after the grotesque experimentation, which altered him as a person after having the zealous ambition retract its claws. Frankenstein beside his own sinful behavior could tag along that of envy that could be attributed to Clerval, “so thoughtful in his generosity – so full of kindness and tenderness”. The problem with Henry being Victor’s best friend is that Henry is practically a glowing beacon of decency that may as well be blinding to Victor who feels undeserved in his choice of comrade. Keeping in mind that Clerval is a minor character, “a boy of singular talent and fancy”, it is what is simple that creates such as attraction to one with such striving yet devastating multiplicity such as Frankenstein. It is the same logic an introvert living in the big city would use when seeking out a reclusive sanctuary in a, perhaps, more rural setting.

Though oblivious, Clerval serves to keep Victor grounded and keeping distance from what his nightmarish obsession had wrought. The one human contact to be found tolerable and as refreshing as nature’s spectacles was located within Victor’s friend to which “nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval, his presence brought me back to my thoughts”. As if humans themselves were afflicted with brambles and the very sensation of their presence made Frankenstein flinch, his dear friend was one of few that could rouse Victor from the melancholy. Indefinitely Clerval came to learn from the designated institutions, however, “instead of being spent in study, has been consumed in Victor’s sick room” and enhances the affinity of their connection. It may be all the same to Henry whether it be persisting in modest study or through assisting the meager friend whom is bound to him, they may as well be one and the same in their rejuvenative properties of the soul. Far fetched it may be, Henry as the qualities about him of a guardian angel containing a “divine spark”. That “spark” ironically enough could be the flip side to the unholy power that gave the monster life and therefore Victor fled the ungodly and receded back to the dear friend as in repentance.

The death of Henry condemns Victor to insanity and reveals the consequence of his long-standing idée fixe. Clerval’s demise struck Frankenstein as if by some phantom blunt trauma as “the lifeless from of Henry Clerval stretched before me”. It is by this lifeless visage of his once dear friend that Frankenstein cracks and the fated misfortune that weighs him down as he subsequently enters the primal form of vengeance that consumes Victor. In perhaps an alternate story the idealistic Frankenstein and the moderate Clerval would be joint in an intrinsic ambition that would carry them through to the hearth of their origins in peace but “the beauty of the dream vanished” as the flame of Henry’s life snuffed out. Rightly so Victor is subject to the torments of the mind for he was the cause of the tragedy that has befallen friends and family. Thus began, “the agonizing suffering that I endured, and was carried out of the room in strong convulsions”, in the manner of a man such as Victor whom feels he essentially murdered his friend in the practice of meddlesome science. Degradation of self may only be found henceforth within the novella, leaving aside the wedding, Frankenstein set out on a vindictive fervor that carries him to the grave.

Tragic and sad are little words to describe the suffering to which Frankenstein endured but it is through his dear friend Henry Clerval that any measurement of solace could be received. Bonded in childhood and forged to be practically brothers of sort, their relationship could possibly be alluded to being that of Yin and Yang. That of the dark, or Victor, isn’t inherently evil but is gothic in nature for his brooding persona and the mysterious strive behind the unnatural ambition. To that of the light, Henry, is no man of the cloth but features the best of mankind and the warm love of nature to which it is vibrant. Yet these two of opposite paths find a commonality in their brotherhood that is resilient in force and difficult to keep apart. As demonstrated though in the series of unfortunate events, the light fades out and the dark relentlessly procures the despair.