Frankenstein: The True Monster

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*"I shunned the face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude was my only consolation--deep, dark, death-like solitude."* | Source

**The Perception of a Monster**

It has often been argued that the definition of a monster is something inhuman, something or someone who has no regard for life and nature and that which is good. Many times in literature the word monster is used to refer to men who have done horrible things: rape, murder, mass genocide. The weight that this word carries is many times undermined by things such as Halloween costumes or children’s cartoon characters.

However, the fact still remains that “a true monster is evil, inhumane, and lacks remorse or caring for things that a normal, emotional human being should care for” (Chandler). The term monster lacks what many believe to be the necessary requirements someone needs to be considered human.

Victor Frankenstein’s creation, in [Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*,](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0486282112/?tag=hubacct1102-20) “is referred to as a monster, yet throughout the novel the reader is made aware of the compassion and morality that Victor’s” creature possesses (Clapper).

The only reason that the being is first associated with the term monster is due to his appearance, because “his yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries…his hair was of a lustrous black…his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes…his shriveled complexion and straight black lips” (Shelley 60). Society judges Frankenstein’s creation before it even has time to show its true nature.



Source

**The Frankenstein Complex**

The *Frankenstein Complex* was born out of such harsh judgments against beings of the unknown. The *Frankenstein Complex*is the “fear of artificial human beings”(Clapper). But in reality, the *Frankenstein Complex* should be a fear of creators.

Frankenstein’s creation is “born” as a *tabula rasa*, yet society and Victor label him before even he can form an opinion of himself, and his judgment and constant rejection cause him to react as any human would, by striking out, seeking to eliminate that which caused him harm in the first place. Victor’s creation is not a monster. He is a product of a society’s inability to cope with advancing science and its consequences. His very presence is due to Victor’s experimenting in alchemy, and his greed for fame.

Victor is the one that should be labeled as the monster, since he is the one who shows characteristics of being a monster. Carl Gustav *Jung,* a Swiss psychiatrist, composed a list of characteristics that define what a monster is. Jung expressed that monsters are “unnatural - aberrations of the nature order… hostile toward others… inspire dread and embody evil…not human – even those that look and act like people are not fully human,” and all of these characteristics can be found in Victor’s personality.

The “romanticism of the 19th century saw monsters as *products of man's scientific progress and erring vision,*”(Jung) but they are wrong. Monsters are the scientists that create outcasts in society. Victor should be considered the monster. Victor expresses characteristics of what makes a monster. He is “unnatural” in his obsession to create life and his close relationships with others. Victor is “hostile” toward his creation the moment it is “born,” yet the creature has yet to earn such hatred. Victor is the one that has no compassion for others; he turns his back one a creature who needs him; “[Victor] was the one responsible for William’s murder,” and the rest of his family ( Soyka). Society is wrong in placing its fear on creations that are unnatural; they should place their fear where it is due, on the creator.

### “Everything is good when it leaves the hands of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man ….He turns everything upside down; he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters.”

### – Jean-Jacques Rousseau

## Victor is the Monster

Victor is the monster in this horror novel by Mary Shelley, because he possesses many of the characteristics that define what a monster is. Victor Frankenstein created his being due to his thirst for alchemy and his unnatural obsession with being like God, for Victor believes that “a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. I might in process of time… renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption” (Shelley 52).

Victor does not take into account the consequences of his actions. Victor rejects his creation the moment he lays eyes on its animated form. This cruel rejection is what sparks the beginning of a journey that will ultimately end in the death of Victor. Victor devalued his creation’s life for personal gain, which led inevitably to his own great personal suffering and the suffering of those close to him.

## Unnatural

Many of Victor’s close family and friends experience the direct hatred of Victor’s creature, because they are the only ones that Victor feels any relationship with, but Victor is “unnatural” in his relationships with them. Victor only has one friend, Henry Cherval. Victor seems to have a hard time acquiring close relations with others. Frankenstein marries his step-sister/cousin, Elizabeth, yet his relationship with her seems to be one based on his possession of her versus one of great feelings or love, for Victor envisions that “[Elizabeth] was only to be mine" (Shelley 44).

Victor views Elizabeth as a prize and something to be owned, for Victor “promised [himself] that from [his] detested toils it was the prospect of that day when [he] might claim Elizabeth,” that kept him going (Shelley 130). Victor does not perceive the aspects of a mutual relationship, for all of his relations are based off of his own selfishness.

Frankenstein is also “unnatural” in his quest to become Godlike. Victor has an incredible drive to find out everything that he can in order to animate a human being and find the answer to immortality; “Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world” (Shelley 51).

Victor wants to achieve Godlike status, and in doing so he creates a creature that will never know love. "After days and nights of incredible labor and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter,” and yet after so much time spent on this discovery, Victor cannot stomach what he has done, and he cruelly rejects his creation the moment it is animated (Shelley 51).

## Hostility

Dr. Victor Frankenstein is often cruel and “hostile” toward his creation, and this is another aspect that shows that Victor is a monster. When Victor first lays eyes on what he has created, he is horrified by what he has done, and he abandons his creation, since he is “unable to endure the aspect of the being [he] had created (Shelley 42).

When Victor falls into a deep depression, he blames his creation for not allotting him any peace. When Victor confronts his creation in the Alps, the first thought is to destroy his creation. When Victor starts to show compassion for the Creature, he is yet again telling himself a lie, for “when [he] looked upon him, when [he] saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, [his] heart sickened and [his] feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred” (Shelley 126).

Victor is unable to get pasted the horrid picture that his creature presents, and in the end Victor destroys the only hope that his creature has for companionship when he tears apart his second attempt at animation; “Begone! I do break my promise; never will I create another like yourself, equal in deformity and wickedness" (Shelley 133). Victor’s hostility toward his creature is misplaced. Victor is the monster, for he has deprived a human being of any love and companionship due to his own selfishness.

## Selfish

Victor is, by his own nature, a very selfish person. He does not care for the feelings of others, and only hopes to gain for himself. When Victor created his being, he did it out of a need for fame, and to make a name for himself. Victor “doesn’t value the life he is to create so much as what the creation will give him,” and by using this mindset he creates something that is beyond his mental capability to handle (Lunsford).

When life is brought into the human body, Victor is terrified of his creation’s horrifying appearance. Victor, so caught up in work, never did attempt to create a pleasant looking human. Being terrified of his own creation, Victor does what only the worst of “parents would do – he runs away from it, forcing the creature (as a ‘newborn’) to find its way and survive in the icy and snowy winter in a lone attempt” (Lunsford). Victor abandons his creation because he is horrified that someone will find out what he has done.

While Victor was at first mesmerized by his accomplishment, he soon rejects it after reasoning returns to him. Victor’s most selfish act stems from the murder of his brother William. William is used as a foil to show that Victor is a selfish beast. Victor knows that his creation has murdered William, yet he does not confess to his knowledge. Victor withheld the knowledge that would have spared Justine’s life. “Justine also was a girl of merit and possessed qualities which promised to render her life happy; now all was to be obliterated in an ignominious grave, and I was the cause!”(Shelley 66). While Victor admits to himself that he is responsible for Justine’s death, he thinks he is at fault because he created the Creature, not that he withheld vital information.

## The True Monster- Victor

Victor is the true monster in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein. He is the reckless scientist who unleashed a creature on society that was helpless to combat the horrors and rejection that society placed on him due to his differences. Victor’s goal to generate life causes a great deal of pain through his ambition, selfishness, and hostility, both to himself and others. As a result, these acts caused him to become alienated from his friends and family, and turned him into the true monster in Frankenstein. Victor Frankenstein is The Modern Prometheus, for he made the knowledge of creating life assessable, and by doing so, he is cursed to endure the ratifications of his creation.

**A Creature Misunderstood**

Victor’s creation in this novel is not a monster. He is a being that has been misguided and rejected by society. Someone who is newly born cannot be evil, because everyone and everything is born as a *tabula rasa*, or “blank slate,” without personality, norms, or a sense of what is right or wrong. Victor’s creation is shown as being fascinated by life, for he says “I started up and beheld a radiant form rise from among the trees. I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it enlightened my path,” and quite harmless as he learns about the world after his “birth” (Shelley 85).

The Creature is rejected by society, and it is due to this that he reacts as any human would. The Creature is not a demon spawned from Hell. He is a product of society’s unwillingness to accept the consequences of their experiments. Victor’s creation performs many helpful deeds for the De Laceys. His personality is one that cares for others and longs for acceptance and a family. All the creature ever wanted was for someone to accept him, and even his one chance at such an acceptance was brutally stripped away from him before his own eyes, for Victor destroys the Creatures companion, and “[he] saw [Victor] destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended on for happiness” (Shelley 145).

The Creature is not a monster; he is a human being who reacted in a human way due to the stigma that was placed on him by society. The Creature’s actions at the end of the book reflect the influence that society and Victor had on him, because, as Percy Shelley explains, “treat a person ill, and he will become wicked…divide him, a social being, from society, and you impose upon him the irresistible obligations-malevolence.” The Creature’s anger is justified, even if his actions are not.

**Rejection at Birth**

When the Creature is first born, he is introduced to the world in the most heartless of ways. His creator abandons him. When the creature approaches Victor hours after his creation with a simple gesture of longing, “[the Creature] held up the curtain of the bed…one hand was stretched out,” Victor runs away in terror (Shelley 43).

The Creature is left on his own in a world he cannot possibly understand; “he starts out as an uneducated infant, newly born and innocent to the world” (Clapper). He is portrayed as an infant learning all the things that parents should teach their child. He is rejected by villagers and anyone who sets eyes on him, and at first he cannot comprehend why. He is in that state of infancy that makes children not understand the differences in people. There is no logical way that anyone could judge the Creature as being pure evil, and a monster based off of his mental mind set after his birth.

**The Bloom of Compassion**

The Creature is not the monster in this novel despite all of the rejection that he has faces, because he still shows compassion toward others. The Creature feels a strong connection with the De Lacey family. His actions toward them are unselfish, for he “stocked the cottagers’ wood pile”(Soyka) and “performed those offices that I had seen done by Felix” (Shelley 95).

By doing this work for them, the Creature “has a place to stay and conduct his self-education by observing the cottagers, for whom his affection increases as if he were an orphan finally finding a family to call his own” (Soyka). The Creature also saves a girl from the horrid fate of drowning. He does not stop and judge whether a human child deserves to die due to the unkindness he has received at society’s hands; no, the Creature jumps in without judgment to save the life of a helpless child.

The greatest act of compassion that the Creature shows is the care that he gives his creator, despite the fact that they are in a race to destroy each other at the at end of the novel. The Creature leaves food for Victor, and is reluctant to let him suffer.

Source

**Rejected on Sight**

While the Creature is a person of compassion and has a longing for someone to have companionship with, his sweet nature cannot hold up against the rejection of society. It is through the constant rejection that the Creature turns to seek revenge against his irresponsible master. Yes, the Creature helps the De Laceys and feels companionship toward them, but in the end they reject him when he finally has the courage to reveal himself to them; “who can descried their horror and consternation on beholding me. Agatha fainted…Safie…rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward…tore me from his father…dashed me to the grounded and stuck me violently with a stick” (Shelley 98).

The Creature loves this family, yet they are horrified of this demon that they see, even though he is far from demonic. While the Creature saved the girl from drowning, the girl’s father is horrified by the being that saves his daughter, and he shoots at the creature. The final act that causes the Creature to turn on his master is the destruction of its potential companion.

## The Breaking Point

When Victor destroys his Creatures companion, the Creature has reached his breaking point. Never knowing a kind gesture, act, or friendship would make anyone reacted in a way that the Creature did. The Creature promised Victor that “I shall be with you on your wedding-night (Shelley 147). Though the Creature gives Victor this warning, Victor still marries Elizabeth, but loses her to the Creature’s need for revenge. Victor stole from the Creature his only hope at companionship, therefore the Creature stole Victor’s only love. Victor finally decides to take action against his Creature, yet this race for revenge that the creator and creation engage in only strengthens the point that the Creature is not a monster. Even at his worst, the Creature cannot bring himself to see Victor suffer over much, and at Victor’s deathbed, the Creature weeps because there is not any peace or triumph to be found.

## Even in Death, There was no Joy

The one act that proves that the Creature is not a monster is the fact that even when he learns of Victor death, he feels no joy, only a sense of finality. The Creature weeps over the only person that he felt he had a connection with. The Creature understands that there cannot be anything to come of Victor’s death. This is evident in his confession to Walton:

"You… seem to have a knowledge of my crimes and his misfortunes. But…[Victor] could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I endured wasting in impotent passions, for while 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. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all mankind sinned against me?…Nay, these are virtuous and immaculate beings! I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, kicked at, and trampled on" (Shelley 183).

The Creature is content to go off and die after he finds Victor dead, for there is not any joy to be had at Victor’s death, only a sense of agony and acceptance of the fact that he will never be accepted by anyone.

### “Hateful day when I received life!' I exclaimed in agony. 'Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred.' - Frankenstein”― [*Mary Shelley*](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/11139.Mary_Shelley), [*Frankenstein*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/4836639)

## Society's Misconception of a Monster

Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein presents the false perception that Victor’s creation is a monster, yet this is not true. The real monster in this novel is in fact Dr. Victor Frankenstein himself. Victor is a hostile and selfish being whose rejection of his creation led to his demise, and that of his family. Victor’s only goal in creating his creature was to gain fame, and when it becomes evident to him that the only thing that his creation could gain him would be public shame, he turns his back on the creature; “my tale [is] not one to announce publicly; it’s astounding horror would be looked upon as madness by the vulgar” (Shelley 127).

Victor’s Creature is not the monster in this novel, for the Creature is kind and compassionate toward those that he encounters. It is not until he is constantly rejected by society, and the final straw of the destruction of his companion that the creature reacts in a destructive manner totally bent on revenge against his creator. But in the end, the creature does not take any joy upon finding Victor upon his death bed. The one difference that really sets Victor and the Creature apart is the fact that Victor still believed that the Creature was evil in the end, but the creature realized that the crimes he had committed were wrong.

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