



Rise and Fall of the Monster: A Study of Inequality and Social Madness in *Frankenstein*

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Abstract

The portrayal of the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* hints at the uncanny defamiliarization of the society, the inequality practiced in it and its madness. This is an example of the way the society, alienates someone if they do not suit its tastes. There are many reasons why society dislikes the monster. It is viewed with disgust and hatred because of its hideous appearance. An unknown creature is considered a monster with evil intentions by society and is never accepted as part of society. There is a profound racial undertone to the creature's yellow skin that we can see in a minute reading of *Frankenstein*. In addition, Victor Frankenstein goes beyond the horizon to attain the unattainable through his scientific research and thus alienates himself. The rise and fall of the monster write the rise and fall of Victor Frankenstein and the madness of the society.

Keywords: Racism, Alienation, French Revolution, Radicalism, Defamiliarization, Society, Inequality.

Using Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a magnifying glass, we can see how social stigmatization occurs when a person lacks certain characteristics that fit society's defined and desired taste. Throughout history, traditional roles have molded society, but they have become uncanny defamiliarizations. Victor Frankenstein's monster is used to prove this point. This is a creation of his madness, created as a result of his madness. Because of the monster's hideous appearance, society disapproves of it and so it is viewed with disgust and hatred mainly because of its appearance. It may seem that the monster has no evil intentions at all, but the inhabitants of the community, shaping their minds according to the values and rules of society, instantly assume that the monster really is the evil one. It's both harsh on Frankenstein's monster from people who do not know him as well as people who love him, even from his own creator. In *Frankenstein's* monster, it's easy to judge the monster's monstrous outward appearance by the assumption that an ordered society prefers only ordered people.

Victor Frankenstein, an eccentric scientist obsessed with scientific irrationality since his youth, discovers that it is possible to reanimate the dead. Hoping to create "a new species [who] would bless me as their creator," (33) thus leading to, what he hopes to be, "the creation of a human being;" (33) however, his attempt produces merely a living being. Although Victor initially claims that darkness did not affect him, he begins to despise and fear this being, despite Victor's initial claims that "darkness had no effect upon [his] fancy." (31) It is in later parts of the novel in which he describes his experience as a catastrophe when he sees "the dull yellow eyes of the creature open." (Shelley, 35) As the creature attempts to join society, he is violently rejected, prompting him to embark on a journey to humanize himself through acquiring knowledge and using language. At the same time as the creature develops intellectually, he

comes to the realization that humans will never allow him to become a part of society, nor will Victor ever accept this being that he has created. As a consequence, the image that the creature painstakingly created for himself of a highly educated creature began to deteriorate. As a result of the reactions of society, the creature goes through a paradigm shift when he realizes that his outward appearance will never qualify him to be considered a human by society, thus missing out on the rights that belong to humans. It would be possible to illustrate the creature's growth, which ultimately leads to their demise, within four steps; Victor's vision of his creation, the villagers' reaction to the creature, the creature at the cottage, and finally the final demise of the creature through murder.

Within the following chapter, we intend to make an attempt to analyze the concept of Victor Frankenstein's monster, the central character in the story. It is from Victor Frankenstein and Mary Shelley's perspective. The first thing to note is that the narrator describes an ominous monster without naming it, both in the story and in this paper. As Robert Olorenshaw (1994) suggests, Mary Shelley's personal connection with Shelley's name can be seen in the fact that the monster has no real name. The author makes clear in her discussion that Mary Shelley was a composite name based on several other names. Furthermore, in reality Mary did not have a family name. A monster is a body derived from other bodies. Its identity is made up of other bodies, as Olorenshaw (1994) observes.

Chris Baldick (1987) presents a second explanation by denying the monstrous nature of the monster, based on this aspect of namelessness. According to the author, the monster's namelessness helps free it from the traditional notion of the monstrous, which fixes its objects with a moral label. To be able to write her ghost story, Mary Shelley needed a specific method. There is a special quality to it, as it is not a ghost or another ethereal spirit, but a man's creation. It is believed that this monster has an unsightly and repulsive appearance, causing fear at first glance. Shelley believed that a monster of such a nature must have roots in order to become a reality. Furthermore, she introduced Victor Frankenstein as yet another character in the story, thus accrediting him with responsibility for the existence of the monster. The hero of our story is Victor, a young and untrained scientist who has been endowed with an astonishing power, the power to bestow animation. (Baldick, 1987)

It is crucial that one justifies how a monster would look, act, what sort of body structure it would have, and what kind of personality traits in it would possess so that it can exist. The monster is viewed by his creator, Victor Frankenstein as a living entity or as a 'being'. Therefore, there is no hint that the monster had any human qualities at all, but it was a being. As Frankenstein relates in the novel, the creature resembles an animal. Moreover, the monster is a machine that is made up of some specific materials. Jackson Petche (2014) explains that the monster is neither entirely human nor entirely animal (p. 99), since it has a mixture of human and animal parts, plus some animal parts "obtained from slaughterhouses." (p. 99) Monsters hold the same position as hybrids, according to the author. (p. 98) One key element often overlooked and another important factor to remember is the kind of food the monster eats. This is particularly surprising for a monster with such a large body. The giants typically eat people in fairy tales, so they are either carnivorous or cannibalistic. Unlike one type of giant, the reader will meet another type that eats bread, cheese, milk, and many different kinds of berries in forests, but never kills. "My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment." (Shelley, 2012, p. 147) By contrast, the monster in Mary Shelley's novel differs from creatures like Jack and the Beanstalk that are characterized by cannibalism. The monster serves as the story's central evil source. Jackson Petsche (2014) highlights that the monster is vegetarian as a significant element in the narrative, particularly because it is produced with bone material on one hand, but is actually derived from human flesh on the other. The monster created by Victor Frankenstein, the ostensibly terrifying creature, cannot eat nonhuman animals, which calls into question the very destructive habits of a meat-eating society. A specialist and carnivorous social order is at risk when Frankenstein's Monster is created and then resurrected, not to be consumed, but to reject eating meat. (Petche, 2014)

It was Petsche (2014) who argued that refusal of the principle of carnivory was one of the reasons for the monster's alienation, as this was not a rejection of the species treatment of nonhuman animals, but a challenge to the human-animal binary which undergirds the relationship between the two (see p. 105) Victor's monster is ultimately determined to be a creature by the author. He was brought back to life. (p. 107) It is also critical to understand the time and environment in which the monster developed. The nighttime atmosphere in Shelley (2012) can be described as "a dreary night of November, when the rain patters dismally against the panes, with a half-extinguished light in the distance." (p. 50) Due to his appearance, the monster might be destined to live in the dark. The monster longs for beauty and companionship, and darkness implies darkness and ugliness. As the scientist prepares for an experiment, gathers the materials, sets up the laboratory, verifies accuracy, and finishes, the monster evokes the phases of the experiment. The scientist intentionally uses large parts of the body because they are too small to speed up his work (Shelley, 2012, p. 47), a clear indication of his enthusiasm and the source of all further problems if he does tests too soon regardless of the results.

Above we see Victor's insistence "to make the being of a gigantic stature, i.e. at least eight feet tall and proportionally large." (Shelley, 2012, p.47) Since Victor does not perceive the monster as a human being, he does not worry about the appearance of the monster and how he fits into society, in the sense that the monster is taken as an object of experiment in a lab for scientific purposes. Though the monster has not taken his birth from Victor Frankenstein's womb, the relationship between the monster and Victor Frankenstein is a father-son bond. This father-son bond may destroy itself if anyone dies. The monster suggests that there are some "ties that can only be broken by the annihilation of one of us." (Shelley, 2012, p.97) The monster is predestined to death as it is made of different body parts and organs from different dead bodies.

It is the monster's awe-inspiring appearance that makes anyone be frightened and flee, as according to the definition of beauty as prescribed by society, the hideous appearance of the monster stands against his inner goodness. The ideals of beauty and order of the monster are not supported by society. In fact, it is considered to be somewhat sinister. We notice in the novel that when the monster first encounters any human being, he does not harm him. This is because the monster's mind is just like a newborn child. He does not know what society is. So, when the monster enters the hut of an old man, the old man immediately gets frightened. But the surprising thing is that the monster does not harm him at all. The fact that society has never adopted the monster, an unknown creature, as a part of society, again proves that society has never been ready to accept the monster as a part of society, and a monster is typically viewed as something with evil intentions. A similar incident takes place in the village the next day. It is apparent, however, that the reactions are different this time. When the monster appeared, one of the villagers fainted, some screamed, and the majority of the villagers attacked it. Because of this, they are of the opinion that they should either hurt the monster or drive it away before it has an opportunity to harm them. Many people cannot comprehend the possibility that the monster may be susceptible to a soft spot in some area of his mind. When we watch the monster save the girl despite being rejected by humans, it is hard to understand just how much we see. Edmund Burke was one of the first critics of the French Revolution. He viewed it rather than a movement promoting constitutional democracy as a movement leading to anarchy and the destruction of humanity. A further statement made by him emphasized that it was rather a rebellion against authority and tradition. It has also been revealed that Thomas Paine, who himself took part in the revolutionary events as well, revealed that this attitude of Burke was evidence of a suspicion that the British Constitution needed some kind of "cover-up" to conceal its defects. The British Constitution was considered defected even though France refused to adopt it. (Burke, 1790)

Mary Shelly's creature was a powerful critique of the French Revolution ideology, and assumed both the naive ideals and the tragic consequences of the French Revolution. A. Mellor explains:

The Creature cannot obtain the human sympathy he craves and is driven to violence by the constant suspicion, fear, and hostility he encounters. He thus becomes an emblem for the French Revolution itself. The Revolution failed to find the parental guidance, control, and nurturance it required to develop into a rational and benevolent state. (Mellor, 2012, p.81)

Shelley saw firsthand the suffering the French villages had to endure after 15 years of warfare while Percy Bysshe Shelley and she travelled through France on their way to Switzerland in the summer of 1814. As the Romantics revolted against the social and political norms of the Enlightenment, a rigid reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature in art and literature was already underway. According to the naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon ---

The most temperate climate lies between the 40th and 50th degree of latitude, and it produces the most handsome and beautiful men. It is from this climate that the ideas of the genuine color of mankind, and of the various degrees of beauty, ought to be derived. The two extremes [tropical and subarctic] are equally remote from truth and beauty. (Bohls, 1995, p.72)

Mary Shelley's implicit acceptance of this pseudoscience is evident in her statement in *Frankenstein*: "He was not, as the other traveler seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European." (Shelley, p.11) The creature's yellow skin carries overtones of racial discrimination. An educated white European man was, during Burke's and Buffon's time, considered being a universal standard. There is no doubt that aesthetic ideology of sublime and superiority helped justify colonialism and slavery.

The creature begins to learn the ways of mankind. Safie, the wife of Felix DeLacey, whose family the Creature has quietly watched for several months, opens up a whole new world for the Creature. Safie can not immediately communicate with the De Laceys because she is Arabian. The family accidentally teaches the creature the language while teaching her. When we gain knowledge inadvertently, what value does it have? It results in misrepresentation. The creature learns a lot at the DeLacey cottage. And it learns what people do to each other. Language can teach a living organism how to interact, how to ponder its existence, how to establish an identity, and how to make decisions about its future. Education can influence what we want in life. There is no longer innocence in the creature. The creature accidentally injures people who come across it when it wanders through the woods looking for food. Now that it is an adult, it knows the consequences of its actions and is responsible for them.

Family is the opposite of loneliness in *Frankenstein*. Loneliness can sometimes motivate evil. Families solve problems. Perhaps that is why the monster is only interested in its creator. A companion in the social world will make its life more fulfilling. Without a companion, its existence would be less fulfilling. The book also depicts an alarming rate of fatalities among both parents and children. The fact that all of these children are dying symbolizes that the future is being threatened. The new world, which has experienced rapid scientific advances since the Industrial Revolution, is also a threat to the old world. (Bohls, 1994)

Elizabeth and his family are not on Victor Frankenstein's mind because he is busy researching. He is doing something that is against Nature. Moreover, he reaches beyond the horizon to achieve the impossible. Frankenstein suffers both physical and mental harm from Nature as a result of his experiments. In Paris, Safie's Turkish merchant father was tried and sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. His wealth and religion force him to distance himself from society. DeLacey's family helps him to get out of prison, and he promises to marry Felix's daughter. The DeLacey family must suffer the punishment for helping him escape from the Christian dominion of Europe after he escapes with Safie.

Mary Shelley's masterpiece *Frankenstein* contains the essence of evil in the form of Frankenstein's monster. A fundamental question that needs to be answered in this novel is: Is the monster naturally evil or does his vengeful behavior has something to do with the society he lives in? Throughout this story, there are several ways in which the monster grows. The other is how it becomes increasingly evil through the experience of those around him, the language

he speaks, and the books he reads. In Frankenstein's creation, there are some parallels to be drawn, and one of them is the enlarged lifespan of an average person. "The monster starts out as an uneducated infant, newly born and innocent to the world". With time, it becomes more and more aware of the world around it. From a defamiliarized perspective, we see what society is like from the demon's point of view in *Frankenstein*. Frankenstein is a protagonist in a corrupt and mad society.

When it is about the society, the society does not fulfill the monster's desire and right. Whenever, the monster tries to befriend others or behave well with others, it is very shocking that they do not respond to the monster. They do not treat the monster as their friend. They do not behave well with the monster. They treat him as if the monster has spoiled the space on the earth coming from another planet. Whenever, a child is born, it is named, but not the monster. The monster is no more than a new born child. Though the monster has a developed body, he is without experience and maturity. Victor Frankenstein does not name him; rather he considers the monster as an object of experiment – a living experiment. Due to this absurd and shocking behavior from Victor Frankenstein, whom he considers as his parents, the monster feels ostracized and thereby grows hatred against his creator. Further, we notice that the monster does not receive taste of growth with his parents. The monster is predestined not to have any physical growth, but the mental growth that he demands with the company of his creator is further denied. No one cares for him. Through his observation of the society, its people, his learning the language, the monster prepares to deal with the society. His language learning and communication with people allow him to demand equal right in the society and the responsibility which is to be taken by Victor Frankenstein. In just a few days, the monster asks many questions the answers of which the human beings cannot give in a short span of time. They need lifetimes to answer these questions: Who created the world? What is the existence of Fate? Who am I and what is my role on earth?

And what was I? Of my creation and creator, I was absolutely ignorant... hideously deformed and loathsome... I was not even of the same nature as man. I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge... (Shelley, 2004, p.144)

As a result, the monster realizes that he is unfamiliar to the society and vice versa. It is the monster who behaves well with the people and saved a girl from drowning, but people do not understand him at all. Thus, the monster was able to take vengeance on itself due to the abandonment and hatred it had generated during this time. (Rauch, 1995)

In his pursuit of education at the University of Ingolstadt where Jacobinism flourished at the time, Frankenstein embodies the ideology that caused the French Revolution to devolve into barbarism. Victor Frankenstein solves all our problems by building a new body, better humanity, and a new life, and that is why Mary Shelley thought radical zeal was already corrupt by the start of the novel. Taking the Monster as a metaphor for the bloody progress of the French Revolution works beautifully with her rejection of revolutionary ideas in the novel. Although Girondists and other politically minded groups held a historically anti-aristocratic and clergy stance, they were unable to create a state that recognized every citizen's rights and freedoms, resulting in Louis XVI's execution in 1793 along with his wife Maria Antoinette.

Jacobins, initially the fountainheads of the democratic vision of liberty, soon morphed into those who sought power for selfish reasons, and they succeeded in little more than usurping the political and economic leadership of the church and aristocracy. As a result of this observation, a number of revolutionary forces (mostly controlled by the Jacobins) emerged, opposing the so-called revolutionary government. Mary Shelley developed a metaphorical representation of the revolutionary French nation by illustrating a giant body known as the

Creature which, after being abandoned by its creator, turns towards him in an aggressive manner.

Gayatri Spivak is cited by Elizabeth Bohls in the *Critique of Empire in Frankenstein*:

It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the representation of England to the English. (Lorraine Bowerbank, 1979)

A large amount of inspiration came from geographical and scientific discoveries during Captain James Cook's famous expeditions. This can be compared to the ideological freedom that Frankenstein's characters had during their explorations in the early nineteenth century. Mary Shelley's original quest for knowledge and, more importantly, for a supplementary economic source of income in her time can be seen reflected in the pursuit of knowledge demonstrated by the main characters of Frankenstein. James Cook's Frankenstein plot is directly connected to two significant occasions. The voyages of James Cook to the Pacific, accompanied by scientists, reflect an overreach driven by the need to know the world. In 1779, Cook also died after being attacked by native Hawaiians upon returning to Hawaii.

Frankenstein and the failure of the French Revolution have a special connection. As a result of the dangers of radicalism and abstract idealism, followed by a brutal reality, Mary Shelley put life in Frankenstein through her writings. As a result, she found it easy to agree with Burke's position that any inconsiderate change in the country's political system was unwelcome. As English society was still conscious of the hardships experienced during the English Revolution of 1640-1660, Charles I's execution, and Oliver Cromwell's republican experiment, it could be argued that English society observed events in France on purpose.

Mary Shelley emphasizes the fact that Frankenstein is unwilling to go with the monster's desire to create a female monster as his companion. If it had not been for the monster, Frankenstein would never have considered such a project. Eventually, Frankenstein realizes that though the monster is forcing Frankenstein to create a female monster, Frankenstein cannot create another. He informs Walton that he dismisses his project. Now, Frankenstein does not afraid of the monster, rather his point is as he says, "I am content to reason with you." (Shelley, 2013, p.173) There is no doubt that the monster's ominous warning that "we may not part until you have promised to comply with my requisition" (Shelley, 2012. p. 96) has an ominous tone, and by this stage, he has already killed two of his victims, William and Justine. It is true that the monster desires a social security so that his existence will be meaningful, and it is this need that lies behind his desire to find a female monster with whom he can live happily in seclusion. Brooks points out that if the monster needs its existence to be meaningful, he must have the attachment to Frankenstein because without the creator, the creation is worthless. Similarly, in order to declare his intelligent, Frankenstein needs his creation, the monster. It means that Victor Frankenstein has destroyed his 'society' in the form of the monster and the monster is also isolated from the society. So, both need each other for their existences. (Withey, 1997)

According to Mary Shelley, the French Revolution had a negative impact on her parents' legacy. Mary Shelley, like other Romantic poets like William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Lord Byron, and her husband P.B. Shelley, believed that French Revolution was needed to draw reformation to the society. The tyrannical rule of monarchy under French King Louis XVI had to be overturned and the oppressed might be freed. John Keats remained a great exception in the issue of French Revolution. Through her writing, it is clear that Mary Shelley also followed her parents' legacy. In the end, the French Revolution became a movement that led to anarchy and the destruction of human society, not one that was supportive of constitutional democracy. It is this very idea that causes Mary Shelley to create her metaphor of an evil monster, which is built for the good, but turns out to be evil in the end. Victor Frankenstein rises and falls as the monster does.

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