

"He is Nothing Like Me"

Mei Yi Choo

State University of New York at Geneseo

“He is Nothing Like Me”

When a father looks at his son, he can see a reflection of himself. The same goes for Victor Frankenstein when he first imagines his creation. However, the image of himself immediately fades from his creation. Over the course of Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein and the Monster develop a mutual hatred for each other. By looking at Victor and the Monster as if they are father and son, we can see they share similar traits, but do not end up being the same person: Victor is the true monster. Victor and the Monster share the intellectual talents that drive their desire to “play God,” but they end up reserving roles at the end of the book.

Victor Frankenstein and the Monster present themselves as intellectual beings that are capable of learning from their surroundings. Victor is lucky to have resources, like his father’s library, to increase his knowledge and interests (Shelly, 1992, p. 40-43). Even though his father, Alphonse Frankenstein, discouraged Victor’s naïve passion of ancient and outdated alchemy, it only fed Victor’s burning desire to prove his father wrong with his newfound knowledge (p. 40-41). At the age of seventeen, Victor was accepted to University of Ingolstadt, in his studies, he showed enthusiasm in the chemistry and biology (p. 44, 51). He was able to create a new life from the alchemy and scientific knowledge he gained throughout the years (p. 58). Victor exhibits an ability to learn new things without anyone’s help; even though the Monster did not have the privilege of education like Victor, he was able to gain knowledge from his surroundings. After Victor abandoned the Monster, he is able to understand and speak, develop a conscience, and read philosophical literature like *Sorrows of Werter* and *Paradise Lost* (Shelly, 1992, p.121-132). He managed to accomplish these impossible tasks by eavesdropping on his neighbor (p. 108-137). In *Frankenstein*, the monster was able to pull off these tasks in one year

(p. 105-146). Father, Victor, and son, the Monster, prove to be very intelligent and adapt to their surroundings well to gain knowledge.

Even though Victor Frankenstein and the Monster look different on the outside, they share the same interest of “playing God” to people around them. Victor was fascinated by the outdated alchemy books in his father’s library, which drove his desire to animate new life (Shelly, 1992, p. 40-43). He had a vision to be a creator of this new life and he imagined that this creature would worship him like God. In chapter four, Victor said, “I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter” (Shelly, 1992, p. 53). Like God, who created man, Victor envisioned himself to be like God as he is able to successfully create a new life out of body parts. He wanted this new creature to worship him like God. As Victor is able to give life, the Monster takes life away. Since the Monster was created, a total of five people were killed in *Frankenstein* (Shelly, 1992). For instance, after Victor failed to create a female companion for the Monster, the Monster threatened him “I shall be with you on your wedding night” (Shelly, 1992, p. 173). That was the promise the Monster gave to Victor as God told Moses about the ten plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7:14-11:10). Victor was terrified on his wedding night and believed the monster would kill him that day. Ultimately, the Monster kept his promise, visited him, and killed Victor’s wife, Elizabeth (Shelly, 1992, p. 200). Both characters showed the ability to control the life and death of others, as they see themselves as the judge of mankind on who is worthy to live and die. Like father, like son, Victor and the Monster wish to manipulate life, and bestow the final judgment to people around them.

Although they share the same talent and passion, Victor and the Monster end up trading roles because Victor is the true monster in the story. After Victor successfully fulfilled his lifelong dream to create a new life, he was horrified by his creation and said, “... the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart” (Shelly, 1992, p. 58). Not

only did Victor develop hatred towards his creation by its looks, but also he immediately abandoned the Monster and unleashed it to a harsh reality. Victor did not take responsibility as a creator, but instead, pushed his “child” away from him and viewed it as a failure. Additionally, Victor did not tell the truth about the killer of his brother and allowed an innocent woman to be executed (Shelly, 1992, p. 96). Victor believes the Monster lacks humanity, but in this case, Victor is the soul with no humanity. His deluded self-interests and obsessive pursuit of a fool’s dream caused people around him to die. Victor had a happy and perfect family, but he isolated himself from them for his selfish dreams. When he realized that everyone around him was dying, it was too late for him to save his wife. Victor, who was once human, transformed into the monster of the book.

While Victor turned out to be the monster, the Monster gained his humanity by the end of the book. Though the Monster is ugly at first sight, he is a gentle giant who just wants to be accepted by society. After he was created, he saved a girl from drowning (Shelly, 1992, p. 142-143). This shows that he has a clear conscience. He knows that saving the girl is the right thing to do and he does it. As we know the Monster kills Victor’s younger brother, William (Shelly, 1992, p. 144-145). In the Monster grasp, William cried, “My papa is a syndic – he is M. Frankenstein – he will punish you” (p. 144). He just wanted to talk to William because he thought a child would not judge him, but the last name Frankenstein triggered the hatred towards his “father” and he accidentally killed William instead (p. 144). However in the Monster’s defense, he did not know his own strength because he is like a child in an adult body. It made the Monster remember who he really is and the cause of his suffering. The Monster knows that he is alone in this world and that no one would accept him, so he seeks out his creator to make a female companion for him (Shelly, 1992, p. 147). Like Adam, the Monster needs an Eve to be with in his Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:4-3:24). The Monster believed that with a female

companion, he would finally be at peace with his harsh reality. This scene parallels *Candide*, when Candide chose to live in his own garden with his friends and away from society (V., 1991, p. 87). Both Candide and the Monster understand their reality, both suffer a lot and want to live in solitude with their friends and love ones. The Monster shared similar traits and passion with his “father,” but humanity made him a different person than Victor.

Victor’s action towards the Monster showed similar behavior of his father, Alphonse Frankenstein, towards Victor as a child. Alphonse discouraged Victor’s passion to pursue alchemy and told him that he was wasting his time (Shelly, 1992, p. 40-41). If Alphonse had accepted Victor’s dream and encourage him to use his talent to modern science, Victor’s fate would have been different. However, Alphonse immediately cut him off and denied Victor of his dream just like when Victor immediately judge the Monster as evil when he first created it. Victor did not give the Monster a chance to show him that he was kind and gentle. Like Alphonse, Victor only wants to believe what he sees in his first impression of his “son” and not the potential of a positive version of the Monster. Therefore, the Monster was set loose on mankind. Even after the Monster told him his story and dreams, Victor denied him the only thing that could make him happy. Just like Alphonse, Victor was a terrible father that did not pay attention to the personal interest to his child.

Like father, like son, the cause of the wild and rough nature in the Monster can be traced back to how Victor was treated by his father. Victor would never admit to have any relation with the Monster. But at the end, when Victor died, the Monster showed a sense of loss and sorrow upon his “father’s” death (Shelly, 1992, p. 224-225). If the Monster did not have an ugly appearance, and had not veered from his father’s agenda, maybe Victor and the Monster would have had each other’s company and love.

References

Shelley, M. W. (1992). *Frankenstein* (M. Hindle, Ed.). New York: Penguin Books.

The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). New York: Oxford University Press.

V. (1991). *Candide*. New York: Dover Publications.