

Frankenstein – Reviews from HMP Bristol, April 2016

Thoughts on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

Ryan

“Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.”

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is considered to be a timeless classic, and is commonly considered to be one of the great English literary pieces. With the concept of a villainous hero, strong moral questions and heavy influence from Greek mythology (Prometheus and his clay images) – the book has continued to be a strong source of moral debate since it was first published in 1818.

One of the questions most commonly raised is 'who is the true monster?' Is it the malicious and miserable creation, or is it the so-called 'hero' of the book, Dr Victor Frankenstein?

Frankenstein's nameless creation is unnaturally brought in to the world against his will, abandoned by Frankenstein (his Creator), and is then rejected by the society of man in general. He is a rejected creation, and as he himself states, 'you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us'. He is the creation of his 'father', and what other outcome could there be than a malicious and miserable nature when he is cast aside and discarded like a piece of rubbish?

The creation is left to morally evolve on his own, and develops through eavesdropping on the De Lacey household – as well as through the reading of works including Paradise Lost and the Sorrows of Werter. His hopes for society are dashed however by the cruelty of man, and it is the reaction of the society around him that turns him in to the 'monster'. A monster of misery that truly hates himself, a being that eventually decides to end his own existence and 'consume to ashes this miserable frame'.

How can we blame the creation when it is society that is truly at fault? Hated by the world and rejected by his creator, his God, there is no world in which we can justify laying the blame and the title of 'evil' on an abandoned and mistreated creation of a man attempting to play God.

Evil is his Creator. Evil is a hateful society full of prejudice for that which it does not understand. While the actions of Frankenstein's creation could be described as evil, where else could the blame lie other than with the 'father' that failed to raise him? Evil lies in the heart of all men, but so does good – and had Victor Frankenstein nurtured this aspect in his creation, the outcome would have been very different.

Frankenstein's creation is not the monster. The Doctor himself is the monster. Society is the monster, and at the end of the day, we are the monster.

Frankenstein

Francis

What makes a monster? What a question! No one simple answer could ever cover this. To try to make a dent in this question maybe we should start at the beginning i.e.: family environment, schooling, society, in general, quite often life experiences, sometimes though a few people are just

plain evil! Maybe when Mary Shelley considered her book Frankenstein, she was looking at the various components of a human being. For example: what makes a human being a complete human being? I feel she expresses this puzzle by putting a person together physically, although her intention was to show the complications of the human condition i.e.: love, hate, fear, laughter, but above all the pain and misery that can drive us all into such a state of despair that we attack, i.e.: (Attack is the best form of defence?) Prison is a Pandora's box. When opened and closed the only thing left in Pandora's box was hope. So if all hope is gone as well, what is left? Except pain and misery? Surely that is enough to turn all people into a monster. The way Shelley's monster has been portrayed through the many films and books over the years it has always come across that it suffered so much pain, but had so much love to give, and didn't receive any back, and that was all it wanted, to be loved and excepted. I could go on really!

P.S. Is Doctor Frankenstein a monster? Yes he was. He created a victim. Someone he could control and attack others with, whilst he stayed in control. In today's world, a politician!!

It's ironic that the opening chapter, Letter 1, is address to a Mrs Saville. As a later Mr Saville turned out to be such a monster.

Also pleasing to read a book written in intelligent English.

What Makes a Monster

Manny

An interesting question, best summed up by the following:

"Mary Shelley" an "enigma" however if you look into her character who was "shy introverted person" brought up by a loving mother and father, but screaming to be set free, she was able to find sanctuary in her writings ,with a vivid imagination, a flair for the dramatics, its only when she met "Lord Byron" and his circle of friends that she felt at ease, her writings took a different turn, "Byron" helped to channel "Mary's" thoughts and feelings and conjure up "horror stories", so by writing of a mad scientist a substitute self, to vent her feelings and lose her self, so created a monster via a "alto ego" called "Doctor Frankenstein" who thought of creating life. I think there was a conspiracy by "Byron and Shelley" to shake up society and to some degree "Mary's" "persona" came out of it. This would-be scientist who found inner fulfilment, but really we are talking about "Shelley" her self, who had deep dark thoughts egged on by "Byron", you must remember in her day it was unheard of to write in this form especially for a woman who could have been carted off to a lunatic asylum. Hence her "alto ego" Doctor Frankenstein who thinks the world was ready to meet his master piece, a creation who was no monster but a kind and loving thing, who craved love and in return to love and care, but no this was not to be, this inner voice of "Mary's" who was shouting, and wanted to be heard, although "Mary" was shy and introverted she had anger of sorts, not manifesting overtly, but something was missing from her life.

In answer to the question:

1) 'I am malicious because I am miserable'

Not true. Like "Mary" he wanted to be loved, and love back, cared for, but his maliceness stems from frustration, people not understanding, look beneath the skin, and you will find beauty!

2) The book is a vehicle for would-be scientist to indulge their fantasies, the genuine scientist wants to find cures and help in the well being of people. There are so called "scientist" who are dabbling in the grey areas of science, manipulating human stem cells, creating, blending species that do not exist in nature.

3) The real monster has to be "Shelley" herself.

Brought out by "Byron", who thought, dark thoughts, corruption in the physical sense.

Remarks:

This piece "authors" introduction to the standard novels edition page 5 to 10 has been read a number of times, and I have picked the bones, and clearly understand where she was coming from, an in depth analysis of her writings led me to believe on what makes a monster. Or maybe suffering from the "vapours"??

Signed this day

AD The year of our Lord

March 1832

In the dark damp cell of Bristol Prison where life is at its lowest

(Post script) please excuse spelling mistakes

Keenan

In the book the creature says "I am malicious because I am miserable" – I believe that this is not true because the civilians of the town treat it aggressively on their first encounter, making the Frankenstein monster: being a 'new born' giving it the initial thought that being hostile was the right way to be in society. As it gained more consciousness it did say "No longer restrained by the fear of discovery I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings" – hence why it was being malicious.

I can see why this book is often used as an example of science creating monsters because as humans when we don't understand something we become fearful, and as a way of defending ourselves we become violent, but this being likely I cannot agree: is that I can't recollect any real-life events occurring relating to this incident of the Frankenstein monster or comparable at the least.

From my perspective I do believe that Dr. Frankenstein is the real monster because he was fixated on creating life itself, once he did create it by shocking electricity into the body of the Frankenstein monster he denies it from a loving-life into a belligerent one. Forming the Frankenstein monster as a malicious, rageful monster instead of a possible friendly, mindful one.

What if Frankenstein's monster was an attractive looking female? ~ today

Philip

I think at least a large majority of the fear and loathing Frankenstein's monster causes is down to the sheer ugliness and brute strength of the creation. Also so little understanding of such matters approx 200 years ago. We now have a greater understanding of how powerful human judgement can be from such things as racism! and sexism! Did Frankenstein really stop ever to think of such things or was his obsession to create so intense he forgot about the world around him needed to except him. I think not! I believe even today it would frighten people but in a much different way. Especially for devote and deeply religious people. You have only to think about how people back in the early 1800s people perseaved electric as some form of magic until under standing of it became a norm. I think his grief made him malicious and drove him to a level of madness. Thank you for reading my interpretation of Frankenstein.

The book is often used as an example of science creating monsters. Is this likely?

Stephen

The answer here must be – yes, without doubt. Perhaps not a monster in the literary sense as in Frankenstein's as I believe an organic creation of a creature invented by Shelley would never be possible. However, science has shown itself as a force for both good and evil with examples ranging from the invention of gunpowder to the cloning of animals and the eradication of deadly diseases to the conquest of space.

On the question of cloning could science in this field produce a class of 'subhuman' to free us from menial tasks, for medical experimentation and even as cannon fodder for warfare.

Science has produced the internet and within its darker corners monsters lurk. Could we even see something like 'skynet', that self aware monster of the terminator movies?

Science has helped extend life expectancy along with a myriad other wonders but it must also be remembered that science also created one of the greatest and fearful monsters of recent times – the atom bomb. One of its developers, Oppenheimer used the quote: 'I have become the destroyer of worlds.' after witnessing its awesome destructive power.

Without doubt science is a force for which we should be thankful but also we should be wary and ever watchful as I believe science is always ready to breed ever more and increasingly frightening monsters.

In all likelihood the monster which will appear and creep up in our midst will be one of artificial intelligence that gains self awareness.

It is an overused cliché, yet science fiction very often becomes science fact. It would be too easy, if care and vigilance is not undertaken, to allow science by the back door give birth to and feed a monster beyond our control.

Frankenstein: Fact or Fiction?

My view would have to be "fiction"

Victor for a start "Frankenstein was not his last name" I don't know it myself so I'll say Brown. Victor Brown was an inventor scientist who came up with the creating life from the dead by robbing the graves of the dead and taking different parts from these bodies and stitching them together and trying to bring his creation to life in which he did by shocking it with massive amounts of electricity which of course did work.

Most people saw Victor as the monster but in truth the monster was the creation he made from the body parts of the dead "he was more of a crazy inventor than a monster" hence is where his creation got the name Frankenstein: which turned out to be the opposite of what Victor wanted.

When Victor realised what he had done, his creation lost control and that he had no control "the only thing that made him decide that he had to destroy what he had created" was seeing the lost of his own partner which he brought back to life.

Frankenstein as a book and film I think because I like them if your into your horror films and books other than that its good and I like them both.

But true to say many people out there aka scientist do believe that it can be done, this can never be done because the one thing that never can be replicated after death is the human brain. So this could never be done.

Frankenstein – Mary Shelley

Anthony

I think Dr Frankenstein is the real monster in the story because he studied so many books for so long and went to great lengths over a large period of time to create the creature without considering the outcome of it working and the creature being animated and living. Very selfish in the sense that he only wanted to achieve his own fantasy and dream at any cost and not considering the circumstances or the consequences if he was successful in his work.

My second reason for this conclusion is that he ran away from what he had created, after all the hard work he put in, he got scared of the one thing he wanted to achieve and instead of studying his creation or befriending it, he chose to run away from it and therefore end up making it a monster toward him.

Is Dr. Frankenstein the real monster?

Adam

First of all he's a scientist because he learned about human body. He care about human beings and he tries to understand how the life functions in the body by using electricity and corpses and after when he saw what he had created, he became very scared and decided not to take responsibility of the creature he had created. Dr Frankenstein created a life and he made a big step in scientist evolution and human being anatomy. I think he was the first one who used electricity to produce life from the dead. He became a monster because he doesn't have courage to inform everyone what he had produced out of his creation. He failed to take action when the creature he had created started to kill people. He was a coward and he became evil within himself more than the creature he had produced from his experiment.

David

I have read Frankenstein and books similar to it several times and I think that you always come to the same conclusion, it is not the creature that is the monster but the creator.

Like we are today, and people in the past we are never satisfied with what we have, or how we are, could you not call a modern day plastic surgeon, Frankenstein for changing someones appearance, and lets be honest from what I've seen not always for the best, or when breeders cross breed animals to so say improve an animals looks, or in cattle, or sheep to improve the meat some of the results have truly been monstrous.

So why call the monster, a monster, when that is the way it was created. Like Frankensteins monster it has no choice in the way it is, or acts and when it go's against convention it gets called a monster, but!! the person that created it, is called a genius!!

Maybe you could call Frankensteins creature a monster, but that is the way it was created, it had no choice.

Personally I think Frankenstein was the monster, like some other scientists and doctors of today. Some things should just be left alone, once yer dead, yer dead so just leave it that way and stop interfering or we could end up with real monsters!!

We do not want history repeating itself, because lets be honest we've already had some real monsters in our time: - Hitler, pol pot or even us for removing any indigenous natives that we though were in the wrong place, so who really is the monster: - creator? Created? Your choice?

Frankenstein – A review based on Chapter VI (6)

Robert

Arrival on shore after a torturous stormy and windy sea journey Victor and his wife Elizabeth were glad to be on stable ground. They wandered up and down the shore with delight then found their way to their home.

Their home was nearby and on entering the house spent time in languishing in the delight of these surroundings. Elizabeth was tired and retired to her bedroom. Shortly afterwards Victor and the others present heard terrifying screams. Curiosity and fear caused Victor to race to the bedroom where he found Elizabeth's lifeless body spread out on the bed.

The moon-light night revealed a shadow of a monster outside the window. This monster was laughing and pointing to Elizabeth's body lying on the bed.

Victor raced to the window and chased the monster to the lake but could not catch him. Victor then, with many other people took a boat out on the lake to see if they could catch this monster – all without avail.

Victor decided to return to Geneva and on his journey suffered many nightmares of what had happened. His journey was extremely traumatic and hallucinatory. He recalled the death of his three friends and now of his beloved wife, and immediately thought of his father and Ernest and gave thought to their fate.

The actions of the animal monster he had created was the cause of all this anguish and this was causing Victor turmoil and he was frightened.

At long last he arrived in Geneva where his father and Ernest lived. He had memory lapses and was thinking of all his current misfortunes, the creation of his monster and his time in prison and eventual release.

Victor went to the local magistrate in Geneva to report Elizabeth's death and begged the magistrate to find her murderer who is the monster. He told the magistrate that this monster have immense power which no human had ventured.

The magistrate was convinced that this animal monster must be hunted down and destroyed. Such task would be difficult to secure. Victor vowed to the magistrate he would assist in any way possible to catch the monster. Victor was under the distinct impression that the magistrate had absolutely no intention of doing what he was asked of him.

Victor was exasperated and shouted to the magistrate as he knew the magistrate would do little.

Mary Shelley: Frankenstein

Steve

Chapter 1

The story in this book is told by Victor, who was born in Naples in Italy, and who describes himself as a Genevese. Victor's father was a well respected gentleman who occupied several public positions with integrity and honour.

One of Victor's father's friends was a Mr Beaufort who was a successful merchant who through a number of misfortunes fell on hard times and in to poverty.

Mr Beaufort paid his creditors, but having lost his wealth, and unable to bear to live in poverty with his previous surroundings, moved with his daughter Caroline, to Lucerne.

It took some ten months for Victor's father to find his friend Mr Beaufort, but by the time he had found him it was too late, and despite the best efforts of Caroline to save her father, he died in her arms, leaving her to become an orphan, and a beggar.

Victor's father came to Caroline's rescue and two years later she became his wife. Victor's father relinquished all of his public duties, and they travelled between Italy, Germany and France. Victor was then born in Naples, Italy.

The family had a deep and loving relationship, and when Victor was five years old he and his mother visited a penury where they found a lovely blue eyed infant girl with golden hair. This child was the daughter of a Milanese nobleman who had disappeared. Caroline who had for some time wanted a daughter took the child, whose name was Elizabeth and adopted her.

Caroline presented the beautiful Elizabeth to the five year old Victor as his present: to protect, love and cherish.

The chapter ends with Victor's rather chilling statement that Elizabeth was "my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only".

Karl

Dr. Frankenstein is a scientist following the flow of science, pushing the limits of science in the process of reaching new discoveries. Not thinking of the negative of his discoveries but only the positive goal he sees in his mind. Thinking of science and not his moral duties as a mortal and not exceeding "god" like discoveries. Raising the dead or preventing death. And his creation "The Monster" has the learning of a child. Learning to deal with light, senses and human nature with the basic thoughts of a new being. He sees the good in most things until he witnesses first hand the negative (or fear) that humans portray when they come face to face with the unknown. So like a child who has a tantrum, wonders why he should treat human beings with kindness and trust when he himself gets treated badly. Because he looks and acts differently. He doesn't act badly until he is faced with mob justice. Chased away from villages with stone throwing fearful residents. And so the treatment he gets, he puts back on the others – he is confused that people can treat him so bad when he hasn't done anything except look different. And anger takes the better of him and starts acting like a castaway, acting like a spoilt child with his back against the wall still wondering why people act in such a bad way to each-other when they are a little bit different.

The book is a great read, looking at the thinking of the creator (the scientist) and the thinking and learning of the createe (the so called "Monster") and the balance between the two.

This book is often used as an example of science creating monsters. Is this likely?

Alan

If we look at the period Shelley set Frankenstein in, then on the surface one could argue that at that time, it wasn't the case. History tells us that trying to apply today's values on historical events does not work in many circumstances.

Let us assume that Dr. Frankenstein was a real person and look at what he was trying to do i.e. assemble a person from spare parts. Let us also compare what he was doing to what is happening in the medical world today.

Today we are able to sew back on to a body, arms, hands, feet, and other parts. We are also able to transplant a face, heart, kidneys, liver, pancreas, womb and other internal organs. We can use implants to help people see, hear, walk and exercise other limbs. Electricity is used to re-start hearts and also to make alterations to a person's brain.

If we go back even further than Shelley to the time that Leonardo da Vinci was alive, let us see what he achieved. He is credited with mapping out the human body showing muscle structure, tendons, bones, nerves and many other physiological aspects of the human body but at no time has anyone called him anything other than a genius and someone who was ahead of his time. Without his work on the human body, today's medical profession may still be in the dark ages.

Burke & Hare, those infamous body snatchers, stole freshly buried bodies so that medical science could progress. Allied to Leonardo's discoveries the advancement has progressed to where we are today.

With advancement there is always change and innovation. We have had hearts made out of plastic used to save people and we have used animal hearts (i.e. pigs hearts) to keep people alive. It is now possible to even print body parts, using a 3D printer to be transplanted. Skin can be grown in a laboratory, artificial blood is being created and even body parts are being grown.

So with all this knowledge and advancement in medical science technology let us look again at the original question of whether Shelley's Frankenstein was using science to create a monster.

I would suggest that we, today, are not too far from actually achieving this. Two hundred years has passed since the book was written and it would appear that Shelley was ahead of her time. The ability to stitch body parts together and use electricity to start the heart and bring to life the 'person' is pure genius.

If any of us are alive in 2216, what do you think that generation will be saying about our efforts today to do what we are doing. Will they not be asking a similar question to that posed as the heading for this critique? Is science today, in 2016, creating monsters?

As I mentioned at the start, what seems today, in retrospect, as being outlandish is based on our thoughts and perceptions of today and not 1813. Taking all of the above into consideration and if Frankenstein were a real person, then we have to answer the question in a positive way. We have

progressed today where we can clone animals and next step is humans. Will they be regarded as monsters? I don't think so but we will more than likely, by 2216, be able to re-build a human and I believe they will be part of normal society.