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Real "Monster" in *Frankenstein*

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The story of Frankenstein is typically seen as a battle between Victor Frankenstein and the "monster" of the story. However I argue that the real "monster" of the story is in fact Victor Frankenstein who is suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and that the "monster" is really just a delusions that Victor uses to cope with the idea that he in fact is the killer of the story. This concept is evident in the fact that no one in the story has ever seen both Victor Frankenstein and the "monster" alive in the same place. The characteristics of the "monster" also point towards the idea that the "monster" could not possibly exist. Even the way that Victor acts throughout the book point to the idea that he does not really care for the safety of his loved ones. Overall the actions that play out in the story point towards the idea that Victor Frankenstein is the real "monster" of the story.

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REAL MONSTER IN *FRANKENSTEIN*

Fiend, daemon, and monster are just a few of the words used to describe Victor Frankenstein's creation in *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. This "monster" is the supposed murderer of several characters throughout the book and is presumably the main antagonist. However, the actions of Victor Frankenstein suggest that the monster is in fact Victor himself. Victor is the only person who sees the monster. The monster also possesses qualities that are similar to those of Victor Frankenstein. The language these two characters use during the story also suggest that they are one and the same. This does not necessarily mean that Victor made the monster up to cover his murderous tracks. Instead, Victor could believe the monster is real when, in fact, the monster is a combination of Victor Frankenstein's delusions and hallucinations. These symptoms are common of the mental disorder, paranoid schizophrenia. The language, actions, and characteristics of Victor Frankenstein and the monster suggest that Victor Frankenstein is a paranoid schizophrenic who is battling his alternate personality whom he believes is the monster of the story.

A basic definition of a paranoid schizophrenic is a person who is socially withdrawn due to his or her hallucinations and delusions. A textbook definition of paranoid schizophrenia as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, would be the "preoccupation with one or more delusions or frequent auditory hallucinations" (American Psychiatric Association, 287). The emphasis with both the common and technical definition of paranoid schizophrenia focuses on delusions and hallucinations. The textbook *Psychology 7th edition* defines hallucinations as "False sensory experiences, such as seeing something in the absence of an external stimuli" (Myers, 647). The same textbook defines delusions as "False beliefs, often of persecution or grandeur, that may accompany psychotic disorders" (Myers, 647). A person suffering from paranoid schizophrenia would be more likely to suffer a delusion of persecution than one of grandeur.

Victor is treated as if he is mentally ill several times throughout the story. A couple of times Victor is accused of making the monster up. When Elizabeth is murdered on the night of her honeymoon, Victor and his companions launch a search party for the monster. Victor says that "After passing several hours, we returned hopeless, most of my companions believing it to have been a form conjured up by my fancy" (Shelley, 171-172). Why would the companions of Victor Frankenstein believe that Victor made the monster up? Could it be that they doubt his sanity at this point in the story? A more logical explanation would be that Victor's companions believe Victor

made up the monster to try and find a scapegoat for the death of his wife. However, there is the possibility that they question his sanity. After all, this is not the first death that Victor has had to cope with, and his friends might very well believe that all these simultaneous deaths are too much for Victor to handle.

Nevertheless, Victor does not abandon his idea that the monster killed his wife and all his dear friends, and so he goes to speak with a magistrate. After Victor retells the story of the monster to the magistrate, the magistrate accused Victor of being delirious. Victor describes this accusation by saying that the judge "endeavored to soothe [him] as a nurse does a child and reverted to [his] tale as the effects of delirium" (Shelley, 175). The judge is the first individual to see that Victor is mentally distraught and could be suffering from some form of insanity. The magistrate is not the only who saw Victor was suffering from some mental disorder. In one passage after the deaths of Elizabeth and Victor's father. Victor describes his life as follows,

What then became of me? I know not; I lost sensation, and chains and darkness were the only objects that pressed upon me. Sometimes, indeed, I dreamt that I wandered in flowery meadows and pleasant vales with the friends of my youth, but I awoke and found myself in a dungeon. Melancholy followed, but by degrees I gained a clear conception of my miseries and situation and was then released from my prison. For they had called me mad, and during many months, as I understood, a solitary cell had been my habitation. (Shelley, 173)

This passage details a time when Victor Frankenstein appears to be institutionalized. In some untold part of the story, Victor was accused of being mad and imprisoned. However, he was not placed in any ordinary prison, Victor describes that he was in solitary and bound with chains. The only indication that Victor is insane is when it comes to the monster. So due to this obsession with the monster Victor is institutionalized. It is only after Victor overcomes this obsession and regains his sanity, is he released from the prison.

If individuals in the story believed Victor to be suffering mentally, then there must be some logic behind these accusations. For example, Victor Frankenstein is socially withdrawn during many points in the story. The most described instance of this is when Victor is first creating the "monster," he says that "Winter, spring, and summer passed away during my hours of labors; but I did not watch the blossoms or the expanding leaves-sights which before always yielded me supreme delight-so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation" (Shelley 42). Here Victor has clearly become obsessed with the creation of the "monster" and has become socially withdrawn from everything. He even ignored the changing of the seasons which he says he enjoys greatly. This obsession with the monster brings about the question whether or not Victor is creating

anything. Perhaps this creation of the monster story is just Victor trying to understand the internal struggle that is starting to arise in his mind. If this were true, then it would explain why Victor doesn't socialize with anyone during this time, an individual would have noticed that Victor was in poor mental health and battling with an inner demon. This is not the only time that demonstrate that Victor is socially withdrawn while dealing with the monster. During the time that Victor is debating on whether or not to grant the "monster's" request of a bride, he returns to this socially withdrawn state. Victor's father even says to Victor that "you are still unhappy and still avoid our society" (Shelley, 131). Again why does Victor seclude himself from society when he is dealing with the "monster?" it would possibly be easier if Victor told his family of the monster so that they all could be on guard. However, the fact that victor deals with the monster alone could suggest that he fears what others would do if they found out that Victor is battling a dual personality.

The idea that Victor is afraid to tell anyone about the monster because he is the monster would explain much of Victor's behavior. Victor is always alone when the monster appears. There is never a single part of the book when Victor and the monster are alive in the same room, and others are around to see it. This would make sense if Victor was suffering from dual personality because he doesn't want anyone to see the other side of him. There is also the question as to why Victor doesn't recruit other individuals to help him pursue the monster instead of battling the creature alone. Perhaps Victor is scared of what will happen to him if he tells others; they could view him as insane. The one time that Victor tried to tell someone about the monster they thought he was delusional and a little while afterward Victor was imprisoned (Shelley, 175). So if Victor is battling his dual personality then this idea of the monster has to arise from somewhere because Victor constantly sees and speaks with the monster. Since Victor is socially withdrawn like a paranoid schizophrenic would be, then he should be suffering from delusions and hallucinations.

The monster could simply be Victor suffering from hallucinations, and he uses these hallucinations to describe his other personality. A hallucination is defined as "a false sensory experience", and this would explain why no one else ever sees Victor and the monster alive in the same room together ("Hallucination," 1989). Victor seems tormented by the idea of the monster confronting him and even says that "I felt the fingers of the monster already grasping my neck, and screamed with agony and terror" (Shelley, 154). Victor's hallucinations are so powerful that he can even feel the monster attacking him. The fact that Victor suffers from hallucinations and is socially withdrawn point to him having paranoid schizophrenia.

There is one more symptom that is common among schizophrenics, and that is delusions. In Victor's case, he constantly feels that he is being persecuted by the monster and persecution is in the definition of delusions (Myers, 647). This is why Victor constantly believes that he sees the monster and that the monster is constantly pursuing him. This is also the reason that Victor begins to pursue the monster so he can end his torment. Unfortunately for Victor "he can never catch up with something that exist only in his mind" (Keese, 4). The idea that the monster is merely Victor's delusions compensating for his dual personality explains why Victor always blames the creature for everything that goes wrong in the story. The most common example is that Victor blames the monster every time he finds one of his friends dead. When William, Victor's younger brother, is murdered Victor immediately accuses the monster. Victor at first demonstrates questions whether or not the monster is his brother's killer and then he says that "No sooner did that idea cross my imagination than I became convinced of its truth..." (Shelley 60). Why would Victor jump to such a conclusion? He is a well-educated individual and surely he could hypothesize who logically would kill his brother. At the time of William's murder, Victor doesn't know what happened to the "monster," so why would he assume the monster had anything to do with it? Perhaps Victor is hinting at the fact that he is aware of his dual personality and that he knows he is ultimately responsible for the death of his brother. This suggest, that there is no separate entity known as the "monster," and it is just a figment of Victor's imagination.

The character of the monster is an entirely unrealistic one, despite the obvious fact that he couldn't be a plethora of reanimated body parts, and this further suggests why he cannot and does not exist. The intelligence of the 'monster' is one trait that is impossible for the monster to possess. For instance, when the monster is first telling his tale, he says he ate "berries, nuts, and roots, which [he] gathered from a neighboring wood" instead of stealing food from an already poor and sometimes starving family (Shelley, 94). If the monster was created in November (Shelley 43) then he would be a few months old at best when he was stealing food. How is it that the monster is smart enough to eat berries and nuts, but the poor family around him isn't (Keese, 9)? With a few months' worth of experience, there is no logical way that the monster is smarter than the family he lives near. If they are a poor family who live off the land one would imagine that they would also collect the nuts and berries that the monster claims to be eating.

Another demonstration of the "monster's" unrealistic intelligence is that of his language skills. According to the story, the monster develops language skills by observing the family he lives near. He is then able to use his newfound knowledge to read and comprehend the books *Paradise Lost*, *Plutarch's Lives*, and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Shelley, 108). These books are not simple reads that someone with only

a basic understanding of language could read much less comprehend; therefore, the monster should not be able to understand them if he is not even a year old (Keese, 10). The final factor that shows that the "monster's" intelligence is unrealistic is that of his ability to plan and murder many of Victor's friends and family. For instance, the monster supposedly is intelligent enough to travel from Ingolstadt to Geneva, to the Frankenstein residence, and then find and kill William Frankenstein (Shelley 120). At this point in the story, the monster is around two years old, yet he possesses the knowledge to do all the things Victor accuses him of (Keese, 7). All these cases demonstrate that the monster would have to have the intelligence of a well-educated individual. The only other character who is alive in the story and could fit that description would be Victor Frankenstein.

There are physical attributes that the monster possesses that are impossible given his upbringing and circumstances suggesting he cannot and does not exist. A scene in the book that clearly demonstrates this is when the monster is making his travels in the forest. While he is traveling, the monster rescues a little girl from a raging river and then he tries to "restore [her] to animation" (Shelley, 119). To save the girl from a raging river, the monster probably had to swim (Keese, 11). Nobody taught the monster how to swim, and so it makes no sense for him to do so in the heat of the moment. It would be possible for the monster to do this if he is indeed Victor Frankenstein himself, who could have been taught how to swim when he was younger. Just after the monster saves the girl, he is shot by an acquaintance of the girl (Shelley, 119). Yet the monster does not die from blood loss nor infection, and the wound instead heals over time (Shelley, 120). How does the monster or anyone for that matter survive a direct shot to the shoulder and yet not die without medical treatment? This is practically impossible, and so it suggests that the monster does not exist. If the monster were in fact Victor Frankenstein, then it is possible that Victor had some knowledge of medicine and treated himself. The most astounding physical feat of the monster is that he is able to survive being in the Arctic and other such environments without dying or being affected by the weather. The monster clearly states that he is impassive to the miseries of the cold and frost (Shelley, 179). No human would be able to survive in an environment such as the Arctic without protection against the elements. Given that the characteristics that the monster possesses are unrealistic it is assumable that the monster doesn't exist.

The characters of Victor and the monster share characteristics in the story that hint at the fact that they may be the same person. The language of the two characters is similar throughout several parts of the story. Both Victor and the monster describe themselves as a "miserable wretch" (Feldman, 69). The fact that the two characters use the same word to describe themselves show that they share similar thoughts, which is

true if the monster is just a figment of Victor's insanity. Victor even states, quite frequently, that he is the true murderer in the book, not the supposed monster. When Henry dies and Victor sees his body he begins talking to the corpse and he says, "Have my murderous machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life? Two I have already destroyed; other victims await their destiny;" (Shelley, 153-154). Here Victor confesses that he has already killed Henry and Justine and that he is not done killing. Later on in the story when Victor speaks with his father about the many deaths that occurred, Victor confesses "William, Justine, and Henry-they all died by my hands" (Shelley 161). This is a confession from Victor that he has in fact been the one behind the murders the entire time.

Before and during his honeymoon Victor's actions point to his insanity and desire to kill Elizabeth. The monster threatens Victor by saying that "I will be with you on your wedding-night" (Shelley, 146). Even after this threat, Victor marries Elizabeth. In response to the threat Victor attempts to protect the house he is staying in with Elizabeth so that the monster cannot harm him. Victor is for some reason under the impression that the monster is going to hurt him. It is impossible for the monster to hurt Victor because they are one and the same person. Then, assuming the monster is real, why would he put Victor out of his misery when he has not made an attempt at Victor's life throughout the book? (Keese, 5). After Victor tries to fortify the house Elizabeth is killed by the monster due to Victor's incompetence (Shelley, 170-171). How is it that Victor is so intelligent that he can create life, but he is unable to fortify a house and protect his wife (Keese)? Victor most likely did protect the house thinking some monster was going to come and try to kill him. Then again, Victor could have married Elizabeth and gone on a honeymoon with her just so that he could kill her without drawing suspicion (Feldman, 68).

The classical reading of this story would assume that it is the monster that commits the various murders in the book. However, it is Victor Frankenstein's alternate personality that is committing these crimes. Victor even accuses himself various times in the book which proves his guilt. He also demonstrates disregard when it comes to the well-being of his loved ones, such as Elizabeth. The monster that Victor refers to in the story is just Victor's hallucinations and delusions that he has due to him having paranoid schizophrenia. This is why Victor constantly claims that he is fighting a being known as the monster but the real fiend, daemon, and monster of the story is just Victor Frankenstein himself.

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