

Shelley's Compassion for the Monster and Hatred for Victor in *Frankenstein*

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Abstract

This paper seeks to study certain affects that Mary Shelley is trying to evoke in Frankenstein for the Monster and against Victor Frankenstein along with other characters in the novel. Though the Monster is taken as the villain in the novel, the research tries to justify him as the good character claiming that whatever he does is just because of the misbehavior his creator, Victor Frankenstein along with other characters in the novel does upon him. The paper applies the theory of affect to study the contrasting representations of the Monster and Victor Frankenstein in the novel. The significance of this approach is the clarity of the cultural politics of the representation and the exposing of Shelley's love for the Monster. But the question arises, what opposing affects Shelley evokes against the two characters. The conflicting affects, the paper argues, are those of love and respect for the Monster and hatred and disrespect for Victor Frankenstein. The objective of this paper is to justify that every creature in the world has the right to life and that everyone needs love and compassion from others to be happy otherwise one may turn to be destructive like the Monster himself. The particular theory of the affects of love and hatred comes from Sara Ahmed's The Cultural Politics of Emotion (2003) and the affect of compassion from Ruth Leys' From Guilt to Shame (2007). Finally, the paper asserts that in the novel, Frankenstein, Shelley claims that every creature in the world has the right to life and that everyone needs love and compassion from others to be happy otherwise one may turn to be destructive like the Monster.

Key words: affect studies, affect of love, affect of compassion, affect of hatred, writer's tilt, alienation

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* evokes certain affects towards the Monster and Victor Frankenstein in the mind of the readers: the first one gets love and compassion, and the later gets hatred. Shelley as a female writer also evokes affects of hatred towards Victor's act of creating the Monster without the support of a female partner in the novel. The Monster is Victor's creation with the help of his scientific knowledge and experiments. But he forgets the law of nature that the creation of human beings and any other creature is possible and successful only with the equal participation of both the male and female parents. Victor, without taking any help and support of a female partner creates the creature which turns out to be a Monster ultimately and starts destroying his happy world. By showing this, Shelley evokes the affect of hatred towards Victor, who is never concerned with his female partner in the production of the creature. This very act of Victor and the result he gets at last, evokes the affect of horror in the mind of the readers that scientific inventions and discoveries which are carried without thinking their possible outcome can be self-destructive and dangerous for the humanities ultimately.

Frankenstein is highly discussed text, so we can find many reviews of the critics on the novel. In his article, "*Frankenstein and Caleb Williams*", A. D. Harvey defines the novel "as a prophetic vision of the dangers of the scientific and technological era that was still in its infancy at the time the book was published in 1818." (21) During the early 19th century, when the novel was published, scientific invention was in the initial period. Scientists were searching about new possibilities in the field of invention. The novel shows the story of such scientist who was trying to see possibilities even in dangerous areas.

On the other hand, the critic Erin Hawley in the article, "The Bride and Her Afterlife:

Female Frankenstein Monsters on Page and Screen” talks about the gender issue in the novel. She claims that Shelley confirm the male-female boundary in the patriarchal society of her time. Hawley claims:

Shelley's depiction of male and female characters works to confirm the boundary between nature and technology. The greatest dichotomy in Frankenstein is therefore not that between Victor and his monster- who both stand representative of masculine endeavors in science and techno-production- but between Victor and Elizabeth, the woman who represents Nature and natural corporeality (and, presumably, the possibility of natural reproduction). (221)

Hawley claims that in terms of reproduction, nature has given equal responsibilities to both male and female. If one tries to take the responsibility alone, something danger will occur.

Talking about the Monster, Marshall Brown in his review of the novel entitled, "*Frankenstein: A Child's Tale*" claims that the Monster seems contemporary to the 21st century people. The sensibilities of the Monster and the 21st century human beings are similar. Brown calls the Monster as "more contemporary to twenty-first century, posthuman sensibilities than to the classics of high romanticism." (147)

Brown claims that the Monster is different from the romantic individuals. *Frankenstein* is a suitable novel to be prescribed in the classroom because of its subject matter and style. Talking about this point, Gladys V. Veidemanis in his article, "*Frankenstein* in the Classroom" argues, "*Frankenstein* is an excellent choice for classroom study first because students find it intriguing and intellectually stimulating, appealing in subject matter and style. It has the added advantage of relative brevity and novelty." (61) It is a perfect piece of art that can satisfy the students because of its form as well as content.

In the review, entitled "The Monster in a Dark Room: *Frankenstein*, Feminism, and Philosophy" Nancy Yousef describes the physical appearance of the Monster. He argues:

It is a giant that the creature makes his first appearance in *Frankenstein*. He is the "strange sight" that attracts Wanton's attention, a "being which had the shape of a man but apparently of gigantic stature" and clearly of a different kind from Frankenstein, the wretched, emaciated stranger Wanton's crew pulls aboard the vessel. The creature's "miserable frame" embodies the omission of infancy and childhood from Frankenstein's conception. (Yousef, 197)

The first weakness that Victor has in the creation of the Monster is that he has created him in such a figure that he resembles someone like a giant but not as a human being. Everyone gets love, care and protection along with good education during one's infancy and childhood, this creature has been devoid of that right. The same idea is highlighted in another review of the novel by Denise Gigante in his review, "Facing the Ugly: The Case of Frankenstein". Gigante cites the lines from the novel, "the Creature . . . demands: "where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; . . . I had never seen a being resembling me, or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I?" (Gigante, 581) No human heart is untouched with these words of the Monster who describes his loneliness and the condition of lack of love and care in life. No friends, no relatives, no father, no mother and no one to love and care him from his infancy till today. This evokes the affect of love for the creature in every reader.

Birthing a child is the quality given to females by nature and creating something is the task of God if we think from religious perspective. But forgetting both of these facts, Victor creates the Monster on his own that brings into his failure. In his review, Yousef further writes:

Not surprisingly, the creature's non-birth, occluding an unavoidably female act, has dominated feminist interpretations of *Frankenstein*. . . This argument makes possible a richer recognition of Shelley's intellectual feminism, particularly her sophisticated engagement with influential theories of development in her day. (Yousef, 198)

Yousef's idea, here is that mothering a child is only the task of females, and this is "unavoidable". But when Victor tries to avoid this fact, he gets failure, and this very act of Victor demands a feminist interpretation of the novel. Also through this act of Victor, Shelley evokes the affect of hatred towards him.

Identity is very essential factor for everyone in the world, but the creature has no identity at all. So, he starts searching for his identity. In this regard, Denise Gigante in his review on the novel, "Facing the Ugly: The Case of Frankenstein" comments:

This is a version . . . derived from the chain of phenomenal reality that . . . refers to . . . the "great chain of causes, which linking one to another . . . can never be unraveled by any industry of ours." And it is this very "chain of existence," from which the Creature is excluded, that keeps the other characters in the novel in existence- paradoxically, by repressing their "real existence." (Gigante, 581)

By "chain of existence", Gigante means to refer to the chain of different types of relationships that human beings have with their family, friends and relatives. These relationships make our life easy and comfortable. But the Monster is devoid of all these relationships. To make his point clear, Gigante further cites the words spoken by the Monster in the novel:

Unable to affirm himself as a subject, the Creature thus commences his own autobiographical narrative by inverting Victor's declarative "I am" into the pathetically interrogative "Who was I? What was I?" He despairs of "brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds," (Gigante, 581)

Gigante, here, is trying to show the pathetic words of the Monster that evoke the affect of love and compassion for the Monster in the heart of the readers. The Monster is suffering from identity crisis, and he is searching for that.

On the other hand, Victor forgets his duties and responsibilities of taking care towards his creation (son) and abandons him. This creates the sense of humiliation and isolation in the mind of the Monster and he starts hating his father. The Monster tells his plight to his creator how he suffered when Victor abandoned him:

It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half-frightened, as it were instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes; but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of night. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept. (84)

These lines evoke the affect of compassion in the mind of anyone towards the poor and helpless creature who is abandoned in a lonely and isolated place by his own father. Ruth Leys, in his book, *From Guilt to Shame (2007)* says that "the [...] cognitive requirement of compassion is [...] the belief that the person does not deserve the suffering." (Chapter 6 "Compassion: Tragic Predicaments) Similar case is here with the Monster who suffers even if he does not deserve the suffering. In the cold month of November, he has to pass the night without clothes and his father has left him even though he has done nothing wrong for him. By birth, he is born with such a deformed physical structure that everybody starts hating him as one sees his physical appearance. The Monster is hated not only by the grownups but also by the children who are taken as

innocent beings. He narrates the moment when he was feared and attacked by everyone in the village. He says:

I had hardly placed my foot within the door, before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missiles weapons, I escaped to the open country, and fearfully took refuge in a low hovel, quite bare, and making a wretched appearance after the palaces I had beheld in the village. (87)

The people in the village are afraid of his appearance and they also hate the Monster just because he has abnormal physical appearance than theirs. He has done nothing wrong to these people who attack him even though he does not deserve this kind of behavior from them. Ruth Leys' idea is applicable in this context of the novel. The Monster runs away to save his life because he is also afraid of the people. He has fear in his heart. While talking about the politics of fear, Sara Ahmed in her *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2003) mentions that "the language of fear involves the intensification of 'threats', which works to create a distinction between those who are 'under threat' and those who threaten. Fear is an effect of this process, rather than its origin" (72). There is distinction between the appearance of the Monster and the other people in the novel. The people have the sense of fear before the Monster due to his distinct physical structure and appearance from theirs. On the other hand, he has the sense of fear at the people because of their distinct behavior for him. He had expected love and kindness from them but got just the opposite, and this creates the sense of fear in his heart.

The Monster learns that the world is hateful and indifferent to him. He feels completely alone although he is compassionate to others. He knows well that to save someone's life is a good deed. After saving the life of human he says:

This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and as a recompense, I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound, which shattered the flesh and bone. The feelings of kindness and gentleness which I had entertained but a few moments before gave place to hellish rage and gnashing of teeth. Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind. But the agony of my wound overcame me; my pulses paused, and I fainted. (119-20)

The Monster has every quality that a human has. He has the sense of empathy and feeling of kindness. He is gentle enough to be able to live in the society of people. But it is human beings who hate the Monster just because of his appearance. Although the Monster has compassion towards people, they have only hatred and disgust towards him. The Monster further tells about how he suffered in his difficulties:

For some weeks I led a miserable life in the woods, endeavouring to cure the wound which I had received. The ball had entered my shoulder, and I knew not whether it had remained there or passed through; at any rate I had no means of extracting it. My sufferings were augmented also by the oppressive sense of the injustice and ingratitude of their infliction. My daily vows rose for revenge -- a deep and deadly revenge, such as would alone compensate for the outrages and anguish I had endured. (120)

The Monster is hated by all the people in the society even though he is innocent and does not have any negative intension against them. Their injustice of the people to the Monster who is severely beaten by them creates the affect of hatred in his heart toward these people as well and he starts committing even serious crimes like killing people who seem innocent. While talking about the cultural politics of hate, Sarah Ahmed further argues:

Insofar as hate enacts the negation that is perceived to characterize the existence of a

social group, then we can link hate to injustice, an injustice that is, of course, irreducible to the law, at the same time as it has a relation to it. If hate is always directed to others as a way of *sealing* their fate, then hate may be *about* the effect it has on others. Given this, the introduction of hate crime as a category should be used as a way of making visible the effects of hate by *listening to the affective life of injustice*, rather than establishing the truth of law. (57)

Ahmed's argument here is that hate is injustice and this injustice is irreducible to the law. Hate is directed to unmake the life of others who do injustice. In the context of the novel, Victor Frankenstein does injustice to the Monster by creating him in ugly, fierce and abnormal physical appearance and this compels the Monster to unmake the world of Victor. The Monster explains the feelings he has after he kills Victor's brother who seems innocent. He says, "I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph: clapping my hands, I exclaimed, 'I, too, can create desolation; my enemy is not invulnerable; this will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him.'" (121) Here, the Monster has the sense of revenge against his creator whom he regards the cause of his unhappiness and misery. Since Victor is the person who unmade the world of the Monster, the Monster wants to unmake the world of Victor in revenge.

Man is a social animal and he needs the company of someone to live. Every creature in this world needs a company, and no one can live alone. In case of the Monster, he does not get anyone to share his feelings and emotions. So he goes to his creator to request him create a female partner. He says to Victor, "You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone can do; and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse to concede." (123) Here, the Monster appeals to his creator to create a female counterpart whom he can share his feelings and emotions. He is demanding to Victor his rights to be fulfilled. He knows well that the society is running after beauty which he lacks. He gets hatred in the society just because of his appearance not because of his behavior. He further appeals, "I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me." (124) What the Monster is demanding to his creator is the thing he needs. He cannot live alone being completely isolated from the world where everyone is merry making. He says that he would be benevolent to anybody if that person is benevolent to him but an hundred times. The Monster does not have any negative feelings and intension to anyone but he only in search of a company. His demanding for an opposite sex partner is natural and justifiable in the sense that sex is a basic need for any living creature even for the insects and decomposers. But when his desire is not fulfilled, and his father does not deliver the promise of creating a female partner for the Monster, the Monster cannot control himself. When the rights are not given to the citizen in a democratic country, people start destroying different things in the country that the government concerns. In the same way, the Monster desires to kill Victor's beloved on the very night of his honeymoon with her.

Victor is the character who is over ambitious and guided by his obsessed mentality of creating a human out of the dead bodies with his scientific knowledge and experimentations. In course of creating his creation, he forgets his old father, his small brother and his beloved Elizabeth who are waiting for him in the village. Being a part of the society, he should have taken care of his family members. But he never comes in contact with them. Similarly, Victor, even after creating a human, forgets his duty of giving proper care to the new creation. The lack of parent's love in his life, the Monster turns out to be a criminal.

This paper has come to the conclusion that Mary Shelley shows her love for the Monster and her hatred towards Victor in the novel. She claims that it is the weakness of Victor but not of the Monster he turns out to be destructive. If his father had guided him properly, the Monster would not have turned destructive. At the same time, Victor forgets the fact that mothering is the duty of the females but not of the males. The Monster is the product of absent participation of female and the participation of only the male in the process of reproduction. Here, Victor tries to play the role of both the God and female none of which he actually belongs to. So, Mary Shelley presents her hatred towards Victor Frankenstein, who is responsible for the death of innocent characters in the novel. If he had not created the Monster, the innocent characters would not have to die in their young age. Throughout the novel, she shows her compassion and love for the Monster as he is not responsible for everything he has done. Rather his creator is responsible for all his activities. Shelley argues that every creature in the world is equal and everyone does have the right to life. To live meaningfully, everyone needs proper love and compassion from other people in the society to get happiness. If love and compassion are denied to anyone, one may turn to be destructive like the Monster in the novel.

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