

Good and Evil in Man:
The Double Nature of Victor in *Frankenstein*

Sara Marklund
C-essay
English Department
Göteborg University
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Supervisor: Ulrika Andersson

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1. Introduction

In the summer of 1816 the young Mary Shelley travels with her lover Percy Shelley to Switzerland where they meet some friends. To their disappointment, the summer is filled with grey and rainy days. One of their good friends, the poet Lord Byron, makes the suggestion that everyone of them should come up with a ghost story, in order to keep them occupied during the dull weather. This rather innocent suggestion, made amongst friends, induced Mary Shelley to write one of the world's most epic stories, the story of *Frankenstein*. The novel has made a great mark in history and is still widely read. It has influenced other authors as well as transcended into other types of media, and the very idea of Frankenstein's monster has become almost larger than the novel itself.

In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley tells the story of Dr Victor Frankenstein, an ambitious man who ventures upon the task of creating life out of lifeless matter. The story is told through the voice of three different characters: Captain Robert Walton, Dr Victor Frankenstein and the Monster. Through the letters of Captain Walton to his sister, we learn that he is on a quest to explore the North Pole. During this expedition Walton and his shipmates spot a man in very poor condition on a small raft. The man is brought on board and introduces himself as Victor Frankenstein. Because of his poor health, Victor is confined to bed. Captain Walton keeps him company and they soon become friends. Walton's ambition to achieve great accomplishments frightens Victor, since he recognizes himself in this behaviour. He decides to tell Walton how his ambition has had dreadful consequences, in order to stop Walton from committing the same mistake. And so Victor Frankenstein starts to tell the story of his life and the event which crushed his chance of happiness: his creation of human-like life.

The story of *Frankenstein* has many different aspects to it, that contributes greatly to the fascination it awakens. What struck me the most were the intriguing characters of Dr

Frankenstein and the Monster, and their relationship to each other. Good versus evil is a crucial theme in the novel, and it is here presented as a very intricate issue.

Through *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley shows us that good and evil are not always easy to determine, and that human beings have both of these qualities within themselves. However, readers tend to want to label the characters of a novel as either good or evil, hero or villain. On the surface of this novel, the antagonists Dr Frankenstein and the Monster appears to be representatives of good respectively evil. But this essay will demonstrate that Shelley's characters are more similar to each other than one might at first conceive, and that they are in fact even dependent on each other. The essay will address how the characters have come to develop their characteristics, the reason for why Victor creates the Monster, and how these issues are connected to the notions of good and evil.

In order to fully comprehend this theme, this essay will also discuss both Mary Shelley's own attitude concerning good and evil, and how she portrays it through the characters of Victor and the Monster. It will demonstrate that Shelley was of the opinion that good and evil are co-existent, that you are born not entirely good nor evil (however, depending on what your experiences in life are, one side could become more prominent), and that they both must exist according to the laws of nature.

2. The characters of Dr Frankenstein and the Monster

2.1 Dr Victor Frankenstein

At the surface Victor Frankenstein appears to be an altogether good and kind human being. He is well-educated, sensitive, eloquent, and loving towards his family and friends. At first glance, even his reason for creating the Monster seems noble: "I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now find it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (Shelley 52).

However, beneath Victor's elegant and philanthropic surface lies a more unattractive trait, which makes you doubt whether his true intentions with the creation really were as noble as he would make them out to be. As will be shown, Victor's actions are sometimes quite egotistical and appear to be a part of his motivation. His real and somewhat unconscious reason for creating the Monster seems to be a desire to obtain awe and fame, and to make sure that his name makes a mark in history:

a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was [surprised] that among so many men of genius who had directed their enquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret. (Shelley 50).

He does not seem to think about any possible negative consequences the experiment might have. Above all, he thinks about that he, Victor Frankenstein, has made this incredible discovery, and he wants to show the world his success. This side of Victor's personality, that he ultimately thinks of himself first, is consistent throughout the text, and there are several more indications of it.

Victor is raised in a loving and caring family. His parents' primary desire is to ensure the

happiness and well-being of their children. The strong sense of the importance of family seems to have transferred to Victor as well, since he often declares his love and affection for his family, and also how impossible a life without them would be. However, this seems to be more the image that Victor has of himself, rather than what his actual actions display.

The first sign of his egotistic behaviour would be when Victor embarks on the task of creating life. Victor leaves his family with the intention of studying science at the university in Ingolstadt in Germany. At first he keeps a regular correspondence with his family, but when his interest in science develops into a hubris-like determination to create life out of inanimate matter, he starts to neglect them. Considering that Victor's mother died just a week before his departure to Ingolstadt, this would be a particularly inappropriate time for him to deprive his family of his support and love. Before Victor departs to the university, his father makes it quite clear that he would be hurt by an intermission in Victor's correspondence. He says to his son, "I know that while you are pleased with yourself you will think of us with affection, and we shall hear regularly from you. You must pardon me if I regard any interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected" (Shelley 53). Still, Victor ignores his father's wish in favour of his own selfish desires. Mary Poovey thoughts concerning Victor's behaviour are that: "Mary Shelley characterizes innate desire not as neutral or benevolent but as quintessentially egoistical. [...] For what he [Victor] really wants is not to serve others but to assert himself" (253-254).

Victor's egotism manifests itself even more clearly after the murder of his little brother William, the first victim that dies at the hands of the Monster. A young servant girl in the Frankenstein household named Justine, who is almost as an adopted daughter, is accused of the crime. Although Victor knows that poor Justine is innocent, he does not reveal the truth that might acquit her, namely that he has created the Monster who is truly responsible for the

murder. Victor claims to be willing to confess to the murder, so that he will be punished instead of Justine. But he does not do so since he knows that it would rather quickly become clear that he had been in a different town, and therefore could not be guilty. But what hinders him from telling the truth about the Monster he has created? He refrains from telling the truth because he is ashamed of himself, and of his failed experiment, which has damaged his ego considerably. This shows that he is more protective of his reputation and his ego, than he is of young Justine's life.

Another sign of Victor's tendency to be self-centred is given when the Monster threatens him with the words: "I shall be with you on your wedding-night" (Shelley 163). Victor decides to destroy the female that the Monster has urged Victor to create for him (the Monster has promised to disappear from the habitats of humans if he were to be given a female of the same kind as himself). Victor knows that this decision will have dreadful consequences, but he thinks that it will be his own life that is at risk, and does not consider the danger he exposes his loved ones to. He therefore interprets the Monster's words as meaning that he will try to kill Victor on the night of his marriage to his adoptive sister and fiancée Elizabeth.

Christopher Small describes Victor's behaviour as "Frankenstein remembers the Monster's threat, but with infatuate egocentricity continues to think of it only as directed against his own life; he even looks forward with something like complacency to sacrificing himself for his bride" (168-169).

Victor himself does not fully grasp that he possesses the unflattering trait of egotism, nor do the people that surround him and love him. In fact, it is Victor's inability to allow himself to have less sympathetic features, that results in his creation of a being that actually could act out the traits he denied himself. The two, Victor and the monster, complement each other in the areas that they are not able to fulfil themselves. Together they constitute a being that is whole,

that possesses all kinds of human traits, both good and evil. This will be further discussed in chapter 3.

2.2 The Monster

As in the case with Victor, the character of the Monster is neither one-dimensional nor easily labelled. The Monster does commit heinous crimes: he murders Victor's little brother William (who is only a little boy), he frames the servant girl Justine for the murder of William (which results in her being condemned to death), he murders Victor's best friend Henry Clerval and the wife and great love of Victor, Elizabeth. It is quite apparent that the Monster holds a great amount of anger and bitterness, but he was not "born" with those qualities.

Directly after Victor sees his creation come to life he flees, horrified by what he has created. This is only the first situation of human repulsion and hate that the Monster has to endure. Confused and without any knowledge of who he is or how to speak, the Monster wanders off into the woods, slowly learning to comprehend his own feelings. He has his first encounter with human beings (besides seeing his creator flee in horror), as he one day enters a village. There he is met by scorn and violent beatings from the villagers. However, because he does not understand what is happening, the Monster does not retaliate. He only understands that it is painful and therefore runs back to the forest.

So far the Monster's experience is that humans treat him ill, and he is therefore very careful when coming across a cottage in the forest. Somehow longing for company, the Monster remains in close vicinity of the cottage and its inhabitants without revealing his presence. It is by watching the family who lives in the cottage that he learns to read and speak. By comparing the beauty of the cottagers to his own appearance, he also learns, and understands, that the people he has encountered have treated him ill and become frightened

because of his hideous exterior. The Monster soon starts to love the family, and admire them for their benevolence and the affection they give each other: "The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me; when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys" (Shelley 108).

He secretly helps the family by gathering wood and doing some of their heavier chores, as a token of his appreciation. As the Monster watches these loving people, he starts to hope that they might look beyond his frightful appearance and welcome him as a friend. But when he finally dares to present himself, he is once again met with hate and violence. With bitterness and sadness at heart, the Monster leaves the cottage just to come across a little girl who has fallen into a lake and is about to drown. He immediately jumps in and saves the girl, but is once again met with callous ingratitude. A man who sees the Monster holding the little girl in his arms, starts to shoot at him.

These events teach the Monster that there is no point in being good, since he is always judged by his hideous appearance no matter how kindly he acts. Mary Shelley's husband, the poet Percy Shelley, explains what lesson can be learned from the Monster's experiences: "In this the direct moral of the book consists; and it is perhaps the most important, and of the most universal application, of any moral that can be enforced by example. Treat a person ill, and he will become wicked" (186). Consequently, the Monster is not corrupted from start, it is society that corrupts him. The Monster himself explains his cruel actions: "I am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind? [...] if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear" (Shelley 140-141). Because he is constantly being maltreated, the Monster longs for a companion whom he can share his affection with. He can not bear being alone, because even though his physique is big, strong and brusque, he is sensitive and full of emotions: "If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them a

hundred and a hundredfold; for that one creature's sake I would make peace with the whole kind!" (Shelley 141). The last streak of compassion dies within the Monster when Victor destroys the female he has promised to create as the Monster's companion, and so he continues with his bloody revenge.

Just as Victor, the Monster has both good and evil in him. He commits awful crimes, but also acts of kindness. He even shows some remorse for his crimes towards the end of the novel: "Do you think that I was then dead to agony and remorse? [...Victor] suffered not in the consummation of the deed. Oh! Not the ten-thousandth portion of the anguish that was mine during the lingering detail of its execution. A frightful selfishness hurried me on, while my heart was poisoned with remorse" (Shelley 212). Whilst the Monster's evil sides are apparent and direct, Victor's evil sides, however, are hidden in the choices he makes because of his egotism, which in the long run also causes suffering.

3. Victor and the Monster as two different sides of the same person

3.1 Similarities between the two antagonists

The history of literature is full of good and evil struggling against each other, often in the forms of heroes and villains. It seems as if we, the readers, need a clear distinction between these two in order to grasp which one of them you ought to support, and which one to fear. In reality, though, people are neither completely good nor evil. Most people are complex and can have very different traits, traits that can even contradict each other. As previously mentioned, when first looking at Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* it seems as if Victor is a kind and good-natured man, whilst the Monster is cold-hearted and brutal. But when looking more closely at the text, the labels which we willingly attribute the characters, become more indistinct. Moreover, a great many similarities between the two can even be found, and the traits that the first character lacks, the other one instead possesses.

Just as Christopher Small describes it, both Victor and the Monster are slaves to their impulses (190-191). This is perhaps most apparent in the case of the Monster. Whenever he reacts violently, it is a response to being badly treated. The Monster does not become happy when he hurts people, instead this is in fact his way of defending himself from being hurt. His raw emotions and instincts urge him to perform his acts of violence.

Even Victor, who appears to be a collected and pensive person, is to some extent governed by his impulses. The most striking example would be his desperate longing to create life. Victor's strong impulse to fulfil his wish makes him forget both about the world around him, and also to take the proper precautions (such as contemplating possible consequences of the creation) before venturing upon the task of creating a living being. Ultimately, these impulses lead to both The Monster's and Victor's corruption.

Both Victor and the Monster also hold a certain refinement. Although the Monster's

stature and appearance are hideous and grotesque, and his actions are sometimes violent, he also displays some delicacy and a taste for finer arts. Even Victor himself admits that the Monster expresses himself eloquently, a quality which Victor's friends and family think he possesses as well (Shelley 202). The Monster also shares Victor's great liking and fascination of literature (Reichardt 149). They both turn to literature when trying to find answers to their thoughts. Victor uses literature to learn about natural science, and the Monster uses it to learn about people.

What is perhaps most striking is that Victor and the Monster seem to both share a strong need to have the support and love of a family. Even though Victor sometimes acts quite egotistical, he sincerely loves his family. When the murders and deaths of his family members start to occur, Victor slowly begins to deteriorate. Without them, he feels his life is pointless (Shelley 204). The Monster, on the other hand, does not really have a family of his own. The closest thing to a family that the Monster has is his creator Victor. The fact that the only person, namely his "father", whose love the Monster truly can claim, abandons him, is one of the most significant reasons for the Monster's sadness and bitterness. Still in need of a family, he then asks Victor to give him a wife, and if the latter consented to it, the Monster would disappear for ever. So strong is the Monster's desire for a family that he is willing to leave everything he knows. When they are both left without their families (Victor loses his father, brother and wife, and the Monster loses his bride and Victor), their desire to live vanishes. "The family is an aspect of the self and the self cannot survive bereft of its family" (Levine 213).

3.2 The Monster: a completion of Victor?

Although the similarities between the Monster and the creator are numerous, there are also

quite a few distinct differences that keep them apart. Victor's life, up till his stay at Ingolstadt, is joyful, serene and without much turbulence. He is raised to become cultivated, polite, gentle and “the select specimen of all that is worthy of love and admiration among men” (Small 164). Victor is aware, throughout all his life, that his family has great expectations of him to always nourish the family bonds and eventually marry his adoptive “sister” Elisabeth (Reisner 94-95). Victor's reserved and gentle nature, and the expectations from his family, forbids him from ever being anything other than a good and loving gentleman.

The Monster, on the other hand, although capable of being good, does not share Victor's delicate nature. He is much more forceful and brutal in his approach. Whereas Victor is more pensive and cautious, the Monster is considerably more direct and passionate, “I [the Monster] felt sensations of a peculiar and over-powering nature; they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or cold, warmth or food; and I withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions” (Shelley, 103-104). The Monster is governed by his natural instincts to a greater degree than Victor who restrains himself in order to be the gentleman he feels he must be (Small 165). That the Monster acts according to his instincts is above all shown in his behaviour. Most of his actions are reactions, meaning that when he feels he is treated good and is thankful, he rewards it with benevolence. But when he is treated ill, he is filled with a terrible desire for vengeance, “my feelings [the Monster's] were those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery” (Shelley 131).

What conclusion, then, can be drawn from this? Although Victor and the Monster are very similar, they still differ in certain ways. A likely explanation for this is that they are mirrors of each other, with the Monster being a representation of Victor's dark and savage

side. Through the Monster, all of Victor's suppressed emotions can manifest themselves (Reisner 94-95). Together they complete each other. No man is entirely good nor evil: "[n]ature can be the source of death as well as life. Good people do evil" (Lipking, 330). Both sides need to be expressed. Moreover, this means that there is no supernatural element in the Monster, just as Jasia Reichardt puts it: "Only a human being or a humanoid can be a true monster" (139).

Although Victor tries to be, and believes that he is, entirely good, his situation is untenable. A breakdown in the form of the Monster is the result of his unwillingness to embrace his darker side. As an extension of Victor, the Monster shares some similarities with him, but has the capability of following his raw instincts and emotions: "*Like forces in the natural world, Frankenstein's unregulated desires gathers strength until it erupts in the monster's creation*" (Poovey 257).

3.3 Victor's purpose in creating the Monster

One would have to be very driven and dedicated if deciding to venture upon the task of creating life. Victor certainly has these qualities. He becomes absolutely absorbed by his work, and during a period of time it is all he cares about. What then, would arouse such a dedication that is close to manic? In Victor's case, the answer must be divided into two parts: what drove him on a conscious level and also what exhorted him on an unconscious level.

It is quite apparent what Victor's own thoughts concerning his discovery were. That is, he wanted to come up with a way to rescue people who were deadly ill, as well as to become a renowned scientist and obtain the admiration of all men. However, it is not at all certain that this is all there is to Victor's motivation. When one looks beneath the surface at what is happening in the unconsciousness of Victor, other truths may be discovered. What else is there

that could have made him so obsessed with the idea of creating life, and also to behave so rashly, without really questioning what he was doing?

As previously mentioned, one of the conclusions one can draw after looking at the characters of Victor and the Monster, is that they are quite similar, except for when it comes to expressing their passions. According to Gavriel Reisner the Monster is a representation of Victor's *it* (the *it* is what the neurologist Sigmund Freud referred to as an individual's drives and unknown desires), and that “[the Monster] is made of unconscious energy” (85-89). This shows that the Monster can in fact be a personification of Victor's suppressed emotions. His family has forced their expectations on Victor for him to be good and well-mannered, and feeling obliged to do so in order to obtain their approval, he has complied. The result of Victor depriving himself of any passionate feelings or actions has made him an empty shell, governed by social rules and his family's expectations.

Accordingly, if Victor and the Monster are in fact two sides of the same person, it would explain why they seem to be so bound to each other, and why their roles towards each other are constantly reversed. George Levine explains further how the Monster and Victor are connected:

The monster and Frankenstein are doubles, two aspects of the same being. This seems an entirely just reading given that Frankenstein creates the monster and that, as they pursue their separate lives, they increasingly resemble and depend upon each other so that by the end Frankenstein pursues his own monster, their positions reversed [...] As Frankenstein's creation, the monster can be taken as an expression of an aspect of Frankenstein's self. (209)

In the novel, there are repeated mentions of the words 'slave' and 'master' in reference

to Victor and the Monster. At first it is Victor who plays the role of the slave and the Monster is his master (Shelley 147). Victor feels compelled to obey the wishes of the Monster. He is afraid of what the Monster is capable of, he is afraid of his own darker side. But still he is not able to distance himself from the Monster who occupies his thoughts. However, towards the end of the novel, the roles become reversed (212-215). It is now the Monster who becomes the slave by realizing he cannot live without Victor. He is not complete without him. None of them can co-exist without the other, nor can they function as one person in two separate beings.

This is then an important part of the explanation for why Victor creates the Monster. He needs the Monster to complete himself, but at the same time he loathes this side of his personality. Victor cannot continue his life while repressing his inner unconscious passions, nor can he bear the sight of his darker side on a conscious level, in which the Monster represents all that he detests.

4. Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein*

4.1 Mary Shelley's background

To further support the idea that the Monster is the dark representation of Victor, and that they together constitute a being capable of both good and evil, it is important to look more closely at the author of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley, and what her influences and intentions with the novel were.

Mary Shelley was the daughter of two famous authors: Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Even though her mother died shortly after giving birth to Mary, and her father was rarely present during her upbringing, they both have indeed influenced Shelley's ideas and writing since she studied their books carefully (Gilbert & Gubar 227-228).

Both Shelley's parents were committed to politics and radical in their ideas. Her mother was a prominent feminist and a romantic writer while her father was a distinguished rationalist and a protagonist of political justice (Poovey 252-253, Small 70). Since Mary Shelley never knew her mother, it was above all her father's approval that she was seeking. His influence is notable in *Frankenstein*, especially his idea "that education determines character" (Small 71,73). According to William Godwin, man is born "naturally good and potentially perfectible" (Bronfen 25). The idea that man is then corrupted by society, is truly present in Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The Monster is at first occupied by good intentions and a willingness to love and be loved, but after being repeatedly subjected to hate and violence he finally turns into a true monster.

It was not only Mary Shelley's father who influenced her concerning the subject of the development of a person's character, she was also greatly intrigued by the philosophies of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke. Both Shelley and her father were admirers of Rousseau's work *Émile: or, On Education*. The essence of Rousseau's thoughts can be found

both in Victor and the Monster. As Lawrence Lipking describes them: “Victor Frankenstein, the naturally good human being whose compulsion to improve on nature drives him to violate it with a deformed and monstrous rival creation, and [...] the outcast creature or monster, abandoned to himself at birth and warped like a shrub in the road” (322). This statement explains the characters of *Frankenstein* in Rousseau's terms, namely that a human being is born good but then degenerates and tries to change what nature has determined, but also that if a man is left abandoned to himself, he would become the most disfigured of all. In short one could say that good and evil encompasses all, they are both part of nature, there is no escaping either of them (Lipking 330).

Shelley also studied the philosophy of John Locke and his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* closely, just a few years before writing *Frankenstein*. Shelley presents his thoughts on human development and awareness through the character of the Monster. Locke had the belief that a human is born as tabula rasa (a blank slate). It is through observation, studying and using your senses that one's mind is formed (Woodbridge n.pag.). When the Monster is “born”, he cannot interpret his feelings or what his senses are perceiving. It is by experience and reflection that he eventually learns how to understand all of his sensations. For example, by observing the cottagers he learns kindness and by being exposed to cruelty he learns violence.

Mary Shelley's own experiences in life also had a huge influence on her writing. The birth of a child is usually something good and joyful, but it can also be an experience that is filled with anxiety. For Shelley it meant both grief, uncertainty and joy. She was pregnant almost constantly during five years, but she lost many of her babies shortly after they were born. The circumstances in which she bore the first babies were far from ideal. She was a teenager and pregnant by Percy Shelley who was at that time married to another woman.

Mary Shelley's father refused to acknowledge her because of this. Furthermore, the fact that Shelley's own mother died just shortly after giving birth to her, must surely have been frightfully present in her mind. Having to face these circumstances, Shelley was most likely filled with dread of her pregnancy and the idea of giving birth. A few critics believe that her fear of giving birth manifests itself in *Frankenstein*. Victor would then represent a mother who gives birth to a child (the Monster) but is then appalled by it and rejects it (Johnson 246-247). In fact, Victor was the same age as the pregnant Mary Shelley at the time she wrote the novel, when he started on the task of creating life (Reichardt 137). By writing *Frankenstein* Shelley was able to express and process her anxiety without being judged directly.

Certainly, the age during which Mary Shelley lived, also influenced her ideas to a great extent. It was a time when politics, science, culture and literature evolved and changed, namely the Romantic period. The changes in science during this period definitely coloured the mind of Shelley. It was during this time that natural history became biology, which meant an interest in what is happening on the inside of a living being and what the essence of life might be. Romantic ideas such as the celebration of subjectivity, nature and life and social reform are all present in Mary Shelley's novel (Morton 7-9).

4.2 Mary's purpose in creating *Frankenstein*

Many parallels between the contents of *Frankenstein* and Mary Shelley's own life can be drawn. Shelley's experiences in life, her opinions and moral values can all be found in her great novel. In fact, one of the reasons for the novel's grandeur might be that she truly put her soul into it. It encompasses so much of her own essence. It would therefore be likely that she wrote the novel, on an unconscious level that is, mostly as a way to revise and come to terms with her own life. By writing the novel, Shelley could also feel more connected to her absent

parents. Since they were creators of great literature, writing would be a way for her to feel closer to them, and hopefully to obtain her father's approval (Bronfen 17-19, 24).

Consequently, *Frankenstein* appears to be a reflection of Mary Shelley's own life and her opinions just as much as it is horror story. Shelley has successfully continued in the footsteps of her radical parents. Through a thrilling narrative she shows us that both good and evil are always present, since they are a part of nature, and that our experiences in life and how we are treated (education as Rousseau and William Godwin would have put it) dictate which side becomes more prominent.

5. Conclusion

It is astounding to think that a horror story told by an 18-year old girl on a rainy day would develop into one of the greatest novels of our time. The novel *Frankenstein* with its two main characters, the Scientist and the Monster, has been adapted to different media, other authors have been greatly influenced by it and critics are still fascinated by its many dimensions.

Although it contains many themes, one of the major ones is the issue of good and evil. By writing the novel, Mary Shelley tried to come to terms with the good and evil in her own life, and also to educate people on the subject. It makes the claim that good and evil are both part of life and nature. Through the character of Victor, Shelley shows that there is no use in trying to deny one's darker side, because one way or another it will manifest itself. One of the novels most significant messages is that human beings need to accept that they are both good and bad, since it would be even more monstrous to suppress one's darker side than to acknowledge its existence. This is why Victor's life ends up in misery. Because he denies himself of being anything other than a perfect and good human being, his darker side finally explodes into the form of the Monster and consumes his life instead of sharing it.

However, Shelley also asserts through the novel that we should try to be good, in the sense that we should strive to treat all of our fellow human beings with kindness and respect. Since neither the good or the bad side is prominent when you are born, because man is an empty sheet, it is what happens to you and how you are treated that dictates which side will become more powerful. Had the Monster experienced some warmth or kindness from other people, he might not have embarked on his cruel revenge.

These are the central lessons that Mary Shelley wants to teach us through her novel *Frankenstein*: treat people good and they will become good, but do not deny yourself to be passionate or to have faults, because the dark and raw side of man needs to, and will, manifest

itself somehow.

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