

Title	Creation of a Patched Monster : A Study of Frankenstein
Author(s)	Nishiguchi, Haruno
Citation	Osaka Literary Review. 2019, 57, p. 1-16
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/71973
rights	
Note	

Osaka University Knowledge Archive : OUKA

<https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/>

Osaka University

Creation of a Patched Monster: A Study of *Frankenstein*

NISHIGUCHI Haruno

Introduction

Previous critical literature studies have either examined the paternal relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his father Alphonse or between Victor and his monster. While many researchers point out that Victor owes his blessed childhood to his protective parents, Zimmerman indicates that Victor suffered from his parents' consistent lack of understanding. Previous studies have assumed that Victor's parents were highly influential throughout his life. His parents (especially his father) seemingly occupied a great part of his childhood mind.

However, Victor recalls his early life with not only his parents, but also his friends, Elizabeth and Clerval. Throughout Victor's narrative, these friends appear as frequently as his parents. This suggests that his two friends also occupy important parts of Victor's life and thus influence him as much as his parents, especially his father. Moreover, Victor relates the importance of his childhood friends to Walton, who longs for a friend, by saying that nobody "can replace" them or "be to [him] as Clerval" or "Elizabeth" (211). Victor adds that "the companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our minds" (211).

Previous studies on this friendship or brotherhood have focused on the conflicts involved. As William Crisman said, the sibling rivalry had already begun since Victor was brought into "a situation of multiple siblings" (30), including not only his biological brother but also near siblings like Clerval and Elizabeth. That is to say, since their childhood.

Victor and his two old playmates, however, appear to have lived a

harmonious life in their early days. Victor says that “[h]armony was the soul of our companionship” (36) when referring to the time of infancy with his friends. Victor spent his symphonious childhood with Elizabeth and Clerval.

Surprisingly, these two are later killed by the monster, which critics often identify with Victor. The question is why the monster (Victor’s double) kills his friends, who were special to him in his youth. Victor does not have to kill the others if he is on good terms with them. This suggests the possibility that his friendship with Elizabeth and Clerval may have become negative.

Friendship is defined by Victor before he begins recounting his life history to Walton. Victor first agrees with Walton’s interpretation that friendship will satisfy him (he thirsts for an “intimate sympathy with a fellow mind”). Accordingly, Victor himself may think that friendship should involve harmonious sympathy.

Victor also explains his idea of friendship by describing his imperfections and what role a friend should play in his life. Victor says, “we are unfashioned creatures, but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves – such a friend ought to be – do not lend his aid to perfectionate our weak and faulty natures” (28). Therefore, his second definition involves a potential friend being superior to himself in character; they should supplement his defects or, in other words, his imperfections. Correspondingly, it is natural that his dearest friends, Elizabeth and Clerval, who are “better” in their nature, should “perfectionate” his defects, thus making Victor a perfect being.

Victor obviously acknowledges one of his own faults in remembering his childhood, which is his “bad temper.” Victor says, “My temper was sometimes violent, and my passions vehement” (37). This moody aspect of his nature prevents him from controlling himself, and makes him suffer throughout *Frankenstein* by producing a synergistic effect with his father’s expectations, which are later examined in Section I.

As to his faults, he also refers to relationships between his defects

and his admirable friends when he tells Walton about friendship. He says, “[t]hey know our infantile dispositions, which, however they may be afterwards modified, are never eradicated” (212). It is true that childish dispositions such as his “bad temper” continue to afflict Victor throughout his life. However, they can be improved. In this context, the most likely modifiers are his excellent friends, Elizabeth and Clerval. Section II will examine how these friends reform Victor’s deficiencies and how the close relationship becomes negative. This seems to correspond to their deaths, as explained above.

The breakdown of these friendships can be seen as a supplementary system that absorbs other superior people into one being. Its failure is determined by the fact that either one unit breaks apart or each piece travels in different directions. More specifically, the theme of mutilation is repeated in various forms throughout *Frankenstein*. The last section will examine a variation on this theme, including the dispatched monster at its core, who is seen as a double of the former. Victor had a close relationship with his friends, but there is a breakdown.

1. Father’s expectation of Perfections

“‘Alas! My father,’ said I, ‘how little do you know me’ (185). Victor insists this to his father, Alphonse, who wishes him to seek amusement in society even though he “[abhors] the face of man” (184).

His father’s expectations often outsize what Victor is. This is problematic because Victor’s qualities differ from Alphonse’s expectations. By examining the relationship between Victor and his father, Alphonse Frankenstein, this section will examine how these expectations collide with Victor’s personality.

Victor was Alphonse’s first child. Victor recollects that his parents gave him a series of moral lessons, as follows, “[D]uring every hour of my infant life I received a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control, I was so guided by a silken cord that all seemed but one train of enjoyment to me . . .” (33). Victor’s parents raise him to have “pa-

tience," "charity," and "self-control." These concepts require qualities that are later paraphrased and emphatically repeated by Alphonse whenever he appears.

However, Victor has such a fatal personality flaw that he cannot meet his father's great expectations. Victor says, "My temper [is] sometimes violent, and my passions vehement" (37). His bad temper and his uncontrolled emotions are completely opposite to the expectations of "patience" and "self-control."

Alphonse also requires Victor to maintain a mindset in which he is a positive supporter for others. An ideal contributor must always assist others without venting his own lamentations. This role requires Victor to become mentally strong and able to organize himself no matter what occurs. Victor, however, hardly regulates his emotions in the face of his beloved ones' deaths.

For example, after Victor's youngest brother William is murdered, Alphonse sends a letter asking Victor to "[enter] the house of mourning" where the rest of his family are in despair and "to be [their] comforter" (73). As soon as Victor returns to his hometown in Geneva, Justine's tragic trial and execution follows. Victor, who decides to dutifully comfort his family, cannot afford this. A multitude of feelings such as guilt and remorse overcome Victor. He becomes unable to control his emotions even though Alphonse encourages him to hide his "immoderate grief" (91).

Alphonse also expects "rationalisation." When inspecting the decay of the dead bodies intended for his creation, he explains how he endured such horrible deeds, as follows:

To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy, but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with

no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. . . . (51)

Accordingly, Victor was never horrified by the unnatural. However, he is soon bothered and upset by unnatural things, feelings which would last until the end of his life. Just after he creates and runs away from the dreadful monster, he meets his friend Clerval in the street. Victor returns to his room with Clerval. He is afraid that the monster may find his friend. However, no one is there. He is so frantically pleased that Clerval asks him what has happened. Victor's reaction is as follows:

[P]utting my hands before my eyes, for I thought I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room; "*he* can tell. Oh, save me! Save me!" I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously and fell down in a fit. . . . (61)

Moreover, Alphonse refuses irrational behaviour after Victor suffers the death of his best friend Clerval and confesses that he is the murderer because he let the monster out into the world. Alphonse takes this as "the offspring of delirium" (185) and tries to make Victor rational. Alphonse also tries to remove irrationality from Victor's mind by saying, "[my] dearest Victor, what infatuation is this? My dear son, I entreat you never to make such an assertion again" (186). However, Victor cannot control his feelings.

In addition to the above expectations, Alphonse desires that Victor integrate with society. While Victor prefers being with "old familiar faces" (45) like Elizabeth and Clerval, Alphonse orders him to travel to a foreign country full of "strangers" that he dislikes.

Furthermore, Alphonse, who is respected for his "indefatigable attention to public business" (31), encourages Victor to contribute to soci-

ety. Going against these expectations of public usefulness, Victor is totally unsuccessful. He tries to create a monster that is useful for humankind, but soon finds that it frightens and kills innocent people. There is no amendment to this total failure.

Victor suffers from a gap between an idealised character and what he is. Victor's father requires him to be perfect. In childhood, Victor seems to have met the expectations of his parents, especially those of his father. As an adult, however, he is unable to satisfy these expectations. The difference must be in his surroundings. In childhood, he is surrounded by his kind cousin Elizabeth and his best friend Clerval. However, he is suddenly forced to attend a foreign university. This separates him from his friends. Victor thus begins to experience an unbalanced mind. In section II, we will first look closely at the relationship between Victor and his childhood friends. Second, we will examine his adulthood and find the differences between and the causes of the changes in Victor's mind.

2. Relationship with Elizabeth and Clerval

At the end of the book, Victor talks about his childhood friends with Captain Walton, as follows:

[W]hen you speak of new ties and fresh affections, think you that any can replace those who are gone? Can any man be to me as Clerval was, or any woman another Elizabeth? . . . the companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our minds which hardly any later friend can obtain. They know our infantine dispositions, which, however they may be afterwards modified, are never eradicated; and they can judge of our actions with more certain conclusions as to the integrity of our motives. . . . (211)

This suggests that Clerval and Elizabeth occupy a highly important part of his mind. They knew his infantile dispositions, including his

“bad temper,” which would sometimes show up and annoy him by preventing him from self-control. Judging from him asserting that “however they may be afterwards modified,” we can at least find that Victor tried to correct them. The possible modifiers are his friends, who Victor believes “perfectionate” his faults.

Victor has three definitions for what constitutes a friend. First, friends should sympathise. Second, their qualities should be better than his. Third, they should supplement his faults. His childhood friends were accordingly expected to play these roles.

Considering that Victor lived a happy childhood but later suffers from his father’s expectations, the difference between them is compensated for by the presence of his old playmates. He needs Clerval and Elizabeth to live up to his father’s expectations.

This section will closely examine the harmonious relationship between Victor and his two old playmates.

First, Elizabeth pacifies Victor when his temper becomes bad. Victor says, “I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness” (38).

Moreover, she plays the role of comforter instead of Victor’s mother, as follows:

She indeed veiled her grief and strove to act the comforter to us all. She looked steadily on life and assumed its duties with courage and zeal. She devoted herself to those whom she had been taught to call her uncle and cousins. Never was she so enchanting as at this time, when she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us. She forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make us forget. . . . (44)

Elizabeth, however, becomes unable to suppress her emotions and stops supporting Victor after Justine’s death. Victor says, “Elizabeth

was sad and desponding; she no longer took delight in her ordinary occupations" (92).

She fails to play a supplementary role, even when Elizabeth and Victor have their honeymoon. "Her temper was fluctuating; joy for a few instants shone in her eyes, but it continually gave place to distraction and reverie" (193).

Henry Clerval's dream is to serve society. This is the same as the "public usefulness" that Alphonse requires of Victor. Clerval's interests are practical. He acquires various language skills while Victor's interest in the "metaphysical" seems far from practical. Therefore, Clerval has better qualities than Victor.

Moreover, Clerval shows his intimate sympathy to Victor, who is sick after facing his hideous monster. Victor fears the apparatus, which makes him remember his monster. Clerval reads his countenance and removes the apparatus from view. Clerval devotes himself as follows:

Study had before secluded me from the intercourse of my fellow-creatures, and rendered me unsocial; but Clerval called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature, and the cheerful faces of children. Excellent friend! how sincerely you did love me, and endeavour to elevate my mind until it was on a level with your own. A selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me, until your gentleness and affection warmed and opened my senses; I became the same happy creature who, a few years ago, loved and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care. . . .
(70)

Victor highly evaluates Clerval's sympathy and thus recovers his strength.

The friendship, however, changes. Clerval and Victor travel to London, Oxford, Cumberland, and Westmorland. Victor is depressed about

the promise he made and wants to be alone, while “Clerval [desires] the intercourse of the men of genius and talent who [flourishes] at this time” (157).

Clerval is about to realise his dream of becoming a great benefactor to society, which is Alphonse’s expectations for Victor, although Victor has already failed completely.

Victor is still left bound by his father and his house in Switzerland, but Clerval is not, as follows:

From Derby, still journeying northwards, we passed two months in Cumberland and Westmorland. I could now almost fancy myself among the Swiss mountains. . . . The delight of Clerval was proportionably greater than mine; his mind expanded in the company of men of talent, and he found in his own nature greater capacities and resources than he could have imagined himself to have possessed while he associated with his inferiors. “I could pass my life here,” said he to me; ‘and among these mountains I should scarcely regret Switzerland and the Rhine. (161)

While Victor thinks about the mountains in Switzerland even when he is in a different place, Clerval is able to see the real scenery and says he could forget Switzerland if he lived there. Victor is so servile that he calls himself one of “his inferiors.”

The relationships between Victor and Elizabeth and between Victor and Clerval change from childhood to adulthood. In adulthood, Elizabeth, who used to cheer Victor up and comfort him in depression, no longer has influence. Clerval also devotes himself to business and has no room in his mind for providing elaborate support and raising Victor up as before.

3. The Meaning of the Patched Monster

In childhood, Elizabeth and Clerval form a supplementary system

for Victor in answering his father's expectations. Victor considers this system as a form of friendship. He therefore believes that his friends should be better than him and that they should "perfectionate" his defects. Victor later sees his friendships and his monster break down. This section discusses the similarity between Victor's friends and his patched monster. It concludes that the analogy between the monster and the breakdown of these friendships is the offshoot of *Frankenstein*. Elizabeth and Clerval reappear in spirit form. After their deaths, Victor visits the cemetery where his family are reposed. He calls on the spirits and ask for their aids in taking revenge against his monster.

In fact, Victor has some support along the way. He believes that such aid is from his friends' spirits. For example, when he is starving in the desert, he finds repast prepared for him. He supposes that "it was set there by the spirits that I had invoked to aid me" (203).

Victor believes in the spirits of Elizabeth and Clerval. However, he later finds that his monster gives the same support as the spirits, as follows:

Sometimes, indeed, he left marks in writing on the barks of the trees or cut in stone that guided me . . . "you live, and my power is complete. Follow me . . . You will find near this place, if you follow not too tardily, a dead hare; eat and be refreshed." (205)

Objectively speaking, the spirits do not physically exist and therefore it is Victor's monster that guides him and prepares repast when he is starving or at a loss. In this scene, Victor unintentionally identifies the helpful spirits with his monster. This episode shows the analogy between his monster and his friends.

The monster's creation and the breakdown of his friendships also present parallelism with the key concept of mutilation. Mutilation is closely connected to the modern science through which Victor creates his monster. When professor Waldman explains modern science to

Victor, he indicates that modern scientists “can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows” (48). Victor is strongly inspired by these words, and produces his monster. All phenomena, including “thunders,” “the earthquake,” and “the invisible world,” involve the key concept of mutilation.

As a scientist, Victor first makes use of the thunders in order to bestow his creation with the spark of life. The thunders involve the repeated images of mutilation, and are connected with the words “blasted,” “shattered,” “splintered” (41), “split,” and “cracked” (216). Moreover, when the thunders destroy a tree, Victor is inspired to create his monster, which is comprised of mutilated pieces.

Images of mutilation are also related to the earthquake. The earthquake tears lands of ice apart and bars Victor from traveling to enact revenge against his monster, as follows:

With the mighty shock of an earthquake, it split, and cracked with a tremendous and overwhelming sound. The work was soon finished: in a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of ice, that was continually lessening, and thus preparing for me a hideous death (208).

The earthquake ‘splits’ the icy ground, and Victor, chasing his monster, is left on a “scattered” ice floe. This mutilated image corresponds to the breakdown of his friendships, tearing Victor from the others and driving him to a “hideous death.”

Lastly, Victor creates his monster through modern science, which “mock[s] the invisible world with its own shadow.” This mysterious phrase supports one of the novel’s most substantial gimmicks.

First, “the invisible world” suggests that Victor bestows “the mockery of a soul” on his monster. Modern science allows Victor to imitate

an “invisible” object such as “a soul” within his monster. This is called “[Victor’s] own spirit” (77). Accordingly, “the invisible world” is Victor’s spiritual world. There, his monster is “a shadow” that mimics Victor’s psychological world.

Victor creates his monster after leaving his friends. He describes the farewell to his friends, expressing that they “tear [themselves] away from each other,” as if they had composed one body. In solitude, he thus selects beautiful parts to patch up his monster, but only finds the deformed.

The resulting monster is the failure of the united beautiful parts. Thus, the disharmony of his monster’s body is seen as another mutilated image produced by modern science, just as the two phenomena described above. The patched monster mirrors Victor’s spirit. Thus, his spirit is mutilated and patched.

The disunion of the systematic friendship is analogous to the theme of mutilation. Victor’s spiritual world is supported by a sympathetic childhood friendship. This is when Victor and his friends live a harmonious life. As section II reveals, Victor sees that this supplementary friendship breaks down in adulthood. This mutilates his psychological world.

The creation of the monster represents the breakdown of these friendships. The patched monster corresponds to Victor’s friends. The beautiful pieces Victor selects represent Elizabeth and Clerval.

Accordingly, his friends are the patched parts and the spirits at the same time. The spirits and monster differ in harmony. The spirits support Victor, but the monster tortures him.

Elizabeth and Clerval support Victor in spirit form by providing him with “communion consolation” (210). The supplementary friendship thus returns.

On the other hand, his monster tortures him by showing himself before Victor’s eyes. The patched body invokes disharmony and mutilation.

Walton does not admit that the spirits exist. He concludes that they are “the offspring of solitude and delirium” (210). The spirits are thus figments of Victor’s ideal imagination of his childhood friendships, while his patched monster shows the reality of brokenness, being more objective because of its visibility.

In fact, Victor is aware of the negative changes in his childhood friendships at an early stage. After creating his monster and returning to Geneva (where he spent his childhood with his friends), he recalls the following:

I passed through scenes familiar to my youth, but which I had not seen for nearly six years. How altered every thing might be during that time! One sudden and desolating change had taken place; but a thousand little circumstances might have by degrees worked other alterations, which, although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive. Fear overcame me. (74)

Victor foresees the changes of familiar things in his childhood. This gradually causes him to suffer through the creation of his patched monster, whose beautiful parts become deformed.

Victor also tries to create a patched monster in his second creation. The patched monster creation is a symbol of Victor’s attempt to make the perfect friendship.

Before Victor tries to create his second monster, he spends time with Clerval in London, Oxford, and other locations. At the end of his journey, he feels that Clerval is completely different.

Victor begins creating his monster after feeling completely alienated from his Clerval. Unlike with his first creation, Victor becomes unwilling to create another monster during the process. As soon as he sees the “deformed” monster reappear, he breaks his promise and tears it apart, as follows:

[H]e now came to mark my progress and claim the fulfilment of my promise. As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. . . . (166)

This happens as soon as he sees the deformation. Accordingly, the monster makes him fully aware of his complete failure in maintaining his friendship. Victor then admits that he is unable to recover it by patching things together.

Eventually, Victor's spiritual world is clearly divided according to the ideal spirits and his patched monster. These concepts represent both his wish for ideal friendship and his anguish at the disunion.

In the last part of this novel, Victor wanders between his monster and the spirits of his friends. That is, he wanders between the ideal and the reality of his friendships. In conclusion, Victor's struggle to gain ideal friendship underlies *Frankenstein*.

Conclusion

The first section analyses that Victor's father places enormous expectations on him as a child. This involves "a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control. However, Victor has a bad temper and cannot control his emotions. He cannot therefore satisfy his father alone.

The second section suggests that Victor needs his best friends, Elizabeth and Clerval, to meet his father's expectations. His two friends have different advantages. This supplements Victor's faults. Elizabeth can control her emotions, while Clerval has the ambition to serve society. These are required of Victor, but he cannot accomplish them because of his defects. Victor thus has harmonious friendships in his childhood. These friendships eventually break down because Clerval and Elizabeth diverge from what Victor believes makes an ideal

friendship.

The final section considers what the creation of a patched monster means. The monster's beautiful parts represent Elizabeth and Clerval. The creation embodies Victor's desire for the recovery of these friendships, while his deformed monster suggests failure.

Victor lives a happy childhood even though his father's expectations are imposed on him. He is close with Elizabeth and Clerval, who can "perfectionate" his "weak and faulty natures." As seen in section II, Elizabeth calms Victor's "bad temper" and "uncontrolled emotion." Victor is thus supplemented by Elizabeth, who excellently meets parental expectations.

Clerval strives to realise his dream of public service. This was Alphonse's request for Victor, who was less capable of meeting it. This is because his interests were impractical. Clerval also often sympathises and supports Victor. Elizabeth and Clerval are essential for Victor. These relationships are harmonious during childhood. His mind is therefore balanced with the help of his friends.

However, Alphonse forces Victor to attend a foreign university. This event brings an end to his harmonious childhood.

Victor cannot meet expectations without Elizabeth and Clerval because of his defects.

In creating the monster, Victor tries to recover his supportive childhood friendships. He gathers beautiful parts from different bodies to create one harmonious being. These beautiful parts are symbols of Elizabeth and Clerval, whom Victor needed to supplement his defects. He thus wishes to patch them up to regain the better person he once was.

However, the creation fails. The beautiful parts do not result in a perfectly harmonious being. Rather, it is an "ugly" and "deformed" monster that appears. This means that Clerval and Elizabeth have diverged from Victor's view of an ideal friendship.

The monster is a symbol of Clerval and Elizabeth's independence.

Victor somewhat perceives this, but does not want to admit it. He runs away from his mutilated monster.

The spirits Victor calls on represent his ideal friends. They overlap with his patched monster, though Victor never admits this.

This suggests that the spirits are the ideal images of Victor's friendships or what he believes friends should be, while his monster reminds him of the actual breakdown.

Works Cited

- Crisman, William. "Now Misery Has Come Home': Sibling Rivalry in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 36, issue 1, 1997, pp. 27-41.
- May, Leila Silvana. "Sibling Revelry in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. vol. 35, issue 4, 1995, pp. 669-85.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*. 1831. Oxford UP, 2008.
- Zimmerman, Lee. "Frankenstein, Invisibility, and Nameless Dread." *American Imago*, vol.60, issue 2, 2003, pp.135-58.