

Lives in the captivity of big despair

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



“ I shunned the face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude was my only consolation- deep, dark, deathlike solitude” (74). Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* was written during a period known as the Romantic Era. The recognized forms of literature that were written then had many distinguishable themes, including that of isolation. The quote by protagonist Victor Frankenstein, at the top of the page, shows just a glimpse of a recurrent theme throughout the book. Victor’s own life is one in which he feels compelled to hide incidents and keep things secret, such as his frightening creation. Victor’s self induced and intense isolation is equivalent to that felt by the creature. Victor’s insides, his hatred and ugliness, are projected onto the monster, and shown on his exterior. Isolation, whether it be emotional, physical, or social, and its effects, are key themes in both the lives of Victor and the creature in Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein*.

As a narrator and main character of the book, Victor Frankenstein experiences both mental and emotional isolation from society throughout the novel. For example, Victor spends many hours walking through the secluded mountains, saying “ they elevated me from all littleness of feeling, and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and tranquilized it” (80). Victor further explains that the mountains are a form of retreat for him. He considers them a place of solitude where he can reflect on his inner emotions. Victor also refers to another way of releasing pain: “...after the rest of the family had retired for the night, I took the boat and passed many hours upon the water” (75). Victor does this by himself, in the middle of the night, which shows that he wants to be utterly alone and in silence. He evidently does not want to reveal himself nor express his emotions to

anyone, so he retreats to a boat where no one can see him, and where he is in total isolation. Additionally, in Justine's heart wrenching trial, Victor is horribly bothered as he explains by saying " During the whole of this wretched mockery of justice, I suffered living torture. It was to be decided whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow beings" (66). Victor is torn with the knowledge that can save his dear friend, yet he chooses to keep it a secret because of his self pride, believing that no one will trust his story. This is a tragic display of friendship, yet also an example of Victor's self induced isolation, particularly when he has potent information about his friend. Disregarding the fact that Victor is not acting like an adult, he is suffering from a severe case of emotional isolation, and as a result becomes a more morose character.

The monster that Victor creates also experiences, and lives, a life of social and physical isolation. As the monster reaches Victor on top of Mont Blanc, he begs him to " hear my tale; it is long and strange, and the temperature of this place is not fitting to your fine sensations; come to the hut upon the mountain" (85). Living on top of a snowy mountain demonstrates how isolated the monster is from civilization. He lives with harsh weather conditions and has no one around to speak with for miles. As the monster relays to Victor the immense physical hardships during his first hours of existence, he shares how: " It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half frightened, as it were, instinctively, finding myself so desolate" (87). The monster describes his first experience of loneliness and cold in the woods, which allows the reader opportunity to feel the desperate cry of the creature, for anyone or anything to give him some direction. He further states that just

a few acorns would replace the hunger pains he feels, making the reader feel sadness and sympathy for the monster. The monster tells Victor how he felt about seeing his own appearance, by saying: " I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers-their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool" (98)! The reader again feels compassion for the monster. Even though the cottagers are not the most beautiful human beings in the world, the monster admits that he hates the appearance of his body, and would trade it for anything. Over all, the monster is exiled from society because of his repulsive appearance, and so he is forced to live in a far off place where he will not be seen by others.

Victor also goes through periods of physical and social isolation. In his early years, Victor locks himself in his apartment in Ingolstadt working on his creature for long periods of time, virtually disregarding family, friends, studies, and social life. It is tragic to imagine the physical isolation he put himself through, not leading a healthy life, and instead, suffering sleep and hunger deprivation. Later, in an effort to create a female creature, Victor goes to the far off Orkney Islands where, again, he leads a time of physical and social struggle concerning his decisions about the monster. Victor agonizes over what the creature is asking him to create for him. The stress and seclusion seem to overwhelm him and as an end result, he rips his creation to shreds, believing that the monster is deceiving him. Victor describes the miserable conditions of his living situation while chasing the monster by saying, " the rivers were covered with ice, and no fish could be procured; and thus I was cut off from my chief article of maintenance" (189).

Given that the rivers were covered with ice, one can imagine that the weather was below freezing. Thus, he had no ready source of food, forcing him to continue leading a difficult and unsettled life. It is evident to the reader through Victor's situations that he did not make very good decisions, which ultimately lead up to his inhumane lifestyle, and social separation from civilization.

Isolation, and the manner in which it shapes the characters' lives in Frankenstein, is key to the novel. In essence, Victor's self induced isolation has resulted in the creation of his alter ego - a creature equally as horrible as his own secretive demons. The reader cannot help but notice that Victor himself is a kind of monster, where his self-centered ambitions and secrecy lead to alienation and separation from human society. While trying to be ordinary on the outside, Victor is in truth the real monster on the inside. He has created a human-like creature that actually represents his innermost secrets. The creature and his horrible actions are a direct consequence of Victor's selfishness: his private life of isolation and misery is mirrored in the creature and suffered by those around them both.