



Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein

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Named on Booklist's 2013 Top 10 Horror Fiction

Named by NPR Boston as one of the ten best books of 2012.

"This is juicy material for Franken-fans, and Zeltserman is just faithful enough to the original that his many fresh contributions feel entirely normal. Well, abnormal, to be accurate, but deliciously so." Daniel Kraus, Booklist, starred review

"This reworking of Frankenstein is chilling and captivating! ...A tale of justice, true love, and ultimate forgiveness, this gruesome novel is perfect for fans of Stephen King and similar horror stories." ForeWord Magazine, pick of the week

"a rich and fun response to Shelley's classic" Publisher's Weekly

"More impressively, Zeltserman's plot maps almost perfectly onto the plot of Shelley's novel — the key word being "almost." In its departures, the novel provides more than its cover price in entertainment. Vampyres abound, as do Satanic cults and the Marquis de Sade, preparing to enact the 120 Days of Sodom in a remote mountain castle. You don't get much more gothic bang for your buck." Los Angeles Times

The supernatural, unmissable new novel by the ALA Best Horror award nominee. In nineteenth-century Germany, one young man counts down the days until he can marry his beloved . . . until she is found brutally murdered, and the young man is accused of the crime. Broken on the wheel and left for dead, he awakens on a lab table, transformed into an abomination. Friedrich must go far to take his revenge --only to find his tormentor, Victor Frankenstein, in league with the Marquis de Sade, creating something much more sinister deep in the mountains. Paranormal and gripping in the tradition of the best work of Stephen King and Justin Cronin, *Monster* is a gruesome parable of control and vengeance, and an ingenious tribute to one of literature's greatest

Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein Details

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Author : Dave Zeltserman

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From Reader Review Monster: A Novel of Frankenstein for online ebook

Jason says

This novel is more an accompanying piece to the original, rather than one that occurs in parallel to the original plot, themes, etc.

An unreliable narrator is killed, forced to become something he does not—even in his worst nightmares—wish to become. In fact he takes an excessive amount of time trying to convince the reader that he retains some values, morals, and virtues of his former self, and in doing so does not effectively convince the reader of his morality, but to some extent convinces himself.

The story continues for page after page with our main character, succumbing to delusions of grandeur and a false sense of self, tearing through country after country, often literally, on a vengeful tirade.

Oh and the people he meets.

Satanists, of unlimited numbers; a common thread throughout the novel.

People—who are conceived more like animals than people—having orgies.

wolves that can transform into vampires, oh wait I'm sorry, Vampyres

And more orgies that are right out of the Eyes Wide Shut script

Interwoven among these wonderful themes are the lovely, wait I mean contrived, interactions between monster and the general public that effortlessly recalled Belle's first meeting with the beast.

How did these interactions go from Drew Barrymore in scream...

to 'lets have wine and rejoice'?

It's one of the biggest literary questions of the decades, but can be explained simply with a joke I found online while googling this book...

Q: How did Frankenstein's monster eat his lunch?

Note: not a true spoiler. I just couldn't give you the answer that quickly; where's the fun in that?

(view spoiler)

And boom... shift from fear to trust is solidified

Personally, I just think the monster slipped those innocent women a valium, but who am I really...

This over-flowing bucket of themes, as well as an uneven plot, ruptured off the pages of Monster. The style of writing, ranging from a prose recalling an earlier time to a more contemporary style, was confusing, if not all together distracting. The languages, particularly the use of slang such as 'cock' seemed to choke up the convoluted storyline. The entire experience was exhausting and tedious.

In the end you have to wonder, after all these sexual escapades, illusions of humanity, sparsely crafted character interactions, rough narratives, and poorly executed character development, did the editor succumb to a very different sort of monster? The ever confounding, disorienting post-it plot board.... monster

Jennifer McMurrain says

The voice of this book is phenomenal and soon you'll be right in the monster's head. You'll root for him, cheer for him, and in some places cringe. This is a dark book and at one point I almost stopped reading because it entered a subject I can't stomach. But I had faith the monster would stop it from happening and he did. So why 3 stars? Well, I found the end to be very unfulfilling and it dragged on only to be resolved in the most anti-climatic way. Plus, I think an author can make us cringe without going to the dark places this author decided to go. Lastly, too many rabbit trails. I understand the need for subplots, but they have to be wrapped up in the end. Some in this novel weren't making me wonder what happened or why didn't he ...? All that being said, I kept reading until the end and would probably read another from this author.

Stacy says

I wish I had re-read Mary Shelley's Frankenstein before reading this book. It's been a very long time since I read her novel, and since then I've heard, seen, and read so many twists on the original tale I'm not sure what the real story is anymore. So many versions and many of them have the monster as the victim; I just automatically assume the monster is innocent. From what I gather from this story, Shelley's version had Victor Frankenstein as a sympathetic character, and the monster was evil. Zeltserman's version is telling the story from the Monster's perspective, and in his version Frankenstein is truly evil.

This story is told by Friedrich Hoffmann, a young chemist who was in love and engaged to his beloved Johanna and they were soon to be married. But he woke up in a alley, with blood on his clothes and Johanna's locket and was convicted of her murder. He was tortured on the wheel until he finally died. But he woke up on a table with a man standing over him. The man's name was Victor Frankenstein and Friedrich learned that his body was no longer the body he remembered, but an 8-foot monstrosity of various parts. He met Charlotte, a woman who was a head in a jar, kept alive by satanic rituals and a strange liquid. Months went by and one day Victor left him for a period of time. Friedrich escaped.

Friedrich set off to pay his respects to Johanna. He met a doctor in the woods who put together a remedy for him, but Friedrich put it in his pocket and forgot about it. He visited Johanna then went into the woods. He found a community of monks and spent months with them. They accepted him and he was happy to work with them. But he was compelled to leave and spent months looking in villages, as if he was in a haze. He kept hearing how girls were disappearing and he was being blamed. But one day he came across a group of villagers accusing a young woman of being a witch and he saved her. Her name was Henriette and Friedrich decided to take her to Venice so she could start a new life. They became close on their journey, as brother and sister, and he stole clothes, food, and riches so she could easily start a new life. But one day they were set upon by vampires and Friedrich could not save her in time.

Then he came across a group of devil worshipers who were about to sacrifice a young girl in the woods. He made them return the girl and let them worship him. They brought him food and drink and he made them do horrible things to each other. But when he learned they had already sacrificed a few children, he told them to wait for him at a place in the woods where they should build him a temple. It was where the nest of vampires was.

Friedrich was compelled south, but he resisted and around Lake Geneva finally found Frankenstein's family. He learned he was engaged, or soon to be engaged, to a woman named Elizabeth. But he left and continued South where he found a ruined castle in the mountains. Inside was Frankenstein and others, along with about 100 stolen girls (and some boys). They were turning this castle into a place of debauchery and depravity. There was a going to be a big night, once the castle was finished, and the victims would be defiled, raped, and killed. But Frankenstein discovered, to his horror, that he must obey Frankenstein. He could not resist his order, nor could he harm him.

Friedrich was reunited with Charlotte and was allowed to kill her (her wishes). He was also given the choice to have Johanna brought back to life. He had to pick the girl whose body Johanna would be in. Then he and Victor set off for London/Scotland where they would perform this transition. The night before the transition, Friedrich remembered the remedy and made the tincture. Almost immediately he was in control of himself again. Friedrich frees the girl and gets her home safely, and frames Victor for his friend Henry Clavil's murder. But Victor gets off and returns to his family home. He is set to marry Elizabeth and Friedrich warns him. The day of the wedding, Friedrich tries to warn Elizabeth but she won't listen and in a rage he

accidentally kills her.

Friedrich chases Victor all the way north. Victor is trapped on the ice but an ice boat rescues him. Friedrich stays in the north, living alone. He can only hope that Victor paid for his crimes. It also appears that Friedrich does not age, or ages slowly, for the world had changed by the time he re-entered it.

This was a good read. I like the perspective, but it would have been even more interesting if I had read Shelley's version first.

Kristin (MyBookishWays Reviews) says

You may also read my review here: <http://www.mybookishways.com/2012/08/...>

“As I write this, I can only pray that Frankenstein’s twisted soul is rotting away in whatever crevice within Hell it has surely sunk into.”

So begins Dave Zeltserman’s electrifying novel presenting the classic story of Frankenstein’s monster, from the viewpoint of the “monster.” The monster in this instance is a man by the name of Friedrich Hoffmann, who, on the eve of his wedding to his beloved Johanna is drugged and when he comes to, in an alleyway, he is covered in blood and has Johanna’s locket in his coat. He soon understands that she is dead, murdered in a most heinous way, and he has been blamed for the crime. Broken, tortured, and set to die on the executioner’s wheel, Friedrich can only hope that he will be joining his true love soon. Little does he know that a fate worse than death awaits him.

Monster is told from Friedrich’s point of view, and as he takes you from the wheel, into death, and back to a sort of unlife as the creation of the wicked, diabolical Dr. Frankenstein, you won’t be able to look away, although you may want to. I found myself pausing to cover my eyes for a moment every now and then, not only as I processed the horror that Friedrich is experiencing, but also at the moments of beauty that he manages to find in the midst of this nearly inconceivable ordeal. And there is beauty, in the most unexpected of places. When Friedrich first “awakens” and finds that he cannot move, cannot speak, and can barely keep his eyes open, he is soon introduced to Charlotte, who is only a head, in a bowl of milky liquid. At first, Charlotte repels him, but soon he realizes that she too, is a victim of Dr. Frankenstein’s depraved experiments and it is her stories (he lip reads, because she cannot speak), and assurances that he is still a gently and kind soul, in spite of what is surely hideous appearance, that make his days bearable. When Charlotte is taken from him, at the behest of the Marquis de Sade, and he is inexplicably abandoned, he realizes that he must be free, and find the man that made him into this monster.

Eloquently written (like a certain classic that comes to mind), Monster will take you on a journey of death, rebirth, and vengeance, and is about a man trying desperately not to sink to the depths of his tormenter. I fell in love with Hoffman, and his grief, not only at losing Johanna, but at his own condition, is palpable on every page. However, rays of light do shine through the darkness, and kindness comes from some of the most unexpected places. During his journey, he will encounter vampyres, satanic cults, and more, and it will take him to a crumbling castle, where all will be revealed. Or will it? Brace yourself when Friedrich reaches that castle. Frankenstein is a villain that will make your skin crawl, and is the ultimate embodiment of evil. He even outdoes the Marquis, and that says quite a lot. Monster weighs in at just over 200 pages, but manages to pack a huge punch. If you’re a fan of Frankenstein and the mythos that surrounds it, and love literary horror, this one’s for you. Highly recommended!

karen says

retellings work best when they pinpoint a lack in the original text; a moment that is ambiguous or a lapse in action where a story could have fallen through the cracks. but for this technique to work, the source material kind of has to remain intact. *wide sargasso sea* lays out "what led bertha to her attic prison madness???" *windward heights* asks "what happened during heathcliff's three years away, oh, and what if *wuthering heights* had taken place somewhere much warmer?" *stress of her regard*, which is not an adaptation of a book, as such, but an even more ambitious adaptation of the biographies of poets, makes the tumultuous lives and mysterious deaths of the romantics supernaturally explicable. but they all respect the source material. they don't get so carried away by their own perspective that they forget the limitations imposed by their source material. with *monster*, there is too much rewriting of the original, and it doesn't so much "fill in the pieces" or "reverse the traditional interpretations" so much as it revises the text to suit the author's wishes.

although, i suppose that for this particular text, *frankenstein*, which is about the overstepping of one's human limitations and trying to play god, this is entirely appropriate. but we all know what happened to victor frankenstein when he meddled out of his depths.

so it is an interesting premise:

frankenstein told from the perspective of the "monster." not the newly-created being, but the brain-part of the creation, friedrich hoffmann, who was drugged, accused of murder, and executed by being broken on the wheel. when he is revived, he is in the body of an eight-foot tall monster, while retaining his memory and his humanity.

the thing that makes *frankenstein* so interesting is its moral ambiguity. victor frankenstein uses science to create life, but then doesn't take responsibility for what he has created. and like many neglected children of indifferent parents, his monster goes wild, seeks love and acceptance from other families, and when they are appalled by his appearance, eventually he goes "bad" and lashes out. but he doesn't start out "evil," and frankenstein himself is not an entirely innocent character. the interesting thing about *frankenstein* is the dynamic between the creator and the created, and the revulsion and responsibility inherent in their relationship.

it was never a story of good vs. evil.

and this is where zeltzman's story goes off the rails a little, for me. in his retelling, victor frankenstein is purely evil. and friedrich-monster is a good "man" in an extreme situation. which, fine, if we are just going to take the movie-version of *frankenstein*: scientist good, monster bad, which steamrolls all the complexities out, and reverse it, this is what we would get. but then... vampire-werewolves? satanists?? orgies orchestrated by the marquis de sade? murals that come to life and depict decadent sexual monstrosities? naked girls as tables? it is like *dorian gray* at the playboy mansion. and - of course, where would a story like this be without monster cock? you know what they say about eight-foot-tall patchwork reanimated corpses. the ladies cannot get enough...

this would have been more effective if it had been a stricter retelling. frankenstein and his monster do not hang out together in the original. not as friends, not as creator and captive, there is just no period where they are together for an extended period of time. i could deal with friedrich-monster encountering the satanists and

the vampires because there is that gap where he is off going wild in the woods and who knows what he is doing?? he could well have been living it up as the king of the satanists - who can say? like heathcliff's missing three years, i could have accepted this filling in of the narrative gap. but i have problems with the rest of it. this is more like frankenstein fanfic - like "frankenstein is *good*, but what if there were more orgies in it??"

okay, so that might be a little snarky. because there are parts that i liked - the overall tone is fine, as an adaptation; it's not as good as shelley, but it feels similar enough. including real-people like samuel hahnemann and the marquis de sade and shelley herself is also a cute little flourish that i appreciate. i suppose i just have problems with retellings that deviate from the original. which is a personal peeve. oh, and also, the ending. peeve city.

this isn't terrible by any stretch, it was just not as tight of a retelling as it could have been.

my month of meh-horror continues...

Roger says

I was privileged to read this book in manuscript form. It is a brilliant reimagining of Frankenstein: faithful enough to delight lovers of Mary Shelley's masterpiece, but wonderfully inventive as it takes the monster (Friedrich Hoffmann) on a bloody quest for vengeance. As he hunts Victor Frankenstein he encounters vampyrs, monks, Satanists, and (memorably) the Marquis de Sade. By far Zeltserman's best work, and that's saying something.

Ben Gabriel says

Dave Zeltserman is no Mary Shelley. When I read the blurb on this book, it sounded like a really neat premise. I'm a huge fan of Shelley's story and I thought this would be a cool companion piece. As I read 'Monster' I slowly realized how unnecessary this book was. The idea is great but it just didn't need to be done. Also, the book was very poorly written and just as poorly edited. The first person diary perspective was also poorly done and really detached me from the story. The book's only saving graces are the last chapter and how much research the author did and the love he has for Shelley's 'Frankenstein'. The occult perspective was a horrible addition and the mural in the middle of the story is just ridiculous and doesn't belong so overall, not worth it. Save your money and your time.

Timothy Mayer says

Dave Zeltserman, author of the popular "Julius and Archie" mystery stories has unleashed his take on the Frankenstein genre. The entire book is told in the first person from the monster's point-of-view. We quickly learn that Victor Frankenstein was not the innocent scientist probing the secrets of life, but a twisted necromancer trying to create a super race. This isn't the first time someone has attempted a rewrite; Brian Aldiss did it in 1975 with Frankenstein Unbound. It's still a tale of the modern Prometheus and consequences.

In *Monster*, Zeltserman grabs the reader with the first line: "First my feet were broken. Then my ankles." The opening chapter is a gruesome description of death by torture in the early 19th century. Young Fredrich Hoffman, an apprentice pharmacist in Leipzig has been wrongfully accused of murdering his fiance. The judge sentences Hoffman to be executed by "The Wheel" a method for which "cruel and unusual" was intended.

Hoffman regains consciousness to find himself the prisoner of Victor Frankenstein. The mad doctor in this version has restored the creature by use of sorcery and science. Although he can barely move, Hoffman befriends a sentient head in a bowl named Josephine. They are barely able to communicate by lip-reading, but Hoffman is able to learn what Frankenstein has done to the both of them. Soon Frankenstein is entertaining an enthusiastic guest: The Marquise De Sade.

When Hoffman is finally able to get a look at himself, he's shocked. Frankenstein has turned him into a huge and twisted creature nearly seven feet tall. But he has superior strength in his new body, which he puts to good use.

Hoffman is finally able to escape, but finds Frankenstein has moved on. Wondering through the countryside he undergoes a number of strange adventures on his way to make Frankenstein pay for his crimes. At one point he encounters a group of vampires. In another episode he finds a band of Satanists who mistake him for the real devil. Eventually, he locates Frankenstein in a ruined castle.

Trapped by one of the necromancer's evil spells, Hoffman is unable to carry out his revenge against his creator. He's forced to watch as the mad doctor and perverse count prepare for a gala ball of torture and sadism. Unable to stop his adversary, the monster known as Hoffman seethes and waits for an opportunity. To reveal more would spoil the conclusion to the novel.

Monster is a different, but no less interesting, direction for Zeltserman. I look forward to what else he does in this genre.

Michael says

Friedrich Hoffman (also known as the monster) recounts the false accusations of killing his fiancée and the other gruesome 'crimes' he has been accused of committing. He awoke hideously deformed on the table of Victor Frankenstein, without any real idea of what is going on. He now embarks on a single minded quest for revenge on Frankenstein for all the damage he has done.

This plot feels completely redundant; if you want to read a book from the perspective of *Monster* Frankenstein you read *Frankenstein*; this is nothing new, not interesting, and just cashing in on the same story. Sure this novel is different but there is nothing interesting about it, it is full of the typical horror tropes and doesn't really offer an interesting perspective. I cannot help but think of this as something like fanfic and I struggle to work out why I read this one; I seem to pick up all novels that try to do something with the

Frankenstein story.

I will admit there were parts of the novel that really fit the Frankenstein plot, tiny little points to prove that the author had indeed read and been heavily influenced by this masterpiece. I am just not sure why this would be published; a re-imagining, change in perspective (assuming it wasn't covered in the original book), prequel/sequel or modernisation I can understand but this was the exact same story with minor differences. This feels like the author loved Frankenstein so much that he rewrote the book in his own words, like a writing exercise that is never meant to be published. He has a good style even if he follows a very formulaic horror or gothic theme but the novel did indicate his talent. In an original novel he might have better luck but for me this was just ripping off a classic piece of literature.

When it comes to using classic literature as the basis of your own novel, I am normally a tough judge; you better do something unique and interesting or I will hate the novel. If you are trying to retell Frankenstein then I will be strict, this is my all-time favourite; I have read this multiple times and will be reading it many more, and I am more likely to notice every flaw. *Monster* and *This Dark Endeavour* have probably been the two novels that I've judged the harshest, since starting this blog and you can see the similarities.

When you look at something like *The Machine* which isn't really a Frankenstein reimagining but rather you can see the influence. Some themes and messages are the same and I loved this book, it is in my top five for the year. I guess you are better off reading a book like *Machine*; I really wish I knew why I keep going for Frankenstein remakes. I think people should read Frankenstein and not bother with this book, but I am curious so see how Dave Zeltserman is as a novelist in something original; I hear *Small Crimes* is good.

This review originally appeared on my blog; <http://literary-exploration.com/2013/...>

Jack says

I've been a long time fan of Zeltserman's crime fiction, and greatly enjoyed 'The Caretaker of Lorne Field', his first foray into the Horror genre. His newest novel, 'Monster', takes his fiction to a whole new level. While remaining faithful to the original in some ways, we're given a deeper, more focused monster whose motivations lead the reader through great leaps of imagination. A must read for fans of any genre.

Hugo says

When the Monster claims very early on that Frankenstein's account of the story (as 'popularised' by Mary Shelley) is full of falsehood, the signs are that this is not the promised flipside of the classic novel but more slipshod fanfic, full of endless angst and reiteration; starkly black-and-white characters (Monster good, Frankenstein bad) lose the ambiguity and moral tone of Shelley's novel, and the additions of De Sade and vampyres are eye-rollingly inapt, as is the too-modern gratuitousness.

Nick Burrows says

The premise of this book had so much potential, but the execution was so bad. The depravity was so potent at times I would have rather been reading a 50 Shades book. Literally, in just over 200 pages we had Frankenstein's monster, a living decapitated head, Frankenstein, the Marquis de Sade, countless sadomasochists, vampires, a living mural that demonstrated pure evil, and Satanic worshippers. Very few of the plot points were well developed and at the end, the book left you feeling empty with no real satisfaction. If I hadn't been using this for the library's Extreme Bool Nerd challenge, I would have abandoned it.

Junkie for the Written Word says

I'm torn between 3 and 4 stars, so-so book and good book.

It's a short story and it is filled with intense anguish that only Frankenstein's Monster can radiate, so it's got that going for it.

On the other hand, meh, Frankenstein.

It's told from the Monster's perspective and how it all went down according to him and I really enjoyed parts of it, there was even some cannibalism, yay!

I guess if you really are in love with Frankenstein's creation story then you will LOVE this book. If, however, like me, you care for it only in passing and you always envision this spectacular newborn of science as the father off a hit niche 60's show, then odds are you'll be meh about this book as well.

-1 Star because vampires. Mother. Fooping. Vampires. Every nut licking place I go.

Raquel says

The only reason I finished this book was to see where the author was going to take me, but it was not worth it in the end. The dialogue was stiff and the whole plot was too ridiculous and preachy for my taste. I can suspend disbelief in many cases; this story was not one of them.

Dystopian says

The writing was good, and the premise was interesting, but introducing satanists and "vampyres" made me roll my eyes. Making Victor Frankenstein wholly evil misses the mark on one of the most interesting aspects of the original novel.
