

“Paradise Perverted: Divine Creation vs. Human Fallibility”

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Humanity is at the heart of *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein*, and is the driving force behind their pivotal characters, both man and monster. The former tells the story of Adam and Eve and humanity's original sin starting with the fall of Lucifer. The reader is privy to Lucifer's anger towards God, and God's own ambivalence towards Lucifer, and watches as Adam and Eve make their defining choice through the lens of these divine characters. Shelley, in her novel, describes a similar relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his Creature as they struggle with their own relationship. Victor is obsessed with creating life from nothing to the point where it consumes him, and once he has succeeded, it is clear he has not previously considered the consequences of his actions, and he spurns his creation. In *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein*, the creations commit abhorrent crimes and are plainly villainous. Lucifer is the embodiment of evil and convinces Adam and Eve to commit the original sin and turn from God, while the Creature murders multiple people, including a child. These acts can hardly be forgivable, though is it possible that they are justifiable? Both stories focus on the bond of creator and the created, and both illustrate the grand consequences of mishandling such a bond, and the implications of trying to enter into such a relationship. Justice and justification must be understood if the reader is to understand those consequences, because, while there are those that act as judges in both these stories, i.e. God and Walton, the reader is the one who ultimately passes judgment on the guilt or innocence of the characters.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton endeavors to "justify the ways of God to men" (Bk. I, 26). Yet, in Milton's justification of God's ways, the reader gains an in depth understanding of Lucifer and why he commits his crimes against God, rather than a complete focus on God. He is created by an all-powerful master who beholds "past, present, future" (Bk. III., 78). God has complete knowledge of everything that has happened, will happen, and is happening, and the power to

shape and change the entirety of the universe. Therefore, He must have known that Lucifer would rebel if he were to be created a certain way, and that is precisely how God created him. God argues that Lucifer made his choices with his own free will, and by doing so shirks his own responsibility for Lucifer's actions by saying "nor can they justly accuse their maker, or their making, or their fate, as if predestination ruled their will (Bk. III, 112-115). However, the validity of this argument comes into question considering that God has knowledge of past, present, and future. God creates all of his beings knowing what the future holds but claims that His foreseeing of the future has nothing to do with their actual free will. One can accept this argument, but one may also ask the question of whether a creature being made by a creator with absolute power and knowledge of the future truly has a choice as to what their future holds. And if the creature does not, then why is Lucifer punished with the sentence of eternal damnation in Hell if he was simply pursuing the path that was set before him by the being that created him? Did God intend for Lucifer to rebel? And, is Lucifer then justified in rebelling against his creator?

When interpreting the definition of justification, as used in my question above, it is necessary to consider a divine implication. In the theological sense, justification is "The action whereby human beings are freed from the penalty of sin and accounted or made righteous by God; the fact or condition of being justified in the eyes of God", a connotation that Milton would have been familiar with not only through his understanding of the Bible, but also in that this definition was used from the 1300's through and beyond the time of his writing of *Paradise Lost* in 1667 (Justification, n1). This applies to humans and how God justifies their actions but does not apply to how humans justify the actions of God. It does, however, shed light on the fall of Lucifer and the punishment of Adam and Eve. By this definition of justification, God decides

what is right and what is wrong, and justice lies in God's eyes only. Lucifer's actions, therefore, have no justification in the theological sense of the word, and his punishment by God is just.

There is another sense to the word 'justification', however, which may also be illuminated by considering the actions of Lucifer. He tries to rise above his station as a servant of God and make himself equal, he is then banished to Hell and, to exact his revenge upon God, decides to tempt God's favorite creations to betray Him; Adam and Eve's original sin (Bk. IX, 744-781). Ignoring whether these were actions that he was fated to carry out, these are reprehensible deeds. Lucifer is literally the root of all of humanity's evil, but perhaps that is the very reason why the human reader is inclined to relate to his actions. After all, the stubbornness and love of freedom that Lucifer embodies and fights for throughout *Paradise Lost* are undoubtedly traits shared by humanity. Even in his imprisonment, Lucifer has the audacity to see Hell as his own kingdom to rule and to be separate from the pressure of living under God's thumb, for he declares "here at least we shall be free" (Bk. I, 258-259). Lucifer views God as his oppressor, and, even in his defeat, appreciates that he is free of servitude, for, "to reign is worth ambition though in hell, better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven" (Bk. I, 262-263). These are sentiments that are present in human nature. Spite, self-destruction for the sake of obtaining what one wants, and making the best of a bad situation, it is undeniable that these are simply more shared characteristics and tendencies. It makes a certain amount of sense the humans would share these traits with Lucifer, because it was Lucifer who implanted them in humans to begin with. These characteristics are also why a consideration of the theological and human connotations to the definition of justification are so relevant. Lucifer is a divine being who represents the very worst of humanity, crossing the boundary between celestial and human, and being unjustifiable in the eyes of God (Justification, n1). Yet, this connection to humanity is

what draws the human reader to consider their own justifications and potentially vindicate Lucifer's actions based on the traits that he possesses, and they see in themselves (Justification, n4a). For, even though divine justification lies firmly in the hands of God and his own reasons, humanity has its own definition of justification. Human nature justifies by means of "the action of or result of showing something to be just, right, or reasonable; vindication. Also: the grounds on which this is done; a justifying circumstance; a good reason" (Justification, n4a). This is far more broad than divine justification and does not rely on the decision of a single, indiscernible being. It is rather more comfortable for humans to grapple with, and by extension, the reader.

The reader is also inclined to find a sound motive behind Lucifer's actions due to humanity's penchant for trusting in logic and reason. After all, reason is the very root of Adam and Eve's betrayal of God. In order to convince Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, Lucifer uses logic to convince her that it will not have any catastrophic repercussions. He asks, "wherein lies the offence that man should thus attain to know?" (Bk. IX, 725-726), and "what can your knowledge hurt him, or this tree impart against his will if all be his?" (Bk. IX, 727-728). He appeals to the reasonable part of Eve by suggesting that, because everything is of God, created by God, and watched over by God, the tree could not possibly be the cause of something against his will. And, how could Eve possibly hurt God, the almighty, by eating from it? Satan convinces Eve through reason that eating the fruit of the tree cannot possibly do any harm to anyone. Humanity is readily persuaded by the use of logic and reason, which is the very thing that Lucifer embodies, and God cannot. God is not meant to be reasonable to his creations, for He is beyond all of human understanding, which makes the actions and point of view of Lucifer shown by Milton in *Paradise Lost* so tempting, because his motives, at the very least, can be understood. Humanity, since the beginning of its creation, has always been persuaded by

Lucifer's logical arguments, and the reader of the story is no different. Milton presents his own test of faith in the form of *Paradise Lost*, for he is asking the reader to make the same choice that Adam and Eve were forced to make. The reader can either embrace the mystery and divinity of God, asking no questions and accepting His word without question, or the reader can heed the words of Lucifer, and take the side of reason. The difficulty is that, while Lucifer employs reason that is familiar to humanity, it is not God's reason, just as divine justification is not familiar to human nature. What Milton urges the reader to understand is that God is beyond His creation's capabilities to understand, be they human or angelic. His reasons behind forbidding eating from the tree of knowledge and creating Lucifer knowing he'd rebel are beyond the comprehension of anyone but God himself. Milton's test of faith lies in the fact that much of the story is told from Lucifer's perspective and the knowledge that God knows the actions of His creations before they act. The reader can either take this into consideration and find Lucifer's actions reasonable, thereby justifying Lucifer, or they can reject him and his motives for rebelling, and by doing so choose God. And in choosing God, the reader has faith and knows that God can never be understood, and more importantly, that God's reasons lie outside the realm of human understanding.

The relationship between creator and the created is seemingly clear cut when it is so closely tied to the relationship between the divine and human. When the creator is divine, they hold more power over the actions of their creations, and the consequences that they face because of them. God also has omnipotence, and has knowledge of the past, present, and future of his creations. Milton has established that God acts within His own form of reason and is uninfluenced by anyone else, for he has no need of it. None of the other characters in *Paradise Lost*, whether they are human or angelic, have the power or the mind of God and therefore

cannot understand the universe in the way God does. Nor can they be creators in the same way, as God is fundamentally different from every other living being. When humans take on the role of creator, consequently, it cannot be in the same way that God is a creator, as humanity and God are so necessarily different. How, then, does this relationship between creator and created change when the roles of the divine and humanity are not so clearly separated?

It is first necessary to consider this question through the lens of which these stories are written. *Paradise Lost* is a tale of divinity, *Frankenstein* is one of humanity. In the former, the all-powerful and all-knowing God punishes Lucifer for breaking divine law, for rejecting his own creator and the creator of the universe, and then punishes humanity for not abiding by His word. Milton justifies these actions by showing that God is not meant to be understood, and faith in God should be unconditional and unaffected by external forces. God does not abide by the rules that humanity does, because God is the one who wrote them. In the latter novel, the situation is perverted. The conflict in *Frankenstein* is inherently different from that in *Paradise Lost* because the players have moved from the divine realm into that of the human. Victor Frankenstein is not God, he is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, and yet he endeavors to do what is beyond the human capacity: he seeks “to become better than his nature will allow” (Shelley, 31). Frankenstein takes on the role of that of the divine, one which he does not and cannot understand, and in doing so he creates a living being that he cannot hope to understand or be responsible for in the way that God is for his creations. Rather, Victor sees only a monster who is ugly and unlike himself and is thus repulsed. Victor is a creation himself, bound by the limitations of humanity, and chooses to take on the role of God. Humans are not suited to this task, and when they create, it is only as parents, but that is not what Victor sets out to accomplish. He does not wish to nurture his creation or raise it, he creates life for the sake of it,

ignorant of the repercussions and devastated by them when they occur. He creates a being with power and will, one Victor believes to be “forced to destroy” all that is dear to him (Shelley, 47). Yet, the only thing that has forced the Creature to violence was Victor’s initial response of disgust and hate, a disgust and hate that is only augmented by Victor’s inability to come to terms with his own actions. Victor’s relentless pursuit of knowledge and his obsession with surpassing his humanity blinds him to the fact that he is not God.

Shelley takes on an opposite task as to what Milton set out to do, for Milton sought to justify the ways of God to men, but Shelley, as she states in her preface, seeks to “preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature” (7). Her story and characters, however far removed from reality they may seem, are written with the purpose to afford “a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield” (7). She presents the idea that humanity and its natural tendencies are best exposed through outrageous circumstances that initially appear to be fantastical, but actually reveal a deeper truth about ourselves. In order to uncover these truths of human nature, she writes the story of Victor Frankenstein, a human being who, by nature of his humanity, is neither all-powerful nor all-knowing. The reader learns that Victor grew up happy and healthy with a loving family and close friends. He is passionate about alchemy and brings that passion with him as he obtains his education, and ultimately aims to succeed where past alchemists have failed; creating life itself. He achieves this goal, and by doing so becomes “better than his nature will allow” (31). This surpassing of his nature is not merely a consequence of Victor’s actions, but his ultimate goal. Victor acts with the explicit intention to venture outside the realm of human capabilities, an act of hubris with dire ramifications.

Victor Frankenstein, a being not of a divine nature commits an act that is wholly divine and creates life from a collection of inanimate parts, and he cannot accept nor comprehend this responsibility. Victor, once he realizes he has the power to animate forms is moved by arrogance as his “imagination was too much exalted” by his success to create life that he feels he should “give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man” (31). As he builds his creation, he considers life as the creator of a new race of beings who would “owe their being” to him, and that “no father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely” as Victor would deserve theirs (31). Victor’s vanity and thirst for power over life and death is not about his creations, but about himself. There is no compassion or love in his mission, only unbridled ambition. His true lack of care for his creation is most obvious upon its birth. He describes the Creature with “yellow skin” that hardly covers its muscles, “lustrous black” hair, and “teeth of a pearly whiteness”, all features that Victor had chosen to be beautiful but now present themselves as horrifying (33-34). Perhaps this ultimate ugliness stems from Victor’s imperfect nature and has only shown itself now at the summit of his expedition in the form of his monstrous creation. “Unable to endure the aspect of the being” Victor creates, he rejects the Creature outright. This initial and continued rejection of his creation leads to the murders of Victor’s loved ones, and he lives out the rest of his life fueled by hatred, seeking revenge.

Is this torment and being haunted by his own creation not, however, a just punishment for Victor’s arrogance? He takes on the role of God, which is well outside the boundaries of human capabilities, creates a monster, is unable to accept his actions, rejects the Creature, and refuses to provide his creation with a companion. At their first meeting since the Creature’s beginning, the Creature begs Frankenstein for any sort of charitability and pleads “be not equitable to every other and trample of me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most

due”, and points out that he was driven away from joy “for no misdeed”, as upon his creation, the Creature was innocent (65). And even after listening to his Creation’s short yet terrible life so far, after learning of his utter isolation, Victor listens to the Creature’s final and only request of his creator. He considers providing a companion for the Creature as it is Victor’s duty as his creator to “owe him all the portion of happiness” that he could give, but still “cannot consent” to creating a companion for the Creature, his last hope for some sort of happiness in a world that despises him (95). He fears that the Creature will return to society and again turn to violence when humans inevitably continue to reject and fear the Creature, only this time, the Creature will have another to aid “in the task of destruction” (95). Victor’s potential compassion and willingness to do one good thing for his creation is destroyed by his own fear, sickened heart, “horror and hatred” (96). In denying his creation’s only request, Victor denies the Creature his last hope for a life that has any sort of happiness or fulfillment.

Victor is vengeful, irresponsible, and proud, which makes his actions difficult to justify. In the theological sense of justification, it is unlikely that God would justify Victor after he had outright rejected his own human nature and tried to take on the role of God, going so far as to strive to “renew life where death had apparently devoted to the body to corruption” (31). This goes against the very nature of life, the rules of which God created. In intending to reverse death, Victor endeavors to reverse God’s laws of nature. In the human sense of justification, Victor dismisses his own humanity, which he aspires to “become greater than”, which is precisely what relates him to the reader (31). Because he rejects his nature, Victor rejects his humanity. He seeks to become a God, not merely a creator, and in doing so loses the traits that endear him to the human reader. By the end of his story, the only thing that keeps Victor alive is the need to execute “dear revenge” and to “let the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony” (135). He

is no longer human at this point, but a husk of the man he once was, and the fault is entirely his and his lack of mercy. Because he had denied his nature and his creation, Victor shows no empathy, and instead becomes a cold-hearted monster driven by vengeance, much like the creature he claims to hate. If Victor accepted his humanity and his nature, then perhaps his actions could be justified, but his hubris and hate rob him of that possibility.

In Shelley's exploration of the relationship between creator and created, she presents an inhuman being, the Creature, who is somehow a character that shows a depth of humanity deeper than that of his human creator. The Creature is abhorred by his creator from the moment of his creation, even though he "was benevolent and good", made a fiend by misery (65). In his confusion as he wanders the earth alone, without guidance of any kind nor the ability to speak, the Creature is forced to learn how to survive on his own, finally coming upon other human beings, only to be met with fear and violence (68-69). The Creature flees from the scorn of his creator's people and finds himself living in a small hovel joined to the cottage of a kind family where he educates himself and discovers a love of reading. The Creature comes to terms, somewhat, with his identity through his reading of *Paradise Lost*. He finds himself to be like Adam in that he was made as the first of his kind, though he finds Satan to be a "fitter emblem for [his] condition" (84). The Creature, like Satan, is rejected by his creator and natural master, while he must watch others in their happiness, forever apart in his suffering. Eventually, he is rejected by the family he had come to love, and even after saving the life of a child, he is shot out of fear and disdain (92). The Creature's only source of hope is that his creator will make him a companion, his own Eve to live out his wretched days with, and Victor refuses. This is the final straw that pushes the Creature to become the monster his creator always thought him to be, and he kills Victor's loved ones. In anger and with a thirst for vengeance, Victor chases the Creature

until meeting Walton on the ice in the Arctic, where he eventually finds his deathbed. At Victor's side, the Creature laments that he is "the miserable and the abandoned" and "an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled" (148). The Creature resents this injustice, for he is only what his creator's neglect has allowed him to become. However, the Creature still forgives Victor and even venerates him as one who is deserving of love. In the midst of all of his pain and turmoil, the hatred and fear that has plagued his life, the Creature still finds it within himself to be "torn by the bitterest remorse" over his actions and the death of his creator (148). The Creature was never apathetic to the pain, chaos, and death that he had caused, never "dead to the agony and remorse" (146). He was a being, unloved and misunderstood, who wanted a relationship with he who created him. Yet, by the time of their last meeting, Victor was already dead along with any hope for the Creature to repent.

Even though he is not human, nor a divine entity, the Creature displays a range of human emotions and characteristics. The reader can relate to the challenges he faces, as well as his desire for companionship and affection. Consequently, his anger is understandable as well. But, the final scene in which the Creature laments the death of the man who is the source of all of his contempt is the most human aspect of all, for all humans seek to be accepted by their creators. The Creature is sympathetic, and his actions are justifiable, because the reader sees their reflection so clearly in the Creature and is reminded that there is good and evil within all of humanity. The best of mankind can turn to hatred if that is all they are shown, and the worst can be nurtured towards a path of goodness if the good within them is able to flourish. All any human being ever seeks is acceptance, and that desire is all that the Creature asks for. The Creature's capacity for forgiveness and vulnerability places him in stark contrast to Victor Frankenstein. The reader recognizes their own need for love and acceptance in the Creature, and

even their own anger and hurt. Ultimately, Victor doesn't show the humanity that the Creature does, and yet the Creature isn't even human. Shelley, by contrasting Victor and the Creature, the human and inhuman, the creator and creation, shows that human nature is not in being born human being, but in expressing pain, forgiveness, mercy, and love. And, as a consequence of this contrasting, Shelley allows for the reader to make use of the human sense of justification, which is, again, "the action of or result of showing something to be just, right, or reasonable; vindication. Also: the grounds on which this is done; a justifying circumstance; a good reason" (Justification, n4a). The entirety of the Creature's story, his initial rejection followed by the fear and confusion he faces from every person he comes across, and, of course, being denied a companion. These are each on their own "a good reason" for lashing out against the one that damned the Creature to such an existence. Yes, the Creature's actions are abhorrent by his own admission; he "murdered the lovely and helpless" and "strangled the innocent as they slept", but it is also clear that the intent behind these actions, the urge to hurt Victor in the way that Victor has hurt the Creature, applies to the human sense of justification (148).

The Creature represents what is best and worst in humanity and does not seek to be anything more than what he is, as opposed to Lucifer, who tries to place himself on equal footing with God. As a creation, the Creature understands and accepts the limitations and boundaries that are ascribed to him, unlike his creator. Not only that, but the reader is also sympathetic to the Creature because he has the potential to be good. Unlike Lucifer, whom the Creature so related to, the Creature's creator did not make him with knowledge of what he would do. While God had the power and knowledge to create Lucifer to be other than he was, the Creature's future was unknown at the moment of his creation. There was therefore the potential for the Creature to be good and kind, had he been nurtured or shown kindness of his own. Instead, the first experience

the Creature had was one of detestation, as Victor immediately “rushed out of the room” upon beholding his creation, and then fled from his presence, fearing the approach of the “demoniacal corpse” Victor had “so miserably given life” (34). This lack of remorse from humans is something the Creature continued to experience, effectively destroying the potential for a happy future. And while the Creature is certainly not innocent by the end of *Frankenstein*, he was innocent in his creation, and the chance for a kind existence was robbed of him. That is ultimately why the reader justifies the Creature, for he was a sympathetic being who showed tremendous humanity and had the potential to love, for the Creature “admired virtue and good feelings” but never had the chance to experience these things, as these he could only witness from afar, and never personally (78). Instead, the Creature was forced to deal with the question of his very existence alone, friendless, and miserable.

Due to their tragic natures, it is easy to see how one might justify the actions of both Lucifer and the Creature. One was embarking on the path that had been set before him while the other was taught only hate and fear by the very person who had created him. But is it so easy to declare these two as justified in their actions because they had good reason? Because they lashed out at the creators that broke their hearts? Lucifer was created with forethought and understanding while Frankenstein’s Creature came to life almost by accident as the unhappy byproduct of ambition. Lucifer is a creation of God who is perfect, The Creature is the creation of a man who is decidedly imperfect. Do the justifications for their actions change for these reasons?

The kind of justification that is pondered in *Frankenstein* most closely resembles the human sense of justification. The Creature’s motives are not being justified to God, nor are they really being justified to Victor, the Creator. The Creature knows he has committed crimes, and

knows that they are evil, but only seeks peace. The justification derives from how the reader comes to view and consider the Creature and his actions. In this sense and for the Creature, it is the human reader who is God and decides to absolve the Creature of his sins, or not. The reader acts as an observer to the Creature's choices and free will, but also decides whether he will be pardoned of his sins after the story has ended, just as God pardons the sins of those he scrutinizes. In *Paradise Lost*, on the other hand, the justification of Lucifer's actions lies strictly in the theological, and the reader is told outright that God has not forgiven Lucifer of his sins, and that justice is carried out in punishing Lucifer for eternity. However, whether this is justified in the human sense is unclear, and once again up to the reader to decide. Both conflicts are told to the reader. One appears to be more black and white in terms of whether the conflict is justified or not, and the other is more ambiguous, but both find their way back to reader. It lies in the reader to try and judge Lucifer and Frankenstein's Creature, and to ultimately sentence the two characters as justified in their actions or not.

It is also the privilege of the reader to consider whether or not they justify the actions of God and Victor. Through Milton's narrative, it is clear that the justification of God's actions lie in the fact that God is beyond human understanding, and that the reader's acceptance or rejection of God's authority is Milton's version of Adam and Eve's test of faith. As God is above all human comprehension, and thus His decrees and reasons behind them are as well, the human reader finds justification of God's actions in absolute faith, rather than in some sort of human logic. Victor and his reasons, however, are not beyond the power of human comprehension. As such, justifying his actions should not be a foreign concept for the human reader, provided that his actions are done because of what is right or reasonable, as is dictated by the human sense of justification. Both God and Victor are creators, but Victor's humanity, his fallibility, combined

with “a lofty ambition” lead him to sink to a “state of degradation” (141). His vanity convinced him that he could be a God and change the natural way of life; his fear caused him to reject his greatest creation; and vengeance made him into a shell of a human being, stuck in the past and reliving a life he himself destroyed (140). Victor’s hubris deluded him into believing he could be a creator of both life and his own destiny, and too late for him does it become clear that he could never have that kind of creative power; only God possesses such authority.

The third and final main character of *Frankenstein* is the narrator of the story itself, Walton. Walton as a character is similar to Victor. They are both ambitious, lonely and seeking a sort of glory. Victor exemplifies these characteristics in his thirst for the power to create life and his inability to come to terms with his actions, while Walton does so in his journey to his Arctic because he has always “preferred glory” over all and in the fact that he desires “the company of a man” who can sympathize with him (10-11). When Walton does stumble upon Victor whilst trapped on his ship in the ice, he finds a man with which he has many things in common and the man he comes to consider to be his only friend in the “wide ocean” (16). As he listens to Frankenstein speak, Walton becomes more and more enamored with him, which is a reverence that is only amplified as Victor recounts the tale that has led him to Walton. Even after hearing of Victor’s hubris, Walton only sees a “divine wanderer” and a man who has lost so much that he is to be sympathized with (17). He also sees the Creature as Victor saw him, a wretch that is not to be trusted, that is ugly, vile, and evil (146-147). He does not forgive the Creature, nor does Walton find any justification in the Creature’s actions. Walton’s opinions of Victor and Creature, that the former is worthy of forgiveness and of a character that is almost faultless and that the latter is a subhuman monster, are not opinions that the reader is ultimately inclined to share. This is strange, as Walton is not only the narrator of the story, but an audience member like the reader

is. Furthermore, because it is Walton who is recounting the story and the reader is being told of its contents through his eyes, should the reader not also share his bias in venerating Victor and hating the Creature? What purpose does Walton serve to Shelley if the reader does not agree with his justification and condemnation of characters? Shelley, by means of Walton, takes away the choice of the reader that was provided by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton gave the reader the means to choose either God or Lucifer and firmly placed the reader in the position of both judge and jury. Shelley in *Frankenstein* has given that role to Walton, and the reader is forced to watch Walton's verdict come to fruition without the opportunity to make any judgment that is meaningful to the story.

The reader's role changes from that of active in *Paradise Lost* to passive in *Frankenstein*. Milton writes with the intent that the reader pass their own judgment on Lucifer, Adam, and Eve, and presents the reader with the same choice that was presented in the garden of Eden: blind faith in God or knowledge. Milton justifies the ways of God to man and in doing so, gives explanation to the reader as to why they should choose God. Thus, the reader is actively passing judgment on the characters and taking a role, in regards to the justification, or lack thereof, of Lucifer. This is a role that readers are forced out of by Shelley in *Frankenstein*. In fact, the reader is so far removed from the original story, that their judgement is rendered unnecessary and unheeded. Instead, the duty of determining who is justified in the story falls upon Walton. Frankenstein's tale is not told directly from his perspective. Rather, it is told via the letters of Walton, the captain of the ship that rescues Victor as he chases the Creature through the frozen Arctic. Walton sees Victor as a "man on the brink of destruction" (15), but ultimately intelligent and sympathetic, and Walton quickly considers Victor as one of his only friends. It is through this lens that the reader learns of Victor and the Creature, and of their natures. It is Walton who

writes the letters to his sister, relaying Victor's tale, and it is Walton who expresses his interest and respect for Victor, as well as his disgust and horror towards the Creature. Narratively, by the time the reader has even begun to learn of the circumstances surrounding Frankenstein and his creation, Walton has already reached his own verdict, and the reader's personal judgment is obsolete. In a novel with the intent to explore human nature, it is unendingly frustrating that the human reader is forced to be a passive spectator while Walton decides which characters to condemn and which to revere. After all, it is Walton who vindicates Victor's actions, while Shelley only intends to "preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature" (7). Does Walton represent the nature of humanity, and does that mean humankind seeks to justify those that are least different from themselves? Or did Shelley write with the intention that the reader's discontentment with being made a passive audience member show that it is human nature to want to pass judgment, even when completely separated from that which they are judging?

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* are works that are, in many ways, two sides of the same coin. At their most essential, they are stories that narrate the struggles between creators and their creations. In fact, *Frankenstein* may even be, in some sense, a continuation of *Paradise Lost*. *Paradise Lost* recounts God's creation of man, Lucifer's seduction of humanity, and man's fall from grace. It shows the struggle for power and understanding between master and subject as well as the perfect and the fallible. *Frankenstein* continues those themes, only this time, the paradise and the role of its creator have been perverted by man's imperfections. True understanding of these dichotomies lie within the characters of these stories and how they are come to be understood. God and Victor act as creators, one divine and the other human, while Lucifer, Eve and Adam, and the Creature are the

creations. The difference between creator and created are clear in *Paradise Lost* because God is so different from his creations, as He is all knowing and all powerful. This line between begetter and begotten becomes blurred as Victor is not divine, and though the Creature is not human, he shows a depth of human emotion and tragedy that makes him more like Victor than anyone, human or angel, could ever be like God. As the reader comes to understand these characters and stories, it becomes important to understand how and why the actions of these characters can be justified, as Milton sets out to “justify the ways of God to men” (Milton, Bk. I, 26), and Shelley to “preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature” (Shelley, 7). In the former, Milton justifies God’s actions to the reader, but the reader is also justifying the actions of the other characters, as well. In the latter, Shelley allows for the character of Walton to pass ultimate judgment on the characters, but it is the duty of the reader to interpret and justify what it is to be human by means of the characters and their actions. The works also provide the foundation for what justification means and how it changes for different characters and situations. With Milton, there is a focus on theological justification and what it means to be absolved in the eyes of God. As for Shelley, *Frankenstein* focuses on the human sense of justification, which relies on finding vindication in the reasons behind the action. The reader, as a human being, is particularly moved by the human sense of justification because that is the kind of justification in which the reader can truly have an opinion that means something. Theological justification relies solely on God’s logic, which is uninterpretable by His creations, so the human reader finds solace and purpose in being able to apply their own version of justification. As creations themselves, humans are sympathetic to those who, though they may be flawed, are trying to connect to creators who are unreachable. This is why the struggles of Lucifer and the Creature are so relatable to the reader; because they want a connection with the one who made them. The reader is able to pass their

own judgment on what is right and wrong, in reference to these characters in particular, because their actions can be justified in a way that is familiar to all of humanity. This is, of course, not to say that their actions are good or right, but that the reasons behind them are understandable to human nature. This is also why there is a definitive difference in the sense of satisfaction that each work brings the reader. *Paradise Lost* requires that the reader take an active role in judging the actions of Lucifer, Eve, and Adam. Milton asks the reader to understand the circumstances surrounding the original sin and to consider the plight of Lucifer and mankind, and then decide if they themselves would trust in Lucifer or keep hold of their faith in God. The reader takes on an active role in the justification of the story's characters, and their ultimate judgment bears importance on the overall story. In *Frankenstein*, on the other hand, that active role is stripped from the reader and given to Walton. In making the reader a passive observer without a voice in the judgment of Victor and the Creature, she also takes away the reader's agency in justification, be it divine or human. Why would she do this? Perhaps Shelley passed Milton's test of faith and trusts that God has no control over the free will of His subjects, and, like Him, the reader is forced to watch Shelley's characters suffer without the ability to alleviate any of their pain until their stories are long over.

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