Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* - The Gothic Period & other influences
• Texts include Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*

• Common aspects of the Gothic Novel:
  • Wild landscapes
  • Ruined or Grotesque buildings (typically castles, houses, mansions)
  • Excess & externity (of emotion, violence, cruelty, perversion)
• The supernatural
• Imagery of darkness / shadow / decay
• Horror & Terror
• Isolation
• Loneliness
• Blurring of sanity & insanity
• Crime, lawlessness, and abuse
• Use of multiple narrators
Dualisms in Gothic Literature

• Gothic literature utilizes the notions of opposition / division – and Frankenstein is no exception to this.
• These opposing ideas include:
  • Good/evil
  • Innocence/Guilt
  • Freedom/Imprisonment
  • Pursued/Pursuer
• Natural/Unnatural
• Moral/Immoral
• Light/Dark
• Human/Inhuman
• High/Low (mountains / abysses)
• Living/Dead
• Shelley utilizes many of these Gothic concepts in the construction of *Frankenstein*, but interestingly, she also plays with & expands the bounds of these.

• The most obvious example of this is the absence of a true “hero” and “villain” from the text – we as readers feel both drawn to & repulsed by both Frankenstein and the Monster.
Links to John Milton’s Paradise Lost

• Paradise Lost is an epic poem, published in 1667. Milton was a strong influence on Shelley’s writing.

• Paradise Lost retells the story of the “fall of man” – in which Adam & Eve eat the forbidden fruit from the Garden of Eden after being tempted by Satan.
Shelley’s use of *Paradise Lost* is interesting, in that each of Milton’s 3 main characters (God, Satan, Adam) are present in *both* Frankenstein & the monster he creates.

*Paradise Lost* is also important because this is the first book the monster reads – thus shaping his view of society, and humanity as a whole.
Adam

- **The Monster** Like Adam being God’s creation, the monster is Frankenstein’s first creation. Like Adam, the monster is lonely and is in need of a companion. As Adam is banished from Eden, the monster is banished from that which he wants – inclusion into human society. However, while Adam was provided with a companion by God, Victor failed to create a companion for the monster.
Adam

• **Frankenstein:** Frankenstein, like Adam, commits a sin against God. The result of this is that they become separated from that which they love – Frankenstein loses contact with his family, and fails to gain any pleasure or enjoyment from the beauty of nature. Just as the punishment for Adam’s eating of the forbidden fruit was death, so is the punishment for Frankenstein’s forbidden experimentation – death (which is embodied by the monster)
Satan

- **Monster**: As Satan rebels against his creator (God), so the monster rebels against Frankenstein. Satan tries to exact his revenge upon God by destroying those he most loves – the humans. Similarly, the monster gets his revenge by going after Frankenstein’s family. In *Paradise Lost* Satan says “Evil, be thou my Good” which mirrors the monster saying “Evil thenceforth became my good” in *Frankenstein*. 
Satan

• **Frankenstein**: In his quest to create life, Frankenstein effectively pits himself against God – thinking he can do a better job. This aligns with Satan in *Paradise Lost*, who conspires to replace God on his throne in heaven. Frankenstein recognizes his similarity in the novel, when he says “Like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in eternal hell”
God

• **Monster:** Like God, the monster holds the power of life and death over Frankenstein. He is like the God of the Old Testament – a jealous God who hunts down the child for the sins of the fathers. Because of Frankenstein’s sins against him, the monster condemns all humanity.
God

• **Frankenstein**: Frankenstein plays God in his experimentation, and creation, of the monster. Unlike God, however, who places his creation in the beautiful garden of Eden, Frankenstein displays no affection or love for his creation at all. Frankenstein forces the monster from his paradise (society) although his only “original sin” was his appearance.