

Imago Torem: Creation Theory and Ethics in Paradise Lost and Frankenstein

Sarah Morgan

English

*You sign your place and calling, in full seeming,
With meekness and humility, but your heart
Is crammed with arrogancy, spleen, and pride.*

— William Shakespeare, *Henry VIII* (II.IV. 121-123)

Introduction

For nearly all human history, we have been fascinated and bewildered by our creation. Disciplines like religion and science provide us with rich lexica that help us understand and reflect on our mysterious origin and the marvel of life. If we attempt to understand creation from a biblical approach, we must attempt to understand God. This essay attempts to do just that but through a safe, less controversial medium: literature. By analyzing fictional depictions of him and his archetype, we are taking a backdoor approach to daunting and seemingly unanswerable philosophical questions, including: Why did he create humankind? Should he be held accountable for his creations' failures? Moreover, if humans are supposedly created in the image of God and therefore possess similar capabilities, must we then ask ourselves these questions as we create our own sentient beings? Should we judge God and ourselves equally? John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Mary Shelley's Milton-inspired novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818)¹ address these questions brilliantly. Through close readings of these two works, it is evident that the curiosity we possess over creation is inherent, as is our general desire to create. Interestingly, we humans often associate creation with control and ownership; think of the way we view property, the extent of our copyright laws, and how we parent. In each of those examples of creation, questions of intention and accountability constantly arise. If we create something, it is assumed that we feel some level of responsibility for it and that we have

the right to do with it as we please. Above all else, we feel *proud*. But is pride a justifiable enough reason to create? Furthermore, are God's inventions symptoms of pride? I argue while pride is necessary to creation, it should not be the primary motivator, for when it is, it is often flawed and ultimately backfires, as seen through Milton and Shelley's work.

Understanding natural philosophy—and especially the branches of it Milton and Shelley embed into their writing—is crucial to answering the major theoretical questions regarding matters of motivation, responsibility, and accountability that are applicable to both creator and creation. First, I delve into vitalist theory, which is the natural philosophy that manifests itself in both *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein*. However, dualist theory challenges these manifestations and ultimately wins out. This battle between vitalism and dualism segues into exploration of the soul and what it means to be a creation. Within the fictional Christian dogma of *Paradise Lost* and therefore *Frankenstein*, as it was directly inspired by Milton's epic, the soul-possessing creation is afforded free will. Consequently, the nature of free will affords nearly infinite possibilities for the subject to pursue and develop, including varying degrees of the prideful God complex. I argue this complex compels individuals to create, and with creation—especially that of creation-capable, sentient beings—comes adaptation of this compulsion. Through this cycle of creation and adaptation, the same questions regarding creation theory and ethics circulate. Whether we will ever be able to answer them with absolute certainty is unknown, but I speculate we will always continue to ask ourselves all the same.

Vitalism vs. Dualism

In the seventeenth century, the natural philosophy of vitalism was at the forefront of many writers' minds. Because of the religious landscape of the time, this movement was often discussed in tandem with creation theory and ethics, as seen through John Milton's *Paradise*

Lost (1667) and *De Doctrina Christiana* (1825).² John Rogers' *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (1998) examines the vitalist movement through a political lens and traces its manifestations in seventeenth century writing, primarily through *Paradise Lost*. Using the writings and philosophies of William Harvey and Francis Glisson, Rogers defines vitalism, "known also as animist materialism, as the inseparability of body and soul and . . . the infusion of all material substance with the power of reason and self-motion" (1). Rogers argues that "Milton decentralizes divinity, representing an action logically prior to the decentralizations of the state, of the economy, and of the human body" (113). It is particularly this decentralization of divinity and the human body, he continues, "that lies at the heart of the political science of Milton's poem: the figure of self-creation" (Rogers 114). However, this figure of self-creation is ultimately physical, for "the spiritual and rational faculty contains the corporeal, that is, the sentient and vegetative faculty" (*De Doctrina Christiana* 303). From chaos, Milton's God created the earth, and chaos is a place or state in which nothing exists. Chaos is an intangible, dark void, but God's creation of the corporeal world emerges from this darkness. In "Book VII" of *Paradise Lost*, Raphael tells Adam how God created this world. To kick-start his vision, "Let ther be Light, said God, and forthwith Light / Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure / Sprung from the Deep" (*Paradise Lost*, VII. 243-245). Raphael explains to Adam that the presence of light allowed for perception of the rest of the world:

The Earth was form'd, but in the Womb as yet
 Of Waters, Embryon immature involv'd,
 Appear'd not: over all the face of Earth
 Main Ocean flow'd, not idle, but with warm
 Prolific humor soft'ning all her Globe,
 Fermented the great Mother to conceive,

Satiate with genial moisture, when God said,
 Be gather'd now ye Waters under Heav'n
 Into one place, and let dry Land appear. (*Paradise Lost*, VII. 276-284)

In essence, “Milton has Raphael describe for Adam the moment at which the earth gave birth to itself” (Rogers 115). Raphael’s explanation of the world’s origin provides Adam—and therefore the sentient subjects created post-fall—with a sense of rootedness that does not otherwise exist in chaos. Therefore, identity stems from the structuralist technique of signification; a signifier orients itself by the ability to distinguish between itself and another, a signified object, as two separate entities. To exercise this technique, a physical body—which also includes the mind—is required, as seen through Adam’s vitalist awakening.

Adam is a figure of self-creation. He is able to distinguish himself as separate from God and understand himself within the divine political structure where God reigns supreme and he is his subject. While Adam can identify these differences, Timothy Harrison argues that he—at least upon his initial awakening—cannot differentiate between his mind and his body, thus making him a vitalist subject. When Adam awakens, he is fully developed and perceptive of the physical world. He tells Raphael:

New wak't from soundest sleep
 Soft on the flowrie herb I found me laid
 In Balmie Sweat, which with his Beames the Sun
 Soon dri'd, and on the erakin moisture fed.
 Strait toward Heav'n my wondring Eyes I turnd,
 And gaz'd a while the ample Skie, till rais'd
 By quick instinctive motion up I sprung,
 As thitherward endeavoring, and upright
 Stood on my feet. (*Paradise Lost*, VIII. 253-261)

Harrison views Adam's awakening different than that of the post-lapsarian subject, stating, "Unlike human infancy, the 'beginning' Adam describes is possessed of an immediately clear awareness. He apprehends his nature without cultural or historical mediation, without the slow growth of biological development" (32). Moreover, because he is a pre-lapsarian subject, the ability "to experience awakening along with Adam is to feel life in its purity, to apprehend a vitality that is no longer in dialectical tension with death" (Harrison 32). Therefore, Adam's awakening is the purest of any human, for he is unbiased by any sort of societal influence and his existence is not contingent on an imminent expiration date. Because his awakening is predicated and experienced by and through his physical form, Adam, then, is a vitalist subject; he instinctively sees, sweats, and stands and *then* instinctively understands (Harrison 34).

While Harrison offers a vitalist reading of Adams creation, he also considers dualistic approaches. Dualism contrasts vitalism, for it believes in the separation of mind and body. This term is often attributed to René Descartes, as expressed in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1647). Descartes philosophically tackles the metaphysical world. He begins by explaining the approach he needs to do this tackling, stating, "I [have] to raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations" (Descartes 17). However, this approach is difficult because he, as a human being, has a hard time divorcing the mind from the material or trying to conceptualize one without the other. With difficulty, he succeeds in his reasoning. Descartes concludes dualism to be true, meaning that the mind and body are separate. He comes to this conclusion by defining the body as "all that is capable of being bounded by some shape, of being enclosed in a place, and of filling up a space in such a way as to exclude any other body from it" (Descartes 19). Despite the presence of these at-odds philosophies of vitalism and dualism in Adam's creation scene in *Paradise Lost*, Harrison describes Adam's recollection of his

becoming as a peculiar hybrid act of Cartesian and vitalist self-creation (31-32). This can be seen through Adam's interactions with Eden:

Milton's Adam awakens in sweat, caught up in life processes that precondition the very possibility of awareness. This ecstatic embodied structure, where life exceeds the boundaries of awareness, runs throughout Adam's story. If ecstasy traditionally implies a dualistic separation of soul from body, here Milton forces his readers to rethink *ekstasis*^[3] as the fundamental characteristic of embodied life. (Harrison 38)

Although, Harrison quickly refutes dualism through a close reading of a passage in *Paradise Lost* where Adam walks around and observes nature in Eden. As Adam watches the animals live and move, it can be assumed that "human life seeks out life and marks entities as living by noting spontaneous movement. Adam sees his own 'quick instinctive motion' reflected in other creatures . . . [This] chiasmic arrangement of life and movement . . . stresses the vital kinship that links Adam to the other creatures" (Harrison 41). Here, to live—and therefore perceive—and to move are equated. Furthermore, Harrison asserts that Adam is not able to fully comprehend any of this until he speaks about it with Raphael, where he is allowing himself a proper space to ruminate on the subject and has developed the grammar to discuss it articulately. He must speak his origin into existence, which also requires the body, not just the mind.

The vitalist argument can be identified and abundantly observed in *Paradise Lost*, as seen through Rogers and Harrison, but skepticism accompanies this argument because the reasoning is not consistent through the Genesis story. Logically, vitalism does not hold up in the post-lapsarian world. Through Christian doctrine, when the body dies it is left behind, and the soul either ascends to heaven or descends to hell, thus supporting dualism. Therefore, the disconnect between mind and body is initiated by death. We can also observe the failing of vitalist thinking through Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Similar to Milton's Adam, Shelley's Creature recalls his awakening: "It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original [era] of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses" (97). Like Adam, the Creature associates awakening with corporeality and has the ability to historicize his awakening experience once he obtains the grammar to do so. Although, Adam does not need to learn how to speak, nor does his brain need time to develop like the Creature's does. Again, this is because Adam's pre-lapsarian nature brings him to consciousness fully formed. At first glance, the Creature appears to be a vitalist, self-created figure; however, this is an impossibility because of his morbid origin. Once Victor decides he wants to take on the task of creating a sentient being, he justifies graverobbing to collect the parts he needs: "I collected bones from charnel houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame" (Shelley 50). This means all the pieces Victor collected to create his monster once belonged to other people. Through vitalist theory, would there not be multiple personalities that exist within the Creature because there are multiple people stitched together to form one being? Would the personality of the Creature not be dictated by the head/brain he is given? But we know the Creature does not have dissociative identity disorder, nor is he schizophrenic; he possesses his own mind that begins as a blank slate, for he explains in detail how he learns motor functions and speech. Therefore, reanimation does include an infusion of a soul, but it is one that is separate from the body parts involved (Oakes 67). But what does it mean to have soul, and what does having a soul have to do with creation subjectivity?

The Soul, Creation Subjectivity, and Free Will

Through Cartesian philosophy, the mind and the soul are the same but separate from the body. This can be seen through his most famous meditation where he declares, “I am; I exist—this is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking; for perhaps it could also come to pass that if I were to cease all thinking I would then utterly cease to exist” (Descartes 19). While he can doubt the validity of the physical world, he cannot doubt his soul, his thinking mind; to him, cognition is the beginning of experience. But where did it come from? Descartes also asks:

From what source, then, do I derive my existence? Why, from myself, or from my parents, or from whatever other things there are that are less perfect than God. For nothing more perfect than God, or even as perfect as God, can be thought of imagined. But if I got my being from myself, I would not doubt, nor would I desire, nor would I lack anything at all. For I would have given myself all the perfections of which I have some idea; in so doing, I myself would be God! (32)

This idea of a human God is an impossibility to Descartes because God is an infinite being whereas humans are not. Therefore, Cartesian construction of the metaphysical world originates from God and radiates outward. The human soul—which is an animating life force created and bestowed by God—possesses more authority than the body because the body is merely transport, but God has authority over the soul. Descartes’ considerations of the soul can be traced back to Aristotle’s arguably proto-vitalist *De Anima* (350 BCE).⁴ Disregarding his vitalist sentiments, Aristotle considered thought and soul to be the same. The soul affords thought: abstract, non-physical movement from mental process to mental process, which said mental process can then encourage action or physical movement.⁵ However, Descartes does not place humanity at the pinnacle of thought and soul as Aristotle does.⁶ Instead, God reigns supreme because of the power he possesses to create; he created the human subject and therefore its capacity for a soul and its subsequent thought.

Milton defines the complex relationships between divine entities and their human subjects and how they all influence one another in *De Doctrina Christiana*. The claims Milton

makes in this work are echoed in *Paradise Lost*. He affirms and justifies the existence and need for God, and therefore justifies the denominational hierarchy that situates God as the ultimate deity in the monotheistic Christian tradition. We see this hierarchy at work in *Paradise Lost* through the way God commands his angels and the Son. Furthermore, as the superior, omnipresent entity, he is responsible for the dissemination of virtuous rules humankind must obey. Again, this can be observed through the primary rule of Eden: do not eat from the Tree of Knowledge. In the post-lapsarian world, more rules are put into place because only then does sin exist. Milton believes God's governing of his subjects to be important and critical to follow, stating, "If there were no God, there would be no distinction between right and wrong . . . none would follow virtue, none would be restrained from vice" (*De Doctrina Christiana* 477). Despite these crucial rules, God cannot force his subjects to abide by them because humans possess their own agency, for "God has imprinted upon the human mind so many unquestionable tokens of himself, and so many traces of him are apparent throughout the whole of nature" (*De Doctrina Christiana* 477). Inarguably the most important of these traces is free will.

God speaks of the capacity man has for greatness, for morality and reason. This capacity stems from being created *imago Dei*.⁷ If we are created in his likeness, then we, like him, have free will. Moreover, free will allows for free thought and therefore the soul. Consequently, it is precisely this free will that affords the possibility of evil to taint humanity. The brilliance of the design is also its biggest flaw. Despite the double-edged sword of free will, God asks, "Not free, what proof could [man] have givn sincere / Of true allegiance, constant Faith of Love, / Where onely what [man] needs must do, appeard, / Not what [man] would? what praise could [man] receive?" (*Paradise Lost*, III. 103-106). Essentially, he insists that free will is necessary for humankind to have if it should be capable of faith and love. What I find striking about this

passage is that God says faith first. Faith in what? In him? And love for what or whom? As Milton suggests, this implies that God must first be believed in, obeyed, and then loved, thus reaffirming the divine hierarchy between creator and creation. However, free will also affords creations the ability to deny their creator and therefore his/her rules, though Milton does not advise this form of atheism. But regardless of whether or not someone believes in God, they still possess free will and exist within the divine hierarchy. The divergence between believers and non-believers occurs in death. Still, this makes the hierarchy inescapable in life because, as Jean-Paul Sartre says in his work *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1996), “when God creates he knows exactly what he is creating . . . Thus each individual man is the realization of a certain concept within the divine intelligence” (21).

Within the Miltonic Christian tradition, not only is free will needed to have faith and love, but it is also wielded by God as the justification behind his decision to not interfere with Satan’s ploy of temptation in Eden despite being all-knowing. God states, “[Humankind] therefore as to right belong’d [(i.e. free will)], / So were created, nor can justly accuse / Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate . . . [Man] themselves decreed / Thir own revolt, not I” (*Paradise Lost*, III. 111-117). While I understand the logic behind his argument, I do not fully believe it to be right. Humans did not ask to be created; they did not know what ethical code into which they were entering because they had no way of knowing before being. We see this existential frustration manifest itself in Adam’s cry:

Did I request thee, Maker, from my Clay
 To mould me Man, did I sollicite thee
 From darkness to promote me, or here place
 In this delicious Garden? as my Will
 Concurd not to my being, it were but right

And equal to reduce me to my dust,

Desirous to resigne, and render back . . . (*Paradise Lost*, X. 743-749)

This frustration is also present in *Frankenstein* when Victor first encounters the Creature. The Creature bemoans, “How dare you sport thus with life? . . . [But] [l]ife, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it” (Shelley 94-95). Both the post-lapsarian Adam and the Creature understand that to exist is anguish, but they refuse to accept their own responsibility and instead direct their frustration elsewhere to their creators. However, while I argue Adam and the Creature are similar in their awakening scenes and subjugation, a major departure occurs in their capabilities: procreation.

Humans can exercise their agency through procreation. We can assume Shelley’s Creature is unable to procreate, or at least he is never given the chance upon Victor’s cruel denial of creating a female companion. Had the Creature’s wish been fulfilled, perhaps the vengeful climax and denouement of the work could have been avoided. Although, one could argue the Creature was doomed to a perpetual state of fallenness, as he is created by a post-lapsarian subject. Still, procreation can be interpreted as the ultimate act of free will, for it most closely mimics the power of God and the hierarchy he employs. In attempt to vindicate and defend procreation as this terminal display, Milton asks, “if God habitually assign[s] to himself the members and form of [humankind], why should we be afraid of attributing to him what he attributes to himself, when viewed in reference to ourselves be considered as most complete and excellent when imputed by God?” (*De Doctrina Christiana* 478). This logic considers humans to be gods in their own rights, which Sartre’s humanism would support. Although, Milton quickly refutes this by clarifying “[humankind] is not called simply ‘the beginning of the creation,’ but ‘of the creation of God’; which can mean nothing else than the first of those things which God created; how therefore can he be himself a God?” (*De Doctrina Christiana* 502).

Therefore, while humans have free will, which allows them to create, they create on a smaller scale that does not match God's creative capabilities.

Understanding the soul, its origin, and limitations is crucial to the understanding of creation subjectivity, but one question arises time and time again: why exist at all? Although, Sartre urges against trying to answer this question because he believes human subjectivity—its truth, constant nature, and inescapability—to be the most important revelation of existence (23-24). But if God is perfect and can supposedly do no wrong, as Milton suggests, then why create lesser beings who can?⁸ He created humankind exactly the way he wanted; all aspects of it and its nature were painstakingly and intentionally designed to fulfill the vision of *imago Dei*, but why was perfection, the intrinsic goodness of which Milton speaks, left out? What was God's point in creating humans with the ability to be tempted and therefore possess the capacity for evil if he is going to be upset with them when they indulge and fall? I argue pride to be the answer to these questions.

The God Complex

In "Book III" of *Paradise Lost*, God foresees the perversion and subsequent downfall of humanity. As presumably the only being in the text that has this level of foresight paired with his cosmic and almighty powers, he is then capable of preventing humanity's corruption by eliminating the threat of Satan. Yet he chooses not to interfere. Would he not then be to blame for the fall of man if he knows but does not act? Milton allows God to work through this argument and defend himself. God stands by his answer of free will, as seen in the previous section. Does God's logic of free will imply that he believes he has not committed any wrongs or is not responsible in some way? But if humans were originally created as a corporeal, non-mystical incarnation of God (*imago Dei*) and possess free will as he does, why does he not have

the same potential to be tempted or evil? I identify the aptly named God complex as proof of this potential and as the motivation behind creation. As stated above, God—when creating humans—appears to have intentionally left out his total, intrinsic, total goodness. We appear different than God because we possess the ability to be evil while he does not, but I argue that he can because—as the superior being within the divine hierarchy—there is no one to judge him, to hold him accountable. The creation of lesser, sentient beings is an act of shameless pride and flaunting of skill in both *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein* despite the difference in where the creators stand within the divine hierarchy of Christianity. However, it is easier to place blame on Victor and identify him as an antagonist while it is harder to name a culprit in *Paradise Lost* precisely because of said hierarchy. Victor is a post-lapsarian human, and it is assumed God cannot possibly fall. Despite this, the similarities between these two characters as creators cannot be ignored.

Both God and Victor's creations are Satanic, within the context of Milton, for they are born out of pride. Pride, though in a different context, is fundamentally what brings about the damnation of Satan and his disciples in *Paradise Lost*: “[Satan's] pride / Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host / Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring / To set himself in Glory above his Peers” (*Paradise Lost*, I. 36-39). Although, when comparing this claim to God, it can then be argued that God's creations are not evidence of his pride because he does not have peers or superiors. To this, I point back to free will's affordance of faith and love; God wishes to be freely admired and respected, and the only way to do that is to create lesser, sentient beings. The angels fulfill this desire to an extent, but after Lucifer's fall, God goes on a creation spree, somewhat akin to the way humans command their militaries to march in parades to show off their war resources. God's reaction to his angels' heinous rebellion by creating the Earth in six

days and humankind on the seventh is essentially an attempt to boost the morale of heaven and allow God the opportunity to peacock his power. According to Raphael, God states after the fall of the rebel angels:

I can repair
 That detriment, if such it be to lose
 Self-lost, and in a moment will create
 Another World, out of one man a Race
 Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
 Not here, till by degrees of merit rais'd
 They open to themselves at length the way
 Up hither, under long obedience tri'd
 And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
 One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end. (*Paradise Lost*, VII. 152-161)

God's creation of Earth and his wish for the planet and heaven and to be unified under his rule is not only meant to intimidate his enemies but also speaks to his wish of more dominion over (hopefully) grateful subjects, unlike the angels that followed Lucifer's example. After creating Earth and all its natural glory, God still felt that something was missing, that none of the things he created for this world satisfied his vision:

There wanted yet the Master Work, the end
 Of all yet don; a Creature who not prone
 And Brute as other Creatures, but endu'd
 With sanctitie of Reason, might erect
 His Stature, and upright with Front serene
 Govern the rest, self-knowing, and from thence
 Magnanimous to correspond with Heav'n,
 But grateful to acknowledge whence his good
 Descends, thither with hear and voice and eyes

Directed in Devocion, to adore
 And worship God Supream, who made him chief
 Of all his works . . .
 Let us make now Man in our image, Man
 In our similtude. (*Paradise Lost*, VII. 505-520)

Victor's pride and experimental desire drove him to a similar end. Both God and Victor make inferior beings *imago torem*⁹ with the intention of exuding creative prowess. In other words, their acts are not motivated by creation for creation's sake; creation, rather, can be interpreted as a selfish endeavor. Although, God, as previously stated, also undergoes this feat to boost the morale of heaven after losing one third of its angels in the fall, so it is not completely fair to his character to totally equate him with Victor. Moreover, God and Victor treat their creations differently.

Adam awakens in the safe, perfect space of Eden. While God is not with him upon his coming to consciousness, God still provides. Eden contains all that Adam could ever need. Even when Adam asks God for a companion, a wife, God grants his request (*Paradise Lost*, VIII. 444-490). Adam's fantastical pre-lapsarian experience is in complete contrast with the anthropomorphic Creature, who recalls that when he woke, "It was dark . . . I felt cold also, and half-frightened as it were instinctively, finding myself so desolate" (Shelley 98). While I argue Adam felt a bit forlorn upon looking up at the sky after his awakening, there is no textual evidence to support that he felt as godforsaken as the Creature, at least before the fall. Perhaps the Creature's abandonment and lack of accommodation is simply a consequence of the post-lapsarian world or the fact that Victor is fallen himself, but even with these differences between awakening scenes, the evidence still stands behind prideful motivations of creation.

Victor's motivation to create echoes Raphael's depiction of God's creation Earth and humankind. While it is not war as it is between God and the fallen angels, the peacocking of ability and the desire to be admired are the same. Victor speaks of his motivation, stating:

No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. (Shelley 49)

If one was to read this passage within the context of *Paradise Lost*, it fits perfectly. Even the lexicon Shelley engages with is similar to that of Milton's work: Victor aiming to shed light into the world, as God does upon creating matter and order out of the darkness that is chaos; Victor creating a new, grateful species that *should* love him, implying bestowment of free will; and equating his vision with an elevated sort of parenthood. Even more similar to the Miltonic God, Victor does not accept full responsibility for the Creature's unforgiveable behavior. He constantly attributes his desire to create to an "impulse of some power of which [he] was unconscious" (Shelley 202). Victor attempts to blame God, just as God blames his creations' free will—which he afforded them—for the fall. Interestingly, the nature of the God complex assumes a need to claim and exert dominion over things. However, when said things fail, those who have this complex often deny any sort of responsibility, but they hypocritically relish in their creations' triumphs.

Conclusion

There appears to be an inherent desire to create that is present in all sentient, soul-possessing, free beings. The nature of creation can at least be attributed to pride and a need for order or chain-of-command. Because of this attribution to pride, creation does not happen solely

for the creations' sake, as seen through God and Victor's actions in *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein*. Instead, creation occurs mostly to fulfill some sort of personal accomplishment or sense of satisfaction for creators. Creation—especially that of another sentient being—also elevates the creator of said being to a higher level within a religious or societal hierarchy. We see evidence of this truth most often within our own homes; parenthood can be interpreted as a microcosmic exercise of prideful creation. Similarly, our recent fascination with artificial intelligence also brings forward questions regarding creation ethics. It is important to avoid habitually turning a blind eye to creators, even God. A creator of sentient beings should always be considered at least partly responsible for the potential and limitations of his/her/its creations, but that does not mean he/she/it should be held accountable for absolutely everything said creations do. To claim a stance of total blamelessness—as Milton's God and Victor do—is evidence of an irresponsible, negligent creator. Perhaps if pride was not the primary motivation behind creating, creators would be humbler and hold themselves more accountable for the actions of their creations. After all, creation is unavoidable. In fact, creation begets creation, and creation will always evolve and adapt. As creation progresses and moves farther and farther away from the origin (i.e. God in the Christian tradition), we must remember to always keep the major ethical questions regarding creation in the backs of our minds.

Endnotes

1. Shelley first published *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* anonymously in 1818. She revised and republished the novel in 1823 under her own name. Later, a new version was published in 1831. This version offered more insight on the science behind the Creature's creation by explicitly referencing galvanism. The 1831 version also altered the background stories of Victor's father and Elizabeth. Shelley made these alterations to appease some of her critics who believed the original 1818 publication to be too radical in many regards. (Rieger) In this paper, I engage with the 1818 text. The abstractions and ambiguity surrounding the original monstrous creation allows for more philosophical explorations about creation and creation ethics.
2. *De Doctrina Christiana* was first discovered and published in 1825. The exact date Milton actually wrote it is unknown. (Loewenstein)
3. Ancient Greek for "to be or stand outside oneself, a removal to elsewhere."
4. Also known as *On the Soul*.
5. Aristotle believed "that the soul is not affected and does not act without a body, for instance, in the case of being angry, being bold, experiencing appetite, and perceiving in general. Thinking, however, seems most of all to belong exclusively to the soul; but if this, too, is a sort of imagination or does not exist without imagination, it cannot exist without a body either. If, then, any one of the acts or affections of the soul belongs exclusively to it, it could be separated; but if nothing is proper to it, it would not be separable" (*On the Soul* 3). Therefore, while Aristotle's vitalist understanding of the mind and body contrasts Descartes's theory of dualism, the way both these philosophers approach the soul and its equation with thought is similar.
6. Aristotle's hierarchy of thought covers plants, animals, and humans. Plants have souls because they are able to reproduce and grow; animals have a sensitive soul because they can move, feel, and perceive; and humans have a rational soul because they are capable of thought and introspection. Furthermore, humans possess the same capabilities as plants and animals along with rationality (*On the Soul*, II and III).
7. Theological Latin term meaning "in the image of God."
8. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton insists we must look at all of God's intentions and creations as "intrinsically good, and the chief productive stock of every subsequent good" (502).
9. Latin for "in the image of the maker."

Works Cited

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