

## FRANKENSTEIN NOTES – CH. 10-16

So the Creature is actually smart and is a fan of classic literature. Who would have guessed!

REMEMBER FROM LAST TIME:

**Byronic Hero:** a common character trope in Romantic Literature.

- Almost always a male character
- “Moody, proud, cynical, with defiance on his brow and misery in his heart, a scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep & strong affection.”
- A loner who is either very intellectual & sophisticated, or street smart, or both, but is kind of an outcast from society & scorns many aspects of it. Passionate, obsessive, sometimes vengeful. Usually has a troubled past and acts mysterious, hiding dark secrets from those around him.
  - Examples of Byronic Heroes: Byron in real life, Mr. Rochester, Heathcliff, Phantom of the Opera, Satan from *Paradise Lost* (aha!), Wolverine, Anakin Skywalker, Batman, Zuko, Every Sad Vampire Boi Ever Written.

Victor fits a lot of the tropes of a Byronic Hero. Is the Creature one too? He seems more like one now than he did a few chapters ago.

## LET’S TALK ABOUT SATAN! YAY!!!

*Paradise Lost* – written by English poet John Milton in the 1660s, it’s a long epic poem that is basically one gigantic Biblical fanfic about the Garden of Eden story from Genesis.

- Starts with Satan leading the rebellion against God, and then being cast out of heaven with all his buddies. They end up going to hell and making a city for themselves called Pandemonium.
- Satan then hears that God just created earth and humans, and decides he’s gonna go ruin everything.
- Adam & Eve wake up in the Garden, realize that they’re both incredibly hot, start learning stuff and having lunch with angels, as ya do. It’s a good old time.
- Then Satan shows up disguised as a snake and tricks Eve into eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which was forbidden. She then gives some fruit to Adam.
- As punishment, Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden, but it’s okay because one day Jesus is gonna make everything right again.

Not a coincidence that *Paradise Lost* is the book that has the biggest impact on the Creature.

- Just like Prometheus & the Ancient Mariner, we have yet another story about people who either **defied God** or **defied Nature** (or both), and as a result were **cursed**.
- Also the very common Romantic theme of **Loss of Innocence** rears its head again.

SATAN from *Paradise Lost* is often cited as one of the original Bad Boy Byronic Heroes, because even though he’s evil... he’s kind of weirdly charismatic and sympathetic?

- Don't think Milton *meant* to make him like that, but he did.
- Most of the story is told from his perspective too, so he feels like the main character. There's something weirdly heroic about him at times, like when he declares, "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."
  - o He's like, "I don't need heaven! I'll make my own heaven!" Hopeless, of course, but you kind of admire his rebel spirit anyway.

Thinking about the story of *Paradise Lost*, what are some parallels between...?

- The Creature & Satan?
- The Creature & Adam/Eve?
  - o There's a scene where the Creature sees his reflection in a pool that's a pretty obvious homage to a similar scene where Eve sees her reflection for the first time. But Eve's reaction was like, "Oh dang, I'm hot!" And the Creature's reaction is more like, "Oh God, I'm hideous!"
- Victor & Satan?
- Victor & God?
- Victor & Adam/Eve?
  - o Eating the "forbidden fruit" ...

Last time we talked about Victor's responsibility as a scientist. But thinking about it in relation to the Adam & Eve story, what is Victor's responsibility as a *creator*?

- Does a creator have a certain kind of responsibility towards their creation? If so, what is it?
- The Creature argues that Victor is obligated to try to help him find happiness — do you agree?
- What do you think Victor should do in response to the Creature's request for a mate? What are some ways it could backfire if he goes along with it?

CONCEPT TO REMEMBER...

**Tabula Rasa:** The idea that we are all born with a blank slate, and learn/are shaped by our experiences. Basically like, when it comes to the nature vs. nurture question, this idea is that it's all nurture.

- Shelley describes the Creature's process of learning how to function in the world, following this idea (how he learns what to eat, how to build a fire, how to interact with people, etc...)
- He is heavily influenced by the books he happens to find, especially *Paradise Lost* — he even speaks in a manner similar to Milton's language, and makes constant references to the story ("I should have been thy Adam," it presented to me then as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandemonium appeared to the demons of hell after their sufferings in the lake of fire")

Had things gone differently, he would have turned out completely different

**BIG THEME IN THIS BOOK:** Evil is made, not born: Shelley really seemed to believe this idea; the Creature starts off with the potential to be good, caring and friendly — innocent. But the more he is rejected and mistreated, and the more alone he feels, the more he starts to turn to the dark side, because it seems like his only resort.