

Reading *Paradise Lost* Through
the Eyes of Mary Shelley:
Who Dares to be the Judge of
Milton's God?

*An Evaluation of Frankenstein as a
Reader-Response Product*

Ann M. N. Lande



A Thesis Presented to the Department of Literature,
Area Studies and European Languages
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the MA Degree

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2017

30 Point Master's Thesis

**Reading *Paradise Lost* Through the Eyes of Mary Shelley:
Who Dares to be the Judge of Milton's God?**

An Evaluation of *Frankenstein* as a Reader-Response Product

© Ann M. N. Lande

2017

Reading *Paradise Lost* Through the Eyes of Mary Shelley: Who Dares to be the Judge of Milton's God? – An Evaluation of *Frankenstein* as a Reader-Response Product

Ann M. N. Lande

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Printed by: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The intent of this thesis is to evaluate how a product of reader-response can be useful as a tool for critical analysis of the literary work it initially was a response to. By reading *Frankenstein* as the result of reader-response to *Paradise Lost*, I aim to discover what Shelley's reader-response tells us about *Paradise Lost*. In the introductory part of the thesis, the context of and for reception in the Romantic period is presented with attention to the works of literary critic Lucy Newlyn, as well as an overview of the field of reader-response theory with special regards to criticism by Stanley Fish. *Paradise Lost* has created a lot of disagreements and discussions among readers and critics through time, and I make the claim that the topic of John Milton's theodicy, alongside the problematic notion of God versus Satan, has and will always be the topic most argued and contested. As such, the thesis explores the two camps of Milton criticism, focusing on God's omniscience, the Free Will doctrine, and the problem of Evil. The result is a presentation of how both camps argue their case for Milton's theodicy. Author's intent is disregarded for reading *Paradise Lost* due to reader-response theory, but the epic voice's words of intent (Milton 1.26), become the reasonable starting point for the entire discussion into theodicy, and God versus Satan. From the epic voice's intention, throughout the poem and all the literary criticism, *Frankenstein* is used as the closer. There is no denying that *Frankenstein* is influenced by *Paradise Lost*, but I intend to classify in what sense and to what degree. Finally, the task of this thesis is to show why we should, and how we can, use Mary Shelley's reader-response *Frankenstein* to re-read *Paradise Lost*.

Acknowledgments

Reading and writing has always been easy for me. I love to read a good book and just forget about the world around me. For me, this love has become stronger after several years of studying English literature, but the act of analysing and contributing critically to the literary field has only recently surfaced as something I find joyous. Thus I was excited about starting my work on the MA thesis in January of this year. How wonderful it would be to comment on two of my favourite works of literature, show my appreciation, and argue alongside literary critics whom I admire. Early December this enthusiasm was curbed by the news that my mother was ill. My family is my heart, so naturally my mind had a tendency to wander when it should have been focused on writing. Still, I have been blessed with friends close to me who gave their support and helped me deal with everything that was going on – making me feel better and less lonely being away from my family when we were all struggling. Juan C. Pellicer, my supervisor, gave me time to contemplate and write on my own terms, in the way that I prefer, but I always knew that he would be available if need be. I have never been good with time management or writing over periods rather than in one go. I did not know how I would fare in regards to actually writing a Master thesis, but I did enjoy it and it was worth it.

.mami & papi & faith.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Critical Theory	6
2.1	Reader-Response and Reception Theory	6
2.2	The Romantic Reader and Writer	12
3	<i>Paradise Lost</i>	20
3.1	Theodicy, Free Will and the Problem of Evil.....	23
3.2	The Great Divide.....	27
3.2.1	God.....	29
3.2.2	Satan.....	33
4	<i>Frankenstein</i>	39
4.1	Introducing <i>Paradise Lost</i>	40
4.1.1	Frankenstein as God.....	42
4.1.2	Frankenstein as Satan.....	47
5	Conclusion	50
	Works Cited	54

1 Introduction

I first read *Paradise Lost* as part of a Renaissance course, in which half a semester was dedicated to the poem, for my bachelor degree in English language and literature at the University of Middlesex in London. This was during my second year, and by then literature dated before the eighteenth-century had become a passion of mine. Good old British literature. Shakespearian literature. Canonical, iconic, “everybody knows something about some of it” literature. I had previously not engaged with this part of English literary history before, but being in London and studying at a British university the incentive became you either love it or hate it. And, you guessed it, I loved it. *Hamlet* was the first Shakespeare play on our syllabus, then came the sonnets, followed by Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, and finally *Paradise Lost* – the epic canon of British literature. My professor was a Milton veteran in his final year of teaching, and he loved *Paradise Lost*. His passion was infectious, his well of knowledge deep, nevertheless *Paradise Lost* quickly became a challenge. As far as Renaissance literature is concerned, John Milton did not go easy on any of us. I read and reread, and in the end I decided to appreciate rather than question. Still, *Paradise Lost* had piqued my interest. At that time the field of literary criticism I mostly aligned myself with was feminism, and as such Eve became the heart of the poem. Then I started my masters, now an older and hopefully wiser student. Seeing as *Paradise Lost* still fascinated me, I decided to try my hand at the poem again. For my first semester I chose a course dedicated to Milton and *Paradise Lost*, and so it was that I read *Paradise Lost* for the second time. With my preferred field of literary criticism altered, literary theory added to my arsenal, topical interests shifted, and more experience, *Paradise Lost* suddenly became a new poem to me. I still remembered the feel of the old one, but my reading changed. Now, each time I read *Paradise Lost* I discover something new. This time I found something I want to explore further, discuss and engage with, and I aim to do just that in this thesis.

Part of being a student of English literature is to evolve as both a reader and a critic. During the process of evaluating a work of literature I now find that I look for echoes of past literature, while also considering the effect past works have had on future writings. I believe that the the act itself is unintentional most of the time, but the process has become something of an inevitability. My best ideas are subconscious ones, which is how this thesis was born. Again I reread a work from a previous bachelor course that I enjoyed and discovered that my perceptions were altered. As a result of a different observation of *Paradise Lost*, the way I

read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* altered as well. Suddenly the echoes from Milton seemed very obvious. Where I had earlier solely registered the influence of *Paradise Lost* as a reference to literature, I now realised that the intertextuality could be viewed as more profound than initially considered, and as a means of understanding one text through the other. The topic that I find the most interesting in *Paradise Lost* today is the discussion on God versus Satan. Firstly, in all of my reading experiences with *Paradise Lost* I never doubted Milton's theodicy or saw Satan as a hero. This changed slightly when I read *Frankenstein* as a response to *Paradise Lost*. I was curious to learn more about why some readers and literary critics interpreted Satan as the poem's hero, and how this affected my own response. In addition, I wanted to see how *Frankenstein* could provide evidence to a reading that contradicted my own. To the best of my abilities I have tried to use literary criticism as suggestive evidence for both a pro- and anti-God reading of *Paradise Lost*, but in the end I think that my interpretations will reveal that I side with God in *Paradise Lost* and Satan through *Frankenstein*.

It is necessary to emphasise the obviousness of the fact that *Paradise Lost* has had an influence on Shelley's *Frankenstein*. As evidence, Shelley prefaces this point before starting her story by quoting Adam in *Paradise Lost* when he is distraught by God and with himself. The quote encompasses the topics of this essay perfectly, providing us with an indication as to what in *Paradise Lost* has influenced Shelley the most. In addition, it makes her novel a prime example of a Romantic reader-response that takes into account the themes I wish to explore in *Paradise Lost*. Furthermore, *Frankenstein* is ripe with literary references to *Paradise Lost*, as well as the inclusion of the poem in book form within the novel. However, it is not clear as to how *Frankenstein* comments on, or is a Romantic commentary of, *Paradise Lost*. By this, I mean to say that although it might be evident that Shelley has focused her response to *Paradise Lost* on the relationship between God and Satan, and humanity, the poem's influence is obvious, the degree of reader-response result is not. How can we define Shelley's reader-response of *Paradise Lost*? There have been many discussions and conclusions drawn between *Paradise Lost* and the works of famous Romantic writers such as Wordsworth, Blake, Shelley and Coleridge, but literary criticism solely centred on the relationship between *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost* is lacking. Critics have mentioned *Frankenstein* as a Romantic novel with ties to *Paradise Lost*, as they should, and literary critics in other fields than that of Milton or Romanticism, such as feminist Spivak, discuss the evident traits in *Frankenstein* relating to *Paradise Lost* in relation to their own field. Thus, I have not found a

work of criticism that seeks to discover the influence/commentary position of *Frankenstein*, or one that endeavours to use *Frankenstein* as a commentary on *Paradise Lost* to seek out and discuss the topic of God versus Satan within Milton's epic poem.

Seeing as the literary criticism regarding *Paradise Lost*, Milton, *Frankenstein* and the Romantic legacy for the first mentioned is copious, the task of bringing something new into the field of Miltonic writings, and the Romantic reception and reader-response to *Paradise Lost*, is very challenging. *Paradise Lost* is a work of art widely discussed, no doubt about it, and although coming up with new ways of viewing the epic poem is not an easy undertaking, it is nevertheless a task that is both intriguing and necessary. Knowing of its fame and critical interest makes *Paradise Lost* a literary canon worth discussing repeatedly in any time, no matter the amount of opinions already present. I feel it is important to include literature other than that of obvious *Paradise Lost* commentary pieces from the Romantic period when discussing Romantic reader-response and literary criticism in more detail. By introducing *Frankenstein* as an instrument for the exploration of the topics most widely discussed in *Paradise Lost*, together with the implementation of reader-response and reception theory as it relates to the Romantics, the goal is to widen the interpretations already established by critics of Milton further. *Paradise Lost* and its influence on *Frankenstein* is something I find very interesting, thus I will show my appreciation of both works by commenting on the similarities they share in the portrayal of the problematic relationship between God, Satan and humanity.

The aim of this dissertation is firstly to understand the importance of reader-response as it relates to literature and literary criticism of *Paradise Lost*, the Romantic period, and how *Frankenstein* as a product of reader-response can contribute to this achievement. Second, I intend to make light of the criticism most relevant in the field of Milton regarding God versus Satan, and the case of the Fall. The discussion that follows in chapter three is dedicated to *Paradise Lost* and its themes. Chapter four will then use *Frankenstein* in order to examine how it, as a Romantic reader response by Shelly, contributes to the already established argument on the major themes in *Paradise Lost* and the discussion examined in the chapter on *Paradise Lost*. Seeing as *Frankenstein* will only serve as a tool in the way it relates to and can be useful in further understanding the above-mentioned themes in *Paradise Lost*, this essay will not include a discussion on *Frankenstein* as a stand-alone literary work. My final undertaking is to establish which way *Frankenstein* leans as a Romantic reader-response to *Paradise Lost*.

I will be using reader-response theory to see how re-reading literary works as products of reader-response can provide us with new views, evidence, and opinions on the work the reader-response product initially commented on. As opposed to the common methodology of most reader-response critics today who work with pedagogy, a historical era, or one specific text, this is an approach that uses reader-response theory to explain how readers are influenced by previous literary works by using a novel as the product of reader-response, rather than focussing on the reader and the text in a general sense. Stanley Fish, reader-response and Milton critic, has looked at *Paradise Lost* in great detail through the method of affective stylistics in *Surprised by Sin*, but his focus was on the internal moral struggle of the ideal or informed reader of *Paradise Lost*, with special regards to methodology and the literary criticism on Milton and his work. Another critic who has provided insight on the subject is Lucy Newlyn. Her expertise is Romanticism and the reception of *Paradise Lost*, of which she is the leading critic even today (Shears 1). In some ways her approach is similar to mine, but her analysis centres on reception and effect, and focuses on studying responses to *Paradise Lost* in the Romantic period with special regards to “the greats” and poetry. Newlyn does include some analysis of the influence *Paradise Lost* had for Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein*, but I feel that it is not sufficient. Her criticism is focused on how the Romantics responded to *Paradise Lost*, how this is present in Romantic literature and what *Paradise Lost* has meant for Romanticism, not as much the other way around. I have used Fish and Newlyn as examples because I rely on their expertise.

If we read *Frankenstein* as a product of Mary Shelley’s reader-response to *Paradise Lost*, we need to first find textual evidence suggesting that *Paradise Lost* influenced *Frankenstein*. *Frankenstein* is riddled with reference and intertextuality that relates to *Paradise Lost*, and I will look at possible textual evidence as contextual suggestions that prove this. By looking at examples found in *Frankenstein* we can understand the God versus Satan relationship in *Paradise Lost* in a way that reading *Paradise Lost* on its own might not. The focus in this essay is on what *Frankenstein* tells us about the reader experience of *Paradise Lost*, rather than what the epic poem on its own incites in the reader. Thus, I will use *Frankenstein* as a product of Mary Shelley’s reader-response to judge Milton’s God in *Paradise Lost*, together with reader-response theory and the reception of *Paradise Lost* in the Romantic era. This allows for an evaluation of *Frankenstein* as a product of reader-response, as well as to comment on the work it initially commented on. How does *Frankenstein* change our view and perception of Milton and *Paradise Lost*? Can we elicit something new from this

reading, and is it necessary? What can *Frankenstein* reveal about God and Satan that *Paradise Lost* leaves out? What does *Frankenstein* do for *Paradise Lost*? How can *Frankenstein* as a product of reader-response of *Paradise Lost* provide knowledge, meaning, evidence to *Paradise Lost* that is not necessarily evident, understood or underlined by Milton in *Paradise Lost*? All of these questions, and more, I aim to figure out.

2 Critical Theory

2.1 Reader-Response and Reception Theory

“Reading and writing join hands, change places, and finally become distinguishable only as two names for the same activity.”

(Tompkins “Introduction” i)

Seeing as this thesis takes into account the reception of *Paradise Lost* in the Romantic period in England, as well as the result of one author’s reader-response to *Paradise Lost*, I find it important to introduce the discipline of the literary field devoted to and centred around the reader. What has become known as reader-response theory or reader-response criticism surfaced in the late 1960s and the 1970s as a new cutting edge approach to literature and literary criticism. It was established as a field of literary criticism which centred on the shift of critical perspective from the text itself to that of the reader (Parker 330), whereas today critics agree that all criticism is essentially reader-response criticism. Robert Dale Parker explains in *How to Interpret Language* that reader-response criticism has become less influential and proposes that reader-response should now be considered as an integral part of all literary criticism rather than solely in its own right (330). However, reader-response critic Jane P. Tompkins writes that “Reader-response criticism is not a conceptually unified critical position”, and explains that it is instead a term associated with literary critics who all work with the terms reader, reading process and response (“Introduction” ix).

Tompkins explains that according to reader-response theory a text cannot be understood apart from the results it creates. The effects of reading create meaning which is realised in the reader’s mind (“Introduction” ix). Harkin is another champion for reader-response theory who feels that due to the theoretical commonplace that readers make meaning, reader-response theory is no longer seen as an important practice for literary criticism (414). Instead, reader-response has come to be associated almost exclusively with pedagogy (416). Harkin argues that reader-response theory is more than a teaching tool because it is a literary field that allows for a multiplicity of accepted readings, telling us that readers make meaning and how, which is empowering (418, 422). Following Tompkins’

logic, with the knowledge that there are many different approaches to reader-response criticism, in regards to theory and method depending on field of criticism, topic and intent, it is evident that reader-response criticism is complex and varied, suggesting that it should be considered both as separate and together with other fields of literary criticism.

In her user-friendly guide to critical theory, Lois Tyson has attempted to simplify the range of approaches to reader-response criticism by loosely organising reader-response theories under five headings: transactional reader-response theory, affective stylistics, subjective reader-response theory, psychological reader-response theory, and social reader-response theory (172). While dividing the different theories into categories makes the overall understanding of reader-response criticism easier to approach, the lines that divide are fluid, often indistinct, and not restrictive. Tyson explains that “it is precisely because the fabric of reader-response theory is woven of so many diverse and controversial threads that some method of classification is necessary” (172). By that statement, Tyson makes sure that her readers understand that although reader-response theory and its practitioners share the beliefs that the reader’s role cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature, and that readers actively make the meaning they find in the text (170, Tompkins “Reader in History” 201), methodology differs widely within the critical field. As such, my decision to rely on Tyson’s user-friendly guide as a reference for the introduction to reader-response theory is twofold. Firstly, as an introductory part of this thesis Tyson’s work provides a simplified, well-structured outline of reader-response theory. Second, after having provided an overview of the field of reader-response theory it is only natural to explain the theories that will be used or referred to most in this essay and why. Thus, seeing as all reader-response theory is linked, theories complement each other and expand on already conceived ideas, I find it wise to show how the ideas I have chosen to focus on have come about.

Reader-response criticism can help us learn about our reading process as well as how texts relate to the intellectual communities we belong to, and our own life experiences (Tyson 169). In my introduction I wrote about the observations I made in regards to rereading *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein*, realising how my knowledge and experience had changed the way I read and understood the works. Reflections like these are very important for reader-response criticism, and even though the different theories vary in methodology and preferred focal point, a common thread is how the reader reacts to a text and the meaning this creates; different readers may read and respond to a text differently (170). As such, I want to submit that context is an important variable to consider for reader-response criticism. The context in

which we approach a text, our subjective predisposition and prejudice, and the context of the situation in which we read the text, the age and shared cultural disposition at the time of reading or the actual situation (in a class-room or in private), all shape the meaning we create from a texts as we read. Thus, to see how *Frankenstein* can be seen as a product of reader-response, for then to apply it to a rereading of *Paradise Lost* with the use of reader-response theory, we first have to understand how reader-response theory can be utilised as literary criticism.

Reader-response theories are so closely woven and dependent on each other for further development that it becomes necessary to divulge some information about the main points for which they each derive their methodology. I will only introduce four of the five categories provided by Tyson, leaving out psychological reader-response theory as it does not factor into my thesis. Transactional reader-response theory is often associated with Louise Rosenblatt, and her premise is the distinction between the terms text, reader and poem. Text refers to the written word on the page, the reader is us, and the poem is the product created when the reader reads a text (Tyson 173). Wolfgang Iser further developed this theory by adding that there is an occurrence of interplay between determinate and indeterminate meanings as we read, resulting in multiple experiences that shape our interpretation of a literary work. This process is also referred to as “filling in the gaps” and allows for a range of different acceptable interpretations that can be justified by literary evidence (174). However, transactional reader-response critics often agree that a literary work has a blueprint and thus rely on the authority of the text, leaving interpretation less adaptable than one might think or wish (175). For my discussion on *Paradise Lost* criticism the authority of the text and the author’s intent has perhaps been the most debated topic among early critics, especially in regards to theodicy and God versus Satan. It is for this reason that I want to apply some of the ideas of transactional reader-response when interacting with literary criticism of *Paradise Lost*, to demonstrate how influential literary criticism can be for the reader’s experience, and ultimately interpretation, of a literary work. By applying ideas accumulated by these debates to the reading of *Paradise Lost* seen through *Frankenstein*, I aim to show how literary works that are not solely commenting on previously written texts can be utilised as literary criticism in their own right to provide insight into the works they seem to be influenced by.

Although less important for this thesis, I still want to quickly mention the ideas concerning subjective reader-response theory. I do this mostly because as with transactional reader-response theory it provides us with a history of what is to come in the field of reader-

response criticism. Subjective reader-response theory does not call for the analysis of textual cues. The reader's response is the text both in the sense that the text does not exist outside of the reader's interpretation, and because the text that is critically analysed is not the literary work but the written response of the reader (178). What this means for this thesis is that, if we view *Frankenstein* not as a literary work per se but instead as a reader's response that creates the meaning of *Paradise Lost*, *Frankenstein* is the product of Shelley's interpretation of *Paradise Lost* and an appropriate tool to use for further analysis of the work it responds to. Or as David Bleich would coin it, through re-symbolisation Shelley has interpreted the meaning of the text by responding to the conceptual experience she created in response to the text (qtd. in Tompkins 178). Bleich's primary interest when it comes to reader-response theory is pedagogical, viewing the classroom as a community that with his method can teach students how communities produce knowledge and how each individual member functions as a part of the community (179). Part of this method echoes Harkin's statement that by understanding how we ourselves interpret and create meaning through reading we are empowered because we hold the knowledge of our own reading experience and interpretation. Bleich's subjective reader-response theory also teaches us that we can understand the reader's reaction to a text by looking at specific passages, revealing how the reader feels, thinks and associates with the text (180). By concentrating on specific passages in *Frankenstein* that relate to or echo *Paradise Lost*, we might be able to see how *Paradise Lost* has affected Shelley, and discover what this means for further analysis of *Paradise Lost*.

Reader-response and Milton critic Fish has afforded us with several theories for the field of reader-response criticism. His book *Surprised by Sin* is dedicated to *Paradise Lost* and the theory he uses for his criticism is affective stylistics. As I will be relying on *Surprised by Sin* in my argument, Fish has been instrumental in the writing of this thesis. However, as far as reader-response theories go, affective stylistics will not be my main focus. One of the reasons why is the insistence on detail and close examination. Affective stylistics is a method that looks at the structure of a text, word by word, sentence by sentence, to see how the text affects the reader (Tyson 175). Although I find this methodology very interesting and noteworthy, it is not applicable for my discussion as a whole. Still, Fish's arguments in *Surprised by Sin* have merit for the debate on Milton's authority and the debate on God versus Satan. The affective stylistic approach Fish employs yields important facts and provides textual evidence to be considered about the underlying effects of *Paradise Lost*, as well as Milton's intentions, what is written on the page, versus the reader's response. As such, I feel

that Fish's use of affective stylistics in *Surprised by Sin* is useful for understanding the significance of Shelley's reader-response, as well as how to see *Frankenstein* as a product of reader-response and how to utilise it as literary criticism on *Paradise Lost*.

In the 1972 reprint of "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics", Fish explains in the footnote that he no longer stands behind every statement (70). Instead his focus in the field of reader-response criticism has shifted to what Tyson terms social reader-response theory (185). Still interested in the idea of the informed reader and the value of affective analysis of texts and reader-response, Fish has expanded on his former theories of affective stylistics and those of subjective reader-response theory. Tompkins writes that for social reader-response there is no purely individual subjective responses (185). Instead Fish argues that all our responses to literature are in reality products of the interpretive community we belong to. An interpretive community is built up by those who share interpretive strategies when approaching a text. These strategies are the products of institutionalised assumptions we have picked up and established about what makes a text a piece of literature and the meanings we are supposed to find in it (185). As a result, social reader-response theory closely relates to reception theory in that it is dependent on our predisposition at the time of reading, whether the context is a class-room or a certain historical time. Reception theory interprets the history of the way in which people read a work of literature with regards to the "horizons of expectations that surround the work." (Parker 344). Thus we can argue that although Fish agrees with Bleich that readers create texts, their method is different. Fish argues that the creation is not produced by a communal authority through the negotiation that happens after a text has been read, rather the creation occurs while reading based on a multiplicity of communal authorities based on multiple interpretive communities the reader belongs to (185). These sets of preconceived notions that we bring to the reading experience change over time, or better yet as formulated by Parker on reception theory: "The words on the page are the same, but their meaning has shifted." (345).

Stuart Hall is a literary theorist who specialises in reception theory (Parker 344). Hall's theories are mostly based on how we encode and decode media, but can be applied to literature as well (90). In his essay "Encoding, decoding" Hall's theory suggests that there are four stages of communication: production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction, that can help us understand audience reception, reading and response (94). The value of this approach, Hall writes, is to show that although each moment in the stage is necessary for the circuit as a whole, "no one moment can fully guarantee the next moment

with which it is articulated.” (91). This brings us back to my comment on context. For the encoding and decoding of *Paradise Lost* to be successful in one way or the other, the stages of communication must be evaluated, especially with regard to context. The author encodes his or her content by a framework of knowledge in accordance with both personal bias or sets of belief, and the constructed cultural discourse he or she is predisposed to (94). Thus, it would seem prudent to look at Milton to understand how his encoding created *Paradise Lost* to understand how his message was received by the Romantic audience. However, it is not Milton’s intent I will be discussing, seeing as I want to use reader-response theory not dependent on the author for the analysis of a literary work. Also, it is the framework of knowledge in which the Romantic reader is able to decode *Paradise Lost* that is of interest for this thesis. In this way we will instead be looking at *Frankenstein* as the product of communication, tracing the origin of decoding back to *Paradise Lost* to understand how it was decoded and what meaning was received by Shelley that resulted in *Frankenstein*. Thus, we could say that Hall’s theory will be applied backwards, reception leading back to production, for then to be used again as a means of decoding *Frankenstein* within the framework of knowledge dependent on *Paradise Lost* and the Romantic period’s cultural order.

Fish would better explain the way I intend to use Hall’s theory as a method applying the idea of the informed reader to analyse a literary work, as part of a study of reception theory. An informed reader is someone who is a competent speaker of the language out of which the text is built up, is skilled linguistically, and has literary competence (“Affective Stylistics” 86-7). With these specifics in hand, Fish clarifies that any reader can become an informed reader by making themselves informed, and that this method of reading does not define a literary work’s value: “The fact that this method does not begin with the assumption of literary superiority or end with its affirmation, is, I think, one of its strongest recommendations.” (“Affective Stylistics” 88). However, the informed reader of a particular work might not be the informed reader of another. There is also the issue of response dependent on local beliefs, such as a reader of *Paradise Lost* in regards to religious beliefs. This in turn allows for a multitude of responses to a text, even if all are informed readers of the text in question. Fish’s theory allows for this result, and he further explains that it is not the text itself that elicits literary quarrels or disagreements, rather it is the response to a response. C. S. Lewis’ explains the difference in opinion between literary critics, himself and Dr. Leavis, in this way: “It is not that he and I see different things when we look at *Paradise*

Lost. He sees and hates the very same things that I see and love.” (qtd. in Fish “Affective Stylistics” 89). As such, we shall equate Shelley to the informed readers of *Paradise Lost* in the Romantic period and understand what *Frankenstein* tells us about *Paradise Lost* by looking at the Romantic audience and their belief systems. I intend to analyse *Paradise Lost* with the help of *Frankenstein*, thus, my interpretation will rely on reception theory applied to the Romantic period, as well as reader-response theory that evaluates *Frankenstein*’s involvement and contribution to *Paradise Lost*. As yet another example of reader-response, my argument is not void of subjectivity. This only shows how important context is for differentiating between our own personal experience with the literature and what I am trying to illustrate with the Romantic reception of, and *Frankenstein* as Shelley’s take on, *Paradise Lost*.

2.2 The Romantic Reader and Writer

“Poets are neither ideal nor common readers”

(Bloom, 19)

To better understand the conditions and context surrounding the creation of *Frankenstein*, as well as the Romantic legacy of *Paradise Lost*, I will illustrate the mindset of the Romantic reader and writer. In her introduction to *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception*, Lucy Newlyn sets out to explore the relationship between Romantic readers and writers. Her preface notes that the rise of professional criticism created a sense of anxiety for writers (*Anxiety of Reception* vii). The Romantic era also gave way to the rise of the reader, intensifying the anxiety of reception. However, Newlyn suggests that rather than being oppressed and burdened by the past, Romantic writers were more concerned by the combined threats of modernity and influence (*Anxiety of Reception* x). Newlyn engages actively with Harold Bloom’s celebrated theory on the anxiety of influence, observing that his theory only emphasises the writer-reader relationship, rather than incorporating the effect the reader has for the writer’s creative process. For Newlyn, seeing as all writers are also readers, and some readers are also writers, it is imperative to include that readers are as important to writers as their precursors. Since literary works are dependent on readers to live on, and because readers

construct and defend literary identity, their presence and the traces of earlier writings are just as discernible in the text as the writer's own voice (*Anxiety of Reception* vii).

Romantic readers were preoccupied with the past and practised rereading of great literature, claiming kinship with what had endured, demonstrating that the materials of great poetry were lasting through echoes and intertextuality present in their own work (*Anxiety of Reception* 179). This led to reception anxiety due to the fact that Romantic writers had to strive to be as good or better than acclaimed poets such as Shakespeare and Milton, whose works were held in high esteem, celebrated, and revered by society. Newlyn claims that these circumstances, and the anxiety, made Romantic writers work harder in a time where the market was highly competitive. As a result, collaborative relationships between poets, reviewers and critics were inevitable, and caused authors to create texts that sounded modern (*Anxiety of Influence* 39). Harold Bloom on the other hand submits that the Romantic writers were no match for the great poets of the English Renaissance, adding that Romanticism “shows a further decline in its Modernist and post-Modernist heirs.” (10). Being influenced so severely by *Paradise Lost* took a toll on the Romantic authors and made them self-conscious in their own writing (29). Knowing how important *Paradise Lost* was for the whole of the Romantic period in England, it is no wonder that writers felt anxious about their reception. It also stands to reason that striving to reach the level of fame that Milton's poem had at the time would have been near impossible as Bloom suggests, but it did not keep the Romantics from trying.

Early nineteenth-century England marks the rise of the reader (Newlyn *Anxiety of Reception* 3). The informed reader, as Fish would say, emerges with professional critics who were perceived as threatening. Authors became concerned with reception and the sense of an audience and for many writers engaging with celebrated literature of the past was a way of making sure the reader-response was favourable. In this way the audience could instantly connect with the modern work and be appreciative rather than critical. Newlyn states that the Romantics, especially the established poets, paid their tributes to former author's in echoes and allusions, they also knew that they could “rely on the immediate and effectiveness of its popular appeal to bring home any moral point they themselves wished to convey.” (*Romantic Reader* 21,19). One could easily suggest that this is the case for *Frankenstein*, especially seeing as Shelley was a female writer in a time where men still held most acclaim, and female novelists were viewed as passive readers turned would-be writers (*Anxiety of Influence* 4). Literacy increased in the nineteenth-century mostly due to the emergence of the novel as a

literary form. Newlyn proposes that the reason why the novel became so popular was due to it stemming from the oral tradition deeply embedded in cultural life, creating a sense of reading community and continuity between creation and reception (*Anxiety of Influence* 19). This allowed for the expansion of the reader-public, and one could say that references to known literature became even more important as it made it easier to identify with and attract all sorts of people – informed or not (*Anxiety of Influence* 9, 21). The ever widening middle-class readership together with more economical print technologies made *Paradise Lost* the modern classic, distinguished by its wide availability and great sublimity (Von Maltzahn 247).

Although *The Anxiety of Influence* mainly considers the anxiety felt and seen in the works of poets, Bloom poses some interesting observations and claims that align with authors in general as well. Bloom's concern is only with what he calls strong poets, "major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their precursors, even to the death.", and he sees Milton as strong poet even though he had to struggle with a major precursor in Spenser (11). In an attempt to understand the dilemma of the modern poet, Bloom uses *Paradise Lost* as an allegory: Milton's Satan is the modern poet with the potential to be great, Adam is the modern poet whose anxiety will be his perish, while God is the dead, embarrassingly potent, ancestral poet (20). Bloom has clearly chosen a side in the discussion on Milton's theodicy, but this allegory echoes some of Stanley Fish's concerns regarding the moral education of *Paradise Lost*. We are reminded that the fall has already happened and that we are all corrupted (*Surprised by Sin*). According to Bloom, Milton is the God that the Romantics emulate and try to best as Satan tried to, and when they fail because they are too anxious in regards to influence and reception, they become Adam and fall. It might be farfetched, but the point I am trying to make is that the Romantics feared and revered *Paradise Lost*, and it clearly shows from the amount of literature inspired by the epic poem. Also, Poetry was still deemed the most prestigious form of writing in the Romantic period. Irvin Howe remarks that poetry is "formed upon the model of the best writers who have gone before them, and reflecting many of their graces." (qtd. in *Anxiety of Influence* 12). This quote says something about the Romantic legacy of *Paradise Lost*, as well as discounting *Frankenstein* as a great work of literature. Today *Frankenstein* is one of the most read and well-known canons from the Romantic era, but for the Romantic informed reader it was not as prominent as the works of the great poets, although more people most likely read it at the time. This is a testament to Shelley's great skills as a writer, and tells us something about why *Frankenstein* has not been discussed as much as other Romantic literary works regarding Milton and *Paradise Lost*.

From Newlyn's work on reception, anxiety and influence in the Romantic period, we can surmise that past literature such as *Paradise Lost* was widespread and admired, but mostly critically discussed in regards to poetry (as it still is today).

In *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader*, Newlyn argues that Milton's influence on those who came after him is vital to the very understanding of what Romanticism is (*Romantic Reader* 1). The method she applies to her work is to analyse Milton's presence in Romantic texts. Newlyn states early in her book that every writer belonging to the tradition of English Romanticism could be seen as having engaged with what Milton had to say in one way or another. Therefore, she suggests that Milton became a guide for self-definition, expression and identity (*Romantic Reader* 2). The Romantic tradition was shaped by the assimilation, reformulation and rejection of values embodied in *Paradise Lost*, and Newlyn counts him as the prime example of imagination and presentation of moral ambivalence (*Romantic Reader* 3). As a result, there has ensued a misunderstanding of the way in which the Romantics generally read the poem's political and divine meaning in the wake of the French Revolution: "Satanic allusion is not the register of ideological certitude, but of moral and political *angst*" (*Romantic Reader* 7). The Romantics needed guidance and *Paradise Lost* provided them with a republican hero and champion for freedom of speech, as well as a spiritual guide (*Romantic Reader* 33, 34). As such, circumstances made it so that Milton was identified either as Satan the political hero, or as God the vehicle for spiritual truth (*Romantic Reader* 38). Rather than blaming the Romantics for misreading, Newlyn claims that it is the modern critics who misread Romantic reader-response. Her suggestion is that the increased subjectivity that emerges in Romantic writings about *Paradise Lost* should be read as an effect of revolution and political uncertainty, and the troubled and divided attitudes towards religious authority (*Romantic Reader* 7, 11). It is clear that Newlyn holds *Paradise Lost* and Milton in the highest regards, and she sees the Romantic products of reader-response to *Paradise Lost* as an accumulation of a special kind of reading of *Paradise Lost* that is distinctly Romantic (*Romantic Reader* 4). To Newlyn, the Romantic readings are not examples of misreading, rather they are the interpretations made by the Romantic audience that provide evidence to Milton's influence. The Romantics may have created their own meanings from *Paradise Lost*, which results in the emphasis on reader interpretation as opposed to authorial intention.

The Romantics had a tendency to lean towards the devil's party. Rationalising the Fall as fortunate, the Romantics read Michael's parting words to Adam and Eve: "Then wilt thou

not be loath / To lose this Paradise, but shalt possess / A Paradise within thee, happier far” (12.585-7¹), as humankind’s redemption through Christ from where imagination and love grew, which more than compensated humanity for the loss of Eden (*Romantic Reader* 64). Such a reading has been interpreted by most Miltonists, who are more concerned with the intended meaning of the text rather than its reception, as faulty or as misreading. Newlyn, on the other hand, sees allusive patterns within *Paradise Lost* repeated in Romantic writing that explain why the Romantics wrote the way they did, and excuses their interpretations as not being of the Satanic extreme (*Romantic Reader* 65). As it stands, I am not attempting to prove or disprove Newlyn’s claims, I only want to demonstrate the intricacy of reader-response to *Paradise Lost* to show that even when we know that the Romantics tended to interpret *Paradise Lost* apart from Milton’s seemingly intended paradigm (1.26), we can still argue that the premise has been considered nevertheless. The outcome, i.e. the response, does not eliminate reader experience, but it is fused with the reader’s set of knowledge, belief, mind-set, and the dominant discourse at the time of writing. Therefore, we could also read Michael’s parting words to mean that Adam and Eve will have redemption thus they should not be loath, but being happier far is a term that was not needed in Eden, which suggests that the loss of innocence did not give humanity more. Instead it made it so that humanity has to distinguish between good and bad in order to even feel happy, whereas in Eden they just were. It is easier to imagine a fortunate Fall because we are already fallen and our postlapsarian state makes it so that we cannot comprehend what Paradise would be like. However, this does not automatically mean that the loss of Paradise is fortunate or necessary. The Romantics were troubled with doubts about humanity and religion, thus to view the Fall as fortunate gave them a sense of control and meaning. Pining over something lost was worse than reading *Paradise Lost* as a Satanic epic. Besides, the Romantic writers have a tendency to see themselves as tortured artists of a troubled humanity, rebels of the state and the church, which makes it natural to see Milton as being “of the devil’s party without knowing it” (Blake qtd. in *Romantic Reader* 64), because they wanted, and needed, him to be. Reading *Paradise Lost* as it seems it should be, the easy/obvious take, is not really something the Romantic writers liked to do. Poets like Blake had to subject their own experience and life onto the poem in order to be closer to Milton, and a part of *Paradise Lost*, in his reader-response.

¹ Milton, John. “Paradise Lost”, in *Milton: Paradise Lost*. Ed. Alastair Fowler. 2nd Edition. London: Longman, 2006. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to *Paradise Lost* are to this edition and will be referred to by book number and line.

Right or wrong, Romantic or not, the product of reader-response is always dependent on context, subjectivity and circumstance.

In *The Romantic Legacy of Paradise Lost: Reading Against the Grain*, Jonathan Shears explains that there have been no large-scale attempts to tackle Romantic responses to *Paradise Lost* since Newlyn's book on the Romantic writers' view on Milton published in 1993 (1). Shears on his part writes about the relationship between Romantic literature and the legacy that Romantic readings of *Paradise Lost* have held, intending to offer in some way a counter-argument to Newlyn's take on the Romantic reading of *Paradise Lost*. He says that "It seems appropriate to take issue with Newlyn's work first because this is where we are up to." (3). From a reader-response criticism point of view, Shears' approach can seem too preoccupied with the authorial aspect of the text. By that I mean that his claim is contingent on reading the poem with regards to Milton's intentions and the inevitable success of the intent, rather than how the reader creates meaning by interpretation and experience. Shears' opinion is that the Romantic readers misread *Paradise Lost* (4). The problem with arguing for a misreading is that the critic claims that there is a correct reading, which also indicates that there are several mistaken readings. Thus, Shears clearly believes that there are indications in the poem that suggest a blueprint for the reader to follow for a conclusion (5, 17). By choosing to see the opening lines uttered by the poetic persona as truth of Milton's intent (17), Shears has decided on what the correct reading is, and all the points he makes after are contingent on this premise. Personally my starting point is the same as Shears', resulting in a close relationship between my response and the success of the epic voice's intent.

The point that Shears is trying to make is the fact that the Romantics misread *Paradise Lost* by reading the poem in fragments, imposing their own meaning onto the text to use it as a springboard from which they could launch their own poetic projects (6). In other words, Shears has chosen to follow Milton's intended paradigm as he understands it. He argues that the Romantics read *Paradise Lost* against the grain, positioning himself on the other side, the opposite side of Newlyn (30), which is the main reason I chose to engage with his work. Reading with the grain is to interpret *Paradise Lost* as it seems to invite us to interpret it, in the way that Shears intends, whilst his main argument is that the Romantics read against the grain and analysed elements in the text that are not mainstream or intended by the author (Tyson 7). This means that Shears puts a great deal of emphasis on the intent of the author, disregarding alternate readings. To fully comprehend *Frankenstein* as Shelley's reader-response to *Paradise Lost*, I first need to understand the Romantic attitudes towards the poem,

and sort out the claims by critics so that I can show how reading *Frankenstein* reveals a Romantic response to both the authority of the text, and if we can determine how influential Milton's apparent paradigm was for the reader experience.

Stanley Fish theorises that *Paradise Lost* has an underlying moral purpose to guide the readers as they are surprised by sin through the literature into the fallen state together with Adam. In *Surprised by Sin* Fish explains that the purpose of his book is threefold: to show that the poem's focus is on the reader who is also the subject, to demonstrate that Milton's purpose is to educate the reader so he or she is aware of humanities fallen state and of the responsibility that comes with, and finally to present Milton's method of re-creating the drama of the Fall in the reader's mind as a means of making him or her fall again with Adam's troubled clarity (*Surprised by Sin* 1). It is clear that Fish is attempting to show that the readers are the literature, but he is also criticising from a standpoint that suggest rather strongly that there is a hidden message or authorial intent in the text. Using the methodology of affective stylistics is a way of analysing how readers can respond, or should respond, to *Paradise Lost* based on this specific premise. Reading *Paradise Lost* as it seems Milton intended is dependent on the context in which it is read, and these circumstances are ever changing when we consider reception theory. The encoding is the same, but the message is different. Although I engage with Fish and other critics who focus on *Paradise Lost* in a more general sense, my task is to combine the Romantic situation with criticism concerned with the same topics as me, and figure out how Shelley as a Romantic reader responds to *Paradise Lost* through *Frankenstein*.

“We are meant to remember that the events of the poem have already occurred...and that it is because of what happens in the poem, because we and all men were corrupted by the Fall, that we stand in need of a guide to correct our reading of it. The narrative voice is our guide.”

(Anne Ferry qtd. in Fish *Surprised by Sin* 47)

Both the works of Shears and Fish prove that literary criticism is subjective no matter how intent the critic is on maintaining his or her objectivity. Fish on the one hand provides us with the evidence that using reader-response theory in analysis is subjective in nature, because the subject matter has to have a baseline. This is the difficulty with reader-response theory in

my opinion. No matter how hard one tries, it will be dependent on one's own reader-response and experience, thus bias is inevitable. However, Fish is honest about his approach and its limitations. He explicitly tells us that his method depends on the belief that Milton is not trying to manipulate reader response, rather he is telling the story that created and still creates the responses of its reader and of all readers. By this he means that the readers are goaded into falling for the Satanic rhetoric, making Adam's fall the reader's fall. (*Surprised by Sin* 38). Fish does not limit his method to the author's authority, which also includes one correct or intended reading, but explains that the reader has to consider the authority of the epic voice instead. The epic voice can be confirmed or anticipated in the reading experience, but is not supposed to be experienced as controlling. Milton invites us to put his epic voice on trial by allowing the reading experience to contradict it and view it as a guide. He expects his reader to worry about the clash, to place it in a context that would resolve troublesome contradiction and allow him to reunite with an authority who is a natural ally against the difficulties of the poem (*Surprised by Sin* 42). Although Fish seems to support the reader's freedom, he still chooses a side after deciding to rely on Milton's paradigm. However, compared to other critics, Fish's focus continues to be in favour of the reader whichever way he or she chooses to go with the reading experience. His method can explain how and to what extent readers interpret *Paradise Lost*, but he does not eliminate other readings and different methods.

With regards to Shears on the other hand, I do not particularly like his approach in that he has an unapologetic attitude to what he conceives as false. He bases his entire book on the fact that the Romantics misread *Paradise Lost*, leaving the reader almost no room for a separate interpretation. In addition, he insists that unlike Fish he does not subscribe to the idea of Milton as a corrective author (5), when in reality what he is doing is establishing that *Paradise Lost* has to be read a certain way by claiming that someone else has read it wrong. I applaud Shears' boldness, and agree that there are ways to read *Paradise Lost* that may seem more obvious than other readings, i.e. reading with the grain, but I do not subscribe to his method and abrasiveness. For my reader-response approach to the text, I have decided to embrace the inevitability of subjectivity. As such, although I subscribe to the idea that *Frankenstein* as a reader-response to *Paradise Lost* can be read in several ways, just as *Paradise Lost* can be interpreted in more ways than one, I too have to limit my reach. However, I do not want to be dismissive of the fact that it is ultimately the reader-response that is relevant, and not the act of figuring out what the author's exact intent was.

3 *Paradise Lost*

: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

(Milton 1.22-6)

In 1674 John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* was released in twelve books. The poem is based on The Book of Genesis from the Bible, and elaborates on the of events before and after the Fall, as well as voicing Satan's misfortunes. This part of the thesis is dedicated to the criticism of some of the most influential *Paradise Lost* critics on the subject of Milton's theodicy, and the discussions about God and Satan. The goal of this exercise is to show the differing critical debates in the field, as a means of uncovering how God and Satan have been, and can be, interpreted. For many of these literary critics their arguments depend on where they stand in relation to Milton's paradigm, as expressed by Jonathan Shears in the previous chapter. His starting point is the poetic persona's speech about justifying the ways of God to men (1.26), and all the analysis that follows has to take this into account. Seeing as this is also the case for several other Milton critics, I will explain the paradigm. To be successful in this demonstration, I need to address the ongoing discussion on the Free Will Defense, the theological problem of Evil, and Milton's theodicy. However, before I attempt any of this, I first have to determine the extent to which Milton's paradigm will counter into the argument that follows. I propose that instead of looking at it as Milton's paradigm, we should take the author out of the equation and consider the premise as that of the poetic persona's intent, or better yet the influence of the epic voice. In this way we can evaluate the reader's response without involving the author. We limit the issue of an authorial reading, and to some degree the problem that ensues when we assume that a text can and should be interpreted "correctly". For this thesis, *Frankenstein* is the evidence, a reader-response influenced by *Paradise Lost*, and the question is not if Shelley read it right, but how we can interpret her reading and what that reading means for further analysis of *Paradise Lost*.

Another point to be made for excluding author involvement and intent, is the fact that we cannot be sure of Milton's intention, and it should not matter for the reader's response. Lucy Newlyn goes even further and equates accepting Milton's epic voice to submitting to the authority of the Christian truth. She explains that it is only when the reader fully refuses and resists the absoluteness of the epic voice that the reader is rewarded with free access to the plurality of alternative voices in the poem (*Romantic Reader* 119). Because God sees all, the reader has to become God-like in his or her reading if they want to insert themselves into the story and the experience of *Paradise Lost*. From a Romantic reader's perspective, the authority of the epic voice has to be challenged, and the means to do it is by questioning the justice of God's judgment. The rationalisation behind Newlyn's reasoning is that the Romantics' "interest in the corrupting influence of circumstances on human motivation frequently evolves into a larger and more abstract concern with the problem of evil." (*Romantic Reader* 120). Seeing as Newlyn is viewed as the expert on Romantic reader-response to *Paradise Lost*, her claim has validity. The Romantic responses reveal political unrest, fear of the future and issues with Christianity, but even so, deciding to limit my research by taking into account the poetic voice is necessary. I do not attempt to make any claims that this is the only reading, or the correct one. Instead, I want to make it very clear that by accepting the fact that the poetic voice influences the reader's experience, I have not limited this recognition to whether or not I agree that it should be seen as the ultimate truth. What it means is that the poetic persona's intention is considered as influential, thus it has to factor into the process of analysis.

On the other hand, this does not mean that the poem has to be read as an acknowledgment of the inevitable success of the poetic voice, rather it is only an indicator as to what the reader may expect and take into consideration for their response. My belief is that because the text clearly states the poetic persona's intent, every reader has to keep it in mind, but it is how they respond to the intent that makes the reading. Therefore, Newlyn on her side warns the reader to not blindly trust the authority of the poetic voice but challenge it (asserting this is what the Romantic readers do), whilst Jonathan Shears claims that any reading that does not trust the authority of the poetic voice is a misreading. As such, I will concur with Stanley Fish's methodology which suggests that *Paradise Lost* is not so much a teaching as an intangling, where the poetic voice is Milton's moral guide to whom readers can relate, for then to experience the fall as our first parents did, subsequently realising our own state of fallenness. The experience is true as we are already fallen, we are postlapsarian

readers, but how we respond to the experience differs. Fish's interpretation of this kind of reader-response is one that relies on the correctness, authority, and morality of the epic voice throughout the poem, but the method can just as easily be used to show that the poetic voice is unreliable and manipulative, as well as influencing the reader to disagree with its authority, as the Romantics supposedly did. In this way we can discuss how readers are influenced by the poetic voice's premise for the poem, and how this influence can be seen in their response, while at the same time we do not judge any response as right or wrong. Having made this decision, everything I uncover from this point forward is dependent on the influence of Milton's paradigm, as presented by the epic voice, for reader-response.

The next step, after having accepted Milton's paradigm as a necessary factor for our reader-response, is choosing a side: God or Satan, successful theodicy or not. Although some critics may argue that they do not choose a side, I am quite certain that they have to and that their work proves it. In my subchapters on God and Satan I will only engage with the works of critics who are clear about their affiliations, so as to better portray both agents for the work that comes afterwards, and to show how varied the interpretation of *Paradise Lost* is even among its informed-readers. Newlyn writes that "Milton is hidebound by religious absolutes, from which he is unable to break free." (*Romantic Reader* 59), which is why it is important to keep in mind the influence of the Bible for *Paradise Lost*. No work is without its influences, but as far as influences go, the Bible is one that cannot be betrayed if the author expects his or her audience to relate or submit to his authority. The Book of Genesis however, is riddled with fill-in-the-gaps for readers, and Milton takes advantage of this. His tale never strays from the premise of the original story, but the fillers are up for grabs. This means that the God we read about in the Bible is not Milton's God, just as the snake is not Milton's Satan, therefore we are justified in judging Milton's characters because they are his creation whereas it might be considered bad form to do the same to the Bible. Inadvertently, by commenting on Milton's God we are also analysing the Christian God because *Paradise Lost* is a response to The Book of Genesis. It all comes down to reader-response and how we interpret it. It seems that if Milton had been less vocal about his aim to justify God's actions, he could have saved himself some controversy and disagreement. On the other hand, if had not voiced his aim, the result might not have been a *Paradise Lost* this highly debated and critically acclaimed.

3.1 Theodicy, Free Will and the Problem of Evil

As previously mentioned, to understand how Milton's God and Satan can be, and has been, interpreted we need to first recognise the premise on which *Paradise Lost* is built. We already know that *Paradise Lost* relies on The Book of Genesis, which means that we also have an inkling of what to expect. Whether or not the expectation is realised depends on our interpretation. In this way, as I explained in my first chapter, time of writing, personal, religious and cultural beliefs, context and so forth, as it relates to the reader, has to be taken into account when we analyse any reader-response. However, for me to reach any sort of "conclusion" I need guidance provided by literary criticism. Therefore, I have engaged with Miltonists who's research takes into account both Milton's theodicy and the God versus Satan debate. These debates provide information on how *Paradise Lost* has been and, in their opinion, should be read, as well as arguments for why and how some readings are considered wrong. What most of these critics have in common is the insistence on analysis based on, in some way or other, the poem's premise. By this I mean that they all engage in their own way with the poetic voice's "justify the ways of God to men" (1.26). Again I insist that we not jump to any conclusions of correctness or absolutes, rather I suggest that we figure out why and what it means. For any critic to attempt a critical analysis of *Paradise Lost*, he or she needs to ponder this premise. Some critics argue that Milton's intention is to justify God's actions and they provide textual evidence to recognising his success. Others also agree about the intention, but provide textual evidence to show that Milton did not succeed. Furthermore, some critics assert that although Milton's poetic voice claims that the poem is motivated by the need to justify God's ways, Milton's own intentions vary from that of the epic voice. I have already decided to exclude Milton from the equation, thus the aim is to show how our reading of *Paradise Lost* as a theodicy nondependent on its author betrays the text's motivation and what response the motivation produces. As a general rule, seeing Milton's theodicy as successful means sympathy for God and the unfortunate Fall, whilst an unsuccessful theodicy results in sympathy for the Devil and the fortunate Fall. There are always grey areas, still, most commonly we see critics choosing one of the two sides. More to come, but first let us demonstrate how to evaluate a theodicy.

The word theodicy derives from Greek and is virtually synonymous with Milton's "to justify the ways of God" (Danielson *Good God* 4). A theodicy attempts to demonstrate or

establish a near truth of the three cardinal propositions: 1. God is omnipotent, 2. He is wholly good, 3. Evil exists in this world (*Good God* 7). By using this model for theodicy, it is possible to establish a sense of *Paradise Lost's* accomplishment. For the theodicy to be successful the interpretation cannot be contradicted, which is why we also have to explore the issue that arises for a theodicy when a doctrine is fused with a narrative. God's justification relies on the merit of the Free Will Defense, which together with the theological problem of Evil factors into the Christian Doctrine. Dennis Danielson writes that "To undertake a theodicy at all presupposes that we have *some* right or ability to arrive at judgments concerning God's nature and character." ("Fall and Theodicy"146). Seeing as I am not a religious person, the rightfulness of judging God does not concern or effect me. However, seeing as I am also an informed person, my judging God could rightfully be construed as both blasphemous and offensive by, and to, people who believe. Therefore, I agree with Danielson on the theological matter, but refer back to my own problem statement: Who Dares to be the Judge of Milton's God? Now, I want to argue that Milton's God is there for the taking because he is fictional, from which some might contend that the biblical God is fictional and therefore ripe for judgment as well. My answer is that this is not a theological debate, and I feel that I have neither the right nor the ability to do be a judge in such a debate. Milton's God on the other hand is ready to be challenged, judged and responded to, because he is fictional and the result of anthropomorphism. A God who exhibits humanlike qualities elicits suspicion in the same way we would feel sceptical in any analogous human situation ("Fall and Theodicy"149), which equals grounds for reader scrutiny and judgment. To this predicament Dennis Burden responds that the poem's need to say so much about God is evidence to how little freedom Milton was allotted in his representation (20).

The theodicy seeks a dual solution to assert both grace and free will, providence and divine justice, and both the contingency of human actions and the omniscience of God (*Good God* 155). Danielson expresses his belief that Milton was aware of the difficulty of "reconciling God's goodness with the existence of evil and God's foreknowledge with the freedom of Man's will." (*Good God* 21). The declared subject of *Paradise Lost* is taken from the Bible which means that Milton had to work within the tight limits of The Book of Genesis in accordance with the Christian Doctrine. This lead to limitations in regards to narrative, the portrayal of characters, motive and action, because The Book of Genesis is specific (Burden 6, 17-8). Therefore, Milton had to make sure that his narrative and the doctrine aligned. The only character in *Paradise Lost* that does not have a big presence in The Book of Genesis is

Satan. This suggests that Milton could be more creative with Satan's narrative, of which the importance for analysis will become clear in a later subchapter on Satan. As to the representation of God, the attributes Milton gave him had to be non-disputable. This means that God cannot show sympathy towards those he punishes for evil deeds, just as he cannot be a God who acts out of vengeance or pity (Burden 34). For the theodicy to prove successful Milton has to show that God is wholly good as the second proposition demands, which is understandably hard to do when God also has to be the punisher of evil. A lot of the issues around the justification of God stems from the existence of evil (*Good God* 2). How can we reconcile God's goodness with the existence of evil? If God is almighty, all good and just, why is there any evil in the world? (Lande 5). One possibility is that God permits but is not responsible for evil (Burden 20). Furthermore, Danielson proposes that it is when God's creation disobeys that evil is created (*Good God* 148). The theological problem of Evil becomes a problem because we have to accept that evil exists, even though just by existing it is a contradiction to God being wholly good. For *Paradise Lost* the premise is already established by the Bible, so our job is to interpret how the text deals with the issue. As we have already seen, the Romantic response to the problem of Evil in *Paradise Lost* is to blame God and applaud Satan's heroism, thus indicating that to them the theodicy was flawed – the Fall is necessary.

Another issue that arises from Milton's representation of God is that as soon as he becomes a character who speaks, he cannot be trusted. The only reason why God is given the human attribute of speech, in Thomas Corns' opinion, is because of the doctrinal significance of what God has to say (15). One way in which Milton can be seen as limiting God's human attributes is through the relationship with the Son. The Father's role is that of an overwhelming strength which sanctions and initiates actions of the Son (Corn 19). For example, the creation: It is God's work but it is the Son who executes it. We can read the Father's power as providence and justice, whilst the Son is associated with self-sacrifice and mercy. In summation, it is possible to see the Son as the active agent of God's will, which means that God can interfere without acting on it himself. This brings me back to the first cardinal rule: God's omnipotence. Can we argue that God's creations can change the outcome of the future if God is omnipotent? In book 3 he explains to the Son that "if I foreknew, / Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault" (3.117-8), the crucial word being "if". Upon our first encounter with the almighty God in Heaven, he sits "High throned above all height, ... / His own works and their works at once in view" (3.58-9), and "from his prospect high, /

Wherein past, present, future he beholds,” (3.77-8). We may interpret these lines as God’s omnipotence. He knows all, but he is outside of time as we experience it, and Danielson suggests that what is knowable is not necessarily foreknowable by God (“Fall and Theodicy”149). In defense of God, and for a successful theodicy, “nothing is going to happen on account of God’s knowing it will happen; but because it is going to happen, it is therefore known by God before it does happen.” (Origen qtd. in *Good God* 161). For his creatures to have Free Will, God cannot be an active agent, and to justify God’s actions Milton presents the reader with the few instances where God can permit interference by his agents to prevent the Fall. The one rule asked of our first parents: ‘Ye shall not eat / Thereof, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die.’ (9.662-3), the warning of Satan’s arrival: ‘for thou knowst / What hath been warned us’ (9.252-3), and the explanation by Raphael of Free Will: ‘But God left free the will, for what obeys / Reason, is free, and reason he made right’ (9.351-2). Is this sufficient warning or preparation for the encounter of evil? Arguable, but at the very least it is textual evidence to show that God can be interpreted as less absent or complacent.

I believe that the Free Will Defense is the most persuasive argument in God’s favour. It is hard to argue that a God is unjust in his actions when we know that we are the makers of our own fates. Again we can discuss the validity of God’s Free Will if he foreknows everything, but reading *Paradise Lost* and God’s words as “if” he foreknew, it is possible to assume that the text invites us to side with God. The Free Will Defense is the argument stating that God created all beings with the freedom to choose. In so doing all his creatures could choose if they wanted to obey or disobey his command. The Free Will Defense, as Danielson sees it, claims that “the amount of goodness that presupposes the exercise of freedom ultimately outweighs the total amount of evil.” (Danielson *Good God* 148). If we want to experience the Fall as unfortunate, we have to agree with the three cardinal rules, and that the text is sufficient in its justification. On the other hand, to disagree with the justification of God is not necessarily reason enough to count the Fall as fortunate, but it implies that there is insufficient evidence to the contrary. Shears explains that “Milton’s purpose in using the narrative of the Fall was always to foreground his belief in the desirability of man’s disobedience to God through the exercise of his (free) will.” (Shears 19). In this way, just as Milton’s writing, my reading is tainted by my postlapsarian state, which means that I can experience the pull of Satan’s rhetoric and the scepticism towards what I perceive as defensive God pleading his case. Every time I stray from God I fall, but I can still read the theodicy as successful if I feel that *Paradise Lost* argues well for God’s justification.

Stanley Fish states that “The ability not to fall depends on the ability to fall; free will is a meaningless concept unless the possibility of wrong choice exists.” (*Surprised by Sin* 210), but he is not arguing that the Fall is fortunate. He is opposing the idea critics have that the Fall was necessary because this was the only way for humans to truly have Free Will. The point Fish is making is that Adam and Eve had the option of the wrong choice, therefore they could have stayed in Eden if they had not eaten the fruit.

3.2 The Great Divide

“Two traditions run alongside each other, in post-Miltonic writing: one laments the fallen state, nostalgically yearning to regain or rebuild paradise; the other offers consolation in the face of loss, and celebrates the human qualities that come through falling.”

(Newlyn, *Romantic Reader* 193)

According to Dennis H. Burden, *Paradise Lost* is an exercise in clarification to assert divine providence: To show that God is almighty, good, just and merciful, even though the world he has created also contains evil (3). In the course of these subchapters I will engage with literary criticism on *Paradise Lost* as they relate to God and Satan, and participate in the debates concerning the great divide established in the field. One critic who it has been difficult for me to both place and understand is William Empson. Even though he has been considered a very prominent and influential critic of *Paradise Lost*, in all honesty I do not understand what he is trying to convey. Therefore, I cannot include his work in my discussion on God and Satan, because I am at a loss of where to position his interpretation. Still, I add this short explanation because it allows us to experience how a confusing reading of a response shows the difficulties we encounter when studying reader-response. In regards to the case of choosing a side in the battle of God versus Satan, literary critic William Empson is all over the place in his book *Milton's God*. He shows sympathy for the devil, and he argues that a wicked God is not necessarily bad as Milton struggles in his attempt at presenting us with a less wicked God than the traditional Christian one (11). In his own word: “I thus tend to accept the details of

interpretation which various recent critics have used to prove the poem bad, and then try to show that they make it good.” (11). Reading God as wicked is not always siding with Satan, but the poem in and of itself is apparently supposed to express a downright horrible conception of God, whilst at the same time conveying the belief in the breadth and generosity of Christianity (276-7).

Another Milton critic who muddles the lines for the great divide is Stanley Fish. I have previously engaged with his criticism and found it to be very useful, but due to the fact that *Surprised by Sin* tries to reconcile the opposing positions we encounter, I feel that I cannot use his work for this part of the essay. Fish argues the case for the reader as the poem’s hero, suggesting that seeing God as malevolent or Satan as attractive is simply an indication of our fallen state, which is a part of the poem’s purpose for the reader’s moral guidance. We fall throughout the reading of *Paradise Lost* because we live with sin, and although interesting and relevant for other discussions in this thesis, it is not important for the analysis on Milton’s characterisation of Satan and God. A critic who sets the scene for what comes next, is Christopher Ricks. He draws attention to how Milton’s use of words differs from the epic voice to the characters, especially in regards to Adam, showing the readers of the poem how Milton creates a prelapsarian world we can partly understand, or at least imagine, in our postlapsarian state. By using words in their original, Latin sense, Milton can present the reader with a prelapsarian world through speech, taking us back to a time before sin; no infected words because there are no infected actions (110). John Leonard remarks that this is an intentional act on Milton’s part, because “Unlike the fallen poet, Adam remains unconscious of the ominousness we read into (and out of) his vocabulary.” (135).

We know from The Book of Genesis that our first parents were tempted by Satan to eat the apple of the tree of knowledge and evil. Disguised as a snake, the antagonist tricks Eve by arguing that if God was so good and loving of humans, why would he keep them from knowing all. He instils in Eve doubt and envy, pushing her into sin and simultaneously proving God’s foreknowledge to be true. In book 3 God says to the Son that “man will harken” to Satan’s “glozing lies, / And easily transgress the sole command,” (3.93-4), predicting that man will fall. Eve on her part construes Satan’s lies as being that “good unknown, sure is not had, or had / And yet unknown, is as not had at all.” (9.756-7), arguing the case that Free Will is not realised until after the Fall. L. A. Cormican says that “If the ways of God can be justified, it must be through a purification of the heart rather than by the reasonings of the intellect.” (L. A. Cormican qtd. in *Surprised by Sin* 258), asking of us not to

question God's reasons and how to justify his actions, rather we should experience what the poem tries to convey and feel how this reading creates meaning in us. Milton's poetic voice sets out to justify the ways of God to men (1.26), and postlapsarian Adam echoes Cornucopian when he expresses grief and shame for the loss of Paradise they now find they know "Both good and evil, good lost, and evil got" (9.1072). So, we need to ask ourselves how we create meaning from *Paradise Lost* through theodicy, God, Satan and the Fall.

3.2.1 God

I began the presentation of the rendition and role of God in *Paradise Lost*, as part of my discussion on theodicy, but there are still some ideas I want to discuss further. If we, for the sake of the argument, decide to agree with the logic of the Bible, we do not have sufficient grounds for disagreeing with, or judging, God in *Paradise Lost*. On the other hand, what we can do is critique Milton's interpretation of the Bible, and, as I have already established, judging Milton's God is different because he is fictional and *Paradise Lost* is not scripture (disregarding theological debates). In addition, Milton gives God human attributes and a voice, rendering him a character with a narrative that can be untrustworthy and open for interpretation. When I read *Paradise Lost* on its own, trying to "forget" other works on *Paradise Lost* that have influenced me, I feel compelled by the epic voice's narrative, and subsequently my experience of the Christian doctrine as narrative as well, to side with God. This reading changes and is challenged by the influence of other literary works and criticism (especially *Frankenstein*), proving my point that influence and experience matters, and that we can never truly say that our responses are concluded. This section of the thesis is dedicated to literary criticism offering support for Milton's God.

There are two topics in particular that I want to discuss for Milton's God. I want to look at God as the creator versus his role as a parent, followed by an analysis of how God as just and merciful relates back to God's omnipotence. In the preface to his book *Milton's Good God*, Dennis Danielson writes that "there have been enough critics who have affirmed that Milton and his epic are indeed undermined by the case of God." (*Good God* ix). Therefore, his aim is to argue the opposite: Milton's use of theology informs and improves the overall literary achievement, and the justification of God's ways is successful (*Good God* ix, Lande 4). Danielson has been one of the literary critics I have relied on in my previous work on

Milton's theodicy and God, and together with C. S. Lewis, Douglas Bush and Joseph Addison, he is a champion of Milton's Good God. Milton's paradigm, or the theological apologetic *Paradise Lost* undertakes, does not question God's existence but his nature and character ("Fall and Theodicy"145), and the problems that arise as a result can be equated to interpretations of Free Will and the problem of Evil. Danielson counters the issues by explaining that God had two choices: Either he created his beings free and capable of faithfulness and love, or he determined their choices to exclude the entrance of sin (*Good God* 53). Milton's God chooses the first, and the outcome is the existence of genuine creaturely freedom, because, as God proclaims in *Paradise Lost*, if he had not created man free "What pleasure I from such obedience paid" (3.107). Furthermore, to the Son God explains that without free will "what proof could they have given sincere / Of true allegiance, constant faith or love?" (3.103-4). From this Danielson concludes that "God is responsible for man's having freedom in the first place; man is responsible for how he uses it." (49). God is by no means perfect in Danielson's eyes, but as Raphael says to Adam in his warning of Satan's coming "God made thee perfect, not immutable" (5.524). How can we judge God for our mistakes, when time and time again we are told what is expected of us, and warned about the consequences for disobeying? It is not as if God is just a parent who preaches "be home by curfew". The reality of the matter is that God wants his creatures to be happy without having to know evil. He tries to protect his "children" from sin because he does not want them to experience evil, but provides them with enough knowledge so that they can know evil without falling into sin. At some point we need to take responsibility for our own actions.

But say
 That meant that caution joined, *if ye be found*
Obedient? Can we want obedience then
 To him, or possible his love desert
 Who formed us from the dust, and placed us here
 Full to the utmost measure of what bliss
 Human desires can seek or apprehend?
 (Milton 5.512-18)

The argument discussed in the above paragraph mostly relates to God and humanity, and how God as a creator is justified. What is perhaps more interesting is God as a parental

figure, and his relationship with Satan. Lewis explains that although all creatures are created good, God foreknows that some will voluntarily make themselves bad (67). As Lewis sees it, whoever tries to rebel against God ends up producing more good than evil. God allows Satan to do all the evil he wants after he has fallen, but the end result is Paradise on earth (67-8). Burden echoes Lewis' sentiment, writing that Milton makes it clear that God is letting Satan exercise his free will on earth, but God has the power and knowledge over the outcome even though they are not yet determined (30). Although God may seem cold towards Satan, it seems as though he is actually more of a disappointed parent who wants to teach his child a lesson. We also need to keep in mind that if we feel that Milton's God creates a disagreeable impression, "it is not so much because he defends himself as because he does so while treating a future event as a *fait accompli*." (*Good God* 162). As such, I believe that God does not wish for Satan to be evil, but it is inevitable. To the Son God observes Satan in Hell, "so bent he seems / On desperate revenge, that shall redound / Upon his own rebellious head." (3.84-6), and instead of stopping Satan he instead lets him think that he has won. Humanity falls, and the revenge that redounds on Satan's head is God's mercy on man's soul. Again Satan will experience the almighty force of God, to whom he "may know how frail / His fallen condition is, and to me [God] owe / All his deliverance" (3.180-3). Humanity is given mercy because they were deceived, Satan and his fellows none since they made the choice to fall, "self-tempered" and "self-depraved", with all the knowledge they possessed (3.100-2).

The Fall is Disobedience, doing what you have been told not to do out of pride (Lewis 68, 70). In 1712, English essayist Joseph Addison presented his observation on *Paradise Lost* in *The Spectator*, proclaiming it a work that honours the English Nation. For Addison, the great moral of *Paradise Lost* is "the most universal and most useful that can be imagined", which he describes to be "That Obedience to the Will of God makes Men happy, and that Disobedience makes them miserable" (Addison n.pag.). Now, following Addison and Lewis' logic, pride caused Satan's fall. He wanted to overthrow the almighty, thinking himself a strength to be reckoned with, disobeyed, and failed. Satan's misery turns to revenge that causes the Fall of Adam and Eve. On the other hand, we also learn that God's appointment of his only Son stirs envy in Satan (5.604-5). Satan feels that God has passed him over, and his merit is injured. The feeling that a parent prefers another child over you is awful, but then again, God is not just any parent. Satan again feels less favoured by God when he hears about God's new creation, the humans, and it is his envy for them that convinces him to poison their minds. Lewis says that as creator, God "has a super-parental right of doing what He will

without questioning” (77), but this does not mean that his children are not injured by the account. However, advocating for God’s justification, Satan is in actuality no less worthy in God’s eyes in regards to the Son, because the Son is not his child so to speak: “The Son is not of the same nature as the angels and was indeed the instrument by whom they were made.” (77). Thus, Satan’s envy is not justified, seeing as the Son is a part of God’s being (3.390). He is the active agent who makes it so that God can help his creatures as far as his own rules permit.

“Since the romantic age, which misinterpreted a number of great works, it has been conventional to regard Satan as the real hero of *Paradise Lost*.” (62). Bush disagrees with this interpretation of *Paradise Lost*, even if he understands why the Romantics clung to the Satanic reading. It was necessary for revolutionary poets, but seeing as Satan “condemns himself with a thoroughness which even God could not amplify”, Bush argues that it is only reasonable to interpret *Paradise Lost* as successful theodicy of God (69). Satan has heroic qualities, Bush does not contend this, but the fact remains that he is nevertheless the supposed antagonist of the story (72). *Paradise Lost in Our Time* advocates for Milton’s God, but recognises that readers can be tempted by Satan, because he is a marvellous character, the point being that temptation and acceptance is not the same thing. Lewis agrees and writes that the thing about Satan that entices the reader is how very much like the fallen angel the fallen man is. Therefore, as readers we can identify with Satan, but the experience does not prove that Milton’s Satan is righteous (101).

in mercy and justice both,
Through heaven and earth, so shall my glory excel,
But mercy first and last shall brightest shine.

(Milton 3.132-4)

3.2.2 Satan

Milton presents evil as real and traceable to a “single Evil One.” (Carey 160). In his work on *Paradise Lost*, John Carey attempts an objective analysis of the different reasons behind interpretations of Satan. Although he never outright chooses a side, his response indicates more sway towards Satan than God. Carey figures that a major factor in the attention *Paradise Lost* has aroused is the ambivalence surrounding the characterisation of Satan. What holds interest is not whether reading Satan as the hero is correct or not, it is why some of us do. Satanist critics generally emphasise Satan’s courage whereas anti-Satanists critics usually accentuate Satan’s selfishness or folly. To Carey the observable feature of the Satan figure is “The power to entangle and excite readers” (Carey 161). In all my readings of *Paradise Lost*, I have to admit that Satan can be very persuasive, as well as interpreted as the evil to God’s good. Although I have never really sided with Satan myself, from reading literary criticism and responses to *Paradise Lost*, I see how others can. William Hazlitt tells us that the speeches in *Paradise Lost* provide the most evidence to our responses. And, as “each party converts it to its own purposes”, it is not a fault of the reader nor the author which side the reader responds to the most (78).

for whence
But from the author of all ill could spring
So deep a malice, to confound the race
Of mankind in one root, and earth with hell
To mingle and involve, done all to spite
The great creator?

(Milton 2.380-5)

Harold Bloom positions himself on the side of Satan in the literary criticism divide between God and Satan, and as such it is evident that his reader-response will show this. Still, his allegory on the anxiety of influence poets experience, suggests that God is like the poets he admires the most, and excludes from scrutiny (11). However, Bloom’s Satan is also the active, aspiring new poet, whereas God is the ancestry of great poets who new poets strive to overthrow in a sense, suggesting that the allegory also represents the negative effect of a God

who creates an environment that thrives on the anxiety of his underlings. This interpretation aligns with the beliefs of Satanist critics. On another note, Bloom also comments on Milton as a poet. To him, the image of the modern poet is Satan who has surpassed Milton because Milton has to invoke his Muse (3.19), i.e. poetic ancestry for guidance, aligning him with Adam (20). In this way Bloom undercuts Milton's influence for reader-response, indicating that if Milton was earnest in his attempt to justify God's ways, he has not only failed, he is wrong about how his Satan comes across to the reader. Milton's meanness towards Satan sets in the mind of Milton's readers a temptation to weigh Satan's flaws against God's malice towards him, resulting in the reader's sympathy for the devil due to the unjust wrath of God (23). There is no way we can be definitive in an analysis of Milton's intention. We cannot differentiate between the mind of Milton as a mind and as a poet, which is why we should read *Paradise Lost* without contemplating Milton's "true state of mind" (Waldock 15).

According to Hazlitt, Milton as a poet of morality is one of four of the greatest English poets (54). The lecture this criticism comes from was given in 1818, but I think we can still count Milton as one of the most influential and celebrated poets in literary history. As we saw from the history of Romanticism, Hazlitt belongs to the newly discovered branch within literature devoted to criticism. His work on the English poets is particularly interesting because it is immersed with the Romantic perspective, thus its relevance to this thesis is unparalleled. The lecture I am referencing is on the style and status of Shakespeare and Milton, but what I want to take from it is his reading of Satan. As a Romantic critic, Hazlitt's interpretation is a response this thesis needs to consider for Romantic reader-response, as well as for the demonstration of early readings of Milton's Satan. "In a word, the interest of the poem arises from the daring ambition and fierce passions of Satan." (75). Satan is the protagonist of the first books of *Paradise Lost*, and Hazlitt describes him as the most heroic subject ever chosen for a poem. Hazlitt admires Satan because he dares to challenge God, his ambition and aim is great, but the punishment greater. Still, Satan does not despair for his fortitude is as great as his sufferings (75). He is an outcast from Heaven, "Hell trembles beneath his feet, Sin and Death are at his heels", thus mankind becomes an easy prey (76). Although Hazlitt comments that Satan's loss of infinite happiness is compensated by the power of inflicting infinite misery on others, he does not read Satan as the principle of malignity, or the abstract love of evil. Rather, Hazlitt argues that Satan is the picture of love of power, of pride, and self-will personified. Satan does not crumble, but through his strength and determination creates an empire from his suffering (76). As such, Hazlitt's admiration for

Satan is closely linked to what he sees as Milton's great success in relying on the justice of his cause, which injures the cause laid out by the epic voice (1.26), by giving the devil his due and making him the chief person in his poem (77).

As previously noted, Satan is the only character in *Paradise Lost* with whom Milton could really be creative. When it comes to Satan's narrative, all we really know for sure beforehand is the fact that he rebelled against God, tempted Eve which is supposed to be read as the cause of the Fall, and that the Bible says he is evil. A. J. A. Waldock's theory is that since Milton's Satan is not the Bible's Satan, Milton uses Satan to make *Paradise Lost* interesting, setting certain conditions for the delineation of the devil and his fellows (65). As such, Milton writes Satan as a formidable figure who in the first chapters drives the story (66). We do not check ourselves or remind ourselves that Satan is a liar, and Waldock argues that Milton does not expect us to. We feel the bravado of the language, and we cannot help but be affected (67). Evidence to this fact is how Satan is portrayed, especially through speech, in the two first books: "what we are chiefly made to see and feel" is Satan's "fortitude in adversity, enormous endurance, a certain splendid recklessness, remarkable powers of rising to an occasion, extraordinary qualities in leadership ... and striking intelligence in meeting difficulties" (77). After having fallen from Heaven, Satan holds council with his minions, which is where we get to experience Satan's first speeches. We quickly realise that the attempted coup has failed, but the fallen angels are no less committed to their cause. Satan vows to study revenge, immortal hate, with courage that will never submit or yield: "That glory never shall his wrath or might / Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace / With suppliant knee, and deify his power" (1.110-3). Satan and his minions will rise and they will do so more glorious and with more dread than from no fall, trusting themselves to fear no second fate (2.1-5), sure that all is not lost even if they are fallen. At the same time, we are told that Satan's face shows courage alongside his pride and want for revenge, and his cruel eyes reveal signs of remorse for the fellows of his crime who, like him, were condemned for their crimes (1.603-9). This is an example of how Milton has given Satan attributes one might not expect from a fully evil being, confusing our understanding of evil. In pain and racked with despair (1.125-6), Satan admits that God is the "grand foe, / Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy / Sole reigning holds the tyranny of heaven." (1.123-5). Although we might argue that Satan's phrasing is wrong, he is nevertheless accepting both the reality of his situation and God's omnipotence.

However, Milton cannot keep up the positive image of Satan that he creates because as far as Christian Doctrine and the Book of Genesis goes, Satan is the antagonist. “Satan, in short, does not degenerate: *he is degraded.*” (83) – we are supposed to read him as changed after the two first books. As a new Satan, the real and evil devil, because now Milton has to voice the justification of God’s actions, and the cause for the Fall of humanity by the evil lies of Satan. Satan has to be put in his place, but Waldock interprets the attempt as failed because what the readers really experience is Satan being bullied. He has to be the villain, the question is how Milton’s treatment affects our reading experience and response. Thus, Waldock maintains that the true degeneration is not with Satan, it is the method Milton used to write his story (91). We do not need reasons to see why Satan has to stand out from the other characters in *Paradise Lost*. He is the only character that Milton can draw (75). This does not mean that Milton sides with the devil, but seeing as he could be more inventive with this creation, Waldock suggests that Milton in some marked degree conceived Satan in terms of himself: his temptations and values, his fallen state (75). For these reasons, and to this extent, Waldock argues that Milton “*is on Satan’s side, as it was quite proper for him to be.*” (77). How could he not? Milton’s allegations clash with his demonstration (78), and so the epic voice is supposed to jab at Satan’s words: “Each great speech lifts Satan a little beyond what Milton really intended, so he suppresses him again (or tries to) in a comment.” (79): “Semblance of worth not substance” (1.527), the epic voice interjects after one of Satan’s speeches. Following this logic, it is not hard to understand Waldock’s claim that Satan is being degraded. Another point in Waldock’s favour is the epic voice’s is prejudiced towards Satan. In the very beginning of the poem he asks “say first what cause / Moved our grand parent in that happy state / Favoured of heaven so highly, to fall off / From their creator, and transgress his will / For one restraint” (1.29-31). The poetic voice establishes God’s preference and voices the case for the nearly blameless, unfortunate humans. He follows up with a comment on Satan which serves the purpose of persuading negative response to Satan before much else has been said or justified, just as the quote I attached to the beginning of this subchapter. “Who first seduced them to that foul revolt? / The infernal serpent; he it was, whose guile / Stirred up with envy and revenge” deceived our first parents to “set himself in glory above his peers” (1.33-9). Thus, the epic voice betrays himself as being biased, resulting in an untrustworthy narrator and giving the reader cause for scepticism.

Satan continues to be a problematic character for the readers of *Paradise Lost* because he vacillates between remorse and defiance (Carey 162). Satan even confesses that his

rebellion was unjustifiable because he had the same free will and power to stand as all God's creatures (4.66-8), and it is in this soliloquy Carey figures we access the true Satan. His mind is not hidden and we read a character that is dynamic – maybe the only dynamic character in the poem – again providing evidence to the fact that he is the most interesting character of the poem. It was his “pride and worse ambition” that threw him, but Carey reckons this is also the reason why Satan is redeemed in the reader's eyes (162). On the other hand, we could decide to interpret Satan as evil here because he professes guilt but does not repent. Seeing Adam and Eve reminds him of his hatred towards God, “each passion dimmed his face / Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy and despair” and he is betrayed as “counterfeit, if any eye beheld.” (4.114-8). But, the way I see it, it is not only Satan's pride and ideas of grandeur that leads to the rebellion in Heaven. The background of Satan's revolt is close to non-existent, so we cannot argue his wrongs (Waldock 72), but the motive for his rebellion changes from pride to envy when we in book 5 read about God's appointment of the Son. Waldock asks us to judge the lack of love in the speech of the appointment: “This day I have begot whom I declare / My only Son” (5.604-5). Satan feels passed over by the appointment of the Son (73). In this instance we can argue that God fails as a parent, and thus forces Satan to fall because he has injured Satan's merit (38). All of God's goodness has “wrought but malice” in Satan (4.48-9).

...yet fraught,
 With envy against the Son of God that day
 Honoured by his great Father, and proclaimed
 Messiah king anointed, could not bear
 Through pride that sight, and thought himself
 impaired

(Milton 5.661-5)

So, pride becomes envy, and Satan wishes that God's powerful destiny had “ordained / Me some inferior angel, I had stood / Then happy” (4.58-60). However, in book 9, Satan has a chance to redeem himself. Just as when he admits to doing wrong, he becomes momentarily good and considers repenting when he feels love towards Eve while watching her (9.464-6). He is dissuaded by the thought when he realises that repenting would be in vain due to the inevitability that he again would “recall high thoughts”. Because of the damaged relationship

with God, true reconciliation can never grow “Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep” (4.98-9). Carey takes this moment to mean that Satan’s choice to not escape his diabolism and recollecting his hatred by destroying the human race, concludes Satan’s narrative (168). We knew all along that Satan could not change since he was too trapped in the terms of the fiction he found himself in, but the build up of his character and the glimpses of goodness we are rewarded can create a conflicted experience within the reader. Still, every hostile move Satan makes must be self-defeating, because whether we like it or not, he is supposed to be the fiend (165). Waldock explains that due to these conflicting emotions, and “because of that embedded ambiguity at the heart of it”, *Paradise Lost* cannot profoundly trouble or satisfy us like a great tragedy is supposed to (145). Milton’s way of dealing with the problems that arise in regards to Satan only succeed in reaching a result which is exactly opposite to his intention: his labour to justify man’s ways against God’s ways fails (57).

4 *Frankenstein*

“When Mary Shelley constructs her richly intertextual narrative, *Frankenstein*, in 1818, she can rely on her readers’ acceptance of Milton as an honorary classic.”

(Newlyn *Romantic Reader* 42)

Frankenstein was made available for the reading audience in 1818. From all we already know of the Romantic period in England, and how influential *Paradise Lost* was for both the Romantic writers and the general public, it is no surprise that Mary Shelley would have a response to the poem as well. Although *Frankenstein* is a brilliant novel in its own right, the echoes and allusions to *Paradise Lost* are many and important for the story’s progression and audience appreciation. Now, I want to submit that there are two main ways of interpreting the influence *Paradise Lost* has had on *Frankenstein* when reading the text. Firstly, by viewing *Frankenstein* as a rendering of the God in *Paradise Lost*. The second reading considers *Frankenstein* as a representation of Milton’s Satan. If we follow the first interpretation it is only natural to assume the Creature to be Milton’s Satan, who could have, and maybe even should have, been Adam. The second reading leaves the Creature as *Frankenstein*’s consequence, but we could also presume that the Creature then comes to represent humanity, and what happened to our first parents as a result of Satan’s temptation. As I have mentioned before, it is evident that *Paradise Lost* influenced *Frankenstein*, but I intend to show how the premise of the poem’s epic voice is connected to Shelley’s own reader-response, and how this all links back to an analysis of *Paradise Lost*. Shelley explores the consequence of humanity playing God, and just as Milton’s Satan wanted to challenge God’s rule, *Frankenstein* falls and is overcome by his own creation. If anything, *Frankenstein* can be said to be a cautionary tale about what happens when humanity disregards Christianity, or when a human tries to do something that is not in its nature, by utilising *Paradise Lost* for impact and reference.

4.1 Introducing *Paradise Lost*

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man, did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?

(Milton 10.743-5)

The first “clue” we as readers get that Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is influenced by, a comment on, or a response to *Paradise Lost* occurs before the story has begun. Book 10 lines 734 to 745 of *Paradise Lost* asks the big question: Why did God create us? These lines are written on Shelley’s title page, the epitaph that gives the reader an indication of what is to come. Now, starting of *Frankenstein* in this way tells us something about Shelley’s story, as well as her response to *Paradise Lost*. Knowing the tale of Victor Frankenstein and his monster, we might at first glance interpret the epitaph as Shelley’s interpretation of God and how he has wronged Satan. By this I mean that the way Frankenstein acts, as a God-like human, towards his creation cannot be called anything other than cruel and wrong, and seeing as the monster identifies with Satan, we should read *Frankenstein* as an attack on God; Shelley’s comment is that Milton’s God is not justified. Because we have already seen that God’s theodicy relies on the success of the Free Will Doctrine together with his omnipotence and wholly goodness, the epitaph elicits an audience response of which I believe is most commonly understood as God found guilty for his creations’ actions since they did not ask to be created. This holds true if we take into consideration how the Creature is treated by Frankenstein. If Frankenstein represents God and the Creature is his Satan, *Frankenstein* is a response that rejects Milton’s theodicy by creating an unforgiving God who abandons a child in need. Adam and Eve are shown mercy after they disobey, but as with Satan, the Creature receives no such love by the creator. The last thing Frankenstein says in the book is “I feel myself justified in desiring the death of my adversary.” (185)², thus the Creature knows that Frankenstein has no love or mercy for him, just as Adam knows that his creator does (Lande 8). This is a reasonable conclusion, especially in regards to a Romantic reading, and to

² Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*. Ed. Marilyn Butler. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to *Frankenstein* are to this edition and will be referred to by page number.

Frankenstein as a comment on God in *Paradise Lost*, but the fact of the matter is that it is not Satan who laments in those lines, but Adam.

When the lines are uttered, Adam and Eve have just sinned, but are saved from Hell by God's mercy. Adam tries to make sense of what he has lost and how he can go on in a world with sin. He asks of God why he was created with a will that did not concur to his being (his will was not strong enough to obey), why when he has lost good he has to also suffer the sense of endless woes, "Wherefore didst thou beget me? I sought it not" (10.762). At first glance, this speech also feels like an attack on God. However, the reality of the matter is that Adam has fallen and now feels pain, sin, and doubt, and expresses these afflictions. Adam feels guilt that morphs into anger and despair, but the Archangel Michael is sent down from Heaven by God to help Adam deal with this new reality, and show humanity that God has given them a second chance. During the process of anguish Adam tells Eve to "Remember with what mild / And gracious temper he both heard and judged / Without wrath and reviling" (10.1046-8), and reminds himself of God's goodness: "in whose look serene, / When angry most he seemed and most severe, / What else but favour, grace, and mercy shone?" (10.1094-6). In the end Adam concludes that for this second chance he will obey and love God, walk in his presence and never forget that God is "Merciful over all his works, with good / Still overcoming evil" (12.565-6). Thus, I argue that the epitaph has two possible readings. The first reading interprets the epitaph as a coming judgment of Milton's bad God, the second of Milton's good God. Predicament one is reliant on the interpretation of *Frankenstein* as God, whilst the second suggests that we read *Frankenstein* as Shelley's depiction of Satan. I explained how the first reading could be understood in the past paragraph, as for the second I believe that if *Frankenstein* is Shelley's Satan, her interpretation of *Paradise Lost* is a cautionary tale of what could have happened if God had not been a just God.

4.1.1 Frankenstein as God

Ingrate, he had of me
All he could have; I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

(Milton 3.97-9)

Lucy Newlyn claims that it is in the Gothic novel the full potential of the Miltonic method is realised. The qualities she equates to the Miltonic method in *Frankenstein* are the tales within tales and the unreliable narrators (*Romantic Reader* 133). *Frankenstein* is an epistolary with three narrators telling the tale of Frankenstein and his monster. This specific style of writing is very important for the interpretation of *Frankenstein* in regards to *Paradise Lost*, because it reveals the significance of unreliable narrators. The novel is narrated by the arctic seafarer Robert Walton, who writes letters to his sister about his journey. In his letters he recounts the stories told to him by Victor Frankenstein, and the story the monster has told Frankenstein. The first issue that arises from this writing style is the unreliability of the narrators. Seeing as Frankenstein hates his monster, his account of the monster's tale might have been audited before told to Walton. In addition, Walton is so enamoured with Frankenstein that we have to be suspect of everything we read so as not to be tricked. About Frankenstein Walton says in one of his first letters that he "never saw a more interesting creature" (14), and has started to "love him as a brother" (15). Meaning he is hardly an objective third party narrator, which is something we can say about Milton's epic voice as well. However, the use of this narrative structure provides a perspective on the story that allows us more access and point of views. Keeping in mind the unreliability of the narrative is something we should always do during the reading experience, but for this case it might prove to increase our sense of experience and interpretation. Through analysis of the narratives and the storyline, this part of the essay will show how reading *Frankenstein* as representation of Milton's God comments on *Paradise Lost*.

For the story as a whole, Walton acts as the producer. He collects and relates the tales we are told, starting with Frankenstein's narrative. As a character Frankenstein is curious and hungry for knowledge. He relates a happy childhood with a father who "devoted himself to the education of his children.", and admits that "No creature could have more tender parents

than mine.” (19). As Frankenstein gets older his love for natural philosophy grows, and after the death of his mother he starts studying the “principle of life” (33). At this point, Frankenstein asks Walton not to record the proceedings, because what comes next is not something he wishes anyone else to experience: “Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example.” (35). And so it is that Frankenstein discloses that he possesses the capacity to bestow animation, with exalted imagination creates life. Shelley presents Frankenstein as an overreaching human who wrongfully appropriates divine power (*Romantic Reader* 134), but in comparison to Milton’s God he is not appreciative of his creation. After he has given his Creature life he exclaims: “How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form?” (39). He is filled with breathless horror and disgust, and at the approach of the “demonical corpse” he has given life, Frankenstein runs away, abandoning the newly awakened monster to fend for itself. Although as readers we might feel a sense of shame, guilt or anger towards Frankenstein by now, the only thing we have learned so far in regards to *Paradise Lost* is that Frankenstein and God both create life, but whereas Frankenstein abandons his creation before it has had the chance to do anything wrong, Milton’s God does not cast Satan out of Heaven until he misbehaves. Thus, Shelley’s interpretation seems to not so much judge God as comment on how humanity should not act God-like.

When Frankenstein’s narrative continues after the creation, we learn that he goes on with his life like nothing happened. Then his youngest brother William is killed, Justine dies for the crime, but Frankenstein starts wondering about the true culprit. He worries, has nightmares, is fatigued and sick, but does not show any signs of remorse over leaving the monster. This is when the monster finds him. Frankenstein relates that the Creature’s countenance bespoke “bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity”, calls him a devil, a vile insect, and shouts at him to leave, admitting that he knows that the monster is the murderer (76-7). The monster expects this reception because he receives it by men wherever he goes, but counters that “I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom you drivest from joy for no misdeed.” (77). We learn about the monster’s bad deeds from Frankenstein’s account. The Creature has become a murderer, and no matter the circumstances, killing a child is gruesome. As such it is only natural to feel some resentment towards the monster, but the reading Frankenstein’s reaction and behaviour towards his own creation makes it hard to dislike anyone other than Frankenstein. He is

proud, spiteful, miserable and shows no signs of regret for the monster, rather he feels wronged by the Creature and takes no responsibility for what has transpired. If we for a second forget about the link between Frankenstein and Milton's God, and imagine him as simply a human acting outside the laws of nature, Shelley's Frankenstein is not a likeable character, and maybe he is not supposed to be either. Now, let's remember the link again and ask ourselves: What does Frankenstein's mistreatment of his creation say about Milton's God? Newlyn suggests that in comparison to Milton's God, Frankenstein is an irresponsible creator and his infractions are worse. Still, the incidents where Frankenstein mistreats his monster also reflect badly on Milton's God by implication (*Romantic Reader* 137). Thus, Frankenstein's actions as a creator reflect badly on God and his treatment of Satan, seeing as we read *Frankenstein* as a response to *Paradise Lost*.

Butler says that the Creature's narrative is the heart of the story (xxxvi), and Joyce Carol Oates agrees that most readers identify with the Creature (545). The Creature's narrative starts on the night of the experiment when he is brought to life, and Newlyn suggests that this point of view renders Frankenstein "a confused, partly unsympathetic, and wholly tyrannical God" (*Romantic Reader* 135). Me, personally, I feel that if this is how Shelley understood Milton's God, then her *Paradise Lost* is not the same poem that I read, which makes me question my own response to *Paradise Lost*. Butler argues that the monster's narrative provides an instant challenge to Frankenstein's seemingly definite account of the story, and that it is perhaps the most important development for the audience reception of the Creature (xxxvi). It is not necessarily just the fact that Frankenstein leaves his monster that upsets us, more likely it is because he does so minutes after the monster has been created, when we know the monster has not done anything wrong. Even after we have learned what the monster has done after he has been abandoned, I imagine that for most readers it is still hard to feel sorry for, or find it in their hearts to make excuses for Frankenstein's behaviour, and reading the Creature's own account does not make it any easier. It is for this reason that I believe that whatever Frankenstein is or does, the account he relays from the Creature to Walton is genuine. Having become acquainted with Frankenstein's characteristics it would be strange for him to have falsified the tale and delivered it as it is in the novel, thus it seems likely that it is true. Also, seeing as we know Frankenstein we understand that a sincere account from the Creature would not affect him because he does not care about the Creature, or believe that anyone would sympathise with the Creature over him no matter how persuasive the monster's argument is. Walton is proof of that. Newlyn explains this as

Shelley's pessimistic view on humanity, we fall again and again (*Romantic Reader* 139). In addition, it only makes the Creature's case that much stronger in the reader's mind. For *Paradise Lost* this could indicate that Shelley sees Milton's God as a creator who does not care about his creations so long as they obey his rules. If they do not, like Satan did, they will be punished, just as the Creature is by simply being "alive". To me, Frankenstein is worse than Milton's God, but this might be because Shelley really wants to make a point and exaggerates the bad attributes she sees in God when creating Frankenstein. This would definitely be good for audience response, as well as establishing the Satanic aspect of *Paradise Lost*, celebrated by the Romantics (*Romantic Reader* 135).

In his search for an identity, the Creature makes several comments about *Paradise Lost*. First of all, the monster finds some books on the ground by the woods and discovers one of them to be *Paradise Lost* (103). Out of the three books *Paradise Lost* excites the deepest emotions within the Creature, and he reads it as a true story (Lande 8, Shelley 104). The Creature identifies with Adam as a being "created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence" (105), however he quickly realises that their situations are quite different. Adam is the perfect creature "guarded by the special care of his Creator" (105), whilst the monster is "wretched, helpless, and alone." (105). As a result, the monster's sense of self switches from Adam to that of Satan, even calling himself "the arch fiend" at one point (111). In the introduction to this chapter I explained the two ways I would interpret *Frankenstein* as a comment on *Paradise Lost*, which both rely on our interpretation of Frankenstein. So, to my analysis, the interpretation of the Creature relies solely on the way we read Frankenstein, but seeing as it is the monster who first introduces the readers to *Paradise Lost* I find that I need to comment on the case of his identity as separate from Frankenstein as well. In my opinion, the way Shelley writes the Creature indicates that he only has the potential to become God's Adam in Frankenstein's mind. As soon as his body comes alive, he is no longer in a state of innocence, which means that he is has already fallen, due to his creator's actions. The act of abandonment leads to isolation and loneliness for the monster, but it is his own choice to become Satan. Shelley writes the Creature as dependent on Frankenstein, and his downfall is a result of many things, but most importantly, it seems, is the Creature's belief that he does not have free will. It is true that Frankenstein abandons the Creature, but this does not excuse the Creature's own actions, but we can still pity him like we might pity Satan for being fixed within the Christian Doctrine of *Paradise Lost* (*Romantic Reader* 135). In *Paradise Lost* God can also be read as a good God, but seeing as God's benevolence does not extend to Satan, of

which the monster's true affinity lies (*Romantic Reader* 136), we can interpret *Frankenstein* as revealing that God is not all good, which means that the theodicy is not successful.

Early on in this discussion on Frankenstein as God, I mentioned how Frankenstein felt about his childhood and the best parents the most "tender parents" any creature could have (19). It is ironic then that he should be such a terrible father himself. As the novel progresses Oates writes that the Creature becomes more human, whilst the creator becomes more inhuman, submitting that Frankenstein thinks he is "blameless of any wrongdoing in terms of the demon" (Oates 545, Lande 11). It must be said that Frankenstein is more like a creator than a parent, aligning himself with the almighty who is Father to all, but also not a parent in the familial sense of the word. This makes Frankenstein cold and distant, which is similar to how some critics would describe God in his actions towards Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Regarding Frankenstein as a parent, Butler describes him as a monster (xliv). She also remarks that "no human father ever played so thorough-going a role in any birth." (xliv), but it ends there. Another thing the Creature and Satan has in common is their name, or lack thereof. Although not exactly the same, Satan loses his angelic name in the fall of the angels, and becomes the arch-enemy "and thence in heaven called Satan" (1.82), whilst the Creature never receives one at all. They are both discarded by their maker, and taking away, or not giving a name is indicative of their similarities in Shelley's interpretation, as well as an act of distancing or punishment. One thing that is different about the makers is that God knows what will happen when he lets Satan loose due to his foreknowledge, and has a contingency in the Son, which can be read as taking responsibility. Frankenstein on the other hand is bland to the fact that he lets loose a monster on the world without considering the stakes. He never takes responsibility for anything, or owns up to the fact that the monster is miserable because of him, instead he keeps telling himself he is blameless for "any wrongdoings apart from the act of creation itself." (Oates 546). In simple terms, the Creature "requires love in order to become less monstrous, but, as he *is* a monster, love is denied him" (546). Again and again the Creature is rejected by humanity, exclaiming "Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live?" (110), echoing the *Paradise Lost* quote from *Frankenstein's* title page. In all of my reading experiences, the only time I have noticed any kind of redeeming quality from Frankenstein is right before the Creature's narrative. He agrees to listen to the Creature's story "partly urged by curiosity, and compassion", for the first time thinking it is his duty as the Creature's maker to "render him happy before I complained of his wickedness." (79).

Milton's God says in *Paradise Lost* that "So [they] were created, nor can justly accuse / Their maker, or their making, or their fate;" (3.112-5), but the Creature can blame his maker for abandoning him to become a monster on his own, in a world where he is one of his kind, deformed, shunned and alone (Lande 11).

4.1.2 Frankenstein as Satan

... Yet not for those
Nor what the potent victor in his rage
Can else inflict, do I repent or change
(Milton 1.94-6)

As I was writing about Shelley's representation of God as Frankenstein, I realised that I did not have as much to say about reading *Frankenstein* from the perspective of Frankenstein being the characterisation of Satan. This is mainly because of the influence of Newlyn's take on the Romantic reader-response, but also due to the unappealing nature of Shelley's Frankenstein. However, reading Frankenstein as a manifestation of Milton's Satan can be evidence to the fact that Satan is unappealing too. Frankenstein is Milton's Satan rebelling against the laws of nature, and religion, rendering the Creature as the symbol of Satan's consequence and God's punishment. John B. Lamb counters that "It would be a mistake" to read *Frankenstein* as a "nineteenth-century reenactment of the fall of Milton's Satan" (303). The reason for this claim is not due to textual evidence suggesting an opposite reading, rather Lamb argues that *Frankenstein* in and of itself is Shelley's attack on a society that opposes individualism (305). Lamb feels that *Paradise Lost* has "engendered a cultural system of signs" in which a person's attempt at achieving autonomous selfhood can only result in identifying with "Lucifer" – believing full and well that the identity was freely chosen (306). Lamb is suggesting that it is Milton's myth that is monstrous, and it seems only fair to explore how Frankenstein identifying with Lucifer reads for *Paradise Lost*, as opposed to regarding the Creature as the only character written as an interpretation of Milton's Satan.

Frankenstein would never admit to anyone, least of all himself, that there is a likeness between him and Milton's Satan. Luckily, Shelley provides us with hints in his speech and demeanour that would suggest that there is. We know from the subchapter on Frankenstein as God, that Frankenstein had an intense drive for knowledge, was fixated on the hidden laws of nature, and felt a need to create life. Satan's first sin is pride, and God punishes Adam and Eve for wanting knowledge that they are not supposed to have, thus we can surmise that Frankenstein is at the very least a fallen creature even before the Creature has come alive. Frankenstein's first sin is the usurping of the power of life, i.e. trying to overthrow God. It is his curiousness and sense of self-importance that drives him: "I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself or one of simpler organization" (35), but his pride that fells him. Being certain of himself, Frankenstein never imagines that his creation would be anything less than an Adam, but as with Satan's failed attempt at a coup d'état, Frankenstein's creation becomes a monster. Satan is sent to hell, but Frankenstein is doomed to a life of hell. The Creature is the consequence and punishment for his wrongdoing. Even if he could have received mercy for his crimes, Frankenstein's crime is Satan's crime, which in *Paradise Lost* means that since the fall was "self-tempted" and "self-depraved" there will be no mercy or justice, only punishment (3.130-1). Reading Frankenstein as Shelley's interpretation of Satan makes a very persuasive argument for a justified God in *Paradise Lost*.

As to textual evidence suggesting that Frankenstein is a satanic character, we can start at the very beginning when Robert Walton documents Frankenstein's purpose for telling the tale of the creation. Firstly, if we were to find literary criticism to support a discussion for the great divide in *Frankenstein*, Walton would be of use for the side advocating for Frankenstein. Walton is captivated by Frankenstein, exclaiming that he "never saw a more interesting creature" (14), describing his manners as "conciliating and gentle" (15). It could be that I am too judgmental, but knowing how Frankenstein mistreats his monster, his superiority complex and disillusion of grandeur, I am inclined to disagree with Walton, as I believe most readers would. In the same manner that Satan reasons and explains his fall through false justifications, Frankenstein also perceives of his station as something that has happened to him, that someone has made it so that he is now in a bad situation: "You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes." (17). Rather than admitting that it is he who is at fault, that if he had treated the Creature better, maybe the consequences for his action could have been averted, Frankenstein holds the Creature liable for its own existence and everything that has happened since the night it was brought to life.

The Creature becomes demonic as the tale progresses, and has to be held accountable for its own crimes. Even then I believe most readers would side with the Creature over Frankenstein, and our reader experience of *Frankenstein* might result in a response that sees the Creature as good if Frankenstein had only cared. Frankenstein admits to Walton that seeking knowledge and wisdom was his downfall, the gratification of his endeavour a serpent's sting (17). He then passes on the duty of killing the monster onto Walton, a last selfish act on his deathbed (185). Revenge has been the motivation for Frankenstein, just as it was for Satan, but the monster lives, Adam and Eve have God's mercy, which inevitably renders Shelley's interpretation of Milton's God in regards to ruination because of revenge, a justified God.

At the very end of the novel, one might think before reading that finally Frankenstein will repent. His failed attempt to be God-like has caused so much pain and death, so it is only natural that the reading audience expects a remorseful protagonist, someone who admits his mistakes and shows that he has learned from them. On the contrary, Frankenstein does not do any such thing. The fallen angels are miserable, not repentant (Waldock 96), and the same goes for Frankenstein. In his final days, Frankenstein tells Walton that he feels "justified in desiring the death of my adversary." (185). He also says that he, "like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence" is "chained in an eternal hell." (180). Earlier I claimed that Frankenstein would never admit to any similarities with Satan, and I am not changing my mind. Although his statement links him to Satan, it is important that we differentiate between the Satan in a *Paradise Lost* that regards God as good or as bad. By this I mean that the Satan Frankenstein is alluding to is not the same Satan that the Creature identifies with. The Creature is the Satan who has been unjustly punished by an unjustifiable God, as understood by the Satanic critics of *Paradise Lost*. On the other side of the argument, if Frankenstein is read as Satan, he is the vengeful antagonist critics advocating for God condemn. Thus, Frankenstein inadvertently convicts himself for his crimes against the Creature in the eyes of the reader in this statement. No matter how we read Frankenstein, it seems, he is always the worse foe, but the relevance of the character for this essay and rereading *Paradise Lost*, is on which side of the great divide his representation lands.

5 Conclusion

The main argument presented in the introduction was that *Frankenstein* could be used as a tool to contribute critical analysis on *Paradise Lost*. By showing evidence of intertextuality and evaluating the influence *Paradise Lost* had on Mary Shelley, I wanted the response to yield interesting and valid information that was not necessarily evident or preferred when reading *Paradise Lost* as a work on its own. The intention was to contribute something new to the field of the methodology of reader-response, the Romantic reader's response to *Paradise Lost*, as well as the discussion on the main topics of *Paradise Lost* already well established by several literary critics. In my first chapter I focused on presenting the history and diversity of reader-response theory to my readers. This proved fruitful for the investigation on how reader-response could be read or evaluated as an instrument for further analysis within a field, as well as how valuable it can be to use reader-responses in general as tools for literary criticism. Furthermore, the first chapter also included an introduction to criticism on reception, especially with regards to the Romantic context where Lucy Newlyn has been the most influential literary critic. By combining reader-response and reception theory with the criticism on the Romantic writers' response to *Paradise Lost*, my aim was to show that *Frankenstein* could be read as a direct reader-response to *Paradise Lost*, the attitudes towards these readings, as well as how and why such a reading would be seen as contributory. In doing so I could then dive into criticism on authorial intent, theodicy and the relationship between God and Satan in *Paradise Lost*, keeping in mind Romantic response with regards to *Paradise Lost* seen through *Frankenstein*.

First of all, I want to mention the process of rereading, seeing as it has played a big part for this thesis, both before and during. What we have learned from reader-response theory is that the reception of a literary work changes over time, and it is always subjective even if this subjectivity is due to underlying cultural and societal belief systems. Our experiences shape, create and change the way we read and what we discover when we read. I have realised the impossibilities that occur when dealing with subjectivity, both in regards to my own reading and writing, as well as that of literary critics across the board. This thesis has focused on and shown this predicament, and the difficulties critics encounter during the analytical process of a literary work. Now, I already knew this before I started writing this essay, but I have never before tried to prove it with actual textual evidence. By re-reading *Frankenstein* as Shelley's reader-response to *Paradise Lost* I found that the way in which you

enter into an argument is essential. The literary critics I referred to disagreed on the premise of *Paradise Lost*, and this effected how I approached the evaluation of *Frankenstein* as a response to *Paradise Lost*. In the beginning I tried to consider all possible readings without limiting the analysis. I desperately wanted to provide a discussion that did not exclude any views, which quickly proved futile. The use of reader-response theory, especially the newer theories such as social reader-response and to some degree reception theory, was supposed to eliminate the author's intent as well as the transactional reader-response methodology of textual blueprints, but I see now that no matter the intention this is not possible in practise. I knew that I would be looking at Shelley's authority and intent in *Frankenstein* to evaluate the text's value as a tool for criticism based on reader-response theory, however, I did not realise right away that I also had to establish some kind of parameter in my reading of *Paradise Lost* concerning the text's underlying message or intended audience response. Still, to some degree I managed to limit Milton's involvement, deciding to go through with using Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding technique backwards, always trying to show that *Paradise Lost* is encoded even though the decoding should and could not be restrictive or forced. Thus, the decoding did not depend on the sender, rather the receiver became the encoder and decoder of the message initially sent, based on her set of knowledge and circumstance.

Throughout this thesis I have chosen to disregard Milton's intention so that I could more readily judge *Paradise Lost* as an entity separate from its author. In addition, I have made it clear that there is by no means one correct reading of the poem. In fact, it is only Shelley's response that matters. Shears insist that misreading *Paradise Lost* was the common Romantic response. Newlyn argues that the Romantic readings are not wrong, but might sometimes be considered in this manner due to the Romantic audience and their cultural, religious and political beliefs. Fish advocates for reader-response analysis based on the effect of the moral teachings provided by the epic voice. All of these contributions have merit, but my suggestion is that it is not the Romantic response on its own, or the primary text on its own, that creates meaning. The author's intention, the context and the way in which a text is read cannot decide the text's value or determine a universal "correct" response. It is how we interpret that reader-response as a response that becomes the reading of the influence and reception of a work.

So, who dares to be the the judge of Milton's God? We should all be ready to challenge and critique any work of great literature. Our responses are influenced by our reading and life experiences, and the same way Shelley bravely gives us her judgment on

Paradise Lost in *Frankenstein*, so should we do when we immerse ourselves in literature. *Frankenstein* is in some regards a response to God, Satan and Milton's theodicy, but I dare say it is not a direct commentary to, or merely heavily influenced by, *Paradise Lost*. It is both a response and a literary work in its own right that uses influential prose to entice and connect with an audience. As for the Romantic aspect of *Frankenstein* as a reader-response, I have tried to provide interpretations that suggest the possibility that Shelley's response can be either pro- or anti-God. Reading *Frankenstein* as a representation of Milton's God is certainly the more appealing read in my opinion, as it comments on both God and Satan, *Frankenstein* and the Creature, but the second interpretation is also valid. Personally, I feel that Shelley is leaning towards a response that indicates her belief in an unsuccessful theodicy, due to the dominant reader-response of *Paradise Lost* in the Romantic period. The epitaph is indicative of Shelley's intent, and seeing as Shelley was an informed-reader of *Paradise Lost* I find it reasonable to say that she chose that quote in particular because it appeals to the human response to God's punishment. In this way her audience would respond to *Paradise Lost* as an interpretation of humanity's fortunate fall where the loss of Eden is preferred, because the postlapsarian human is gifted with imagination, freedom and the sublime.

For the final discussion of this thesis I have decided to clearly express my own subjective opinion about the topics and fields I have chosen to engage with. The reason why is because it contributes to the complexity that is *Paradise Lost*. In addition, it shows how reading and engaging with a reader-response of *Paradise Lost* can simultaneously simplify and complicate a reader's experience. It happens all the time with literary criticism, intertextuality and allusions. I previously mentioned why I wanted to explore the link between *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein*, but the main reason, my individually subjective desire (if one even exists), was so that I could express my appreciation for both literary works. When I read *Paradise Lost* I agree with Milton's paradigm, not just the epic voice, but my belief is that Milton's authority is part of our reading experience, and that he encoded *Paradise Lost* with a specific message for the audience to decode. I understand this message to be the justification of God's actions towards Satan and humanity, and for me the only question to consider is: Was Milton successful? The Free Will Defense and the theological problem of Evil win me over. I firmly believe that Milton's theodicy succeeded. Furthermore, by logical assumptions, I also believe that the Fall could have been prevented seeing as Adam and Eve did not have sufficient or justifiable reasons for rejecting Paradise when they did not know anything else. Satan's temptation, his innate evil, was the cause and God could not intervene

by the logic of his own rules. However, I am not a Christian and experience a conflict while creating my response. To have blind faith is unreasonable to me. How can we really know good, choose good over bad, if we do not also know evil? Thus I realize that I cannot really relate to our first parents. Still, I choose to agree with Milton's reasoning and arrangement, finally rejecting my personal belief that God does not exist, because even though he is not a part of my reality, he is real for the poem.

Now, as an informed-reader of *Paradise Lost* I am confused when I read *Frankenstein*. Shelley's reader-response poses questions that I do not have to answer in my reading of *Paradise Lost*, which indicates that I need to remodel my response to *Paradise Lost* from how I have responded when read separately. There are different ways to read *Frankenstein* other than as a response to *Paradise Lost*, but when I do I am reminded that a reading is never really concluded. *Frankenstein* has me re-evaluating my stand on God's justice, as well as my response to the Fall. Shelley's response can be read as agreeing with or denying Milton's theodicy, which means that I am influenced by opposing arguments that both agree and challenge my own. This experience goes to show that every reader-response is influenced by something, and what influences a response also challenges the meaning the reader creates. No one escapes bias, and with a literary work of art such as *Paradise Lost*, who knows how the reader really reached his or her final response, why and what it means. In the end it does not matter what the author intended, or what the reader-responses' intentions are. The only thing that really matters is the reader's experiences and the meaning this creates.

The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

(Milton 12.646-9)

Works Cited

- Addison, Joseph. "No. 369 – Saturday, May 3, 1712." Ed. Henry Morley. *The Spectator*. Vol. 2. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1891. N. pag. *Project Gutenberg*. Web 12 Dec. 2015.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence; a Theory of Poetry*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.
- Bush, Douglas. *'Paradise Lost' in Our Time. Some Comments*. Gloucester Mass.: Smith, 1957. Print.
- Burden, Dennis H. *The Logical Epic: A Study of the Argument of Paradise Lost*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967. Print.
- Butler, Marilyn. Introduction. *Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*. By Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. ix-lxi. Print.
- Carey, John. "Milton's Satan." *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*. Ed. Dennis Danielson. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 160-174. Kindle.
- Corns, Thomas N. *Regaining Paradise Lost*. London: Longman, 1994. Print.
- Danielson, Dennis Richard. *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.
- , "The Fall and Milton's Theodicy." *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*. Ed. Dennis Danielson. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 140-154. Kindle.
- Empson, William. *Milton's God*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1961. Print.
- Fish, Stanley E. "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics." *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Ed. Jane P. Tompkins. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994. Print.
- , *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1997. Print.

- Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Simon During. London: Routledge, 1993. 90-103. Print.
- Harkin, Patricia. "The Reception of Reader-Response Theory." *College Composition and Communication*. 56.3 (2005): 410-25. *JSTOR*. Web. 08 Apr. 2017.
- Hazlitt, William. "On Shakespeare and Milton." *Lectures on the English Poets*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1968. 52-81. Kindle.
- Lamb, John B. "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Milton's Monstrous Myth." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 47.3 (1992): 303-19. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 Oct. 2016.
- Lande, Ann. *Frankenstein: Mary Shelley's Comment on Milton's Theodicy in Paradise Lost*. Unpublished manuscript. University of Oslo: 2016. Print.
- Leonard, John. "Language and Knowledge in Paradise Lost." *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*. Ed. Dennis Danielson. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 145-158. Kindle.
- Lewis, C. S. *A Preface to Paradise Lost: Being the Ballard Matthews Lectures, delivered at University College, North Wales, 1941, Revised and Enlarged*. London: Oxford UP, 1971. Print.
- Milton, John. "Paradise Lost." *Milton: Paradise Lost*. Ed. Alastair Fowler. 2nd Edition. London: Longman, 2006. Print.
- Newlyn, Lucy. *Paradise Lost, and the Romantic Reader*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993. Print.
- , *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
- Oates, Joyce Carol. "Frankenstein's Fallen Angel." *Critical Inquiry* 10.3 (1984): 543-54. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 Oct. 2016.
- Parker, Robert Dale. *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014.
- Ricks, Christopher. *Milton's Grand Style*. London: Oxford UP, 1967. Print.

- Shears, Jonathon. *The Romantic Legacy of Paradise Lost: Reading Against the Grain*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009. Print.
- Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein: Or The Modern Prometheus – The 1818 Text*. Ed. Marilyn Butler. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- Tompkins, Jane P. Introduction. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994. Print.
- , “The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response.” *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Ed. Jane P. Tompkins. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994. Print.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Von Maltzahn, Nicholas. “Milton’s Readers.” *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*. Ed. Dennis Danielson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 236-252. Kindle.
- Waldock, A. J. A. *Paradise Lost and Its Critics*. Gloucester, Mass.: Smith, 1959. Print.