**CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND NOTES**

**Advanced Module A - Study Day 18/3/13**

**Mary Shelley - Frankenstein (1818)**

**Enlightenment**

18C Rationalistic Movement:

An 18th-century intellectual movement in Western Europe that emphasized reason and science in philosophy and in the study of human culture and the natural world.

- Age of enlightenment; Age of Reason

- characterized by dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy, society and politics; swept away the medieval world-view and ushered in our modern western world

- political and social order informed by the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality for all ; founded on human ideals/human reason. POST FRENCH REVOLUTION

- *begins* with the scientific revolution

- Rise in new science; undermining ancient ideals of the ‘cosmos’ and even that of the Church. I.e. French revolution began Notre Dame became a ‘House of Reason’

1 The True:

· Rationalism

· Empiricism

· Skepticism

· Science of Man and Subjectivism

· Emerging Sciences and the Encyclopedia

2 The Good:

· Political Theory

· Ethical Theory

· Religion and the Enlightenment

3 The Beautiful: Aesthetics in the Enlightenment

· French Classicism and German Rationalism

· Empiricism and Subjectivism

· Late Enlightenment Aesthetics

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment/>

Enlightenment in regards to Frankenstein

· In the Enlightenment era, people found new ideas regarding the natural laws of the universe. There were questions regarding the natural right of mankind, as well as progress in knowledge, technical advances, and moral values.

· Secular society --> people searching for a reason for the existence of mankind

· Mary Shelley was critiquing the people and events of the Enlightenment, providing a representation of how their desire to “play God” through finding out things they weren’t supposed to know can have a negative impact on them and lead to their eventual destruction

· Victor Frankenstein learned the enlightenment thinking

· Excelling at science, he was interested in the idea of using science to create life --> relates back to the Enlightenment period’s ideas of right of mankind, moral values, and technical advances

· Shelley expressed the consequences of “playing God” through Victor’s running away after creating the monster – just as human beings are unable to comprehend God’s decision to create man and His omnipresent nature allowing him to watch over all at once, Victor Frankenstein hadn’t an idea of what to do once his creation actually awoke. A mere human, he was unprepared for the life he had created.

· Shelley’s husband being a Romantic poet, she was influenced by the Romanticism period which looks at the Enlightenment period as a “drawing away from nature”

* Because of enlightenment, the notion of ‘god’ and religion was rejected...in a way... Frankenstein was/is an example for humans to be like god because there was a rejection in this belief... (?) The enlightenment illustrates an AGE OF REASON. Reason in terms of... “well, if there isn’t a God, then maybe, we might be god” hence the creation

**Frankenstein - Romantic Movement**

-The Romantic Movement consists of a heightened interest and understanding of nature with emphasis on individual expression of emotions and imagination.

- It’s a departure from aristocratic social and political norms and a revolt against scientific rationalisation of nature.

- Mary Shelley was influenced by the natural environment in her summer sojourn – shores of Lake Geneva – this is explored through the organic versus inorganic theme in her novel, and the conflict of the nature of Frankenstein’s monster placed within this environment.

By Chanel, Paul, Matthew and Leanne.

PARADISE LOST/ THE SORROW OF YOUNG WERTHER IN RELATION TO FRANKENSTEIN

# PARADISE LOST:

A biblical story written about the Fall of Man, the temptation of Adam and Eve by Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Milton stated his purpose to “justify the ways of God to men.” The influence of Milton's poem runs throughout the entire corpus of Shelley's novel, through both direct reference, as well as simply sharing common threads.

RELATION TO FRANKENSTEIN:

The creature has been self educated upon the abandonment of Frankenstein, and “Paradise Lost” is one of the books he has read. The creature feels as though he is Adam and Frankenstein is his creator or “God”. The story of Adam and Eve resonates with the creature as the poem has “excited different and far deeper emotions [within him].” The creature draws parallels between his existence and the story told in the poem, as well as contrasting his life with the poem. The creature was left helpless and alone without any love, as was Adam, and that is why the creature longs for a companion, just as Adam had received. There is a strong thematic connection between the expulsion of Adam and Eve and the rejection that the creature receives by his creator.

# SORROW OF YOUNG WERTHER:

Majority of The Sorrows of Young Werther presented as a collection of letters. They were written by Werther, a young artist of highly sensitive and passionate temperament, and sent to his friend Wilhelm.It describes a summer that he spent in the country where falls in love with a woman who is already engaged to another man. The woman and the other man soon get married and each day that passes torments him. He cannot murder them so eventually suicides.

RELATION TO FRANKENSTEIN:

The Sorrows of Young Werther is one of the three books that are found by Frankenstein’s monster. He teaches himself to read to pass the time and understand the english language from these books. The monster personally connects with the story illustrating this through the lines, "As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition" .The novel also teaches Frankenstein to be more humanlike eventually developing his own emotions and being able to relate to others. Through the story of ‘The Sorrows of Young Werther’ , the monster is also confronted with the idea of suicide and weighs the options of living or ending his own life. This is shown through the lines , "Often... I was tempted to plunge into the silent lake" . He specifically raises the notion drowning himself since it relates to the story in Young Werther about a girl who drowns herself in the river when her lover abandons her. All the deaths in Young Werther are due to the loss of another companion or individual, through this it is made important to Frankenstein’s monster to have a suitable, loving companion that contributes monumentally to one's happiness. It also contributes to the reasoning behind the creature's request for a companion. Therefore the inclusion of The Sorrows of the Young Werther contributes to the overarching theme in Frankenstein of the need for love and nurturing for survival and ultimate happiness.

**WHAT IS GOTHIC FICTION ?**



* **A genre or mode of literature that combines elements of both horror and romance.**
* **Although it was also categorised as *Romantic literature*, it explores a much more darker and tragic themes than other Romantic texts at the time as it involves the use of ghost and supernatural elements which evoke terror by exploiting mystery and variety of horrors**
* It originated in England in the second half of the 18th century and had much success during the English romantic period with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and the works of Edgar Allan Poe. A later well known novel in this genre, dating from the Victorian era, is Bram Stoker’s Dracula.
* The name *Gothic* refers to the medieval buildings in which many of these stories take place. This extreme form of romanticism was very popular in England and Germany. The English gothic novel also led to new novel types such as the German *Schauerroman* and the French *roman noir*.

**WHAT GOTHIC FICTION ELEMENTS ARE IN FRANKENSTEIN?**

*Frankenstein* is set in continental Europe, specifically Switzerland and Germany, where many of Shelley’s readers had not been. The incorporation of the chase scenes through the Arctic regions takes the readers even further from England into regions unexplored by most readers.

The principle aim of any gothic novel is to evoke terror by exploiting mystery and variety of horrors. The story focuses on the sufferings of an innocent heroine (Elizabeth Lavenza, Frankenstein’s wife) by a cruel and lustful villain (although at times our sympathies for the monster and Victor are divided). The entire plot structure is dominated with the activities of the monster together with *‘fantastic’ yet scientifically grounded events* as the story involves a reanimated pieced together a corpse and resurrected from in Victor’s laboratory. Laboratories and scientific experiments were not known to the average reader at the time, thus this added an element of mystery and gloom. Also the thought of raising the dead would have made the average reader wince in disbelief and terror. Imagining Victor wandering the streets of Ingolstadt after dark on a search for body parts adds to the sense of revulsion purposefully designed to evoke from the reader a feeling of dread for the characters involved in the story.

Also...

<http://www.jessicatiffin.org/teaching/frlect.htm>

The Gothic novel

The function of Gothic as a cult literature of the late 18th and early 19th century

A popular, romance form - stylised, non-realistic, idealised, with an adventure format

Gothic as an extreme form of romance - the imagination run wild.

The implications of Gothic as mostly a pulp genre, the equivalent of the modern horror movie.

Jane Austen's parody in *Northanger Abbey* of the titillation of the "horrid".

Some characteristics of Gothic

MELODRAMA - stereotype, moral polarisation, one-dimensionality, excess.

EXOTICISM - wild/remote locations, other cultures such as the Oriental.

TRANSGRESSION - fear of barbarism, of unleashing human passion beyond social constraings. Gothic's operation as a literature of the unconscious, of transgressive desires.

ALIENATION - the genre's interest in identity and subjectivity, but of an alienated self, set apart from society.

Gothic literature and feminism

Gothic operates as a genre with particular significance for women: it has a tendency towards female writers and readership, but also embodies a peculiarly patriarchal nightmare in which violence is continually enacted on the female body.

- The importance of Mary Shelley's identity as the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft. She was a woman living in a tradition of literary women who explicitly criticised patriarchy; it is therefore logical to look for criticism of Gothic and patriarchy in *Frankenstein*.

- The maleness of *Frankenstein* is a particular problem here: within the Miltonian archetypes, men are dominant, women are weak and passive playthings and possessions, or self-sacrificing mother/nurture figures.

- Shelley's use of the exaggerated misogyny of the genre can be seen as being in many ways subversive and critical.

First Science Fiction Text/Galvanism: Frankenstein

Galvanism

* revolutionary time in science (18th/19th Century)
* new developments and discoveries in the nature of electricity
* people questioning the potential of electricity
* Galvani’s experiments showed a connection between life and electricity/science
	+ connected frog legs to electricity and caused them to twitch
* NOTE: medical amphitheatres used to conduct dissections and operations, allowed viewing of operations on live patients
* 1803, Newgate Prison: Giovanni Aldini (Galvani’s nephew) conducted experiments on severed heads with electricity- facial expressions changed, “the jaw began to quiver, the adjoining muscles were horribly contorted, and the left eye actually opened …”

 <http://www.lateralscience.co.uk/reanim/galvreanim2.html>



<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/frankenstein/galvanism.html>

**During the 1790s, Italian physician Luigi Galvani demonstrated what we now understand to be the electrical basis of nerve impulses when he made frog muscles twitch by jolting them with a spark from an electrostatic machine. When *Frankenstein* was published, however, the word galvanism implied the release, through electricity, of mysterious life forces. "Perhaps," Mary Shelley recalled of her talks with Lord Byron and Percy Shelley, "a corpse would be reanimated; galvanism had given token of such things." - Extract from above site.**



**Illustration of Italian physician Luigi Galvani's experiments, in which he applied electricity to frogs legs; from his book *De Viribus Electricitatis in Motu Musculari* (1792).**



**1836 political cartoon of a "galvanized" corpse**

<http://carnalbutterflies.wordpress.com/2011/04/04/frankenstein-and-galvanism/>

Science Fiction

How does Mary Shelley’s novel differ from other examples of gothic fiction?

Why is it considered to be science fiction?

- By virtue of this move, *Frankenstein* began the exploration of imaginative territory into which no previous author had penetrated (although that was not its initial purpose). For this reason the novel is more aptly discussed as a pioneering work of science fiction, albeit one that was written at least half a century before its time and one which does considerable disservice to the image of science as an instrument of human progress.

- Mary had no formal education, as was typical of women of her time, she was a voracious reader.

- One difference between the 1818 and 1831 editions of the text involves galvanism, or the use of electricity to stimulate nerve impulses. Mary was aware of Galvani's discovery. Luigi Galvani (1737-1798) proposed that electricity flows through nerves. Galvani showed that

- Galvani's Experiment (National Library of Medicine Collection, Washington, DC)

stimulation of a frog's nerve causes contraction of the muscle to which it is attached (1791). The scientific community was excited by the potential use of this new force and research was conducted throughout Europe on the application of electricity to induce and sustain life. Indeed, an attempt was made to shock Harriet Shelley back to life following her suicide by drowning. Victor learns of Franklin's experiments with electricity from his father in the 1818 edition, but references to his father's interest in science are omitted from the 1831 edition. Thus, Victor may place the blame upon his father by saying, if his father had shown more interest and knowledge in science, then Victor would not have been seduced by it at university leading to the monster's creation (1831 edition). Obviously Mary could not know how to animate life in enough detail to write it in the book; we do not have that knowledge in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the novel continues to resonate with readers to this day because of its criticism of science without conscience.

**BLADE RUNNER (1982 theatrical release)**

**Golden age of Science Fiction:**

* The first Golden Age of Science Fiction — often recognized as the period from the 1938 to 1946— was an era during which the science fiction genre gained wide public attention and many classic science fiction stories were published.
* In the history of science fiction, the Golden Age follows the "pulp era" of the 1920s and 30s, and precedes New Wave science fiction of the 1960s and 70s.
* The 1950s are a transitional period in this scheme; however, Robert Silverberg, who came of age in the 1950s, saw that decade as the true Golden Age.

## Cultural significance

* As a phenomenon that affected the psyches of a great many adolescents during [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) and the ensuing [Cold War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War), science fiction's Golden Age has left a lasting impression upon society. The beginning of the Golden Age coincided with the first [Worldcon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worldcon) in 1939 and, especially for its most involved fans, science fiction was becoming a powerful social force. The genre, particularly during its Golden Age, had significant, if somewhat indirect, effects upon leaders in the [military](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military), [information technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_technology), [Hollywood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollywood) and science itself, especially [biotechnology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biotechnology) and the [pharmaceutical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharmaceutical) industry.
* The impression of many parents at the time, however, was often tinged with dismay and intolerance, sometimes sparked by the racy cover illustrations of pulp magazines. The stereotypical cover of a science fiction pulp magazine depicted a brass-bikini-clad woman at the mercy of a bug-eyed monster.

**Cyberpunk**

* Is a [postmodern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern) [science fiction genre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction_genre) noted for its focus on "[high tech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_tech) and [low life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Low-life)." It features advanced science, such as [information technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_technology) and [cybernetics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cybernetics), coupled with a degree of breakdown or radical change in the [social order](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_order).
* Blade Runner is a cyberpunk film directed by *Ridley Scott*. It gave cyberpunk science fiction its visual representation, and has so become "the definitive cyberpunk movie".



### Protagonists

* [Protagonists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protagonist) in cyberpunk writing usually include computer [hackers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hacker_%28computer_security%29), who are often patterned on the idea of the lone hero fighting injustice, such as [Robin Hood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Hood). One of the cyberpunk genre's prototype characters is Case, from Gibson's [*Neuromancer*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neuromancer). Case is a "console cowboy," a brilliant hacker who had betrayed his organized criminal partners. Robbed of his talent through a crippling
 injury inflicted by the vengeful partners, Case unexpectedly receives a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be healed by expert medical care but only if he participates in another criminal enterprise with a new crew. very similar to ‘Rick Deckard’ the detective that harrison ford plays

Relation to Blade Runner

* [*Blade Runner*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blade_Runner) can be seen as a quintessential example of the cyberpunk style and theme. [Video games](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_game), [board games](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Board_games), and [tabletop role-playing games](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabletop_role-playing_game), such as [*Cyberpunk 2020*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyberpunk_2020) (created by [Mike Pondsmith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Pondsmith)) and [*Shadowrun*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadowrun), often feature storylines that are heavily influenced by cyberpunk writing and movies.

Storyline: In a cyberpunk vision of the future, man has developed the technology to create replicants, human clones used to serve in the colonies outside Earth but with fixed lifespans. In Los Angeles, 2019, Deckard is a Blade Runner, a cop who specializes in terminating replicants. Originally in retirement, he is forced to re-enter the force when four replicants escape from an offworld colony to Earth

The Cold War: Although it broke out into “hot” wars throughout the 20th Century (Korea and Vietnam being the most obvious examples) the Cold War consisted mostly of spying and tense international relations between the US and the USSR. It also manifested in the Space Race, the over-emphasis of western nations on capitalist policies and their continued interference in the politics of developing nations. The tone of this period of history was pessimistic, with the constant threat of nuclear war hanging over the world. This pessimism about the future of the human race and of the planet is clearly seen in *Blade Runner*.

Globalisation:

- This term refers to growth to a global or worldwide scale, or the unification of economies through free trade. The effects of globalisation can be seen in Blade Runner, specifically the Chinatown scenes, where there are strong themes of movement of people and languages across borders.

- The future world, of Blade Runneris a cosmopolitan “global village”. This is communicated by the use of bilingual advertising signs: Coca-cola sits amongst neon Japanese symbols.

-The fact that an agent of the central authority, the Police, speaks in Japanese rather than English in LA signifies the state of globalisation.

- Globalisation is also reflected in the name of the Shimago-Domínguez Corporation, whose slogan proclaims: "Helping America into the New World", indicating that a mass migration is occurring, as there is a status quo that people want to escape.

**Computer Age - Bladerunner**

Efficient Calculations

1. After WW2 these machines developed almost naturally to serve the needs of people for a reliable method to perform - mundane calculations

In relation to Bladerunner:

Bladerunner is a dystopic text that explores the advances in technology and how this affects society. Harrison Ford presents this through a cooperation that produces artificial beings to mimic human life/society in a form that rather harms and helps.

ALSO...

(from Wikipedia)

The **Information Age**, also commonly known as the **Computer Age** or **Digital Age**, is a period in [human history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_history) characterized by the shift from traditional industry that the [industrial revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_revolution) brought through industrialization, to an economy based on the information computerization. The onset of the Information Age is associated with the [Digital Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_Revolution), just as the [Industrial Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Revolution) marked the onset of the Industrial Age.

During the information age, the phenomenon is that the digital industry creates a knowledge-based society surrounded by a high-tech global economy that spans over its influence on how the manufacturing throughput and the service sector operate in an efficient and convenient way. In a commercialized society, the information industry is able to allow individuals to explore their personalized needs, therefore simplifies the procedure of making decisions for transactions and significantly lowers costs for both the producers and buyers. This is accepted overwhelmingly by participants throughout the entire economic activities for [efficacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efficacy) purposes, and new economic incentives would then indigenously encouraged, such as the [knowledge economy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_economy).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Age#cite_note-1)

The Information Age formed by capitalizing on the [computer microminiaturization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miniaturization#Background_to_modern_development)advances, with a transition spanning from the advent of the personal computer in the late 1970s, to the Internet's reaching a [critical mass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_mass_%28sociodynamics%29) in the early 1990s, and the adoption of such technology by the public in the two decades after 1990. Bringing about a fast evolution of technology in daily life, as well as of educational life style, the Information Age has allowed rapid global communications and networking to shape modern society.

In relation to Bladerunner, the computer/digital age has enabled us to

Late 20th Century Capitalism and Reganomics

The economical policy of the 1980’s was known as Reaganomics and can be seen ‘trickling down’ of government. It was trying to encourage production rather than fostering demand. To do so, massive tax cuts were given to the most rich and influential in order to allow corporations to privatise government services. This would lower the cost of maintaining government as there would be less government sectors that were regulated.

* · Ridley Scott was afraid of corporation having too much power
* · Warning against the domination of private businesses over society
* · Showed that if corporations control power, freedom would be restricted and that power should belong to the government
* · Devastation of environment emphasises corporate greed
* · Strongly against ‘the rich getting richer’ through unnecessary government intervention

Note that Reagan's emphasis on cutting taxes did not mean cutting spending, although many conservative observers credit Reagan's massive defence spending as being a contributing factor to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

The decade of Reganomics had an emphasis on reducing welfare and education funding and increasing defence spending in the era of the Cold War. Although in our context we think that this may have caused the collapse of the Soviet Union and avoidance of a nuclear war, due to the Soviet Union not being able to keep up.