**ASSIGNMENT**

How might the reader regard the relationship between Victor and the creature in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*?  Considered in simple terms, the relation is one of opposition (i.e., Victor “vs.” the creature).  But in many places, this binary scheme breaks down as the creature comes to mirror rather than oppose his creator.  Write a paper showing how binary oppositions associated with these characters are both established and undercut by Mary Shelley.

**DIRECTIONS**

-1500 words, NOT including works cited page

-May NOT use outside sources, only Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein”

-MUST BE ORIGINAL WORK

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-DUE 7/15/17 @ 1900

-Must include Work cited page

-Include 3 in-text citations per paragraph

-Must reference what is italicized below

-Then, in the body paragraphs, you should take up each opposition, one at a time, and demonstrate first how it is established and then how it is eventually undermined by the author.

-Liberal quotations of text AND plot references, not only direct quotes (CITE WITH PAGE NUMBER)

-In other words, to simplify this even further, you’re going to argue that Victor and his creature seem very different at the beginning, but become increasingly similar as the plot proceeds. Therefore, you need to identify 2-4 ways in which they initially seem different (2-4 binary oppositions), provide proof of that, and then show how they become similar in the same areas, providing proof of that.

- The in-text citation should look like this: (Marvin and Davis). Or with a signal phrase (As Marvin and Davis point out. . . .), you'd do it like this: ("Understanding Binary Oppositions")

***MUST REFERENCE***

*I'll devote my attention entirely to Question 7 since it directly relates to the essay topic. While I don't want to provide the answer for you, one of the most striking aspects of this novel is the manner in which Shelley repeatedly sets up ostensible antitheses (seeming oppositions) only to undercut them later in the story.*

*Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the relation between Victor and his creature. A few of you have pointed out their similarities, but at first the reader will see these figures as opposite poles based on both superficial and thus erroneous (good/evil), and real (creator/creation; beautiful/ugly; accepted/rejected) differences. These are just a few of the binary oppositions in the relationship between Victor and the creature.*

*What happens is that the terms are first illuminated and defined by their opposites but then problematized (made ambiguous/uncertain) when the antithesis, under closer scrutiny as the plot develops, is exposed as*false.***To put it more simply, in a number of cases what first seems to be a thematic opposition turns out to be false.***

***A good example of this is the binary opposition of beautiful and ugly.****Naturally, Victor's a spoonfed pretty boy and the creature's a gigantic, misshapen, lumbering juggernaut: there's no arguing with that. What fascinates the close reader, however, is Shelley's repeated hints that these figures are perhaps not so different as they seem. For example, Victor's work consumes him so completely that he becomes "ill [in appearance]... thin and pale" (45), just like his creation, a reanimated corpse. Evidence for this connection with the creature is everywhere in the text, and the implication is that Victor's compulsive desire to transgress nature and God has made him ugly.*

*When they meet on the glacier Shelley implies further that Victor has been transformed internally as well as externally. Notice that Victor's rage at the creature has grown so acute that "rage and hatred [has] deprived [him] of utterance" (81), and that when he collects himself enough to speak, he launches into a frightening, megalomaniacal tirade that tells us far more about himself than it does about the creature: "And do you not fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your head? Begone, vile insect!" (81). And how does the creature react to this puny human with delusions of godhead (whom he could crush with a single blow!)? He tells him to calm down (!) and then delivers a very rational defense of his actions (82 ff.).*

*The degree to which Victor's obsession consumes his consciousness (and conscience) sems to transform him into the virtual double (alter ego/*doppelganger*) of his despised creation, in appearance at first and then internally. In fact,*it is the creature who is the double*: the mirror of Victor's initial potential and his ultimate deterioration. In other words, the good and evil in Victor is traced by the creature's development from innocent infant (French: literally, "can't/speak" [*in/fant*]) to corrupted adult.*

*reformulate the essay topic to produce the thesis, specifically by arguing that in her novel Shelley establishes a number of binary oppositions only to undercut (collapse/overturn/delegitimize) them later in the text.****After you have defined “binary opposition”—your first requirement (see my "Binary Opposition" lecture and the information below in this forum)—and then articulated the thesis—your second requirement—I expect to find a forecasting statement (a.k.a., "plan of development") in the introduction in which you explicitly set out at least three types of binary oppositions to serve as the focus of your analysis.***