

## Taylor Swiftenstein:

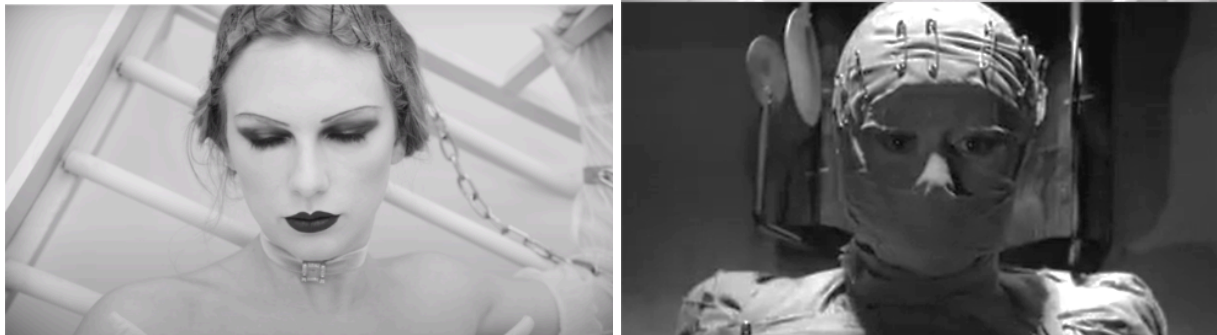
### Authorship, Godhood, Isolation, and the Pursuit of Forbidden Knowledge

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It's been almost a Fortnight since TTPD dropped, and we are still at the beginning of whatever this album release period/era will bring, but I have way too many *Frankenstein* related thoughts swirling around in my brain already and I need to get them out.

I think that both the plot of *Frankenstein* and the work's journey as a piece of literature and pop culture can be used as tools in interpreting The Tortured Poets Department.

Some of the more direct references Taylor has made to *Frankenstein* so far occur as visual references within the Fortnight music video. Most of these examples are very cinematic, and seem to evoke the “movie magic” version of *Frankenstein*, which is interesting considering this is the Literary album. I think this is one reason *Frankenstein* might resonate with Taylor. There are countless versions of the *Frankenstein* story, and even more interpretations of those versions. The story itself is a creation tale about the reanimation of life and the dangers of “playing God,” and its legacy throughout culture seems to mimic the fate of its characters, being brought back to life time after time, but always different, and many times changed for public sentiment and consumption.



The opening shot of the video, in which Taylor wears a wedding dress and her hair pinned up in many hairpins, seems to reference James Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein*, the sequel to the original *Frankenstein* film. In the scene, Dr. Frankenstein and his partner have finally succeeded in creating a mate for Frankenstein's original creature.

[She's Alive! She's Alive!](#) (Scene from *Bride of Frankenstein*)

Later in the film scene we see that the scientists have dressed the Bride in a wedding gown. They introduce her as the Bride, and church bells play in the background.

Another scene in the “Fortnight” video takes place in something of a mad scientist’s laboratory, also evocative of Frankenstein. The shot where the scientists run tests on



Taylor closely mirrors that same scene from *Bride of Frankenstein*.

The film is referenced once again when the head scientist (literally Todd Anderson) pulls a lever which gives Taylor electric shocks. It was a scene at the end of *Bride of Frankenstein* which birthed the trope of science labs having a pre-installed “self-destruct lever,” in case of some kind of mad-science calamity. In the film, the lever is pulled by Frankenstein’s monster when he decides he, his bride, and Dr. Pretorius are better off dead. The monster spares Dr. Frankenstein, telling him to run and be with his wife.



Both electricity & lightning relate heavily to *Frankenstein*. Lightning is also a prominent symbol within Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and electricity and Galvanism were major discussions at the time she was writing, when the realities of it were just becoming known. Later in the Fortnight music video, lightning too becomes relevant

in the ending scene, in which Taylor sits atop the phone booth in a lightning storm, high above the rest of the scene, in danger of being struck.

[Lightning strikes every time she moves: Taylor’s public vs. private personas & electricity in the Fortnight music video](#) by liminaldyke on Reddit.

**Past references to Frankenstein within the sphere of Taylor Swift lore include:**

- *The First Two Pages of Frankenstein* by the National. (“The Alcott” appears on this album, and the band first performed it while touring with Patti Smith)
- The Anti-Hero music video seems to make reference to *Frankenstein*, as well as the lyric “And I’m a monster on the hill. Too big to hang out, slowly lurching toward your... favorite city.” (Many regard both Victor Frankenstein and his Creature as Tragic Heroes. Bonus: Aristotle was the one who first laid out the attributes of a Tragic Hero.)



- “Look What You Made Me Do”: What is Frankenstein if not the original zombie? “The old Taylor can’t come to the phone right now. Why? Cause she’s dead.”
- The concept of coming back from the dead, in general, is not new in Taylor’s music. These instances usually closely align with her public reinventions, and the concept of “Eras” as a whole. Extending this metaphor would make all of Taylor’s public-facing personas into undead beings! Slay!
- “[Firelight](#)” is a SNL Twilight spoof skit from 2010. In it, Taylor parodies Bella Swan, if she were in love with Frankenstein’s monster (Bill Hader) instead of a vampire. This connection reminds me of the irony, sarcasm, and humor Taylor uses on TTPD. “Who’s gonna troll you like me?”



## Lyrical Parallels to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* on TTPD & the Anthology:

### The Tortured Poets Department & The Anthology:

“Crash the party like a record scratch as I scream”

“I was tamed, I was gentle til the circus life made me mean.”

*(Who's Afraid of Little Old Me?)*

“Down bad like I lost my twin.”

*(Down Bad)*

“One bad seed kills the garden”

*(The Albatross)*

“She almost drowned when she was six in frigid water” / “This feels like the time she fell through the ice and came out alive”

*(The Bolter)*

“Isn't that what they all said? ... That I'm fearsome and I'm wretched and I'm wrong.” / “I am what I am cause you trained me.”

*(Who's Afraid of Little Old Me?)*

### Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* 1818 & 1831:

“Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend.”

“I am alone and miserable. Only someone as ugly as I am could love me.”

“One wandering thought pollutes the day”

*(Mutability by Percy Shelley, quoted in Frankenstein)*

“A young girl came running towards the spot where I was concealed ... when suddenly her foot slipped, and she fell into the rapid stream ... I rushed from my hiding-place and with extreme labour, from the force of the current, saved her and dragged her to shore.”

“All men hate the wretched; how then must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me...”

“Honestly, who are we to fight the alchemy?” / “This happens once every few lifetimes. These chemicals hit me like white wine.”

*(The Alchemy)*

“The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted, and that the elixir of life is a chimera. But these philosophers ... have indeed performed miracles.”

“I got cursed like Eve got bitten. Oh, was it punishment?”

*(The Prophecy)*

“I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel...”

“Cross your thoughtless heart/ Only liquor anoints you/ She’s the albatross/ She is here to destroy you”

*(The Albatross)*

“I am going to unexplored regions, to “the land of mist and snow;” but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be alarmed for my safety, or if I should come back to you as worn and woeful as the “Ancient Mariner.”

*(Frankenstein 1818)*

## Plot Parallels:

<p>“a debrief, a detailed rewinding for the purpose of warning”</p>	<p><i>Frankenstein</i> is formatted in letters. The bulk of the story is told through Robert Walton’s dictation of Frankenstein’s account of how events unfolded with the creature.</p>
<p>“Without ever touching his skin, how can I be guilty as sin?” (<i>Guilty As Sin</i>)</p>	<p>In <i>Frankenstein</i>, Victor’s brother is killed by the creature. This, by extension, makes Victor the reason for his brother’s death, although he was not technically the killer.</p>
<p>“If you wanted me dead, you should have just said. Nothing makes me feel more alive.”</p> <p>“Still alive, killing time at the cemetery, never quite buried.” (<i>LOML</i>)</p> <p>“I leap from the gallows and I levitate down your street”</p>	<p>Reanimation/ Being brought back from the dead.</p>
<p>“She almost drowned in frigid water.” (<i>The Bolter</i>)</p> <p>“This feels like the time she fell through the ice and came out alive.” (<i>The Bolter</i>)</p>	<p>At one point, the creature saves a girl from drowning, only to be shot by people who assumed he was trying to hurt her</p>

## Shared Allusions:

- **Rime of the Ancient Mariner & The Albatross**

“Rime of the Ancient Mariner tells of the misfortunes of a seaman who shoots an albatross, which spells disaster for his ship and fellow sailors. The seaman, who is the ancient mariner of the title, then roams the world retelling the tale of his cursed journey.”

<p>“You said I abandoned the ship, but I was going down with it.” <i>(So Long London)</i></p> <p>“Drowning in the Blue Nile” <i>(Guilty As Sin?)</i></p> <p>“I dream of cracking locks, throwing my life to the wolves or the ocean rocks” <i>(Guilty As Sin?)</i></p> <p>“Cause you lured me and you hurt me, and you taught me” <i>(Guilty As Sin?)</i></p> <p>“She’s the Albatross, she is here to destroy you.” <i>(The Albatross)</i></p>	<p>“I am going to unexplored regions, to “the land of mist and snow;” but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be alarmed for my safety, or if I should come back to you as worn and woeful as the “Ancient Mariner.”</p>
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- **The Bible /Paradise Lost**

“The poem is a retelling of the story of Adam and Eve from the biblical book of Genesis which describes the creation of Heaven and Earth and of Adam and Eve. This poem fleshes out this story and imagines the couple’s reactions to the events that led to them being expelled from the Garden of Eden (or Paradise).” In *Frankenstein*, *Paradise Lost* is one of the books the creature reads in order to learn language. Much of his understanding of the world is based on it.

<p>“I got cursed like Eve got bitten”</p> <p>“What if I roll the stone away?”</p>	<p>“Remember, that I am thy creature: <b>I ought to be thy Adam</b>; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest</p>
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<p>They're gonna crucify me anyway. What if the way you hold me is actually what's holy?"</p> <p>"Your wife waters flowers; I wanna kill her"</p> <p>"You Holy Ghost, you told me I'm the love of your life"</p>	<p>from joy for no misdeed."</p> <p>"I read and reread her letter, and some softened feelings stole into my heart and dared to whisper paradisiacal dreams of love and joy; but the <b>apple was already eaten</b>, and the angel's arm bared to drive me from all hope."</p>
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- **Principles of Alchemy**

Alchemy was the earliest form of chemistry, consisting of scientific principles and speculative philosophy. Its Chief goals were to discover a way to transmute base metals into gold and find an elixir for eternal life. "In short, alchemy is Victor's other half; it is the means by which he seeks to achieve both individual and cosmic completion. For all his devotions to Henry Clerval, his father, fiancée and family, once Victor becomes committed to the creation of an artificial person, he is so absorbed that he appears to need no one." ([source](#))

<p>"I forget <b>how the west was won</b>" <i>(But Daddy I Love Him)</i> *<i>"How the West was Won" takes place during the gold rush</i></p> <p>"He had a <b>halo of the highest grade</b>, he just hadn't met me yet." <i>(I Can Fix Him (No Really I Can))</i></p> <p>"Are they second-hand embarrassed that I can't get out of bed cause <b>something counterfeit</b> is dead." <i>(LOML)</i></p> <p>"I don't even want you back, I just want to know if <b>rusting my sparkling summer</b> was the goal." <i>(The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived)</i></p>	<p>"My father looked carelessly at the title page of my book, and said, "Ah! <b>Cornelius Agrippa!</b> My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash."</p> <p>"A modern system of science had been introduced, which possessed much greater powers than the ancient, because <b>the powers of the latter were chimerical</b>, while those of the former were real and practical."</p> <p>"The ancient teachers of this science," said he, "promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that <b>metals cannot be transmuted and</b></p>
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<p>“This happens <b>once every few lifetimes</b>. These <b>chemicals hit me</b> like white wine. What if I told you <b>I’m back?</b>”  <i>(The Alchemy)</i></p> <p>“Honestly, who are we to fight <b>the alchemy?</b>”  <i>(The Alchemy)</i></p>	<p><b>that the elixir of life is a chimera</b> but these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles.”</p>
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- **Greek Mythology**

<p>“So they killed Cassandra first cause she feared the worst”</p> <p>“Beauty is a beast that roars down on all-fours, demanding more”</p>	<p>“The Modern Prometheus”</p> <p>“A modern system of science had been introduced, which possessed much greater powers than the ancient, because the powers of the latter were <b>chimerical</b>, while those of the former were real and practical.”</p>
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- **Shakespeare, especially Romeo and Juliet**

<p>“Rose by any other name is a scandal”</p>	
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- **One Thousand And One Nights (Arabian Nights)**

- The framing device of the story is a jilted king has taken to marrying a virgin every night just to kill them the next day, to ensure that they aren’t unfaithful. One woman escapes this fate by telling the king a story so enthralling, he cannot kill her because he needs to find out what happens next. She keeps the story going for one thousand and one nights.
- In contrast to the palaces, houses, shops, subterranean rooms, and other interior spaces, many characters in The Arabian Nights find themselves in gardens where they find truth as opposed to the illusions and lies found in

human-made spaces.

“Secret Gardens in my mind”	
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## **Thematic Parallels:**

- **Romanticism & The Natural World**

- “The best examples of Romanticism in Frankenstein are the scenes involving the Creature. Romanticism was fascinated by the juxtaposition of the grotesque and the beautiful. The Creature exemplified this dynamic.”
- “Your wife waters flowers; I wanna kill her” could easily be called a romantic juxtaposition of the grotesque and beautiful.

- **Alienation/Abandonment**

- “Frankenstein suggests that social alienation is both the primary cause of evil and the punishment for it. The Monster explicitly says that his alienation from mankind has caused him to become a murderer. His murders, however, only increase his alienation”
- “For Frankenstein, too, alienation causes him to make bad decisions and is also the punishment for those bad decisions. When Frankenstein creates the Monster he is working alone, in a “solitary chamber, or rather cell.” Being “solitary” has caused his ambition to grow dangerously, but this isolation is already its own punishment: his laboratory feels like a “cell.” Once he has created the Monster, Frankenstein becomes even more alienated from the people around him because he can’t tell anyone about his creation.”
  - “Down Bad” as a metaphor for alienation and abandonment
    - “Just to do experiments on me? Tell me I was the chosen one? Show me the world is bigger than us then put me back where I came from?”

- **The Danger of Knowledge & Playing God**

- “The pursuit of knowledge is at the heart of Frankenstein, as Victor attempts to surge beyond accepted human limits and access the secret of

life.”

- “Because I knew too much. He saw forever so he smashed it up.”  
(*My Boy Only Breaks His Favorite Toys*)
- “They knew, they knew, they knew the whole time that I was onto something.” (*Cassandra*)
- “Who’s gonna know you like me?” (*The Tortured Poet’s Department*)
- “It’s hell on earth to be heavenly” (*Clara Bow*)
- “Did you really beam me up in a cloud of sparkling dust just to do experiments on me, tell me I was the chosen one, show me this world is bigger than us, then put me back where I came from?” /  
“For a moment I knew cosmic love.” (*Down Bad*)

- **Madness/Insanity**

- “I was supposed to be sent away” (*Fortnight*)
- “Because we’re crazy” (*The Tortured Poets Department*)
- “I’m just mad as hell cause I loved his place for so long” (*So Long London*)
- “I know he’s crazy but he’s the one I want” (*But Daddy I Love Him*)
- “This city reeks of driving myself crazy” (*Florida!!!*)
- “I’m seeing visions. Am I bad or mad or wise?” (*Guilty As Sin?*)
- “You wouldn’t last an hour in the asylum where they raised me” (*Who’s Afraid of Little Old Me?*)

## Plot Parallels:

<p>“Post Malone as our <b>tortured tragic hero</b>”</p>	
<p>“Without ever touching his skin, how can I be guilty as sin?” (<i>Guilty As Sin</i>)</p>	<p>In <i>Frankenstein</i>, Victor’s brother is killed by the creature. This, by extension, makes Victor the reason for his brother’s death, although he was not technically the killer.</p>
<p>“If you wanted me dead, you should have just said. Nothing makes me feel more alive.”</p> <p>“Still alive, killing time at the cemetery, never quite buried.” (<i>LOML</i>)</p>	<p>Reanimation/ Being brought back from the dead.</p>
<p>“Save all my romanticism for my inner life” (<i>I Hate It Here</i>)</p>	

## Symbolic Parallels:

<p>Light &amp; White as symbols for “the pursuit for Knowledge/Truth”</p> <p>“In Frankenstein, light symbolizes knowledge, discovery, and enlightenment. The natural world is a place of dark secrets, hidden passages, and unknown mechanisms; the goal of the scientist is then to reach light.”</p> <p>“In Frankenstein, the color white is identified with knowledge. In turn, knowledge is not necessarily a positive thing, as excessive desire for knowledge that is forbidden causes much of the downturn in the plot.”</p>	<p>“I saw in my mind <b>fairy lights through the mist.</b>” <i>(So Long London)</i></p> <p>“If all you want is gray for me, that’s just <b>white noise</b>” <i>(But Daddy I Love Him)</i></p> <p>“Gray and blue and fights <b>in tunnels</b>, handcuffed to the spell I was under <b>for just one hour of sunshine.</b> Years of labor, locks and ceilings, <b>in the shade of how he was feeling...</b>” <i>(Fresh Out The Slammer)</i></p> <p>“Camera <b>flashes</b>, welcome bashes Get the <b>matches, toss the ashes off the ledge</b>” <i>(Fresh Out The Slammer)</i></p> <p>“Now, pretty baby, I’m running To the house where you still wait up, and that <b>porch light gleams.</b>” <i>(Fresh Out The Slammer)</i></p> <p>“He sent me Downtown Lights” <i>(Guilty As Sin)</i></p> <p>“Nobody loves you this way It’s alright, can’t you see? The <b>downtown lights</b>” <i>(Downtown Lights - The Blue Nile)</i></p> <p>“The <b>smoke cloud</b> billows out his mouth like a freight train through a small town.” <i>(I Can Fix Him (No Really I Can))</i> *He is creating a cloud of smoke, blocking</p>	<p>“What may not be expected in a country of <b>eternal light?</b> <b>I may there discover the wondrous power</b> which attracts the needle and may regulate a thousand celestial observations that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever.”</p> <p>“No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of <b>light into our dark world.</b> A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me.”</p> <p>“I remembered the effect that the view of the tremendous and ever-moving glacier had produced upon my mind when I first saw it. It had then filled me with a sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul and allowed it to soar <b>from the obscure world to light and joy.</b> The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnising my mind and causing me to forget the passing cares of life.”</p>
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	<p><i>light</i></p> <p>“I felt <b>aglow</b> like this never before and never since” <i>(LOML)</i></p> <p>“This town is fake but you’re the real thing. Breath of <b>fresh air through smoke rings</b>. Take the glory, give everything. Promise to be <b>dazzling</b>.” <i>(Clara Bow)</i></p>	
<p>Lightning/ Electricity as a symbol for the Dangers of harnessing Cosmic knowledge/power</p> <p>In <i>Frankenstein</i> lightning is, like fire, a symbol for the dangerous side of knowledge, and the destruction it can cause. In the story, lightning destroys a tree. Later, Frankenstein uses lightning to reanimate the corpse.</p>	<p>“<b>I knew too much</b>. There was danger in the <b>heat</b> of my touch.” <i>(My Boy Only Breaks His Favorite Toys)</i></p> <p>“For a moment <b>I knew cosmic love</b>. Now I’m down bad, crying at the gym.” <i>(Down Bad)</i></p> <p>“<b>Lights</b>, camera, bitch smile, even when you wanna die.” <i>(I Can Do It With a Broken Heart)</i></p> <p>“The <b>lights refract sequin stars</b> off her silhouette every night. I can <b>show you lies</b>.” <i>(I Can Do It With a Broken Heart)</i></p> <p>“You <b>kicked out the stage lights</b> but you’re still performing” <i>(The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived)</i></p> <p>“You look like Clara Bow <b>in this light</b>, remarkable.”</p>	<p>“As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a <b>stream of fire</b> issue from an old and beautiful oak which stood about twenty yards from our house; and so soon as the <b>dazzling light</b> vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump.”</p> <p>“<b>Vivid flashes of lightning dazzled</b> my eyes, illuminating the lake, <b>making it appear like a vast sheet of fire</b>; then for an instant every thing seemed of a pitchy darkness, until the eye recovered itself from the preceding flash.”</p> <p>“<b>A flash of lightning illuminated the object</b>, and <b>discovered its shape plainly to me</b>; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the</p>

	<p><i>(Clara Bow)</i></p> <p>“No one in my small town thought I’d see the <b>lights</b> of Mannatan.” <i>(Clara Bow)</i></p> <p>“Crowd goes wild at her fingertips. <b>Half moonshine, a full eclipse.</b>” <i>(Clara Bow)</i></p> <p>“Only when your <b>girlish glow flickers</b> just so do they <b>let you know.</b>” <i>(Clara Bow)</i></p> <p>“You’ve <b>got edge</b>; she never did. The future’s <b>bright .. Dazzling.</b>” <i>*Dazzling, here, refers to the Emily Dickinson poem, “Tell all the truth but tell it slant.” Emily’s poems famously include Strategically placed Capital letters. In the poem, she says “The truth must dazzle gradually, (like lightning to the children eased!!) or every man be blind.”</i></p> <p>“Lucid dreams like <b>electricity. The current flies through me</b> and in my fantasies I rise above it. And way up here I actually love it.” <i>(I Hate It Here)</i></p> <p>“Hand on the throttle, thought I <b>caught lightning</b> in a bottle but it’s gone again.” <i>(The Prophecy)</i></p>	<p>filthy dæmon, to whom I had given life.”</p>
<p>Fire as Destructive knowledge</p>	<p>“I knew too much. There was danger in the heat of my touch. Saw forever</p>	<p>“My candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the</p>

<p>“In <i>Frankenstein</i>, the dangerous and more powerful cousin of light is fire.” Fire represents the dangers presented by the “light” of knowledge.</p>	<p>so he <b>smashed it up</b>”  <i>(My Boy Only Breaks His Favorite Toys)</i></p> <p>“You left me at the house by the heath”  <i>(So Long London)</i></p> <p>“I’ll tell you something right now. I’d rather <b>burn my whole life down</b> than listen to one more second of all this bitching and moaning.”  <i>(But Daddy I Love Him)</i></p> <p>“You can beat the <b>heat</b>, if you beat the charges too.”</p> <p>“Oh what a way to die. My <b>bedsheets are ablaze</b>. I screamed his name, building up like waves, crashing over my grave.”  <i>(Guilty As Sin?)</i></p> <p>“Who’s gonna stop us from waltzing back into <b>rekindled flames?</b>”  <i>(LOML)</i></p> <p>“Our Field of Dreams” <b>engulfed in fire</b>. Your <b>arson’s match</b>, your somber eyes.”  <i>(LOML)</i></p>	<p>half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open.”</p> <p>“I <b>lighted the dry branch of a tree</b> and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon nearly touched. A <b>part of its orb was at length hid</b>, and I waved my brand; it sank, and with a loud scream I fired the straw, and <b>heath</b>, and bushes, which I had collected. <b>The wind fanned the fire, and the cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames, which clung to it and licked it with their forked and destroying tongues.</b>”</p> <p>“We are still surrounded by mountains of ice, still in imminent danger of being crushed in their conflict. The cold is excessive, and many of my unfortunate comrades have already found a grave amidst this scene of desolation. Frankenstein has daily declined in health; a <b>feverish fire still glimmers</b> in his eyes, but he is exhausted, and when suddenly roused to any exertion, he speedily sinks again into apparent lifelessness.”</p>
<p>Ice and Cold</p> <p>“Ice frames the story of Frankenstein,</p>	<p>“Wet through my clothes, <b>weary bones caught the chill</b>”  <i>(So Long London)</i></p>	<p>“I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the <b>seat of frost and desolation</b>; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of</p>



<p>representing isolation and alienation. Ice carries with it connotations of emotional coldness, or lacking the warmth of human companionship.”</p>	<p>“<b>Splintered back in winter</b>, silent dinners, bitter”  <i>(Guilty As Sin)</i></p>	<p>beauty and delight.”</p> <p>“Last Monday (July 31st) we were nearly <b>surrounded by ice</b>, which closed in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea-room in which she floated. Our situation was somewhat dangerous, especially as we were compassed round by a very thick fog. . . .”</p>
<p>Texts / Letters</p> <p>“<i>Frankenstein</i> is overflowing with texts: letters, notes, journals, inscriptions, and books fill the novel, sometimes nestled inside each other, other times simply alluded to or quoted. This profusion of texts is an important aspect of the narrative structure, as the various writings serve as concrete manifestations of characters’ attitudes and emotions.”</p>	<p>“Now you’re <b>at the mailbox</b>”  <i>(Down Bad)</i></p> <p>“<b>As I said in my letters</b>, now that I know better I will never lose my baby again.”  <i>(Fresh Out the Slammer)</i></p> <p>“And all at once the <b>ink bleeds</b>, a conman sells a fool a get love quick scheme.”  <i>(LOML)</i></p> <p>“Could <b>someone give a message</b> to the smallest man who ever lived?”  <i>(The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived)</i></p>	<p>Letters are a narrative framing device used in <i>Frankenstein</i>. The story is told through a series of letters from a traveler to his sister.</p> <p>Walton’s letters envelop the entire tale; Victor’s story fits inside Walton’s letters; the monster’s story fits inside Victor’s; and the love story of Felix and Safie and references to <i>Paradise Lost</i> fit inside the monster’s story.</p>
<p>Adam &amp; Eve</p>	<p>“Your wife <b>waters flowers</b>; I want to <b>kill her.</b>”  <i>(Fortnight)</i></p> <p><i>Here, Taylor is referencing the Tree of Knowledge in the garden of Eden</i></p> <p>“I would have <b>died for your sins</b>;</p>	<p>The monster sees himself as Adam, and Frankenstein as his “deadbeat” creator.</p>

	<p>now I just die inside.”  <i>(The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived)</i></p>	
<p>Science &amp; Science Fiction</p>	<p>“Did you really beam me up in a cloud of sparkling dust just to do experiments on me?”</p> <p>“I miss your hostile takeovers, encounters closer and closer” / “I’ll build you a fort on some planet where they can all understand it”</p> <p>“Stopped CPR, after all, it’s no use. The spirit was gone, we would never come to.” (Trying to bring something back to life or reanimate it)</p> <p>“Stitches undone”  <i>So Long London</i></p>	

## Mary Shelly & Frankenstein 1818:



Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was certainly a *Tortured Poet*. Her life brought her a fair amount of tragedy and hardship. Her mother died of complications from childbirth, and her father later remarried to a woman who Mary did not get along with. As a result, Mary ended up feeling very isolated from her family. As a teenager she was sent away to Scotland.

Mary would also suffer through the grief of losing multiple children and a step-sister in her young adulthood.

Likely because of these events, and because of her interest in Romanticism, themes of isolation and loneliness permeate *Frankenstein*.

These themes are also woven into the fabric of TTPD & The Anthology, with Taylor expressing her own feelings of alienation. Songs like “Down Bad,” “I Hate It Here,” and “I Look In People’s Windows” all evoke feelings of being left out or left behind. They harken back to the days of “The Outside” and “A Place In This World.”

TTPD Songs: “Down Bad,” “I Hate It Here,” “I Look In People’s Windows”

Other Songs:

### Mary & Percy’s Calamitous Love:

When Mary was sixteen, back visiting her father, she met Percy Shelley, her father’s young poetic protege. Apparently Percy was something of a “social justice warrior,” using his family’s money to help those in need, including Mary Shelley’s father, who was in debt. Although Percy was already married, he and Mary showed interest in each other.

Soon the two began meeting up at the site of Mary’s mother’s grave. “Mary described herself as attracted to Shelley’s “wild, intellectual, **unearthly looks.**”



([source](#)) Her father did not approve of their love at all. It didn't help that Percy's family was no longer willing to fund any of his philanthropic ventures. Mary's father tried to tear them apart, but they were genuinely passionate about each other. Percy encouraged Mary to write. In 1814, they ran away together, eloping in France.

“Mary and Percy believed in the concept of free-love, which in the Romantic era was specifically anti-marriage. Followers of free-love believed that anyone should be allowed to love anyone, even outside legal and societal constraints.” ([source](#))

Because of this, Percy Shelly also entered a relationship with Mary's sister Claire Clairmont, who had been traveling with them. This obviously didn't sit too well with Mary, despite her free love beliefs. Claire Clairmont also had a fling with Lord Byron, resulting in her pregnancy. Mary herself entered flirtatious relationships with others, like a friend, Hogg, but only seemed to really love Percy.

Early in their relationship, Mary and Percy lost a baby. This introduced Mary to her bouts of what we now know to be depression. Percy was also haunted by the amount of death in his life.

TTPD Songs: “But Daddy I Love Him”

Other Songs: “New Romantics,” “The Lakes,” “Lavender Haze,” “Paris”

### **The Year Without A Summer**

In 1816, the Shelleys took a gloomy vacation to Lake Geneva. Due to the eruption of Mt. Tambora, the sun had been blocked by volcanic ash in the stratosphere. During this time, temperatures dropped and light grew scarcer. This eruption also caused food shortages worldwide.

To entertain themselves during the gloom, they read German ghost stories.\* It was during this vacation that the Shelleys friend Lord Byron



challenged their group to write their own ghost stories. It was during this contest that Mary Shelley came up with the basis of what would become *Frankenstein*.

\*[How Taylor's Fortnight Evokes German Expressionist Film](#) by slowburn\_23 on Reddit

TTPD Songs: "The Tortured Poets Department"

Other Songs: "The Lakes"

### **Frankenstein 1818:**

This edition of *Frankenstein* was written by a young, nineteen year old Mary Shelley. It was published when she was only twenty.

## Who's Afraid of The Modern Prometheus?: Authorship and Revision

Since its publication, there has been contention about whether Mary was the real author of *Frankenstein*. Some are convinced that Percy was the true author, and that he allowed Mary to take credit for it. Percy did edit the book, but mostly this sentiment seems to exist because certain people don't have it in them to believe Mary Shelley, a young woman with two writer parents, could have written something with such dark and scientific subject matter, and something so integral to literature and pop culture.

Two tropes were invented in *Frankenstein*, those of the Mad Scientist and his Experiment-Gone-Wrong. I think we can use this duality as a way to interpret TTPD. If Taylor Swift the artist & person is the flawed but genius Dr. Frankenstein, her public-facing image is her out-of-control experiment.

### Frankenstein 1831:

This edited edition came out about 14 years after the original publication of *Frankenstein*. There are a few noticeable changes from the 1818 edition to the 1831 edition.

- Elizabeth, Victor Frankenstein's love interest, who, in the original, is a true cousin of Victor gets a new backstory. In the 1831 edition, Elizabeth is no longer a cousin but an orphan taken in by the Frankenstein family.
  - This change was made based on the public's reaction to the original incestuous relationship between Victor and Elizabeth
- Victor Frankenstein's character is altered in a way that removes his agency and places the story instead into the hands of fate. In the original 1818 edition, it is Frankenstein's own decisions frame his story. In the 1831 edition, he becomes a victim of circumstance.
  - The changes greatly impacted the overall themes of the novel
  - These changes are attributed to Mary's altered philosophical outlook, due to the deaths of many of her loved ones, including multiple children and eventually, Percy.
  - Shelley was also greatly impacted by the critical reception of *Frankenstein* 1818, which many believe had a hand in causing her to make some of the changes she did. She didn't like the backlash she received about the novel, and so she altered it to better mesh with public perception. Now, the

edited 1831 version is the one most known by the general public, although scholars don't all agree that it is the better version.

[Swift's view of fate in her two albums reflected in Frankenstein's two versions \(1831\)](#) by  
Burger4Ever on Reddit

## James Whale's *Frankenstein* & The Death of The Author

James Whale's *Frankenstein*, now a staple of the classic Universal monster movie genre, was not directly based on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, but instead was adapted from a 1927 play by Peggy Webling. This play was based on *Frankenstein* 1818. This play is credited with "naming" the creature Frankenstein, after his creator, a thematic choice which has infamously confused the roles of the characters among the general public.

### Frankenstein & Bride of Frankenstein Parallels

Music video visual parallels ( <i>Fortnight</i> )	
"I was in my tower weaving nightmares, twisting all my smiles into snarls."	
"At dinner you take the ring off of my middle finger and put it on the one people put wedding rings on. And it's the closest I've come to my heart exploding."  "Died on the altar waiting for the proof."	

The Bride of Frankenstein: The Rebirth of the Author

The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Poor Things, and The Tortured Poets Department

[Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf](#)

Metropolis (1927)

TTPD wedding rings noise like Bride of Frankenstein????