Daniela Lopez

English 181 Portfolio

REFLECTIVE COVER LETTER

My English Course this year focused on writing about science fiction literature and film. In this course I felt that the most significant issue that arose was reading and writing as a conversation. I learned that reading is the first step of entering a conversation by understanding what others are saying and then actively responding by forming my own argument through writing. All the learning outcomes in my first year composition course seemed to relate back to the idea that writing is a way to enter into conversation with others. While exploring technologies' effects on humanization, I have learned to form my own arguments by either resisting or supporting this change. In developing a portfolio with a variety of artifacts, I have learned to engage and persuade a range of audiences in a variety of genres, summarize and analyze the ideas of others, and write using a process of research, drafting, revision, editing and reflection.

From this experience I have learned that it is important to pay attention to the audience to whom I'm addressing, which I feel will be invaluable in similar situations in future writings and presentations, especially wanting to go into marketing as a career. The most important part of rhetorical composition is writing in different genres in response to expectations and certain situations.

The blog posts I wrote in this class portray an informal and exploratory genre. They were written in one day and once a week, containing anywhere from 200-400 words. The constraint of the post allowed the post to be an easy and quick read for both the teacher and students who may

have come across the text. The tone of these posts were informal and opinion based. This tone allowed me to express my thoughts on a given prompt in a free manner, not worrying about structure. I enjoyed these posts more than other writings because I felt I was able to be more honest with my opinions. For example, in blog post 7 when thinking about my research paper topic I wrote

> "I would like to write about the submission of women in Marry Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I find it particularly interesting how the portrayal of women passive parallels the role of women in the 19th century. I would like to further explore Shelley's possible criticism of this weak role played by women and the dysfunctions of the domestic hierarchy in regards to family structure."

Here, one can see that by writing in first person, addressing only my teacher and classmates, I am able to express my thoughts freely in my own words, without making it sound fancy.

On the other hand, my final research paper is argumentative, formal, and written over a longer period of time. Its audience is whoever reads the paper and its purpose is to use literary text to make an argument. Although it is written about the same topic as my blog post 7, my final research paper is written in a formal and persuasive tone. One can see this when I write

> "This paper further investigates Shelley's criticism of the limited role of women in nineteenth-century England. Shelley works to subvert the patriarchal hierarchy through her depiction of female characters that abide by the social construction that values men over women and the negative consequences suffered by both men and women because of this social order."

While this excerpt exemplifies the same concept as the one written about in my blog post, it is much more formal, because of the expectations of a final research paper.

The difference between my blog post 7 and my final paper demonstrates my ability to use the same content, but write in different genres according to the audience, purpose and constraints of the project. I'm able to switch tones, depending on the expectations. Through writing a variety of genres I learned to write according to the expectations of different settings, holding the reader's attention with different methods.

The idea of writing as a conversation is most prevalent in outcome 2, critical thinking and reading resulting in writing. By reading, one absorbs information expressed by other people and actively responds by writing.

Throughout my blog posts I have been using writing as a critical thinking tool. In my first blog post I responded to the idea brought up by a podcast about cameras watching over a city to avoid crime rates. After various class discussions, I was able to formulate my own opinion on the subject: "While some argue that our privacy is being invaded, others contend that cameras are enhancing our security, therefore we are more protected." It is evident that I was able to respond to the idea of having "an eye in the sky" in a way that incorporated others' positions on the subject, while further challenging them.

Another example of crafting my own argument is evident in my Pecha Kucha presentation. Creating this project helped me improve my critical thinking skills outside of analyzing literature. I was able to analyze Dove's real beauty campaign and integrate it into creating my own thesis on what it meant to me: "Addressing mainly women, Dove's Real Beauty Campaign aims to widen the definition of beauty in relation to different sizes, colors, and shapes of women's bodies." I was able to discover the meaning of just one image, while further relating it to how just one advertisement can shape social media. I really enjoyed this project because I think analyzing literature is monotonous and boring, especially when you do not get to choose

which literature you are evaluating. This project allowed me to choose my own artifact and explore its meaning and importance, while having to pull other artifacts into my presentation that support my thesis, and maybe even provide some critique.

In sum, my new realization of myself as a person engaged in inquiry and scholarship is that my opinions aren't the only ones that matter, and in that case, my opinions aren't the only thing I should be writing about. It is important to nuance your argument to incorporate all sides of an argument to engage the audience of an article. Furthermore, I have learned how to incorporate others' ideas into my writings and presentations and further explore their thoughts, making them my own.

To continue, there are many steps to writing any paper, specifically a research paper. In writing my research paper I learned that writing is a process of research, drafting, revision, editing, and reflection.

The first step of my procedure was to come up with a topic and a novel, I chose the submission of women in *Frankenstein,* shown in my blog post 7: "I would like to write about the submission of women in Marry Shelley's *Frankenstein."* After being sure this is what I wanted to write about, the same idea then developed into a proposal: "this papers further investigates Shelley's criticism of the limited role of women in nineteenth century England in effort to subvert the patriarchal hierarchy in regards to family structure." After this, I assembled 5 scholarly sources in my annotated bibliography that I planned to critique in my paper, either refuting, supporting, or adding on to what they said. For example, I wrote in my annotated bibliography: "Davis' idea that the exclusion of women is what led men to failure in the novel can be used in my paper to portray Marry Shelley's criticism of the role of women in the 19th century. It can be argued that Shelley uses the failure of men in *Frankenstein* to encourage the

use of the feminine voice in the actual world." From this, I was able to expand my thesis to be more detailed and thought out, adding the idea that the failure of men in *Frankenstein* further criticizes the domestic hierarchy in the 19th century. This change is seen in my rough draft when my thesis becomes,

> "This paper further investigates Shelley's criticism of the limited role of women in nineteenth century England. Shelley works to subvert the patriarchal hierarchy through her depiction of female characters that abide by the social construction that values men over women and the negative consequences suffered by both men and women because of this social order."

Here, one can see the drastic changes that were placed in order to ability to establish a debatable and original thesis statement.

Based on feedback from both my classmates and my teacher, I then decided to restructure my final draft of my research paper. Since my counterargument was weak, I decided to take out my counterargument and integrated it as support for my main argument. For example, I added to my main argument the impression of "Shelley showing that it is the woman who takes charge in the marital hierarchy" in effort to "reverse the social order in her present day society, the nineteenth-century." Additionally, by reverse outlining with my peers, I was able to move paragraphs around, leading my paper to have better organization and more flow. Lastly, I added more detailed evidence in supporting my thesis, specifically the claim that "the inequality of the hierarchical society of the nineteenth-century is what leads men and women to their downfall." In my final draft I flushed out this claim, integrating substantial evidence from the text.

All in all, my final draft has been a long process edited by my peers, teacher, and ultimately myself. Writing as a process helped me produce the best final paper I could. By writing this paper, I realized that it takes multiple drafts to create a complete and successful text.

In conclusion, as a writer coming in on the first day, I struggled with organizing my paper and found that I had writers block. Now I can comfortably say that I have been given the tools to view writing as a way of entering a conversation with others, making writing an easier process for me. With all the projects and papers I have completed throughout this course, I have learned that writing is a long process that integrates the ideas of others and engages the audience to whom I'm addressing.

LITERARY ANALYSIS LETTER + REFLECTION

Dear Diary,

Almost found the perfect boyfriend. People always say boyfriends are fun. Feeling lonely I can't share my story with no one (note to self: remember to tell Precious Pony). So yeah, Ben. So super nice. He's super rich, just like I like them! Our date: First went to this insanely good restaurant. Everyone at restaurant knew him, that's so cool AND we drank a 200-euro wine. Such good wine, wow. Then we went for a walk around the city walls leading us to the gorgeous hotel room. Super fancy. I knew I had to fuck him after that amazing, expensive date but I wasn't really feeling it. Sort of regret it now. His body was incredible though. He could be the perfect boyfriend but there definitely is something about him that is off. Maybe that's why I kept telling him his feet smelled, when they really didn't or that he was cross-eyed when he wasn't? Or maybe I was drunk? So frustrating. He literally turned down the community access on his apparat so I wouldn't know where his mind was. Besides, sex was alright, but why the fuck did

he try to comfort me. Telling a girl she's "slutty" and that her "fuckability is an 800+" is not a turn on, plus that probably wasn't even true because I was having such a bad hair day (note to self: try to find place in Rome that knows how to do Asian hair). I know I'm super sexy but I feel ashamed when I'm with him. Trying to figure out whether he's too good for me... When I walk next to him on the street I feel so undeserving because he's so rich and rich people deserve to be with supermodels or smart media whore girls.

Ben is nice guy who treats me good, like dad. Well not really. He's at it again. mom told me she had to sleep in the basement and that Sally had to sleep upstairs because dad is drunk. I have bad memories of dad being drunk. Why is dad always drunk? So dangerous (note to self: fix dad). Dad is an idiot and can't handle stairs when he's drunk. On top of it all, no one will tell me what's up. Sally tells me random shit about mom's spoiled tofu or dad's empty practice. Dad always tries to hide that it's his damn fault that the practice is empty, not mom's or Sally's or the patients. He's such a bastard. I love spending his money here, but I feel bad for not being with Sally or mom, so I have to go protect them (note to self: buy ticket to visit mom and Sally).

I like Ben, but dad is always going to be only man for me, although he is asshole. Ben and I have really good times. I like being with Ben sometimes, but when I have too much fun with Ben I suddenly think of dad and then I MISS HIM. Why do I miss dad? He is such an asshole, but I miss him? I think it was because I was drunk, I don't know. I shouldn't miss him. But maybe I should because he was nice sometimes, like the times he helped the poor illegal Mexican immigrants for free. Maybe he is more of butthole now because I left him. Can I be bad daughter for leaving him and going all the way to Europe?

Also I miss my sister. Precious Pony. I always remember that time we lived in Long Beach and she slept over all the time. We would sleep until so late. Then mom got mad at us for

sleeping so much and would tell us "early bird gets the worm." That's so dumb. Anyway, I miss her so much (note to self: talk more to Precious Pony).

Anyway, I'm tired. That was basically my day in a nutshell. So much to handle, I'm like verbal diarrhea. I'm done now though. Bed time (note to self: figure shit out).

Process Reflection/ Rationale:

My literary response is a diary entry by Eunice. Eunice's original entries are online communications to her sister or mother. In this submission Eunice is addressing no one, which enables her to accurately express her opinions and moods. This literary response is meant to be an entertaining read. Being a personal diary Eunice has no filter in the way she conveys herself so she is a more vulgar and detailed about her personal experiences. Her tone is a free spirited one who is frustrated with all the different events going on in her life, whether back at home or in Rome.

In writing my letter I first re-read the assigned pages in this epistolary novel. I tried to grasp the spirit of Eunice's character which is why I decided to keep Eunice's broken English. I tried to make the letter more personal by adding more insight to her feelings and ideas. I included the "notes to self" to show all that she has to do, leading to her frustration.

This letter's weakness is that it is not a responsive letter, it does not address an argument, rather it tells the story of a girl and her hectic world. The letter's strength is its ability to capture the essence of Eunice's character in the novel and to further portray her inner feelings through a diary entry.

PECHA KUCHA PRESENTATION

Picture	Description
	My artifact is an online banner advertisement from Dove. It is part of Dove's "Real Beauty Campaign". Addressing mainly women, the campaign aims to widen the definition of beauty in relation to different sizes, colors, and shapes of women's bodies.
	Dove has been running its' real beauty campaign since 2004. Previous to the campaign Dove made a worldwide study and found that only 2% of women describes themselves as beautiful. Since then, Dove has taken the initiative to challenge beauty stereotypes posed by modern day models.
	So I'd like to begin by juxtaposing Dove's campaign with Victoria's Secrets "Love my body campaign" These models set the social cultural standard of feminine beauty. The images of these women printed in almost all forms of popular media portray what is considered to be the "ideal body"

	I mean it cannot get any clearer than this image. This poster shows the perspective of the mass media that the perfect body is only attained by being thin. Images like these in the media project an unrealistic and even dangerous standard of feminine beauty.
	The problems with these images is that people are giving themselves false illusions. Such standards of beauty are almost completely unattainable for most women; a majority of the models displayed on television and in advertisements are well below what is considered healthy body weight.
	Even Barbie dolls have unrealistic proportions. Most girls fail to realize that if they had the proportions of a Barbie doll they would not be able to bear children, or even attain an overall state of well-being.

Which brings us to our next topic… |

	Why is it important for the mass media to educate the public with a broader definition of beauty?
	Because models are making it difficult for females to achieve any level of contentment with their physical appearance. * These images are translated into body image disturbance in women. *
1 in 5 girls would consider plastic surgery. Get involved at www.campaignforrealbeauty.com.sg the dove self-esteem fund	In this slide we see that 1 in 5 girls consider plastic surgery. This is because the mass media is a commanding influence for which women look to for social comparison. Because of the media women are so conflicted with their bodies, seeking constant change.
	According to research conducted by Streigel Moore disturbed body image is one of the main precursors for disordered eating and dieting in adolescent and young adult girls. Girls this age frequently report being dissatisfied with weight, fearing further weight gain, and being preoccupied with weight.

	Concerns with the development of disordered eating are an especially vital issue because such patterns have been found to be a major cause of clinical eating disorders (Bulimia and anorexia). These diseases can be extremely dangerous and even fatal.
	The worst part is that not only do these models have unhealthy proportions, but most their photos are photo shopped. For example, in this image you can see what editing can do to a picture with out even putting actual make up on the person.
	So how is the mass media actually appealing to people? The mass media is rhetorically appealing by **ethos** because people assume lucrative companies like Victoria's Secret are something worth listening to, hence they believe that what they portray as the ideal body

let's face it, firming the thighs of a size 8 supermodel is no challenge.	This image by Dove compares to VS image because Dove also uses its **credibility** as a large, lucrative company to appeal to their audience, but they display another message, that women should be confident in their own skin, no matter what color, shape or size.
	These large companies are also using **pathos** to appeal to the belief and values of the audience. Since the models in the picture seem content, the audience assumes that if they look like the models they will also be content
	Dove also uses **pathos** to appeal to its audience, but they portray a variety of women with different body images as being happy, showing that beauty is a sense of confidence and that there is no set definition for beauty.

	Now, upon first glance one assumes that Dove is trying to widen the definition of what it means to be beautiful, but after closer examination one can argue that dove criticizes women who are naturally skinny
The Perfect Real Body	In this image women of larger size are portrayed to have the perfect real body. So what is happening to the women who are naturally skinny, are they not beautiful anymore?
	I'd also like to critique both Dove and VS ads for targeting women as their audience. The mass media is assuming that beauty/ appearance is important to women as a group. I mean where do men fall in in all of this?
	Overall, although it has left out men, I believe Dove has realized that media images come to affect the way women feel about their bodies and physical appearance and it is taking the right step forward in depicting what it means to be beautiful, empowering women to feel confident with themselves

	So whether it is VS "love my body campaign" or Doves "real beauty campaign" the media needs to raise women's self esteems and let all women know they are beautiful. Like Dove, we should challenge stereotypes posed by modern day models and widen the definition of what it means to be beautiful.
	Know that all women are real. All bodies are beautiful no matter what size, color, or shape. Little by little we can learn to be confident in our own skin.

FIVE SELECTED BLOG POSTS

<u>Blog Post #1 (Eye in the Sky)</u>

Position 1: In discussions of cameras that can watch over an entire city at once, a controversial issue has been our privacy. While some argue that our privacy is being invaded, others contend that cameras are enhancing our security, therefore we are more protected. That is not to say that it is right for the government to be watching us all the time. One's freedom is being taken away if we are constantly video taped. It can also be argued that crime will not diminish just because people are being watched. A crime can still happen, the only difference is that the person who engage in illegal activities "may" get caught. I say "may" because if the video cameras are not being watched 24/7 the person committing the crime may not even be

caught! Overall, it is not a good idea to have persistent surveillance all over cities.

Position 2: In discussions of cameras that can watch over an entire city at once, a controversial issue has been our privacy. While some argue that our privacy is being invaded, others contend that cameras are enhancing our security, therefore we are more protected. Persistant surveillance will prevent misdeeds from happening in the first place. People are less likely to commit a crime if there is a higher likelihood that they get caught. Hence, people will think twice about engaging in an illegal act. This diminishing of crime will cause people to feel more safe around them. For this reason, it makes sense to have surveillance all over cities.

Blog Post #3 (Identity in Super Sad True Love Story)

When it comes to the topic of identity, most of us will readily agree that ethnicity has a lot to do with how people identify themselves. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of stereotypes. Whereas some are convinced that stereotypes are factual, others maintain that they distort the personality of individuals. Although Super Sad True Love Story is a fictional futuristic novel, stereotypes about our present world are described.

One particularly important scene in the novel is Chung Won Park's communication to Eunice on page 72. In this letter Eunice's mother writes to Eunice to give her orders about what to do with her life. This alone labels Asian mothers as being strict. The letter is also written in broken English, which brings about the assumption that all American immigrants speak and write inadequately. Within this message one can see the stereotype that Koreans are racist. Chung Won Park mentions that Eunice's father thinks Eunice "is probably with black man," giving black people a negative connotation. Chung Won Park also reiterates "we are not like American…Which is now why Korea very rich country and America owe everything to China."

This does not only stereotype Koreans as racist, but it mocks America as a nation. Furthermore, throughout the letter Eunice's mother mentions how her husband is abusive, which can also be viewed as categorizing Korean husbands and manipulative and abusive.

In sum, then, the elements in the online communication on page 72 demonstrate that while Super Sad True Love Story is a futuristic novel, it raises issues of our present-day world.

Blog Post #4 (Dystopia in Super Sad True Love Story)

Super Sad True Love Story's most prevalent theme of dystopia revolves around the lack of privacy that comes along with society's rare manner of using technology to communicate. On page 141, Lenny's mother mentions to Lenny that Ms. Vida, his neighbor, heard him appear on the stream "101 People We Need to Feel Sorry for." Lenny, of course, is embarrassed and had previously asked his parents not to look or listen to streams or data about him. The availability and constant broadcasting character's every day lives is what I consider disturbing and what characterizes the novels society as dystopic. There is no sense of privacy what so ever.

The image I chose is a person checking their Facebook. This represents the scene on page 141 because people are checking technology to gain insight on what is happening with other peoples lives. The only difference between Facebook and SSTLS's streams and data is that posting is optional. In the novel, there is pretty much nothing you can do about having your life and opinions constantly broadcasted, invading the privacy of all individuals.

Blog Post #7 (Thinking about our Paper Proposal)

I would like to write about the submission of women in Marry Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I find it particularly interesting how the portrayal of women as passive parallels the role of women

in the 19th century (the time when the novel was written). I would like to further explore Shelley's possible criticism of this weak role played by women and the dysfunctions of the domestic hierarchy in regards to family structure.

I found a peer reviewed journal by James Davis titled *Frankenstein and the Subversion of the Masculine Voice*. This article investigates the submission of women in the novel. It expands on the concept of misogyny, "their virtual exclusion of female characters and perspectives purposefully enacts in the novel's form the misogyny that dooms the male characters to failure." This idea that the exclusion of women is what led men to failure in the novel can be used in my paper to portray Marry Shelley's criticism of the role of women in the 19th century. She can be using this failure of men in the book to encourage the use of the feminine voice in the actual world.

The author of this article references a critics claim in the first paragraph of his journal entry. He uses the critics claim to further support his thesis stating in his works cited that "Several studies have been particularly useful in establishing feminist critical."

Blog Post #12 (If I Were a Guest Lecture in this Course)

If I were asked to guest lecture in the next section of this course, I would cover constructing a thesis using a They Say/ I Say Structure. I would teach this because I think it is vital for all writing. The biggest concept I learned in this class is that writing should be a conversation. One enters a conversation through their writing. In this way one can engage the audience, capturing their attention as if you were talking to them. A thesis constructed using a They say/ I say structure not only talks about common opinions on the subject matter, but it also responds to it, explaining why it is important that the reader read your paper.

To begin teaching this skill I would begin by explain the "they say" aspect in a thesis. I would explain that you must start with stating what others are saying, or summarizing. I would teach that the art of summarizing is stating the other person main points to either agree with them or rebuttal them. Here, I would teach that you can even include a quote of what "they say" and then further comment on it. I would further explain the second part of the thesis, the "I say" part. There are 3 ways you can respond: yes, no, or okay, but. From this one must include a "so what" factor, distinguishing what you are saying from what they are saying. With these two aspects to a thesis one can engage the audience through writing as if they were entering a conversation.

PROPOSAL AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Shelley's Effort to Subvert the Patriarchal Hierarchy in *Frankenstein*

This research analyzes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* written in 1831 and published by the small London publishing house. This research draws upon primary and secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations and book reviews. Previous research focuses on Shelley's undermining of women in *Frankenstein*. This papers further investigates Shelley's criticism of the limited role of women in nineteenth century England in effort to subvert the patriarchal hierarchy in regards to family structure.

Annotated Bibliography

Davis, James P. "Frankenstein and the Subversion of the Masculine Voice." *Women's Studies*
21.3 (1992): 307-22. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.
Davis' peer reviewed journal investigates the submission of women in the *Frankenstein*.

Davis expands on the concept of misogyny, "their virtual exclusion of female characters and perspectives purposefully enacts in the novel's form the misogyny that dooms the male characters to failure." The idea that the exclusion of women is what led men to failure in the novel can be used in my paper to portray Marry Shelley's criticism of the role of women in the 19th century. It can be used to argue that Shelley uses the failure of men in *Frankenstein* to encourage the use of the feminine voice in the actual world.

Haddad, Stephanie S. "Women as the Submissive Sex in Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'" *Student Pulse*. N.p., 2010. Web. 25 Oct. 2015.

Haddad's review offers insight about the female characters in *Frankenstein* and their specific purpose in the novel. It elaborates specifically on the demeaning characterizations of Safie, Elizabeth, Justine Margaret and Agatha in relation to other members of their families. This text can easily be included in my paper to show different analyses of events in the novel that show Shelley's portrayal of women as the submissive sex. It will also be used to explore Shelley's possible criticism the dysfunctions of the domestic hierarchy in regards to family structure.

Hodges, Devon. "Frankenstein and the Feminine Subversion of the Novel." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 2.2 (1983): 155-64. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 Oct. 2015.

Hodges' journal article attempts to ascertain Mary Shelley's way of recreating the patriarchal hierarchy in the nineteenth century through her novel *Frankenstein*. It emphasizes how Shelley uses *Frankenstein* to give a portrayal of women at the time, "her representation of the liminal position of women- and the relation of that position to sexual categories of a patriarchal culture- is precisely her achievement." This article can be used in my paper to show how Shelley indeed is showing women's liminal role in society. I

can use it to further prove that *Frankenstein* challenges cultural order by making society

be aware and feel the pressure of what it is doing to women.

Hughes, Kathryn. "Gender Roles in the 19th Century." *British Library*. British Library Board,

N.p., Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

Hughes' article published in the British Library is about gender and sexuality in the

Victorian era. It emphasizes the sharp definition between the roles of women and men at

this point in history. It talks about marriage, sexuality, education, and rights and attitudes

toward gender. I will use this article to provide background information on patriarchal

culture in the Victorian era, particularly within the context of the submission of women.

Knudsen, Louise Almen. "Reading Between the Lines: An Analysis of Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein, Or, the Modern Prometheus, Using Horace Walpole's The Castle of

Otranto as an Example of Male Discourse about Women." Diss. English Almen, n.d.

Projekter. 31 July 2012. Web. 25 Oct. 2015.

Knudsen's unpublished dissertation found online aims to examine socially constructed

ideas on the different roles for men and women in society. It assesses how Mary Shelley

presents male and female characters in *Frankenstein*. It also touches up on the overall

status of women in the 19th century. This dissertation will be used to further examine the

role of women in *Frankenstein*. It will also be used to show how the portrayal of women

as passive in the novel parallels the role of women in the 19th century, particularly in

England.

RESEARCHED ARGUMENT ROUGH DRAFT + REFLECTION

Shelley's Effort to Subvert the Patriarchal Hierarchy in *Frankenstein*

Although *Frankenstein* was written over two hundred years ago the ethical issues raised in *Frankenstein* are still relevant today. Written in 1831 and published by the small London publishing house, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* recounts the story of two men, Robert Walton and Victor Frankenstein, and their voyage on the quest for knowledge. At first glance one assumes that the role of women in the novel is insignificant due to the lack of any leading role, but in fact women are Shelley's main focus. Previous research focuses on Shelley's undermining of women through the representation of female characters such as Caroline, Justine, Elizabeth, and Margaret. **This paper further investigates Shelley's criticism of the limited role of women in nineteenth century England. Shelley works to subvert the patriarchal hierarchy through her depiction of female characters that abide by the social construction that values men over women and the negative consequences suffered by both men and women because of this social order.**

While most critics argue that women in *Frankenstein* are portrayed as submissive and dependent characters, after closer examination one can see that "women are not completely passive victims. Instead, they stand in an in-between position in society, with only partial rights" (Hodges). Because of the absence of her responses to any of Robert Walton's letters, Margaret is exposed as the most distant and passive female figure in the novel. We never get to know Margaret, nor do we know if she really exists (Haddad). As a result of her lack of expression, one can interpret Margaret as an oppressed and completely passive character. However, in reality she is the most essential character in the novel, because without her there is no reason for Walton to relay his story.

Caroline serves as another example of a woman who is not a passive victim to the social order posed by society. One can see Caroline's power when Shelley mentions that "every thing was made to yield to her wishes and her convenience" (16). Here, it is evident that Alphonse, Caroline's husband, is completely devoted to fulfilling his wife's wishes. For a change, Shelley is showing that it is the woman who takes charge in the marital hierarchy. Shelley can be using the power of women to also try and reverse the social order in her present day society, the nineteenth century.

Although it is important to consider that the female figures in the novel are not portrayed as completely passive; one must not overlook the inequality of the social system posed by society that has negative impact impact for both men and women. Nineteenth century society was founded on a rigid division of sex-roles. This sharp definition where the man inhibits the public sphere and the women is consigned to the domestic sphere is evident in *Frankenstein.* The male character's in the novel all work outside the home; Alphonse as a public servant, Victor as a scientist, Clerval as a merchant, and Walton as an explorer. On the other hand, the female figures are relegated to chores in their houses; Caroline as a housewife, Elizabeth as a child care provider, Margaret as a nurse, and Justine as a servant.

The separation of masculine labor and the domestic realm cause intellectual activity to be segregated from emotional activity. This separation leads Victor to separate his scientific work from his family, which in turn causes Victor to be emotionless, causing Victor never to be able to feel love or empathy towards his creature. As a result, Victor's creature seeks to avenge Victor for the lack of love and compassion, causing chaos, destruction and eventually resulting in Victor's downfall (Mellor). The segregation of sexes, in this instance, leads to the failure of Victor. This failure encourages the collaboration of intellectual and emotional activity. Shelley

is able portray the consequences of female and male characters abiding to the social constructions set by society, suggesting that a change in social order may revolutionize negative outcomes in the real world.

The rigid division of sex-roles does not only doom Victor to failure; it also causes the destruction of female figures in the novel, such as Caroline Beaufort. Caroline nursed her father until his death, displaying qualities of nurturing and selfless. Caroline, not able to fend for herself, goes on to marry her father's good friend, Alphonse Frankenstein. Despite her brilliance, she could not sustain a life of her own. Shelley claims that "Caroline Beaufort possessed a mind of an uncommon mould, and her courage rose to support her in her adversity" yet she "earned a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life" (Shelley 15). This example not only illustrates how women are dependent on men, but it also implies that women are not able to survive in the public sphere, proposing their constraint to the domestic sphere.

Staying within the domestic sphere is what leads Caroline Beaufort to her ruin. According to Mellor, Caroline "incarnates a patriarchal ideal of female devotion and self-sacrifice." The role of caregiver and motherly self-sacrifice is evident when she risks her life in order to cure her daughter Elizabeth's scarlet fever. Knowing it was best if she stayed away from her daughter's deadly and highly contagious sickness, Caroline was not able to resist providing care for Elizabeth. Although she was able to save Elizabeth, Caroline's impulsiveness to embody the ideal female figure in the eyes of nineteenth century society leads her to her death.

Also suffering from the prejudice of the patriarchal hierarchy, Justine Moritz represents another objectified female character in *Frankenstein.* Justine is adopted by the Frankenstein family and serves as their faithful servant, ensuring that their home was a place of comfort.

Justine is wrongly accused and executed for the murder of William Frankenstein. Knowing that the public sphere will not support her innocence, Justine is inactive and passive during her trial. Having no support from society, Justine eventually confesses to William's murder. She explains her reason to confessing by expressing, "I had none to support me; all looked on me as a wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition" (Shelley 58). Knowing that, as a woman, she would be given no justice in the public realm, Justine accepts death as her fate. Shelley uses Justine's case in effort to subvert social order by creating awareness of the injustice it poses in society.

While all the women in the novel seem constricted to their roles given to them by society, Elizabeth Lavenza is arguably the most submissive character in the novel. Being an orphan and a beggar in Italy, Elizabeth is adopted by the Frankenstein family to serve as Victor's "adored companion" (P17). Being given protection by the Frankenstein family, Elizabeth becomes a "commodified form of reward for Caroline's charity and for Victor's possession" (Davis 317). Caroline views Elizabeth as a reward by regarding her as a "pretty present for my Victor" (Shelley 18). After receiving Elizabeth, Victor further objectifies her by stating:

And, on the morrow, she presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally and looked upon Elizabeth as mine- mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her I received as a possession of my own…No expression could body forth the kind of relationship in which she stood to me- my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only. (Shelley 18)

In this passage one can see that Elizabeth exemplifies the typical passive and dependent women in the nineteenth century. She is objectified by being viewed as a "promised gift" or reward for

Victor. One can also argue that Elizabeth is subject to Victor, for she is his "possession." Victor even sees the need to "protect her" demonstrating that a woman cannot survive without a man; rather, they need care and protection.

Elizabeth's demeaning characterization is further displayed when she is given no choice but to stay within the domestic sphere of society. As Caroline was dying, Elizabeth was told "my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father Elizabeth my love you must supply my place to my younger children" (Shelley 24). Not only is it expected of Elizabeth to assume the role as caregiver to Caroline's children; to add, she is expected to serve as Victor's lifelong companion. As a result of her relationship with Victor, Elizabeth is used as an object of revenge and eventually is killed by Victor's creature. Upon being killed "Elizabeth has become another inert victim in this game of insanity and male-centered mayhem. She has been demeaned and reduced to a simple tool of revenge, along with the other female characters appearing in *Frankenstein*" (Haddad). Elizabeth's objectification can be argued to show Shelley's portrayal of women as victims. In effort to subvert the hierarchy Shelley uses the representation of Elizabeth to show the dysfunctions and unjust consequences posed by the patriarchal hierarchy.

In conclusion, Shelley creates awareness of the inequalities posed by society's social order through the representation of both male and female characters. Shelley further criticizes the patriarchal hierarchy by showing the negative consequences suffered by both men and women in result of abiding to social standards. This idea further suggests that a change in social order may revolutionize negative outcomes in the real world. Although the patriarchal hierarchy depicted by Shelley still exists today, it is literature like *Frankenstein* that makes the public aware of discriminations in society, advocating for change to improve society as a

whole.

<u>Rough Draft Reflection</u>

In writing my paper there are many things I feel confident about and other things I struggled with. The strongest element of my paper is my ability to establish a debatable and original thesis statement. I am also able to use each paragraph as a way to back up my thesis and build on what I have said previously. It was easy for me to come up with ideas on how to back up my thesis, because while reading *Frankenstein* I actively took notes. On the other hand, although I bring up valid opposing views, the weakest element in my paper is structuring my counter argument. I find it a bit awkward to have opposing views, because I am used to solely persuasive essays. I am learning, though, that opposing views can make my paper more complex by considering all the different ways a reader can agree or disagree with my statements.

RESEARCHED ARGUMENT FINAL PAPER + REFLECTION

<u>Shelley's Effort to Subvert the Patriarchal Hierarchy in *Frankenstein*</u>

Although *Frankenstein* was written over two hundred years ago the ethical issues raised in *Frankenstein* are still relevant today. Written in 1831 and published by the small London publishing house, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* recounts the story of two men, Robert Walton and Victor Frankenstein, and their voyage on the quest for knowledge. At first glance one assumes that the role of women in the novel is insignificant due to the lack of any leading role, but in fact women are Shelley's main focus. Previous research focuses on Shelley's undermining of women through the representation of female characters such as Caroline,

Justine, Elizabeth, and Margaret. **This paper further investigates Shelley's criticism of the limited role of women in nineteenth-century England. Shelley works to subvert the patriarchal hierarchy through her depiction of female characters that abide by the social construction that values men over women and the negative consequences suffered by both men and women because of this social order.**

While some critics argue that women in *Frankenstein* are portrayed as submissive and dependent characters, after closer examination one can see that "women are not completely passive victims. Instead, they stand in an in-between position in society, with only partial rights" (Hodges). Because of the absence of her responses to any of Robert Walton's letters, Margaret is exposed as the most distant and passive female figure in the novel. As Stephanie Haddad points out, we never get to know Margaret, nor do we know if she really exists. As a result of her lack of expression, one can interpret Margaret as an oppressed and completely passive character. However, in reality she is the most essential character in the novel, because without her there is no reason for Walton to relay his story.

Although it is important to consider that the female figures in the novel are not portrayed as completely passive; one must not overlook the inequality of the social system posed by society that has negative impact impact for both men and women. Nineteenth-century society was founded on a rigid division of sex-roles. This sharp definition where the man inhibits the public sphere and the women is consigned to the domestic sphere is evident in *Frankenstein.* The male characters in the novel all work outside the home: Alphonse as a public servant, Victor as a scientist, Clerval as a merchant, and Walton as an explorer. On the other hand, the female figures are relegated to chores in their houses: Caroline as a housewife, Elizabeth as a child care provider, Margaret as a nurse, and Justine as a servant.

The separation of masculine labor and the domestic realm cause intellectual activity to be segregated from emotional activity. This separation of scientific work from family "renders victor unsocial," which in turn causes Victor to forget about his family and friends from back home (Shelley 45). The lack of relationships causes Victor to feel isolated, comprehended during his reflection of melancholy "I, who had never been surrounded by amiable companions, continually engaged in endeavoring to bestow mutual pleasure, I was now alone" (Shelley 25). Here, one can see the domino effect caused by the separation of men and women in the public and private sphere, ultimately leading Victor to his destruction.

Victor's lack of separating masculine work and family life causes him to never be empathetic towards his creature, failing to provide the adequate care and love his creature longs for. As Victor himself explains, he was "unable to endure the aspect of the being" he had created (Shelley 35). As a result, Victor's creature seeks to avenge Victor for the lack of love and compassion, causing chaos, destruction and eventually resulting in Victor's downfall (Mellor). The segregation of sexes, in this instance, leads to the failure of Victor. This failure encourages the collaboration of intellectual and emotional activity. Shelley is able portray the consequences of female and male characters abiding to the social constructions set by society, suggesting that a change in social order may revolutionize negative outcomes in the real world.

The rigid division of sex-roles does not only doom Victor to failure; it also causes the destruction of female figures in the novel, such as Caroline Beaufort. Caroline nursed her father until his death, displaying qualities of nurturing and selflessness. Caroline, not able to fend for herself, goes on to marry her father's good friend, Alphonse Frankenstein. Despite her brilliance, she could not sustain a life of her own. Shelley claims that "Caroline Beaufort possessed a mind of an uncommon mould, and her courage rose to support her in her adversity"

yet she "earned a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life" (Shelley 15). This example not only illustrates how women are dependent on men, but it also implies that women are not able to survive in the public sphere, proposing their constraint to the domestic sphere.

Staying within the domestic sphere is what leads Caroline Beaufort to her ruin. According to Anne K. Mellor, Caroline "incarnates a patriarchal ideal of female devotion and self-sacrifice." The role of caregiver and motherly self-sacrifice is evident when she risks her life in order to cure her daughter Elizabeth's scarlet fever. Knowing it was best if she stayed away from her daughter's deadly and highly contagious sickness, Caroline was not able to resist providing care for Elizabeth. Although she was able to save Elizabeth, Caroline's impulsiveness to embody the ideal female figure in the eyes of nineteenth-century society leads her to her death.

While Caroline is fixed in the domestic sphere of work, she is portrayed to play a major role, rather than a minor role in the novel. Caroline serves as an example of a woman who is not a passive victim to the social order posed by society. One can see Caroline's power when Shelley mentions that "every thing was made to yield to her wishes and her convenience" (16). And yet, she only gains power through her relationship to a man, showing that though she is not entirely passive, her ability to subvert the system is limited. In this excerpt, it is evident that Alphonse, Caroline's husband, is completely devoted to fulfilling his wife's wishes. For a change, Shelley is showing that it is the woman who takes charge in the marital hierarchy. Shelley can be using the power of women to also try and reverse the social order in her present day society, the nineteenth-century.

Also suffering from the prejudice of the patriarchal hierarchy, Justine Moritz represents another objectified female character in *Frankenstein*. Justine is adopted by the Frankenstein

family and serves as their faithful servant, ensuring that their home was a place of comfort. Justine is wrongly accused and executed for the murder of William Frankenstein. Knowing that the public sphere will not support her innocence, Justine is inactive and passive during her trial. Having no support from society, Justine eventually confesses to William's murder. She explains her reason to confessing by expressing, "I had none to support me; all looked on me as a wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition" (Shelley 58). Knowing that, as a woman, she would be given no justice in the public realm, Justine accepts death as her fate. Shelley uses Justine's case in effort to subvert social order by creating awareness of the injustice it poses in society.

While all the women in the novel seem constricted to their roles given to them by society, Elizabeth Lavenza is arguably the most submissive character in the novel. Being an orphan and a beggar in Italy, Elizabeth is adopted by the Frankenstein family to serve as Victor's "adored companion" (17). Being given protection by the Frankenstein family, Elizabeth becomes a "commodified form of reward for Caroline's charity and for Victor's possession" (Davis 317). Caroline views Elizabeth as a reward by regarding her as a "pretty present for my Victor" (Shelley 18). After receiving Elizabeth, Victor further objectifies her by stating:

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in the nineteenth-century. She is objectified by being viewed as a "promised gift" or reward for Victor. One can also argue that Elizabeth is subject to Victor, for she is his "possession." Victor even sees the need to "protect her" demonstrating that a woman cannot survive without a man; rather, they need care and protection.

Elizabeth's demeaning characterization is further displayed when she is given no choice but to stay within the domestic sphere of society. As Caroline was dying, Elizabeth was told "my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father Elizabeth my love you must supply my place to my younger children" (Shelley 24). Not only is it expected of Elizabeth to assume the role as caregiver to Caroline's children; to add, she is expected to serve as Victor's lifelong companion, rather than being valued as an individual.

To continue, as a result of her relationship with Victor, Elizabeth is used as an object of revenge and eventually is killed by Victor's creature. Upon being killed "Elizabeth has become another inert victim in this game of insanity and male-centered mayhem. She has been demeaned and reduced to a simple tool of revenge, along with the other female characters appearing in *Frankenstein*" (Haddad). Elizabeth's objectification can be argued to show Shelley's portrayal of women as victims. In effort to subvert the hierarchy Shelley uses the representation of Elizabeth to show the dysfunctions and unjust consequences posed by the patriarchal hierarchy.

In conclusion, Shelley creates awareness of the inequalities posed by society's social order through the representation of both male and female characters. Shelley further criticizes the patriarchal hierarchy by showing the negative consequences suffered by both men and

women in result of abiding to social standards. This idea further suggests that a change in social order may revolutionize negative outcomes in the real world. Although the patriarchal hierarchy depicted by Shelley still exists today, it is literature like *Frankenstein* that makes the public aware of discriminations in society, advocating for change to improve society as a whole.

Final Draft Reflection

Based on feedback from both my classmates and Marlo, I have decided to restructure my paper. The strongest element of my first draft was my ability to establish a debatable and original thesis statement, but the opposing views in my first draft seem to line up with my thesis. For this reason, I restructured my counter argument and integrated it as support for my main argument. This restructured my paper into a progressive one, one that builds on ideas from the paragraphs before and always relates back to and supports my thesis.

By doing reverse outlining, I have been able to move paragraphs around, leading my paper to have better organization and more of a flow. I have also changed some of my topic sentences to establish a clear connection of what I have been talking about in the paper and what I am going to continue to talk about. This also contributed to the flow of the paper, making it an easy read.

The last revision that differentiates my final draft to my first draft is deeper evidence in supporting my thesis, specifically the claim that the inequality of the hierarchical society of the nineteenth-century is what leads men and women to their downfall. In my final draft I work to flesh out this claim integrating substantial evidence from the text.