

Cover Letter \*Exhibits are in **bold**.

Favour Nwachukwu

Professor Marlo Starr

Writing about Sci-Fi in Lit and Film

15 December 2015

In a world where writing class requirements are given to first year students, one brave girl will embark on an epic journey through Science-Fiction in literature and film to improve her skills, defeat the evil Writer's Block, and save her grade! Coming to a theater near you...

It is the summer before she departs for college. Favour, in antsy anticipation, pulls up Emory's general education requirements on her laptop screen. "Four semesters of writing?! You've got to be kidding me!" She ponders over the daunting thought of endless essays and research papers, a task she has never before enjoyed; but it was too late to back out now, her none refundable admission's deposit was already paid in full. Then the thought occurred to her, *Did you really think you could come to college and avoid essays? Ha! Think again.* Realizing that writing is an integral component of any institution's educational system and life in general, Favour decided to take full advantage of this extensive writing opportunity and use it to sharpen her skills and prepare her for the real world.

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During my time in Writing about Science-Fiction in Literature and Film, I had the privilege of receiving instruction in several modes and genres of writing. I was able to write in an informal manner through our weekly blog posts in which I could convey my thoughts and ideas in an unregulated format. I could approach the topics in any way I deemed fit, which was often

times humor. I employed my creative side within the literary response letter in which I took on the persona of a character from the novel *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart and wrote in her voice, fabricating what I imagined to be her inner most thoughts in the format of a diary entry. The character I chose was Chung Won Park, an immigrant from Korea who had an abusive husband and spoke with imperfect English:

**Dear Diary,**

**He hit again. It leave mark. Big mark. I make soon-dubu with bad tofu. Husband get drunk and get angry I have to sleep in basement. Sally sleep in guess room. I cry myself to sleep. This not what I expect when get married. I thought come to America make things all better. They only get worse. I scared in my own house. All because soon-dubu.**

The novel always depicted Chung as a very helpless, static character who lacked true depth. I desired to give her emotion, and explore the possibility that there could be more below the surface than what she was letting on to in the novel.

I tried my hand at oral presentations. With the Pecha Kucha, I had to formulate an argument, provide supporting evidence for my claim, and clearly convey my thoughts to a listening audience rather than a reading audience. Though they seem like opposites, writing a researched paper and presenting a Pecha Kucha follow much of the same formula. Which brings me to my researched argument paper on the literary work, *Frankenstein*, accompanied by its rough draft and proposal/annotated bibliography. This was the most formal genre of my compositions. None of it was left to my imagination as all of my arguments were derived from the book and the scientific findings I based my reasoning on. So as can be seen, my writing this

semester has stretched from sea to shining sea. Even the very structure of this cover letter is evidence of my growth in the use of a range of genres. I started off in a drama-packed movie trailer announcer's voice, segued to a lighthearted third person narrative, and finally, ended in a first person account.

I also demonstrated that I know how to adapt to different settings and write for different audiences through specifically my Pecha Kucha Presentation and my researched paper. In the presentation I included numerous pictures, many humorous, accompanied by few written words so that I could better grab and hold the attention of the audience and have them focus more on the words that I was speaking. And I was also constrained to twenty seconds per slide, forcing me to elaborate only on the most essential information and use a word choice that was easy to understand yet informed; whereas in the argument paper, although I had an ample amount of time and space to communicate my thoughts, I had to adapt my style and attempt to captivate an audience that I could not see through my rhetorical strategies, word choice, and structure of the paper.

My writing professor often described writing as entering a conversation. This entailed the use of the ideas of other writers and the incorporation of their perspectives in my work, whether to build off of or to refute. In my final argumentative paper, I did both:

**Abigail Heiniger, in her article for the *Journal of Ecocriticism*, made this same connection between a storm and the creation of both *Frankenstein* the book and the protagonist's spark of interest that led to the creation of the monster within the book. She stated that, "storms are an unintentional stimulus for the creative work of both Mary Shelley and her protagonist." Though, this paper argues that it was not**

**unintentional, but rather used as a way to further establish weather's impact on the characters and events that transpire.**

I agreed with part of the writer's claim while also disagreeing with a segment to both show my interaction with her ideas and demonstrate independent thought/analysis.

Not only have I examined written work, but imagery as well. For my Pecha Kucha presentation, I evaluated the street artwork of an artist name iHeart. Throughout the presentation, I incorporated his ideas and interpretation for his artwork entitled *Nobody Likes Me*. I did not leave it at that, but also attached my own personal interpretation for his work and what I felt the picture truly conveyed. In this, I summarized iHeart's argument as well as used critical thinking to synthesize my own.

With the practice of interacting with the ideas of others came the very useful skill of integrating quotes. I learned that it is never okay to simply stick a quote into a writing and then move on, but the quote must be thoroughly explained. To practice this, I went back to one of my earlier blog posts in which I quoted an article on privacy. Viewing that I made no effort to properly integrate the quote into my argument, I used my newly learned skill and edited the quote to create a smoother transition.

**Kate Murphy further argues the more invisible effects of lack of privacy, including conformity and the stifling of individuality causing depression, anxiety, and the like. Murphy compares privacy and sleep saying that "just as being unconscious for a portion of the day is restorative, so is being unselfconscious." The essence of Murphy's argument is that people who want privacy aren't trying to hide**

**anything as might be assumed, but rather just want to hold on to themselves.**

**(Blog Post 8)**

This proved to be a seamless way for the ideas of others to coalesce with my own. I was able to first summarize their ideas, and then tie them back to my writing by explaining how it served my thesis. An important choice I made during the creation of this paper was deciding what quotes and segments of the book and various articles would be most beneficial in integrating with my argument and establishing my claims. Doing this allowed me to enter into the conversation.

My argumentative research paper, though it seems like a singular polished work, actually came about through a series of *works*. The process of writing this paper was an extensive one; it proved to be a challenge for me. The enemy, Writer's Block, hit me with a fatal blow and I found myself bouncing from topic to topic, struggling to settle on my ideas. I first started off by writing a proposal about what my thesis would be and what text or film I would be basing it off of, accompanied by an annotated bibliography. **"This research paper will endeavor to render a basis for this opposing view to technology through the use of scholarly articles and the example of *Frankenstein*, and ultimately reveal ever-increasing technology for what it really is- a forbidden fruit."** I was first set on writing about the dangers of technology in *Frankenstein*, a task that I presumed would be easy. Afterward, in an informal blogpost, I then jotted down how I was to organize and outline my thoughts for the paper.

**My new working topic (as of now) is an evaluation of how lack of privacy stifles individuality along with other harmful effects through the use of *Super Sad True Love Story*.**

**Body:**

**I will now include more background information to further establish a foundation for the paper. A lot of my body will focus on the passages where Lenny changes his behavior and likes to assimilate into the new digital culture. Namely, hiding his books when others are around, reading in secret, etc. (Blog Post 9)**

As you can see, I underwent a complete topic change and even changed the book I was utilizing. I realized that my initial research question had too broad a scope for me to be able to write a detailed and cohesive paper, so I endeavored to pick a new topic that I could hone in on. Something that I could really sink my teeth into. Unfortunately, this topic as well proved incompatible with the direction that I envisioned for my final work, and so I ventured back to my initial book of *Frankenstein* to right my rough draft. **“Through several studies and the examples of Victor and his ‘creature’ along with the circumstances in which the novel itself was written, a conclusion can be drawn that the environment can in fact effect ones mental state and well-being.”** It can be see that from my blog post to my proposal to my actual rough draft, I tried my hand at three completely different topics but finally settled on one. Thinking I was at last done, I received a rude awakening during a peer review when I was able to see my paper through the eyes of another and receive constructive criticism about its faults. There was an even ruder awakening when my rough draft was handed back brimming with suggestions for corrections and alterations by the professor. I was not as done as I thought I was and began to discover that writing truly was an ongoing process. I came to the realization that all the focus I was attempting to put into my paper was still unsatisfactory and left the reader in a state of confusion. And so, a final attempt was made to edit my thesis and directly tie it to the book.

**Rather than analyzing the characters in *Frankenstein*, this paper turns to the key roles that weather and nature play on the characters to argue that there is a**

**connection between the environment and the mental state/well-being of Victor Frankenstein and his creation. Furthermore, the author also uses weather to suggest the character of the monster and foreshadow the outcome of events.**

Finally, after an intensive few days of rereading, rewriting, and revision, I could at last gaze upon my final product and appreciate the long process and long nights that went into its making.

In this course, I not only was able to write about other people and topics but, I even had the opportunity to write about myself. Coupled with many of the aforementioned assignments was a brief reflection. This afforded me the chance to really analyze my work for myself and identify what I felt were its strengths and weaknesses and where I could see room for improvement. I am a better, and more self-aware writer because of it.

Now, as the semester draws to a final halt, I reflect on all the new information I have received this semester. From my instruction in different genres, to my interaction with the ideas of others, to the learning of the process that produces great writing, I feel that I have definitely grown vastly in my writing literacy. What started off as an irksome general requirement has undoubtedly turned into a well of new knowledge that I can take with me to all subsequent courses and beyond the walls of Emory.

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*Rolling Stone Magazine* says, "If you only see one movie this winter, make it this one! It's the best film of the year!" *Time Magazine* gives it three thumbs up! Get your copy of the #1 movie in America on DVD and Blu-ray, in stores everywhere starting February 30, 2016!

Literary Analysis Letter

FROM THE DIARIES OF CHUNG WON PARK

Dear Diary,

He hit again. It leave mark. Big mark. I make soon-dubu with bad tofu. Husband get drunk and get angry I have to sleep in basement. Sally sleep in guess room. I cry myself to sleep. This not what I expect when get married. I thought come to America make things all better. They only get worse. I scared in my own house. All because soon-dubu. When I small girl in Korea, I always imagine beautiful family. I imagine handsome rich husband. Husband that love me. Husband that no hit but hug. This what I get instead. Bruise body and many tears. Maybe I make sin against God. Maybe I run away. Yes. I go live with sister. Get away from angry husband, get away from cry and scars. I can take daughters with me. We move far away, maybe back to Korea. Korea become very rich country much better place since I leave, much better then America. I can get job maybe buy house. Eunhee can take test there and become lawyer. Make me very proud and meet nice Christian Korea boy. Get marry have many children. And Sally can meet nice Korea man too. No more worry of punch or slap. I make sure girls no marry man that hit. What I saying? I can't leave. I no have own money. I just worthless. Such bad mother and bad wife. Everything my fault. Husband hit because of me. Why I no do anything right? It my fault my husband no happy and my children no successful. Is because I no pray enough? I no go to church enough? Jesu please help me! Reverend Cho say he pray for me but it no do anything, husband still hit and daughter still fail. Why I born!

I have nice dream last night Diary. In it I marry to very nice man. He love me and buy me expensive gifts. He give me lots of money and kiss me all the time. Never once hit. Never once

drink. He make me feel like beautiful woman. I smile in my sleep. Then I wake up and remember it no real. Why not dreams be real? It make me sad again and I cry because I tired of this life. I tired of be punching bag for husband. I no tell anyone this because wife no supposed to speak or complain. Man the head and woman is leg or arm. I complain I get hit again. People see me on street no know I hide many bruise with clothes. I always smile to hide pain and depress. I silently wait for day it all end. Reverend Cho suggest husband see special doctor and take medicine so that he stop hit. But he say it shameful to take drug. Why he no just listen to Reverend maybe drug real and work!

I give up everything to marry husband. I plan to be writer when I little. I go to school and write many many books. Be famous. Travel world. They say woman no go to school or work, job only for man. But I no care. I going to find way and go to school. Then husband come and say he pay for school if I marry him. I drop everything. Leave whole family in Korea. Korea scary then in 1980 long time ago when there was Kwangju trouble and many people die. So I glad to leave. Everything fine till I have Eunhee and Sally then business start to go bad. Husband tell me no money to pay for school then start to drink. Everything go bad quick from there☺. I try to make sad face but happy face come instead. This sign from Jesu he telling me to be happy. I need to throw away myself and fill with Christ. Then everything be better. Then family be fix and Eunhee pass test. I hope Jesu right. ☺

Please forgive Diary I have terrible English.

## **Reflection/Rationale**

The readers of this book currently see Eunice's mom as just a helpless, immigrant wife. She is a very static, flat character. As far as we know, she has no dreams, goals, or ambitions. She blames everything on herself and just accepts whatever happens to her. I wanted this diary entry from Chung Won to induce the audience to start viewing her as a real person with thoughts and emotions of her own. To develop this letter, I first picked the scene of her abuse so that, even though she claimed to be fine, I could show how she might truly feel underneath the masquerade. Then I tried to take it a step further and add a background story leading up to the event. One of the strengths of this letter is that it is written in Mrs. Parks broken English which allows for the reader to better visualize that it is her speaking. A weakness or critique might be that it lacks the feeling of deeper emotions and seems very "on the surface", to which my response would be, "You wouldn't think it would be that difficult to put yourself in some else's shoes and imagine how they truly feel until you actually try to."

## Pecha Kucha



### Reflection:

The purpose of my presentation is to evaluate and support my personal interpretation of the street artwork entitled *Nobody Likes Me* by iHeart. I wish to make the connection between social media and self-worth and how the former has had too large of a lasting effect on the latter in today's society. What I would like the audience to take away from my presentation is an altered perception on technology. I would like them to reason with themselves and ensure that they are not giving technology more power over their self-value and mental well-being than it should ever have. To develop my presentation, I sat down and basically just talked to myself (my roommate wasn't there of course), thinking out loud everything that I wanted to say in relation to my artifact. Then, realizing how long winded I am, I cut a lot out and just stuck to the essential minimum. Afterwards, I began to gather the various images and statistics that would reinforce my ideas. But I did not want my presentation to be so serious, so a few of the pictures I selected are slightly comical. I feel that one strength would be the vast array of data I collected to support my stance and I suppose I'll leave the weaknesses for you and my classmates to decide.

## **Blog Post #1**

In the present violent and chaotic world we live in, incalculable crimes are taking place day in and day out. Innocent lives are being taken or forever altered. Wouldn't it be a miracle if this could somehow all change? The airplane surveillance proposed in "Eye in the Sky" sounds like an answered prayer. In a matter of seconds, complex crimes that could have otherwise never been solved could be figured out and brought to justice. This idea may seem like an invasion of privacy but should, in reality, pose no threat if there is nothing to hide. The ramifications of this ingenuity could bring about an altogether safer environment and brighter tomorrow. There could be an end to the dreadful 5 o'clock news stories that make leaving the house a nightmare. If we have the technology to save lives, why not use it?

The naysayers of this innovation argue that the loss of privacy is just too great a price to pay. Technology this advanced in the wrong hands can start off being innocent but develop into something less than desirable rather quickly. As stated in the podcast, "There [is] no way you could trust government with this volume of information." Putting this much power in the hands of the government would begin to actualize the, formally thought, fictitious world of Orwell's, *1984*. It is also possible that criminals would simply adapt and learn to work their way around the new system, such as committing murders in more heavily congested locations to avoid being seen/tracked. Though it seems like a brilliant safeguard, a handful of lives saved in the expense of countless other lives does not sound like an ideal tradeoff.

## Blog Post #2



I was initially drawn to this work of art by the way it brought social media to life. I want to study it more because I think it is making an interesting reflection on the priorities of youth today and from where they derive their self-worth. The street art/graffiti depicts a young boy bawling with a cell phone in his hand. And floating above his head is the orange Instagram trademark notification box, only, the boy has zero notifications.

The picture was painting by a Vancouver street artist who goes by the name of I <3 (iHeart) and is titled "Nobody Likes Me". There could have been a range of purposes for the piece but its effect on me is the highlighting of how society obtains its self-worth from social networks. I think it is very effective in showing this. By indication of the young boy, I would assume the youth of this generation to be the audience. The art assumes that all youth take part in social networking, including very young children. The cultural time period seems to reflect the 21st century in its attention to social media, specifically Instagram. The tone is one of turbulence and desperation. I looked up a list of genres and Speculative seemed to be the best fit from that list. A little bit of pathos and logos are represented. Pathos because you can plainly see that the child is obviously in distress and emotional. And logos because if you recognize that the orange rectangle above him is from Instagram, you can logically conclude that he is crying because he has no notifications. Which is, in a greater extent, an introspective comment on society.

## Blog Post #4

Pg. 156

In an attempt to show off his new, youthful girlfriend, Lenny eagerly escorts Eunice to Family Night with his friends and their partners. The six of them are all getting acquainted in the Cervix when Vishnu suddenly calls out. There is a break out riot taking place in Central Park. The inhabitants of the bar scramble for their *äppäräti* as recent photographs from the scene come streaming in. A family is sprawled across the ground, lifeless. Aziz, the unemployed bus driver, lies with a bullet hole in his forehead and eyes rolled to the inside of his head. Eighteen people shot and killed.



I chose this image because the scene within it depicts privilege (and also coincidentally takes place in a bar). It stood out to me that in the midst of all this darkness and death occurring, Lenny has this to say: "Finally, the fear and the empathy were replaced by a different knowledge. The knowledge that it wouldn't happen to us... That we were of good stock." Though he started out empathetic and fearful, Lenny's emotions quickly transformed to ones of reassurance once his privilege kicked in and ensured him that nothing like that could ever happen to people like them. A similar form of privilege surfaced in Eunice earlier (pg. 146) when she was messaging her friend and telling of the "Low Net Worth Individuals" she witnessed in Tompkins Square. After one man by the name of David tried to make a connection with her by claiming "we're all in this together", Eunice thinks to herself, "I wish things were better for you, but we're not all in this together." (She must not have been an HSM fan.)

\*\*In case you didn't catch the reference/bad joke I made in the last parentheses, HSM refers to High School Musical in which the final musical number was entitled "We're All in This Together"

## **Blog Post #8**

Primary (revision of blog post #1):

In the “Eye in the Sky” podcast, one of the speakers on the topic deplors the idea of such an invasion of privacy saying, “There [is] no way you could trust government with this volume of information.” In making this comment, the speaker urges us to reevaluate the ramifications of this advanced technology and the amount of faith we have in the intentions of those who intend to use it.

Secondary (revision of blog post #5):

Kate Murphy further argues the more invisible effects of lack of privacy, including conformity and the stifling of individuality causing depression, anxiety, and the like. Murphy compares privacy and sleep saying that “just as being unconscious for a portion of the day is restorative, so is being unselfconscious.” The essence of Murphy’s argument is that people who want privacy aren’t trying to hide anything as might be assumed, but rather just want to hold on to themselves.

## **Blog Post #9**

I am undergoing a topic change. My new working topic (as of now) is an evaluation of how lack of privacy stifles individuality along with other harmful effects through the use of *Super Sad True Love Story*.

Introduction:

I will begin with a brief inclusion of background information as pertains to the book, followed by my thesis. Then my research question will come next along with a ‘they say, I say’ statement.

Body:

I will now include more background information to further establish a foundation for the paper. A lot of my body will focus on the passages where Lenny changes his behavior and likes to assimilate into the new digital culture. Namely, hiding his books when others are around, reading in secret, etc.

I will incorporate studies that have been done that link lack of privacy to conformity, depression, anxiety, etc. I will include examples from the book that demonstrate conformity such as everyone having an apparat and being looked down upon if you don’t have one or have an outdated one. The scene of the FAC will be evaluated to show the negative effects in had on Lenny’s self-esteem. The government’s privacy invading measures, such as the credit poles, will also be looked at along with the negative consequences it has.

I plan to use quotes from the studies relating to privacy, including the one I discussed in blog post 5. Ultimately I will relate the occurrences in the book to the real life occurrences of similar nature to bring the fictional book into today’s reality and create a ‘so what’ factor.

Conclusion:

Clearly answer my aforementioned research question with the evidence I have gathered.

## **Blog Post #12! The Finale!!**

Hello class. My name is Favour Nwachukwu and today we will be discussing the ‘So What?’

If I was to guest lecture, I would probably feel most confident talking about how to construct a ‘so what’ statement and convey the ‘bigger picture’ through your writing. I think it is the most vital concept I have learned in this class all semester; it made me realize the importance of connecting what you are saying to the reader so that they can relate and actually care to continue reading. **\*\*\*It is an integral aspect that should be present in all writing, no matter what the subject, so it is best to learn it sooner rather than later if you wish to be an effective writer.**

To go about my guest lecture I would first, of course, explain what the ‘so what’ statement is and the different ways that it can be formatted. I would provide the students with various articles from magazines, newspapers, scholarly sources, etc. and have them see if they can locate the ‘so what’ statement and determine whether or not it was effective. Then to ensure that they are not just following a script (“This is important because...”), I would give them very obscure topics that not many people could ever possibly care about and see if they can devise a unique ‘so what’ structure that would make the reader interested though it seems it is completely unrelated to their life. And then we would end the class with an ice cream party because you’ve gotta end with a bang.

**\*\*\*I made a so what statement without even realizing it. It really comes in handy everywhere.**

## Proposal

### Frankenstein and the Pursuit of the Forbidden Fruit

Technology plays a very prominent role in the story of Frankenstein (1994) written by Mary Shelley. We read of how Victor neglects his relationships and personal health for this pursuit of technology to the point where he is emaciated; and the end result does more harm than good. The main purpose of a new technology or innovation is essentially to make life easier and better, but when the outcome is negative rather than positive, shouldn't the pursuit cease? Many have shed a positive light on technology and innovation and attributed our higher standard of living to it but I dare to argue that it is doing more harm than good to society. This research paper will endeavor to render a basis for this opposing view to technology through the use of scholarly articles and the example of *Frankenstein*, and ultimately reveal ever-increasing technology for what it really is- a forbidden fruit.

### Annotated Bibliography

Guinan, Patrick. "Bioterrorism, Embryonic Stem Cells, and Frankenstein." *Journal of Religion and Health*

Vol. 41, No. 4 (2002): 305-309. Web.

This source essentially illustrates the different quests for higher knowledge that humans, whether it be in stories like Frankenstein or in real life, have endeavored. And how each of these quests ended in a less than desirable way. This will be helpful to me in highlighting how the creation of the monster Frankenstein followed this same path, as has already been mentioned in the article. Victor felt the all-encompassing urge to create this being just because he had the means of doing so which is a key ethical issue introduced in the article and the basis of this research paper.

Favour Nwachukwu

Professor Marlo Starr

Writing about Sci-Fi in Lit and Film

11 November 2015

### Frankenstein and the Effect of Nature on Holistic Well-Being

Picture your happy place in your mind. Are you envisioning a fierce and catastrophic storm? Most likely not. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), we often see a connection between nature and the holistic well-being of individuals. Holistic well-being refers to a range of aspects including, mood, mental health, physical health, etc. Particularly, Victor and his creation alike are both internally influenced by their surroundings. Nature is a motif that surfaces repeatedly throughout the novel in conjunction with the characters' conditions, whether good or bad. Do the uncontrollable forces of nature and our environment have a hand in our psychological processes? Through several studies and the examples of Victor and his "creature" along with the circumstances in which the novel itself was written, a conclusion can be drawn that **the environment can in fact effect ones mental state and well-being**. The novel *Frankenstein* takes this principal even further and uses the weather to suggest the character of the monster and foreshadow the outcome of the story.

Before delving into the psyches of Victor and his monster, it is important to evaluate the environmental occurrences that were taking place at the time of the writing of the novel. It is known through the "Author's Introduction" by Shelley that it was the cause of stormy weather

that kept her, along with her three other companions, indoors on that “ungenial summer” day on which the challenge to each write a ghost story was given. It is safe to speculate then, that the unfavorable weather conditions are what ultimately led to the creation of this monstrous story that has received literary acclaim. This vile and murderous “devil”, as he is commonly referred, can subtly be seen as having derived from bad weather. The negative light that the nature of the creature is depicted in equates the negative environmental conditions; thereby, drawing a connection between weather and the character of Frankenstein’s monster.

It was, as well, bad weather that led the thirteen year old Victor and his family to stay within the confinement of their inn during a trip to the baths near Thonon. This is where young Victor finds a volume of work by Cornelius Agrippa, a natural scientist, and ignites his passion for the subject that eventually leads to his downfall.

Mary Shelley does an ornate job of incorporating descriptions of the present weather, seasonal shifts, and scenery in the passages throughout the novel. In the early chapters, as well as in later ones, Victor Frankenstein recounts his childhood with descriptions of beautiful mountains and lakes, family travels to picturesque lands, and accounts of adventures in nature with his dear friend, Henry Clerval. He exclaims that “no human being could have passed a happier childhood than myself,” paralleling the beauty of his youth to happiness. At this point in the storyline, Frankenstein still takes delight in his surroundings. It is not until the creation of the monster that we very clearly see the correlation between nature and the rise and decline of Victor’s state of health.

The night that the creature was given animation, Victor describes the weather as dreary, while “the rain pattered dismally against the panes”. This is much like the conditions faced in the reality of which the novel was written. The scene painted for the arrival of this creation, and so also the beginning of the story, is one of melancholy and does not elicit a positive outlook for the remainder of events to follow.

While recounting of how the monster came to be, Victor says that “winter, spring, and summer passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves- sights which before always yielded me supreme delight-“ Right from the onset, we are told of Victor’s connection to nature and the stake it holds in his happiness. This connection will later manifest itself in transient ways as well as in very physical, palpable ways.

After having so much of his time and energy solely dedicated to animating a creature and the dismay of what he had brought into the world, Victor falls ill during the winter. With the arrival and help of his childhood friend Henry, Victor is slowly but surely nursed back to health but not without tremendous assistance from the changing season. “It was a divine spring; and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence. I felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom; my gloom disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was attacked by the fatal passion.” What we see here from this key passage is that the emergence of spring is accredited with having an immense role in restoring Victor’s well-being.

This phenomenon of spring partially healing Victor can be seen in and compared to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Though it may seem unrealistic, SAD is a psychological

occurrence that has been more recognized in recent decades, and is characterized by a change in emotional health brought about by the change of seasons; i.e. depression sets in with colder seasons while mood and mental health are elevated as spring emerges.

Following his recovery, Victor receives a letter from his father. What he expects to enclose the date for which he can return home for a visit, ultimately discloses the devastating news that his younger brother, William, has been murdered. Alarmed, Victor immediately endeavors to travel home and is met with a sorrowful journey that entreats him to take a two-day detour to relieve his troubled mind. Having witnessed a serene lake and snowy mountains on this detour, Victor testifies to his restoration due to the scenery. "The calm and heavenly scene restored me, and I continued my journey towards Geneva." Just the mere act of passing through a picturesque landscape has enough potency to rejuvenate Victor and send him back on his way to Geneva.

In contrast to the beautiful scenes that lifted Victor's spirits and hurried him along, his actual arrival proved unpleasant. On the night of his entry into Geneva, the town gates had already been locked, forcing him to take yet another detour into a neighboring village by the name of Secheron. As he approaches a hill, originally intending to visit the location where William was murdered, the weather grows increasingly worse. The lightening and rain grow fierce with frequent bursts of thunder. Then suddenly, appearing within a grouping of trees, the silhouette of a figure is illuminated in the flashes of lightening. Unmistakably, Victor recognizes it to be the creature he had given life. He was then immediately lost in gloom and grasped a tree for support. It is worth noting that so far in the novel, the arrival of the monster into a scene is always preceded by a storm or rainy weather of some sort, including the real-life

contexts of which the fictional story was written. This further perpetuates the analogy of Frankenstein's monster to bad weather and an overall negative connotation.

Similar to the reaction of Victor, his creation also quite enjoys the emergence of spring and serene weather conditions. In the midst of being confined to a miniature hovel and lacking companionship and acceptance, spring has the power to evoke blissful emotions in the creature. "My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope, and anticipations of joy." Not only did the season take his mind off of what had been experienced in the past, it also served to provide him with hope for a better future. This is quite a drastic shift in outlook attributed to a simple weather change.

After his long standing preparations for revealing himself to the occupants of the cottage that accommodates his hovel fails, the monster is shooed away and the occupants, the De Lacey's, make arrangements to vacate the cottage and relocate. Filled with fury at this abandonment and betrayal, the monster sets the cottage ablaze in the dark of night and then proceeds to flee the scene. On his newly found journey to locate his creator, Victor, the creature is filled with bitterness and contempt for the human race; thoughts of fury and revenge boil within him. But in the midst of his journey, a miraculous breakthrough is made once again through the avenue of season.

"The day, which was one of the first of spring, cheered even me by the balminess of the air. I felt emotions of gentleness and pleasure, that had long appeared dead, revive

within me. Half surprised by the novelty of these sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them; and, forgetting my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy.”

This creature, who had once caught a glimpse of his own reflection and flinched in horror of his appearance, could once again leave his past and inadequacies behind him and venture into happiness. This serves as the primary example of how nature tremendously effects the disposition of Victor Frankenstein’s creation.

As the story draws to its conclusion and Victor has sworn to pursue his creation until death, the two find themselves in a marathon across the ice capped, frozen tundra of the North Pole. The monster supplies Victor with messages along the route to aid and direct him on his hunt, though the notes do more to taunt Victor and fuel his angry passion. “Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will find the misery of cold and frost-.” Here, the monster equates the severe climate in which the chase is taking places to misery. The venturing into this cold state of “misery” foreshadows a dismal ending to this tale. And, inevitably, this tundra is where both characters meet their ultimate demise. So, in effect, a final connection is being made between the harsh unfavorable weather and death.

Some may dismiss the overlap of holistic health and weather as purely coincidental, but many studies done on the matter have proven otherwise. “In two correlational studies and an experiment manipulating participants’ time outdoors, pleasant weather was related to higher mood, better memory, and ‘broadened’ cognitive style during the spring as time spent outside increased.” This study’s findings stemmed off of the results of previous studies that have all come to the same conclusion: there is a positive correlation between nice weather and mental

well-being; though, the amount or level of well-being can be further dictated by the length of time spent outdoors.

Through the primary example of the characters in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* supplemented by scientific research findings that have been made in recent decades, the consensus is that nature and the weather can play a unique role in your psychological state and mood. I bet you did not realize your happy place could do all of that, huh?

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## Reflection

What do you think is the strongest element of your paper? What is the weakest?

A strength of my paper would have to be the simplicity with which it can be understood. My word choice and analytic descriptions can be easily followed. The passages and examples I draw from the book can be clearly interpreted and applied to my thesis. Also I think I utilized the sandwich method effectively: tell us what you are going to say, say it, and then tell us what you have said. My claim is arguable and, I think, well defended. For weaknesses, I suppose I could have used more resources to further establish my argument. And I fear that I get quite repetitive in my analyses. I may use the same terms and phrases a little too often and draw from too many examples to all say the same thing. Also, the sections where I talk about weather being indicative of the monsters character and foreshadowing the end don't 100% mesh with my thesis, so the reader may have a hard time seeing where I am going with it.

Favour Nwachukwu

Professor Marlo Starr

Writing about Sci-Fi in Lit and Film

5 December 2015

*Frankenstein* and the Effect of Nature on Holistic Well-Being

Picture your happy place in your mind. Are you envisioning a fierce and catastrophic storm? Most likely not. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), we often see a connection between nature and the holistic well-being of individuals. Holistic well-being refers to a range of aspects including, mood, mental health, physical health, etc. Particularly, Victor and his creation alike are both internally influenced by their external surroundings. Nature is a motif that surfaces repeatedly throughout the novel in conjunction with the characters' conditions, whether good or bad. Do the uncontrollable forces of nature and our environment have a hand in our psychological processes? **Rather than analyzing the characters in *Frankenstein*, this paper turns to the key roles that weather and nature play on the characters to argue that there is a connection between the environment and the mental state/well-being of Victor Frankenstein and his creation. Furthermore, the author also uses weather to suggest the character of the monster and foreshadow the outcome of events.**

Before delving into the psyches of Victor and his monster, it is important to evaluate the environmental occurrences that were taking place at the time of the writing of the novel. It is known through the "Author's Introduction" that it was stormy weather that kept her, along

with her three other companions, indoors that “ungenial summer” day on which the challenge to each write a ghost story was given. It is safe to speculate then, that the unfavorable weather conditions are what ultimately led to the creation of this monstrous story that has received literary acclaim. This vile and murderous “devil”, as he is commonly referred, can subtly be seen as having derived from bad weather. The negative light that the nature of the creature is depicted in equates the negative environmental conditions during the time (Phillips 66); thereby, drawing a connection between weather and the character of Frankenstein’s monster.

Continuing on into the story itself, it was, as well, bad weather that led the thirteen-year-old Victor and his family to stay within the confinement of their inn during a trip to the baths near Thonon. This was where young Victor found a volume of work by Cornelius Agrippa, a natural scientist, and ignited his passion for the subject that eventually led to his downfall. Abigail Heiniger, in her article for the *Journal of Ecocriticism*, made this same connection between a storm and the creation of both *Frankenstein* the book and the protagonist’s spark of interest that led to the creation of the monster within the book. She stated that, “storms are an unintentional stimulus for the creative work of both Mary Shelley and her protagonist.” Though, this paper argues that it was not unintentional, but rather used as a way to further establish weather’s impact on the characters and events that transpire.

Mary Shelley did a thorough job of incorporating descriptions of the present weather, seasonal shifts, and scenery in the passages throughout the novel. In the early chapters, as well as in later ones, Victor Frankenstein recounted his childhood with descriptions of beautiful mountains and lakes, family travels to picturesque lands, and accounts of adventures in nature with his dear friend, Henry Clerval. He exclaimed that “no human being could have passed a

happier childhood than myself,” paralleling the visual beauty of his youth to happiness. At this point in the storyline, Frankenstein still delighted in his surroundings. It is not until the creation of the monster that we very clearly see the correlation between nature and the rise and decline of Victor’s state of health.

The night that the creature was given animation, Victor described the weather as dreary, while “the rain pattered dismally against the panes” (Shelley 22). This is much like the conditions faced in the reality of which the novel was written. The scene painted for the arrival of this creation, and so also the beginning of the story, is one of melancholy and does not elicit a positive outlook for the remainder of events to follow.

While recounting of how the monster came to be, Victor said that “winter, spring, and summer passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves—sights which before always yielded me supreme delight—” (Shelley 22). Directly from the onset, we are told of Victor’s connection to nature and the stake it holds in his happiness. This connection will later manifest itself in transient ways as well as in very physical, palpable ways.

After he dedicated so much of his time and energy to animating a creature and his expectations fell short, Victor himself fell ill during the winter. With the arrival and help of his childhood friend Henry, Victor was slowly but surely nursed back to health but not without tremendous assistance from the changing season. “It was a divine spring; and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence. I felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom; my gloom disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was

attacked by the fatal passion” (Shelley 25). What can be seen from this key passage is that the emergence of spring was accredited with directly and physically affecting Victor’s well-being.

This phenomenon of spring partially healing Victor can be seen in and compared to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Though it may appear unrealistic, SAD is a psychological occurrence that has been more recognized in recent decades, and is characterized by a change in emotional health brought about by the change of seasons; i.e. depression sets in with colder seasons while mood and mental health are elevated as spring emerges (Gregoire, para. 3).

Following his recovery, Victor received a letter from his father. He expected it to enclose the date for which he could return home for a visit, but it ultimately disclosed the devastating news that his younger brother, William, had been murdered. Alarmed, Victor immediately endeavored to travel home and was met with a sorrowful journey that entreated him to take a two-day detour to relieve his troubled mind. Having witnessed a serene lake and snowy mountains on this detour, Victor testified to his restoration due to the scenery. “The calm and heavenly scene restored me, and I continued my journey towards Geneva” (Shelley 32). Just the mere act of passing through a picturesque landscape had enough potency to rejuvenate Victor and send him back on his way to Geneva.

In contrast to the beautiful scenes that lifted Victor’s spirits and hurried him along, his actual arrival proved unpleasant. On the night of his entry into Geneva, the town gates had already been locked, forcing him to take yet another detour into a neighboring village by the name of Secheron. As he approached a hill, originally intending to visit the location where William was murdered, the weather grew increasingly worse. The lightening and rain grew

fierce with frequent bursts of thunder. Then suddenly, appearing within a grouping of trees, the silhouette of a figure was illuminated in the flashes of lightening. Unmistakably, Victor recognized it to be the creature he had given life. He was then immediately lost in gloom and grasped a tree for support. It is worth noting that so far in the novel, the arrival of the monster into a scene is always preceded by a storm or rainy weather of some sort, including the real-life contexts of which the fictional story was written. This further perpetuates the analogy of Frankenstein's monster to bad weather and an overall negative connotation.

Similar to the reaction of Victor, his creation also quite enjoyed the emergence of spring and serene weather conditions. In the midst of being confined to a miniature hovel and lacking companionship and acceptance, spring had the power to evoke blissful emotions in the creature. "My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope, and anticipations of joy" (Shelley 53). Not only did the season take his mind off of what had been experienced in the past, it also served to provide him with hope for a better future. This is quite a drastic shift in outlook attributed to a simple weather change.

After his long standing preparations for revealing himself to the occupants of the cottage that accommodated his hovel failed, the monster was shooed away and the occupants, the De Lacey's, made arrangements to vacate the cottage and relocate. Filled with anguish at this abandonment and betrayal, the monster set the cottage ablaze in the dark of night and then proceeded to flee the scene. On his newly found journey to locate his creator, Victor, the creature is filled with bitterness and contempt for the human race; thoughts of fury and

revenge boiled within him. But in the midst of his journey, a miraculous breakthrough was made once again through the avenue of season:

The day, which was one of the first of spring, cheered even me by the balminess of the air. I felt emotions of gentleness and pleasure, that had long appeared dead, revive within me. Half surprised by the novelty of these sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them; and, forgetting my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy.

(Shelley 67)

This creature, who had once caught a glimpse of his own reflection and flinched in horror at his appearance, could once again leave his past and inadequacies behind him and venture into happiness. This serves as the primary example of how nature tremendously effected the disposition of Victor Frankenstein's creation.

As the story drew to its conclusion and Victor had sworn to pursue his creation until death, the two found themselves in a marathon across the ice capped, frozen tundra of the North Pole. The monster supplied Victor with messages along the route to aid and direct him on his hunt, though the notes did more to taunt Victor and fuel his angry passion. "Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will find the misery of cold and frost-" (Shelley 103). Here, the monster equated the severe climate in which the chase took place to misery. The venturing into this cold state of "misery" foreshadowed a dismal ending to the tale. And, inevitably, this tundra was where both characters met their ultimate demise. So, in effect, a final connection was made between the harsh, unfavorable weather/climate and the death of the main characters.

Some may dismiss the overlap of holistic health and weather as purely coincidental, but many researches done on the matter have proven otherwise. Published in the journal of *Psychological Science*, one of the leading journals of its field, a study was conducted by Matthew C. Keller et al. on the effects of weather on mood and cognition. In it, experimental evidence was accumulated to refute the naysayers. "In two correlational studies and an experiment manipulating participants' time outdoors, pleasant weather was related to higher mood, better memory, and 'broadened' cognitive style during the spring as time spent outside increased." This study's findings stemmed off of the results of previous studies that have all come to the same conclusion: there is a positive correlation between pleasant weather and mental well-being; though, the amount or level of well-being can be further dictated by the length of time spent outdoors.

Through the primary example of the characters in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* supplemented by scientific research findings made in recent decades, the consensus is that nature and the weather play a unique role in holistic well-being. Weather is more than just a background to the story but can also be analyzed in the forefront to derive the nature of the monster and signal the outcome of events.

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## Reflection

Explain the revisions you made and why you made them.

I did not make a great deal of revisions, but the few that I did make hopefully made the paper a little stronger. I removed a previous source and included another, more scholarly source to further and better bolster my views. While agreeing with the additional source, I also refuted a portion of it to show independent thought. I went back and cited all of my secondary sources throughout the paper to show how I am interacting with the work of other writers, as well as to avoid expulsion and conviction from plagiarism because who would want that? I realize that I have a problem with abruptly switching verb tenses when I write, so I went through and made sure, to the best of my ability, that all of my verbs were in one tense (forgive me if I missed a few). I made minor clarifications to my sentences here and there to ensure that the reader thoroughly understands what is trying to be said. Most importantly, I revised my thesis so that it is more centered on the text at hand. All of these alterations were made at the suggestion of my knowledgeable professor and served to make this paper hopefully worthy of a higher grade than it initially received.