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Professor Starr
Final Portfolio and Cover Letter
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I had never felt assured in my writing. While I had been taught proper ways to set up an argument and write a research paper, I was never confident in my ability to write. A few parts of the class really stood out to me as I began tuning my writing. First, I learned about "They say, I say" argument structure, helping me to develop my theses as responses to other established perspectives on a topic. Also, I recognized the usefulness of discussion as a way to enhance my understanding of a text. In each class, everyone would get together and talk about the section we had read for that day, with each person bringing in different or similar points of view, depending on how the read the book. And finally, what I had realized by the end of my experience in the class was that all writing comes a process, each topic or event can be described as if it were its own story. With this in mind, each outcome of this class will be described in similar manners, each detailing how it was accomplished through a process.

For Outcome 1, two artifacts that display a range of genres are the literary response letter and the research argument rough draft. Whereas the researched argument is presented in a more professional tone and stays in the voice of the writer, the letter is written from the perspective of a character, Eunice, in a novel, *Super Sad True Love Story*. This alone shows a range in writing, from the point of view of a girl writing in a diary about technology to an argumentative-based essay about Frankenstein as an unreliable narrator. In both cases, I am exploring unique views ideas on focal characters to the stories, but I explore these ideas in different ways. For example, I use a flashback in the letter when I say, "And that was the last they spoke of my face. Now that I remember that so well, it's hard for me to ignore what must be happening during my trip. If I hear one incident like that while I'm away, I'd go straight home". My intention is clear that from Lenny's one view of Eunice's bruise in a photo he found online that a whole story can be derived. This invasion of privacy narrative differs greatly from the researched argument, where I claim Frankenstein lies to the reader to leave a legacy for himself. (add in some quote). Although both the letter and researched argument pose questions and attempt to answer them, they are two extremely different ways. One is a direct interpretation of events in *Super Sad True Love Story* while the other is offering a unique way to view the purpose behind the character of Frankenstein. This stark contrast between writing mechanisms shows my proficiency of writing in different genres.

With Outcome 2, my ability to respond to author's ideas and utilize them in my own came within Blog Post #5. In this post, I began by summarizing the main ideas of a

New York Times opinion article about technology and how it affects modern interaction. I had chosen to read this article in particular because of its catchy title "Stop Googling. Let's Talk" and of how closely it related to the text, *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart. Although I did not quote the article itself, I gave a brief overview of what the article was about, the views of the author, and the research and data the author mentioned to support her claims. I then went back into a section of the book I had recently read and reexamined it using the argument that the opinion author, Sherry Turkle, made in her article. In writing the second paragraph of my post, I incorporated Turkle's ideas into how Eunice acts after the Rupture in the novel, remarking how without technology Eunice behaves as Turkle's data predicted. I presented my own claims to this, remarking, "After spending time thinking about the atrocities and having no connection to technology to distract her, Eunice is finally able to connect to David's strive to help people and be angry with his death". My final conclusion makes Eunice gain a key part of humanity, empathy, through the removal of technology from her life. With this claim, I integrated Turkle's argument into my own, thus beginning a useful strategy of using secondary sources to support my own claims.

Regarding Outcome 3, one project that underwent several changes was my proposal and annotated bibliography. It was born out of Blog Post #7, a post in which I researched an article relating to *Frankenstein* titled "The Monster in a Dark Room: Frankenstein, Feminism, and Philosophy" and the potential arguments I would make with it, such as "This article would be useful in clarifying a basis for identity in Frankenstein and how the natural world pushes the creature of no species towards humanity, allowing it to develop human qualities and differ from humans only in history, juxtaposing it with its creator." However, I still had ideas that I jotted down on my computer, from class discussion points that stuck with me to ideas swirling in my head, that I wanted to explore. In order to contemplate these ideas, I met with my professor outside of class and bounced ideas off of her until we finally came to a solid idea with which I could manage. When I began my proposal, I still had to contemplate which ideas I had accumulated with my professor were cohesive and formed a proper argument. To aid with this, I began researching sources before completing my proposal. As I researched sources, I developed arguments and counterarguments that I could potentially use, then cited them and annotated them as I incorporated them into my proposal. The proposal itself slowly focused in on what I wanted to write about, stating " Whereas others have analyzed WHAT Victor is hiding, I intend to discover WHY he is acting unreliable. I argue Victor hides who he really is in order to provide a confession; he acts as an unreliable narrator in order to leave a legacy in a way he couldn't have before he met Walton." But even after I had finished, some things still weren't clear. I had been sure to focus on writing techniques that we had discussed in class, such as a "They say, I say" statement for my objective, but peer-reviews allowed me to see what I

needed to clear up for my rough draft. My professor also gave me feedback independent of my peers, which highlighted other aspects of my proposal that were good and that were needing revision. This one project was a long process, but was necessary in the scheme of my final paper.

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Wrapping up the year in my writing seems like a difficult task, but one in which I showcase what I've learned and how I can incorporate it into any writing. Each outcome of the class was laid out in a way that demonstrated a new style of writing with which I can be comfortable: processes and stories. From detailing how I have a wide range in styles to making and responding to arguments, I now can say I understand myself as a writer. This is not to say that I am perfect in my writing since I still have a long way to go, but I do know what steps I can take to make each attempt at writing significantly better than the last.

Literary Analysis Letter + Reflection
Dear Diary:

Today is June 4. After talking with her last night, I have to start acknowledging my family more. Yes, I want to appear independent and in control, but I will always need them. But not him. It was a little more than seven years ago. We'd moved from California to New Jersey because his practice had a dwindling clientele. I'd made friends at my new school and so had my sister. Everything was going fine for us, but not for our parents. I don't want to remember this, but I need to in order to start thinking clearly. My father always said he would be the one to take care of the whole family, but we all knew that wasn't going to be the case for too long. He had to work longer hours, reach out to more unsavory people, just to get by each week. He'd come home at 10:00 or 11:00 every night, exhausted and frustrated. Mom would have dinner prepared for him, but he wouldn't appreciate it. To him, she was putting in no work to sustain the family, even though she was the one taking care of my sister and me throughout the day. And after dinner, he would sit on the couch with a beer, only getting up to resupply himself. With each week he would become more confrontational with mom no matter what she was doing.

Finally, it boiled over and began affecting us all one night. He had finished his dinner with some screams and was well past the state of sobriety when I came downstairs. It was a Friday night and I was all dressed up and ready to go to a party at a friend's house. He decided to get up for another drink the same time I was trying to escape. He caught hold of me, his large, clammy hands firmly gripping my shoulders. He held so hard it hurt. "What are you do now?" he yelled sloppily, his English degraded

by his drunkenness. I dared not breathe through my nose as his panted his vile breath onto me. "I'm just going to see some friends," I offered, nearly gagging after only a few seconds of being in his presence. He roared, "No! You stay! You study then find nice boy! No parties!" If he wasn't so commanding, towering over me in a heaping mass of mess, then I would have rolled my eyes. "It's Friday night. I can have fun and don't need to study right now." I shrugged off his grip and walked to the door. I went to grab the handle when I felt a similar touch on my shoulder. He spun me around to face him again and suddenly I was on the ground. The right side of my face stung like a horde of fire ants biting at the same time. My touched it gingerly with my fingertips as tears streamed down my face. But I didn't scream, only silently sobbed as I quickly stood up, flung the door open, and slammed it shut in his face.

I quickly ran to the hose on the side of my house and ran the water, cupping it in my hands and splashing it onto my face. I knew it wouldn't help cover it up, but I need to wash away some of the pain. At least before my friends showed up. After a minute, a horn blared from the street. I shut off the hose and quickly walked over like I had always done. "'Sup Euny!" said Sam, the driver. In a car full of people who'd pregamed, even the driver wasn't completely sober. That never stopped me before, so I didn't mind. "Hey, how's it going!" "Like, we're all great!" Sally said between laughs, spinning her head in mindless circles. "Hey," Tom said, "what's that thing on your face?" I didn't have to touch the throbbing handprint on my face, but they couldn't make out the shape of the mark in their current states. "Yeah, I like was pregaming and I totally just fell into the door on my way out!" I giggled wildly. "Yo! TFA girl!" Sally yelled, high-fiving me. And

that was the last they spoke of my face. Now that I remember that so well, it's hard for me to ignore what must be happening during my trip. If I hear one incident like that while I'm away, I'd go straight home. Well, I'll go for now. Someone's messaged me on GT.

Reflection:

For this letter, I was writing from Eunice's perspective as she writes in a diary instead of posting messages online, though I do reference that this is a more personal way for her to say what's on her mind as she still does use GlobalTeen. The author's intention is to make Eunice's inner thoughts ambiguous, since she changes her attitude and behavior depending on who she talks to and what situation she is in. This diary entry, however, attempts to answer that it is in her nature to adapt to situations, going from her abusive father to a random party in the blink of an eye. This scene is also meant to reference the picture Lenny finds on page 39, explaining hastily to get the memory onto paper and not suppressed in Eunice's mind. Though Eunice is the victim in this scene, the irony of her situation shows how she still needs to change her mindset. She runs away from the abusiveness of a drunk to the fake comfort of other drunks who can potentially do more damage, especially since the driver is drunk as well. Eunice's subconscious desire for change puts her in these situations, yet she does not fully comprehend why, and therefore she cannot change yet. The letter's strengths include continuing and expanding irony, self-centeredness, and books as more personal than electronic communication. I believe some areas of improvement would be focusing on presenting an argument and voicing an opinion to a present idea.

Pecha Kucha (script)

Slide 7 (slap): At the hearing, Yellowjacket accuses his teammates of being jealous of him or seeing him as a threat. His ramblings prompt Wasp to remove her glasses and plead with her husband, showing everyone that he had hit her. Yellowjacket activates the machine in panic, which is quickly destroyed by the Avengers. Yellowjacket resigns in failure, and in the following stories Wasp divorces him.

Slide 8 (random): That's the story, and I've chosen to take a closer look at the "slap" panel. Marvel was known for pushing boundaries during this time in its history, but many fans and critics saw it being too extreme, taking an established hero and turning him into controversy to bring more readers in. Though Marvel doesn't shy away from referencing the incident, it is still viewed as infamous.

Slide 9 (just the panel again): Now to look at the specific image itself. Yellowjacket, a supposed hero, is in an aggressive black and yellow costume, a dark scowl on his face, and pure yellow eyes, all signifying his insanity. Wasp is lower in the panel, in a white gown and pained expression, showing her as an innocent victim.

Slide 10 (blood red): The hit itself is graphic for a comic book. First, the wide arching range and visual path of the slap astonishes the reader. Also, the red "WHAK!" jumps out of the dull background, bringing all the reader's focus onto the action, rather than the dialogue, promoting the scene's importance.

Slide 11: This scene depicts what Marvel believes to be an accurate portrayal of domestic violence. They assume that the harsh realism presented here will capture a reader's attention. While that may be the case, the panel pushes its audience away at the same time. The reader feels a rush of emotion: sympathy for Wasp and disgust for Pym.

Blog Post #5

        In *Super Sad True Love Story*, social media interactions are the top priority of everyone in the world. The problem is so huge, people actually are willing to commit suicide when the networks shut down and apparati can no longer be used. It is an age where the world is completely dependent on social interaction through technology, and one that appears quite similar to our own. One effect of this social media practice seen in both our society and the novel's is a waning in empathy. In an opinion article printed in the New York Times, author Sherry Turkle explains how empathy between college students has decreased 40% since the technological age, the majority of the decrease occurring since 2000, and how even five days without using technology, such as at summer camp, can show an increase in human connection and meaningful conversation.

        Turkle's ideas are an intriguing commentary on our world and can be added to Shteyngart's arguments in his novel. First, characters don't have much empathy for one another. Jenny doesn't acknowledge Eunice's heartfelt comments about friendship (176) and Eunice's first encounter with David leaves her saying they aren't all in together for David's cause (146). In contrast to this, while following Turkle's arguments, Eunice, cut off from technology after the Rupture, sends messages that cannot be received by anyone. In one message to Jenny, she says, "White people don't really care about old people, except for David who tried to help everyone. And then they shot him like a dog" (265). Eunice changes her earlier seemingly apathetic comments about David to empathetic ones. After spending time thinking about the atrocities and having no connection to technology to distract her, Eunice is finally able to connect to David's strive to help people and be angry with his death.

Blog Post #6

        One of Hale's main arguments is that the monster created by Frankenstein is a symbol of racial minority and the fears associated with those groups. First, Hale presents significant historical context to her claim, analyzing slave rebellions at the time Shelley writing the book, as well as historical claims of abolitionists to connect Frankenstein to Britain: a parent who failed to nurture their child into adulthood. Hale then addresses common stereotypes in the world to Frankenstein's fears of the monster, from calling it a "savage" to worrying about the monster and its assumed wife procreating in the new world and having a new race of "devils". This was a key argument in Hale's paper.

        One example of close reading of the text is when, as mentioned before, Hale talks addresses Frankenstein's fear of the monster giving birth to an entire race in the new world. Hale first addresses the scientist's strict fear of creating more monsters, but goes on to examine the racial subtext. Hale concludes the monster to be an allegory for the slave trade bringing Africans to America and leaving them to procreate in the new land, making an entirely new, large population.

        One secondary source Hale uses is an essay by Malchow about Frankenstein depicting race in the nineteenth century. Hale uses this analysis to expand her own by signifying that the monster is not just an explicit "Negro monster" by that of an "other" race (18). This enhances Hale's argument and clarifies to the reader that Shelley did not choose a race for the monster, yet it can be implied that a completely new race can produce the same messages.

        In reading a quote from the book, I came upon the word "sophisms" (18). After using context clues and researching on the internet, I found the word means: deceiving arguments.

Blog Post #7

       In "The Monster in a Dark Room: Frankenstein, Feminism, and Philosophy", author Nancy Yousef argues that prior philosophies on individuality are addressed and revised in the novel, as the monster's growth and early experiences that influence his character reveals the restraints of such philosophies. Using classic examples of Locke and Rousseau, Yousef shows how the monster adopts some of their ideas and rebuts others. The monster is driven from nature to society by natural means (hunger) and gains his education by observing an Italian family. The creature, observing he has no history due to his lonely upbringing, adopts human sympathy, language, and identity. Overall, however, because he is not human in appearance, he is distinctly separate and does not carry the burden of human history.

       Yousef addressed the critics Marshall and Lipking and their claims of the monster's connection to Rousseau. Both critics argue that the monster inherently acts and personifies Rousseau's philosophy: that a creature brought into nature is alone and unique. Yousef refutes this claim, saying that the creature develops this thoughts at the peak of his education, developing the self-aware quality that is unlike Rousseau's philosophy.

       This article would be useful in clarifying a basis for identity in Frankenstein and how the natural world pushes the creature of no species towards humanity, allowing it to develop human qualities and differ from humans only in history, juxtaposing it with its creator.

Blog Post #8

"In contrast to this, while following Turkle's arguments, Eunice, cut off from technology after the Rupture, sends messages that cannot be received by anyone. In one message to Jenny, she says, "White people don't really care about old people, except for David who tried to help everyone. And then they shot him like a dog" (265). Eunice changes her earlier seemingly apathetic comments about David to empathetic ones. After spending time thinking about the atrocities and having no connection to technology to distract her, Eunice is finally able to connect to David's strive to help people and be angry with his death."

In this primary quotation, I have integrated Shteyngart's writing into my own. I frame the quote with a full background sentence and then directly introduce it in its own sentence. I then explain what I extrapolate from the quote. Here is one revision to introduce the quote:

> In contrast to this, while following Turkle's arguments, Eunice, cut off from technology after the Rupture, sends messages that cannot be received by anyone. Eunice has newfound agreement with the rebel cause when she writes, "White people don't really care about old people, except for David who tried to help everyone. And then they shot him like a dog" (265).

"One secondary source Hale uses is an essay by Malchow about Frankenstein depicting race in the nineteenth century. Hale uses this analysis to expand her own by signifying that the monster is not just an explicit "Negro monster" by that of an "other" race (18). This enhances Hale's argument and clarifies to the reader that Shelley did not choose a race for the monster, yet it can be implied that a completely new race can produce the same messages."

In this secondary quotation, I have not properly integrated the quote, though I do explain what I took from it and how it related to the text. Here is a (hopefully) better version of introducing the quote:

> One secondary source Hale uses is an essay by Malchow about Frankenstein depicting race in the nineteenth century. Hale affirms Malchow's work as she states, "That the otherness of the monster has strong racial overtones seems like a plausible hypothesis, especially in light of Walton's misidentification of him as "a savage" at the beginning of the narrative (9)."

Blog Post #10

  For this blog post I will refer back to an article I previously wrote about: "Stop Googling. Let's Talk" by Sherry Turkle. I will be analyzing her introduction to her opinion piece printed in the New York Times and seeing which strategies I can then integrate into my own writing.

  First, Turkle begins with setting a scene to familiarize the reader with the argument she is presenting. The first words are "COLLEGE students", followed by an accurate description of how college students act with technology and split attention: focusing on a friend in person while texting at the same time. Whether or not the reader participates in conversation this way, this is a common sight to see in twenty-first century America. The next sentence is an explanation of background information, with a hinted mocking tone of ignorant youth as she talks about how they explain they get away with partial attention due to hiding texting in middle school classes. Finally, Turkle ends the paragraph with how college students are able to be with their friends and "elsewhere". The follow-up paragraph includes data on how often adults use phones at social events and also how most feel it takes away from the event.

  Overall, this introduction is engaging yet bland. There is enough detail to grab the reader's attention through a small anecdote and mocking tone. Oh, those silly kids and their phones. It has enough weight to make a reader pay attention to the next, more important paragraph about studies on phones and attention. The anecdote is also focused in topic, not being randomly assigned to grab attention and instead focusing as a transition from the real world to the argument in the article. However, the anecdote itself is too general to hold for more than the three sentences that compose it. I want to use the focus that Turkle uses, but at the same time be engaging enough, since my introduction will be considerably longer.

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography
A Frankenstein of Two Worlds

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the titular character Victor Frankenstein relates his story to an eager Robert Walton, thus making the scientist an unreliable narrator. Between the constructs of elegant language and demonizing characterization of his own creation, Frankenstein hides true facts about his life, such as not caring about Justine or not wanting to marry Elizabeth. In this sense, Victor hides who he really is and conjures up the best image of himself for Walton to know. Whereas others have analyzed WHAT Victor is hiding, I intend to discover WHY he is acting unreliable. I argue Victor hides who he really is in order to provide a confession; he acts as an unreliable narrator in order to leave a legacy in a way he couldn't have before he met Walton. To research this claim, I will be using several secondary sources to examine previous claims about what Victor is hiding to connect to the reasons as to why he acts in such a manner.

Bibliography:
Benford, Criscillia . ""Listen to my tale": Multilevel Structure, Narrative Sense Making, and the Inassimilable in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *Narrative* 18.3 (2010): 324-346. *Project MUSE*. Web. 26 Oct. 2015. This article makes the argument that the "inassimilable", something that draws attention to two contradictory yet plausible ideas, is ever-present in the novel. This is added to by each narrator's description of himself to warp the reader's perspective. This extends my argument that Frankenstein is unreliable, promoting that Walton's enthusiasm blinds him and the monster's account contradicts Frankenstein's previous and continued descriptions of it. Benford also draws attention to subtle references in the text that show the real Victor amongst his story, such as his overall distaste for those he deems ugly (such as M. Kempe).
Salotto, Eleanor. ""Frankenstein" and Dis(re)membered Identity". *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Fall, 1994): pp. 190-211
The argument of this article is to discuss the multilayered approach to Frankenstein and how it promotes the idea of femininity in its subtext. A major role in this is Victor's desire to create a creature that mirrored himself, but a mirror image is fragmented and not a true representation of one's self. This can be used to extend my observation that Victor has failed in his quest for creation. All he has discovered, as said by Salotto, is that he doesn't truly know himself. My argument is extended by saying since he doesn't know himself, he attempts to create himself again in the best way possible: a story.
Sherwin, Paul. "Frankenstein: Creation as Catastrophe". *PMLA*, Vol. 96, No. 5 (Oct., 1981): pp. 883-903. Sherwin rebuts feminist arguments of Frankenstein in favor of a different argument: psychologic, oedipal influences. I would use this article to also refute purely feminist arguments in favor of a less gendered look at the character of Frankenstein and his storytelling motivations, not his actions or desires within his story. Also, my argument would then be extended by the failure of Frankenstein. However, I must then refute Sherwin's argument, saying Frankenstein is tortured for true purpose and identity, not masculine crisis as the story goes on.

Vine, Steven. "Filthy Types: 'Frankenstein', figuration, femininity". *Critical Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1996): pp. 246-258. This article describes how each narrative and person tries to make a self-image through the identities of others. He concludes this by stating femininity in the novel is based on male self-reflection. This article can extend my own thesis by providing another take on why Frankenstein creates his story. Though Vine does not directly state it, he suggests that Frankenstein cannot have a real identity or purpose if Walton is not there to here him. Vine does, however, explicitly state that the monster is a failure of Frankenstein trying to put his image onto something else to validate himself.

Researched Argument Rough Draft + Reflection

A Frankenstein of Two Worlds

As Doctor Gregory House always says, "Everyone lies." This quote, no matter how simple it may seem, takes on new meaning in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. The main story is told to Robert Walton, a sea captain, by Victor Frankenstein after the latter is rescued from the icy waters of the arctic. Though Frankenstein seems genuine in his large display of emotion and his openness to share his story with a new acquaintance, the dying man shrouds facts of his life by inventing a more glamorous story around them. Walton eagerly listens to the extravagant details, having been fascinated by the stranger since he came aboard the ship, and does not catch these details as he writes them down. By this regard, Frankenstein becomes an unreliable narrator: a person telling a story whose credibility is severely compromised. A reader cannot trust what Victor says, from his feelings towards Elizabeth to the inherent wretchedness of the monster. In many analyses of Frankenstein, this is the basic premise; however, I will be focusing on why he acts this way, why he tells this story. **My claim in this paper is that Frankenstein tells his story is to leave behind his mark on the world in a way that he wants as opposed to, in his eyes, his mark only being his perceived failure.**

Victor determines that his life's work is a tremendous failure and eventually resolves to telling his story for a proper legacy. After years of studying alchemy and necromancy and toiling over his project, Victor is crushed by the eventual awakening of his creation. As the monster opens its eyes, the young Frankenstein believes, "I had

worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body, For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (35). Victor's intense detail and his burning passion for this project shows how this reflected his life: creating life was a beauty and glory the he desired yet, in his eyes, failed to achieve. Such a feat, creating life, is a sign of a god complex; being unable to create life in one's image as a god would shows Frankenstein's weakness, one that he recognizes and over which is distraught. This idea of Frankenstein not seeing himself in his creation is further discussed by critic Eleanor Salotto. In her article, Salotto states, "The creature, as the excess in identity, fractures Frankenstein's wish to create a creature in his likeness. Frankenstein desires to re-member his identity after the death of his mother by creating the creature; when this project fails, however, he turns to narrative to re-member his life" (190). Frankenstein's story is now his only method of creating a legacy for himself. His failure to create life in his image now drives him to find greatness in a different way, leading him to only being able to tell his life story.

The subtext of Victor's unreliable account of his life hides his true intentions, allowing him to present himself in the way he wishes to be seen forever. Victor, as discussed before, actively hides his more unfavorable qualities in favor of presenting seemingly positive ones. A major example of this subtleness is Victor's relationship with Elizabeth. Early in the story, Victor presents his cousin as a perfect gift, and she soon becomes his fiancé when Victor's mother makes it her dying request. Victor often

mentions this commitment throughout the novel, but the subtext of his story actually conveys disinterest in marriage. When his father proposes Victor should marry Elizabeth soon, the young man thinks, "Alas! to me the idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and dismay. I was bound by a solemn promise, which I had not yet fulfilled, and dared not break; or, if I did, what manifold miseries might not impend over me and my devoted family!" (Shelley 110). Victor explicitly says he does not want to marry Elizabeth, something true, but claims it to be for her safety and for the safety of his family. However, Victor does not care for the monster's actions on his family when he destroys the second creature, so he is lying when he tells Walton of his concern for his family. Victor lies because it is noble to protect his family, but selfish to say that he does not intend to marry Elizabeth, thus leaving a poor image of himself instead of a righteous one. This is compounded on further after Victor returns from jail to Geneva and sets a date for the wedding to Elizabeth. Victor "confesses" that he truly wants to marry Elizabeth and should not wait any longer, no matter the danger, but he first reasons, "If the monster executed his threat, death was inevitable...My destruction might indeed arrive a few months sooner; but if my torturer should suspect I postponed it, influenced by his menaces, he would surely find other and perhaps more dreadful means of revenge" (139). Victor's seemingly heartfelt confession is shredded by him stating that no matter what he does, the monster will follow through with vengeance. In Victor's mind, marrying Elizabeth will make her and his father happier, so he can at least give them joy before, as he supposes, dies. Victor attempts to present himself as a martyr, dying for his sins while giving the people who love him happiness, as opposed

to looking defeated and resigned to a quick fate. Through all of this, Victor's subtext reveals the true story and motivations behind his seemingly heroic story.

This story could not have been told in such a way without the eager Walton as Victor's direct audience. First, Walton acknowledges that he holds affection, wonder, and curiosity toward his new acquaintance. The two men also share many similarities that allow for a quick, close connection, such as having grand curiosity for knowledge and desires for glory. Frankenstein himself remarks of Walton: "'I had determined, at one time, that the memory of these evils should die with me, but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek knowledge and wisdom, as I once did...I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale" (13). Victor sees himself in Walton and, knowing of Walton's obsession of him, recognizes an opportunity to tell his story so that Walton will interpret it to be divine and recount the glory and fall of a great man instead of the failures of a mad scientist. This design of Frankenstein is observed by critic Criscillia Benford, who labels this phenomenon "the inassimilable." To this point, Benford writes, "The inassimilable is an element...that calls attention to a text's constructedness by simultaneously activating two or more competing, yet equally plausible, sense-making frames" (325). Frankenstein's story is the first half of the inassimilable, one sense-making frame in the view of Walton, while the second half comes from the apparent madness observed by others, such as Clerval and Elizabeth, toward Victor. Both these ideas coexist and activate the reader's thought process, contemplating about whether Walton hears the same story seen by Clerval and Elizabeth, who absorb the details through different frame references. Another thought

on Walton's importance comes from the critic Steven Vine as he offers a "mirror" concept. In his analysis, Vine argues, "The self must be given face and figure from elsewhere in order to be itself...the identities and stories in *Frankenstein* gain their meaning through their relation to other identities and stories in *Frankenstein*" (247). Walton dreams of having a certain image for himself, thus sparking his adventure to find passage over the north pole, but finds it in the seemingly wise and exciting Frankenstein that is pulled aboard his ship. In return, Frankenstein finds himself needing a vessel to use to generate his own self-image, and locks onto Walton. This symbiosis of characters allows for the story to unfold, fascination and desire pushing both men into needing the story, Walton for inspiration and Victor for a legacy he can finally see.

While this argument about leaving a legacy may be comprehensive, other arguments would want to position Frankenstein's unreliability on a more gendered approach. Such a gendered or feminist argument claims that Frankenstein acts against marrying Elizabeth due to homosocial characteristics and lies about them due to social norms of the time. First, Frankenstein telling his story as a legacy leaves room for why he acts the way he does in his story, since the main argument revolves around why the story itself is told and how it is told. However, a feminist argument suffers against the legacy argument because while the feminist argument dictates social norms are the reason for the intense subtext of the novel, there are several scenes that either are not affected by gender roles and still contain subtext or show Walton to be suffering in the same way as Frankenstein, allowing a perfect time to divulge such homosocial interests to a man with similar desires. The critic Paul Sherwin emphasizes how *Frankenstein*'s

gender argument can be broken down by analyzing Victor's oedipal actions. Through such actions, Victor becomes less confined by societal norms and more free to express himself through creation at first, but eventually story (885). The gender argument can be incorporated into the legacy argument, but fails to explain the same phenomena that the latter argument successful argues.

As Victor attempts to establish his legacy the way he sees himself, he undergoes a lengthy process to tell his story. First, he determined early on that his life's god-like goal had ended in utter failure, creating only his story as a viable output for success. To be able to tell such a story, he hid facts of his life around glorified details as to present himself in the best way possible. Finally, he had the opportunity to tell the story due to Walton being another person who he could relate to and manipulate at the same time to mold his image into the greatness he so desired. There is little debate among scholars that Victor himself is secretive and unreliable, however it is important to understand his character not on what he is hiding but as to why he hides it. The underlying intentions of Victor develop his character in a way that gives a fuller understanding of the novel, one that I hope readers will observe and understand in their own readings.

Bibliography

Benford, Criscillia . ""Listen to my tale": Multilevel Structure, Narrative Sense Making, and the Inassimilable in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *Narrative* 18.3 (2010): 324-346. *Project MUSE*. Web. 26 Oct. 2015. This article makes the argument that the "inassimilable", something that draws attention to two contradictory yet plausible ideas, is ever-present in the novel. This is added to by each narrator's description of himself to warp the reader's perspective. This extends my argument that Frankenstein is unreliable, promoting that Walton's enthusiasm blinds him and the monster's account contradicts Frankenstein's previous and continued descriptions of it. Benford also draws attention to subtle references in the text that show the real Victor amongst his story, such as his overall distaste for those he deems ugly (such as M. Kempe).

Salotto, Eleanor. ""Frankenstein" and Dis(re)membered Identity". *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Fall, 1994): pp. 190-211
The argument of this article is to discuss the multilayered approach to Frankenstein and how it promotes the idea of femininity in its subtext. A major role in this is Victor's desire to create a creature that mirrored himself, but a mirror image is fragmented and not a true representation of one's self. This can be used to extend my observation that Victor has failed in his quest for creation. All he has discovered, as said by Salotto, is that he doesn't truly know himself. My argument is extended by saying since he doesn't know himself, he attempts to create himself again in the best way possible: a story.

Sherwin, Paul. "Frankenstein: Creation as Catastrophe". *PMLA*, Vol. 96, No. 5 (Oct., 1981): pp. 883-903. Sherwin rebuts feminist arguments of Frankenstein in favor of a different argument: psychologic, oedipal influences. I would use this article to also refute purely feminist arguments in favor of a less gendered look at the character of Frankenstein and his storytelling motivations, not his actions or desires within his story.

Vine, Steven. "Filthy Types: 'Frankenstein', figuration, femininity". *Critical Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1996): pp. 246-258. This article describes how each narrative and person tries to make a self-image through the identities of others. He concludes this by stating femininity in the novel is based on male self-reflection. This article can extend my own thesis by providing another take on why Frankenstein creates his story. Though Vine does not directly state it, he suggests that Frankenstein cannot have a real identity or purpose if Walton is not there to here him. Vine does, however, explicitly state that the monster is a failure of Frankenstein trying to put his image onto something else to validate himself.

Reflection: The strongest part of this paper is the integration and use of quotes. I understand how quotes are used and integrated into essays and I believe I have been able to set them up and explain them all while supporting my subtopics and overall

thesis. This includes direct quotes from my outside resources, which play especially important roles in validating my essay, since that is how I mostly used them. Though I don't rebut other's direct quotations, the lack of such a detail is not needed (at least, in my view, at this point in my essay development). That being said, the one area of my essay I find the weakest is the rebuttal section. Though I knew what I wanted to rebut from an early stage and included it in my paper outline, the execution of the paragraph seems slightly unfocused and rushed to me. That is something I am hoping my peer review partner will catch and for which they will offer the most revisions. Overall, I am pleased with how far I have come from my initial conception of the essay to now. I hope to use the peer review time effectively and make useful, effective revisions to my work.

Researched Argument Final Paper + Reflection

Jonathan O'Brien

Professor Starr

English 181-004

12/8/15

A Tale to Astonish: Frankenstein the Unreliable Narrator

As Doctor Gregory House, the main character of the eponymous television show, always says, "Everyone lies." This quote, no matter how simple it may seem, takes on new meaning in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. The main story is told to Robert Walton, a sea captain, by Victor Frankenstein after the latter is rescued from the icy waters of the arctic. Though Frankenstein seems genuine in his large display of emotion and his openness to share his story with a new acquaintance, the dying man shrouds facts of his life by inventing a more glamorous story around them. Walton eagerly listens to the extravagant details, having been fascinated by the stranger since he came aboard the ship, and does not catch these details as he writes them down. By this regard, Frankenstein becomes an unreliable narrator: a person telling a story whose credibility is severely compromised. A reader cannot trust what Victor says, from his feelings towards Elizabeth to the inherent wretchedness of the monster. In many analyses of Frankenstein, this is the basic premise; however, I will be focusing on why he acts this way, why he tells this story. Whereas many critics have claimed Frankenstein is consciously manipulative, this paper argues that Frankenstein acts

unreliably due to an amalgam of different, conflicting ideas and emotions that make him confused about his identity and purpose.

After perceiving his life's work to be a tremendous failure, Victor becomes confused about his purpose. After years of studying alchemy and necromancy and toiling over his project, Victor is crushed by the eventual awakening of his creation. As the monster opens its eyes, the young Frankenstein believes, "I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body, For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (35). Victor's intense detail and his burning passion for this project shows how this reflected his life: creating life was a beauty and glory the he desired yet, in his eyes, failed to achieve.

The confusion Victor has surrounding his purpose leads him to use surreptitious storytelling to attempt to claim one. The collapse of his dream causes Frankenstein to go into a personal crisis since he no longer understands what he should do in his life. This identity confusion is summed up by critic Eleanor Salotto, who says in her article, "The creature, as the excess in identity, fractures Frankenstein's wish to create a creature in his likeness. Frankenstein desires to re-member his identity after the death of his mother by creating the creature; when this project fails, however, he turns to narrative to re-member his life" (190). The loss of purpose stops Frankenstein from using the creature to represent his greatness. This leads Victor to glorify his story through unreliable means in order to achieve at least a little sense of self. The confusion

that surrounds Frankenstein after his perceived failure leads him to eventually become the unreliable person telling the story.

      Although Victor's tale is enticing to Walton, the subtext of the story shows the scientist's confusion, despite his seemingly collected accounts. Victor, as discussed before, hides his more unfavorable qualities in favor of presenting seemingly positive ones. A major example of this subtleness is Victor's relationship with Elizabeth. Early in the story, Victor presents his cousin as a perfect gift, and she soon becomes his fiancé when Victor's mother makes it her dying request. Victor often mentions this commitment throughout the novel, but the subtext of his story actually conveys conflicting thoughts about the marriage. When his father proposes Victor should marry Elizabeth soon, the young man thinks, "Alas! to me the idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and dismay. I was bound by a solemn promise, which I had not yet fulfilled, and dared not break; or, if I did, what manifold miseries might not impend over me and my devoted family!" (Shelley 110). Victor uses the argument that his new destiny is to stop the monster and protect his family as rationale for postponing his marriage to Elizabeth. However, as this is an act he has put off for the majority of the novel, Victor once again makes an excuse for not marrying Elizabeth because he is truly confused about if he wants to go through with it or avoid it altogether. Victor lies because it is noble to protect his family, but selfish to say that he does not know for sure he wants to marry Elizabeth, thus presenting a poor image of himself instead of a righteous one.

Even when Victor comes to his conclusion about the marriage, he is still uncertain of the reasons behind it. After Victor returns from jail to Geneva and sets a date for the wedding to Elizabeth, Victor "confesses" that he surely wants to marry Elizabeth and should not wait any longer, no matter the danger. Despite a heroic remark, Victor explains: "If the monster executed his threat, death was inevitable...My destruction might indeed arrive a few months sooner; but if my torturer should suspect I postponed it, influenced by his menaces, he would surely find other and perhaps more dreadful means of revenge" (139). The dilemma Victor presents is indicative not of the physical problem at hand, but the psychological one. He tries to find a sense of purpose by defying the monster, but at the same time he still does not know if marrying Elizabeth is the right course of action for him. Through his logic, his marriage to Elizabeth seems part of his potentially new motivation and thus goes through with it. The mental strain of Victor is hidden in his subtext as he argues the potential consequences of marriage with respect to the monster, but when it is uncovered, he is seen in a new light as just a conflicted individual looking for purpose.

This story could not have been told in such a way without the eager Walton as Victor's direct audience. First, Walton acknowledges that he holds affection, wonder, and curiosity toward his new acquaintance. The two men also share many similarities that allow for a quick, close connection, such as having grand curiosity for knowledge and desires for glory. Frankenstein himself remarks of Walton: "'I had determined, at one time, that the memory of these evils should die with me, but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek knowledge and wisdom, as I once did...I imagine that

you may deduce an apt moral from my tale" (13). Victor sees himself in Walton and, knowing of Walton's obsession of him, tells his story so that Walton will interpret it to be divine and recount the glory and fall of a great and purposeful hero instead of the failures of an unsure man. This design of Frankenstein is observed by critic Criscillia Benford, who labels this phenomenon "the inassimilable." To this point, Benford writes, "The inassimilable is an element...that calls attention to a text's constructedness by simultaneously activating two or more competing, yet equally plausible, sense-making frames" (325). Frankenstein's story is the first half of the inassimilable, one sense-making frame in the view of Walton, while the second half comes from the apparent madness observed by others, such as Clerval and Elizabeth, toward Victor. Both these ideas coexist and activate the reader's thought process, contemplating about whether Walton hears the same story seen by Clerval and Elizabeth, who absorb the details through different frame references.

Another thought on Walton's importance comes from the critic Steven Vine as he offers a "mirror" concept. In his analysis, Vine argues, "The self must be given face and figure from elsewhere in order to be itself...the identities and stories in *Frankenstein* gain their meaning through their relation to other identities and stories in *Frankenstein*" (247). Walton dreams of having a certain image for himself, thus sparking his adventure to find passage over the north pole, but finds it in the seemingly wise and exciting Frankenstein that is pulled aboard his ship. In return, Walton acts as a vessel to potentially settle Victor's long-lasting confusion by taking the story to heart as a purely reliable tale. This symbiosis of characters allows for the story to unfold, fascination and

desire pushing both men into needing the story, Walton for inspiration and Victor for a legacy he can finally see.

      While the argument presented thus far has depicted Victor as mentally compromised, other interpretations claim Victor to be in control. The control Victor has in these arguments allows him to manipulate Walton throughout the story in order to identify the main thought in his life: his greatness. By accentuating parts of the story that appeal to Walton and hiding those that compromise Victor's character, Victor can use the story to do several things, from creating a close bond with Walton to leaving a legacy of heroism instead of failure. However, many of Victor's actions within the story, including his hidden thoughts, point to confusion over assuredness. As the critic Paul Sherwin points out in his critique, "Rather, it is a phantasmic derivative of the [Oedipus] complex, a shadowy type of that relentless internal danger which the Creature consummately represents" (886). This reference to the creature being a manifestation of Victor trying to bring his mother back to life immediately compromises his psyche, providing him with an internal challenge that he then spends his time focusing on. His confusion swallows him and leaves no room for him to be manipulative.

      Victor's understanding of himself is compromised from early on in his life, causing him to disclose his story as means to detail a motivation that does not truly exist. First, the failure of his creation causes Victor's identity to be uprooted, eventually leading him to question himself even in his life's most important moments. To be able to tell such a narrative in a positive way, he hides facts of his life around glorified details as to present himself in the best way possible. Finally, he has the opportunity to tell the

story due to Walton being another person who he could relate to and accept a great life story amidst a history of misunderstanding. There is little debate among scholars that Victor himself is secretive and unreliable, however it is important to understand his character not on what he is hiding but as to why he hides it. The underlying intentions of Victor develop his character in a way that gives a fuller understanding of the novel, one that I hope readers will observe and understand in their own readings.

Bibliography

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Reflection: I made a substantial number of edits to my paper. The first of which, and most important of all, was to revise my thesis. My new thesis broadens out my original ideas from something as singular as leaving a definitive legacy to something more broad such as confusion over identity and purpose. Now there is room for an arguable topic as well as a clearer rebuttal argument. After changing my argument, I saw that most of my evidence still worked despite the revision, but needed to be explained differently. I went back and split paragraphs, changed topic sentences, concluding sentences, and analysis of quotes in order to establish better support for my new thesis. I changed my rebuttal from refuting a gendered argument to arguing against a deliberate one. This rebuttal makes more sense, since being deliberate directly conflicts confusion, as opposed to gender and legacy not clashing. At the end, the conclusion also had to be tweaked in order to incorporate my thesis better. And just for logistical purposes, I added in headings that I had forgotten and changed the title to more accurately reflect the new topic I was discussing. Those were all the changes I made to this paper.