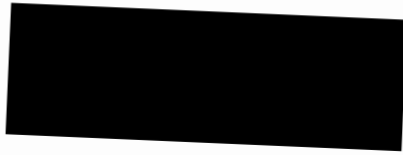



NAME



ranking

PRAXIS EXAM	ESSAY	165	}	outstanding
	CONTENT	189		
GPA IN MAJOR		3.86	}	outstanding

Cam + Vince → satisfactory



English Content Assessment Portfolio

18 November 2010

Leonardo Da Vinci once said, “Art is never finished, only abandoned.” As I review my papers for inclusion in this portfolio, I agree with Da Vinci. These papers were not finished. I still had more thoughts to work out and more editing to do, but at some point I had to stop and hand them in. I firmly believe in the idea that while writing I learn. The more I write about a subject, the more I learn, and this process causes me to want to start my papers over once I get to the end. With that understanding, I welcome your review of my papers. I think you will find that although not finished, they do show some serious thinking and careful construction.

The two papers I am submitting deal with very different books. I have chosen them to demonstrate that I can analyze a variety of texts and to show growth in my education. As an undergraduate, I focused on American literature, but here at Rhode Island College I have expanded my understanding of history and culture by taking British Romanticism and Non-Western Literature. In the first paper, I analyze Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* which was written and set in early 19th century Europe. In the second paper, I analyze *Things Fall Apart* by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, written in 1958 about Igbo society during British colonization of Nigeria in the 1890’s. My analysis of Shelley’s work demonstrates my understanding of a central problem in Romantic theory and literature: How to control the over-active imagination. My analysis of Achebe’s work shows my ability to do cultural as well as literary analysis as I point out some of the strengths and weaknesses of pre-colonial Igbo culture and the pressures colonial armies and missionaries placed upon that culture.

Both papers show that my writing is clear, focused, and well supported. Although the Shelley paper needs some revision to strengthen my thesis, it still makes a valid, logical argument. In the Shelley paper, I contrast how Frankenstein and Walton treat their respective families. Regarding Frankenstein, I use textual evidence and secondary sources, with correct MLA format, to support my assertions. The Achebe paper needs less revision. I begin it with a strong thesis that I develop in a series of logical steps. I support each assertion with evidence from the text. I do not use secondary sources for the Achebe paper because my instructor, Dr. Scott, did not require their use. However, because I demonstrate my writing proficiency in the paper, I have included it.

Both papers contain typos that I did not catch and some grammatical errors, particularly with comma usage, in the Shelley paper. With hindsight, I know I should have reviewed comma use prior to writing that paper, but as it was one of the first papers that I wrote in pursuit of my M.A.T., I was unaware of the problem. Following Dr. Hall's advice, I now keep a grammar book in my desk drawer and refer to it regularly. Other than incorrect comma use, both papers show that I comply with the conventions of standard written English and display my facility with language and syntax.

I have enjoyed working with the English Department faculty here at Rhode Island College. The reading materials for class have been wonderful, as have the class discussions. I feel my professors have prepared me for a career in teaching English, and my papers reflect the quality of the instruction I have received.

Professor Scott

English 336

14 February 2006

Okonkwo's Thoughtlessness

Achebe has written more than 1 novel

Chinua Achebe in his novel Things Fall Apart uses the story of his main character, Okonkwo, to demonstrate how thoughtless adherence to some beliefs can destroy not only a person but also a culture. The story of Okonkwo shows in a vivid and emotionally compelling way, how people can become trapped in their own world view and fail to see their own shortcomings. Just as Okonkwo thoughtlessly follows his own concept of masculinity while ignoring his own troublesome feelings, so too do the Ibo people thoughtlessly follow some of their traditions despite the discomfort such traditions cause. By overlooking such discomfort, the Ibo people unknowingly sow the seeds of dissent within their culture. These seeds begin to grow when the Christian missionaries arrive offering an alternative to the traditional Ibo way of life. The Ibo culture, though strong in many ways, falls apart when external forces put pressure on it. As the Ibo culture falls apart, so too does Okonkwo. He is unable to see how his impulsive acts of violence further contribute to the demise of his culture. His concept of strength becomes a liability. Unable to cope with the demands of the new era, Okonkwo takes his own life.

In many ways Okonkwo is symbolic of the Ibo culture. He embodies many of the qualities admired by the Ibo people. He is strong, persistent, and determined. He is a hard worker, a formidable warrior, and a successful farmer. As a result he has become a

STRONG 1st sentence

(yes)

by extension Achebe is handing out culture a lesson about inflexibility

tribal leader at an early age. In Okonkwo's culture "age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered" (5). His rise from poverty to wealth through hard work makes him respected in the community. Achebe introduces Okonkwo at the very beginning of the book by telling about Okonkwo's fame. "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements" (1). His work ethic is fueled by his fierce, violent nature, and he approaches all tasks in life as if they were battles to be won. Okonkwo's fame began at the age of eighteen when he defeated another wrestler who had not been beaten in seven years. The old men agreed that the wrestling match was the fiercest match since the founding of their town. Achebe further describes Okonkwo as "tall and huge" (1) with the intensity of a wild carnivore. When Okonkwo walked, "his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he were going to pounce on somebody" (1).

fame through
can contribute
to arrogance
self-
pride

Although Okonkwo embodies many Ibo values, he fails to represent Ibo culture in many important ways. He is not articulate and has no patience for conversation. The Ibo people value the art of conversation, but Okonkwo is described as having a "slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fist" (2). He also fails to understand the balance between masculine and feminine roles within his society. He believes men are strong and that women are silly. His uncle, Uchendu, tries to teach Okonkwo about the importance of female strength. Uchendu says "a man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you" (116). Okonkwo never learns this lesson. Instead of seeing the

good point

strength of women, he associates femininity with weakness. Okonkwo remembers as a child people referring to his father as “agbala” which meant either a woman or a man without a title. Ashamed of his father’s failures, Okonkwo comes to believe the word for woman, agbala, means weakness. “His whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness” (10). He was afraid of resembling his father and so “Okonkwo was ruled by one passion – to hate everything his father loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness” (11). As a result, Okonkwo never displays gentle emotions towards his wives or children. He beats his wives and children for not working hard enough or for showing signs of weakness. Okonkwo displays his hatred of idleness during tribal celebrations when he is too restless to enjoy them.

Okonkwo’s character does not change or develop ^{1 word} through out the novel. He never learns to think about his feelings. He steadfastly adheres to his proven success strategy of suppressing any emotion that displays weakness. As a result he has a terrible relationship with his son, Nwoye, who is afraid of his father and prefers his mother’s company.

Okonkwo’s ^{JB} lack self awareness mirrors a failure of the Ibo culture at large to address the discomfort people feel about certain Ibo traditions. The people are deeply disturbed by the tradition of leaving twins to die but nobody challenges this practice. Instead, when the women hear the cries of the dying children in the forest, they quicken their steps to escape the sound. Nwoye remembers how he felt when he first heard the cries of an abandoned set of twins. “A chill had descended on him and his head seemed to swell, like a solitary walker at night who passes an evil spirit on the way. Then something had given way inside him” (53). Uchendu also refers to the suffering this practices causes when he is trying to teach Okonkwo about the strength of women. Uchendu says, “If you

think you are the greatest sufferer in the world ask my daughter, Akueni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away" (117). The only character who thinks about Ibo traditions is Obierika, but he is unable to reconcile his discomfort with some Ibo traditions. He wonders:

Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offense he had committed inadvertently? But although he thought for a long time he found no answer. He was merely led into greater complexities. He remembered his wife's twin children, whom he had thrown away. What crime had they committed? (110)

People are also disturbed by the decision to kill Ikemefuna but no one contests it.

The tribal elder, Ezedu tells Okonkwo not to participate in killing the boy. His advice indicates he feels the injustice of the decision. Nwoye reacts to the news by bursting into tears for which Okonkwo beats him. When Nwoye's mother hears of the decision, she drops her pestle and sighs, "poor child" (50). As Ikemefuna leaves the compound with the elders, "a deadly silence descended on Okonkwo's compound. Even the very little children seemed to know" (50). Everyone seems to feel badly about Ikemefuna's fate, but no one thinks about trying to change it. It is just part of life, accepted without much thought.

Achebe brings Okonkwo's failure and the failure of Ibo culture together at the

climax of the novel when Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna. This event leaves Okonkwo emotionally devastated. "Okonkwo did not taste any food for two days after the death of Ikemefuna. He did not sleep at night. He tried not to think about Ikemefuna but the more he tried the more he thought about him" (55). Okonkwo fights his feelings of grief

but yes -
that shows us
that reflection
is taking
place - but
not enough of
it

to almost go early?

and despair by clinging desperately to his credo of strength and masculinity. He believes he is bothered by his killing of his adopted son because he has become weak like a woman. He never considers the cruelty of killing a boy who looked to him as a father. Instead of thinking about the issue, Okonkwo looks for a distraction to get his mind off his problem. He ignores his emotional pain and convinces himself that his ability to kill his adopted son shows his strength as a man. Okonkwo thinks of the event as "his latest show of manliness" (58). He remains loyal to his culture just as everyone else has remained loyal to their culture by not saving the abandoned twins or by saving Ikemefuna. He shows his loyalty to his culture by questioning Obierika's commitment to the Oracle. When Obierika explains why he did not participate in killing the boy, Okonkwo replies, "Someone had to do it. If we were all afraid of blood, it would not have been done. And what do you think the oracle would do then" (58).

Just as Okonkwo fails to value femininity and the emotions associated with it, so too does the Ibo culture undervalue the feelings of individuals. The Ibo proverb "if one finger brought oil it soiled the others" (111) speaks to the importance of the clan over the individual. The suffering of the parents of twins does not matter if the clan will be punished by the great goddess for not destroying the twins. Ibo culture does not value Ikemefuna's feeling nor does it consider the friendships people have with him. It does not matter that Nwoye is devastated by the loss of his friend, Ikemefuna. It does not matter that Obierika feels Okonkwo's act of killing Ikemefuna is "the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families" (58). Just as Okonkwo fails to think about the effect his cruel and violent actions have on his family and community, so too do the Ibo people fail to think about their cruel traditions. The discomfort and unhappiness

caused by this lack of thoughtfulness not only causes Okonkwo's demise, but also becomes the seeds of dissent which allow the Christian missionaries to obtain their first converts. Christianity gains broader appeal because it addresses the dissatisfaction the Ibo people have with some of their traditions. One of the first programs the missionaries undertake is to begin rescuing the abandoned twins. As a result, the missionaries begin winning the hearts of some Ibo people.

Okonkwo cannot understand how he adds to the demise of his culture by his insistence that the men of his village be strong and fight the whites. His emphasis on the importance of strength and the use of force to rectify problems alienates people like his son Nwoye who is revolted by his father's violent actions. As the clan becomes fragmented the need for discussion and compromise becomes paramount, but Okonkwo has no patience for words. He needs to lash out violently. Okonkwo kills the court messenger, perhaps hoping his clan will follow his lead and attack the whites and their African supporters. Instead, people question his actions. The majority of his clan, perhaps understanding the power of the new colonial government, does not believe violence is the solution to the changes occurring within their culture. They see that Okonkwo's leadership style will likely cause their village to suffer the same fate as the village of Abame which Obierika reports has been "wiped out" (119) by the colonial government.

Okonkwo has spent his whole life working to be a leader of his clan, and he cannot accept that his clan needs a new type of leader. The clan needs someone with diplomatic skills to negotiate with the missionaries and the colonial government. But Okonkwo sees diplomats as weak. His world view makes him incapable of thinking his

way to a solution that would promote harmony within his clan and between his clan and the Europeans. Devastated by the loss of his prestige in the clan, Okonkwo takes his own life. As Okonkwo dies so too does a part of traditional Ibo culture. The Ibo people will no longer be allowed to thoughtlessly follow their traditions. The pressure Christianity will apply to the culture will force people to think about their way of life.

This self-reflection is a strength of any culture. (Notice that Achebe shows western culture as being highly un-reflective ~~thoughtless~~ by way of the final paragraph.)

Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart. New York: Knopf, 1992.

A

David -
 thoughtfully done.
 you draw a very tightly
 clearly outlined analysis
 around the situation. I
 think you miss an opportunity
 to link this theme of
 thoughtlessness to
 the west more directly.
 Achebe clearly shows us
 that lack of reflection is
 not just one culture's
 problem

English 531: British Romanticism

Professor Hall

7 December 2005

Walton's Life Saving Letters and Journals

"You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings" (912). Mary Shelley uses this sentence to begin her novel, Frankenstein. This sentence not only immediately captivates but also provides hints as to what the novel is about. To fully understand its meaning, one must realize that it appears in a letter written by Robert Walton to his sister, Mrs. Saville. From the letter, we can determine that Mrs. Saville has warned her brother against doing something, and that Walton feels the need to inform his sister he is safe. His need to communicate with his sister is not casual. In his next sentence, he tells his sister, "I arrived here yesterday: and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare" (912). Given that Walton is on a dangerous journey of some sort, it is remarkable that his top priority is to write a letter to his sister. Surely, there must be other aspects of his enterprise that need his attention. Instead, Walton makes time to think about his sister and send her a letter to ease her concern. This behavior is central to Shelley's point. By creating a male character who makes thinking about his sister a top priority, Shelley is telling her readers, in the first two sentences of her novel, that this story is about how important it is for men on quest-like missions to remember their families. Men who remember and communicate with their families avoid disaster.

As the letter continues, we learn about Walton's quest. It is not an ordinary trip but rather an enormous undertaking. He is leaving the safety of the known and populated world. He states ^{that} he will "sate his ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man" (913). Walton is talking about the North Pole, a place off limits to mankind. Others have warned him that the Pole is a land of "frost and desolation" (913), but Walton does not heed their warnings.

Walton wishes to go to the Pole because he believes it's a place of eternal light, and as such, it may be a land "surpassing in wonders and beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe" (913). Shelly's decision to send Walton to the North Pole has symbolic significance. By journeying to the artic, not only does Walton seek knowledge and beauty beyond the reach of mankind, but also he must leave the community of man behind to acquire it. Although Walton is on a ship with other men, these men do not provide him with a community of friends. In another letter to his sister, he expresses a need for a friend. He wants the company of someone who shares his desires and could help approve or amend his plans. ^{He describes} The absence of this friend, ~~he~~ describes as "a most severe evil" (915). Walton's quest symbolically represents the quest of any man who reaches beyond the limits of mankind, especially if the quest causes him to leave behind his friends and family. While searching for such knowledge, a man can go morally astray. Walton's sister recognizes this danger and regards his adventure with "evil forebodings." Alone, without the counsel of those who love them, men can make bad decisions even when they may have good intentions.

OK -
It's worth noting that a journey on a ship (e.g. Melville) has been used to suggest a male would be separated from the redeeming qualities of the feminine. Given the responses to Victor, it is as if Walton finds elements of the "feminine" in the former.

Good intentions will not prevent disaster when men become obsessed with their quests. This danger is especially true when the obsession for the quest results from a desire for personal glory, as it does with Walton. Walton hopes to discover “the wondrous power which attracts the needle” and the knowledge that “may regulate a thousand celestial observations” (913). He writes, “you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind” (913). Unfortunately, Walton’s aims are not entirely altruistic. He wants to confer a benefit on all mankind, not out of his love for humanity, but for personal glory. In a letter to his sister, he writes, “do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose. My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path” (914). Therein lays the danger; he feels entitled to glory. His sense of entitlement may cause his downfall, during a crisis, while he is alone on his quest for glory.

Walton provides justification for his feelings. He believes that the hardships he has endured and the self sacrifice he has made in preparation for his quest entitle him to glory. Although hard work and self sacrifice often lead to reward, Shelly, through Frankenstein’s narration, will show the dangers of obsessing on a goal, particularly when the demands of that goal draw one away from his relationship with his family. Obsession of this type becomes a downward spiral. ^{First, it} causes one to neglect his domestic relationships, and then creates a sense of entitlement to achieve because of the sacrifice one has made for the quest. The downward spiral continues because achieving the quest requires further neglect of domestic relationships which in turn creates a greater sense of entitlement. A man on this type of quest, following this type of pattern will eventually deprive himself of all familial counsel. Without such counsel, the quest is doomed to end

But more than just that, as you say.

I think that you may overdo the “glory” motivation at the expense of his humanitarian motives

This begins to repeat ideas that have already been intricately laid.

in disaster. Shelly's novel serves as a warning to those who seek glory at the expense of interacting with their family and friends.

reference ?

Walton has often chosen his quest over his family. In his youth this expedition had been his favorite dream, and he read passionately, day and night, about voyages of past discoverers who attempted to reach the North Pacific Ocean. As an adult, his preparations have caused him to be away from his sister, his only family, for much of the past six years while he inured his body to hardship by accompanying the whaling vessels to the North Sea on several expeditions. Walton, a wealthy man, goes to the extreme of hiring himself ^{out} as an undermate on a Greenland Whaler. He has voluntarily endured "cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep" (914) to prepare himself. The rest of his time has been devoted to the study of mathematics, medicine, and other physical sciences which may aid him on his quest. Yet, despite the demands of his intense preparation, he maintains some relationship with his sister by writing to her. He also encourages her to "continue to write to [him] by every opportunity" (916) because he values her support. His efforts to maintain his family relationship distinguishes him from Victor Frankenstein. Frankenstein also becomes obsessed with his own quest, but Frankenstein completely neglects his family in order to accomplish his goals, ^{thus} causing complete disaster for himself and his family.

As Walton leaves Russia and heads towards the Artic, he is on the verge of a similar disaster. The demands of his tasks, ^{now} overwhelm his ability to maintain his relationship with his sister. While he is out on the Artic Ocean, his relationship ^{looses} ^{of} much of its substance. He has no way of delivering his letters and she cannot respond to him. Without any familial support, he is rapidly spiraling downward in his quest. Alone,

Does this contradict but do continue to write to her?

Your argument seems to go back and forth. Maybe you could have begun with the last sentence as your topic.

he has the potential to make a disastrous mistake. But, Walton does not hit bottom. He finds a friend, Victor Frankenstein, and he continues to write to his sister and keep a journal for her. By remembering his sister and recording for her, in his own words, Frankenstein's tale of woe, Walton is able to understand and digest the significance of Frankenstein's story. In the end this minimal relationship he maintains with his sister, via his journal, allows him to abandon his quest and avoid disaster even though Frankenstein urges Walton to stick to his purpose. The following series of events illustrates this point.

phrasing

When Walton believes the ice will soon crush his ship he decides to make a journal entry. In his journal he writes out his thoughts in a way that his sister will understand the state of his mind. He writes as if he is talking to her. Writing in this manner undoubtedly helped him clarify his feelings. The state of the voyage weighs on his mind. He knows his crew looks to him to resolve their crisis, but he does not have a solution. His situation is terribly appalling, yet "his courage and hope do not desert [him]" (1027). His sister's welfare is paramount in his mind. He thinks of the awful effect his disappearance and death will have on his sister, and he worries more about her grief than his own death. He is thankful for the support Frankenstein provides him and the crew, but he fears a mutiny.

A good point

Two days later, his crew requests him to promise to abandon the voyage if the ship is freed from the ice. In his journal, he records the event and writes, "he told me that he and his companions had been chosen by the other sailors to come in deputation to me, to make me a demand, which, in justice, I could not refuse" (1028). Although Walton had not yet conceived of abandoning his mission, he questions rhetorically, in his journal, in response to his crew's desire to return to England, "could I, in justice, or even in

ant.

of

possibility, refuse this demand?" (1028). As he considers this question he is at a moral cross road. He desperately desires to continue his journey, but he senses the injustice of doing so. While he ponders his decision, Frankenstein interrupts him with a speech that Walton describes as "full of lofty design and heroism" (1029). Walton and his crew are moved by Frankenstein's speech. He writes, "I had rather die, than return shamefully,-- my purpose unfulfilled. Yet I fear such will be my fate: the men unsupported by the ideas of glory and honour, can never willingly continue to endure their present hardship" (1029). Two days later, Walton consents to return if they are not destroyed by the crushing ice which ensnares their vessel. Walton does not record his reason for consenting to return to England. He only writes, "I cannot withstand their demands. I cannot lead them unwillingly to danger, and I must return" (1030). The unanswered question is why he consented to return. In his journal he said he would rather die than return. His crew did not mutiny; no one forced him to return against his will.

Later when Walton is talking to Frankenstein's creation ("The Creation") he provides a clue as to why he consents to return. He says to The Creation "your repentance... is now superfluous. If you had listened to the voice of your conscience" (1031). Walton abandons his quest because he listens to his conscience. He still possesses a conscience, despite Frankenstein urging him and his crew to "be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your purposes and as firm as rock... Do not return to your families with the stigma of disgrace marked on your brows" (1029). Walton is able to ignore this advice because of the journal he keeps for his sister. By remembering his sister, a sister that had regarded his quest with evil forebodings, Walton avoids the mistake that Frankenstein made in his life. He avoids allowing an obsession to isolate

sp

5

For some reason, I think of the King Henry's famous St. Crispin's Day speech in Henry V. I suspect that Mary Shelley had it in mind, too.

Doesn't this answer the question? To continue would be against their will, mutiny or no mutiny.

Why not just "creature"?

I think that the causal connection is overdone -

again, you haven't really demonstrated that his sense of justice is based on or caused by his relation to his sister.

7

him from his family. Through this minimal contact with his sister, Walton, a man on a mission for knowledge beyond the reach of mankind, remembers the concept of justice, a man made concept that values and balances competing interest. As a result, he decides the lives of his crew outweigh his own ambition. He chooses not to be more than man, as Frankenstein urged.

sp

well said

Frankenstein would not have made the same decision. When Walton tells him that they are returning to England, Frankenstein, despite his failing health springs from bed saying, "I will not. You may give up your purpose; but mine is assigned to me by heaven" (1030). Frankenstein thinks of himself outside the realm of man. He does not think of justice; he thinks only of his purpose. His behavior is ironic given the advice he previously provided Walton. He fails to apply the lesson of his past mistake to this new situation. He forgets that he decided to tell Walton his story, so that "the strange incidents connected with it will afford a view of nature, which may enlarge [Walton's] faculties and understanding" (920). Previously, he also told Walton, "Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow" (932). The moral lesson which he had hoped to teach Walton, Frankenstein summed up as follows:

A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections, and to destroy your taste for those simple

actually, it is more complex. Victor sees himself as pursuing justice as an instrument of wise retribution. His selected sense of justice could be contrasted to Walton's more effective, rational, and humanistic sense.

This, incidentally, is strange out of mention. Classical Stoics.

cf. Percy Shelley's
Introduction to
the 1818 version

pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind. If this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with tranquility of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved; Caesar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed. (934)

Frankenstein repeatedly cautioned Walton against the danger of going too far in pursuit of knowledge and glory, yet when the lives of the entire crew are at stake Frankenstein urges Walton and the crew to continue and not return to their families. Just before he dies, however, Frankenstein does finally learn his lesson. He says, "Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility, avoid ambition, even if it be only he apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries" (1030-31).

But you leave out the following two sentences. Has V. "learned his lesson"?

When Walton consents to return, he acts with compassion for others, instead of obsessing about his quest. This compassion he exhibits always existed within him as evidenced in his letters and journal to his sister. His thinking about his sister shows he is not solipsistic. Other people matter to him. This compassion that he has kept alive in himself through his journal writing allows him to treat The Creation compassionately. When he sees The Creation fleeing, Walton calls for him to stay. The Creation begins to weep. Walton in his journal records how he felt at that moment. He writes "my first impulses, which suggested to me the duty of obeying the dying request of my friend, in destroying his enemy, were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion. I approached this tremendous being...I attempted to speak, but the words died away on my

Yes - but before you suggested that it was caused by his relation to his sister.

lips" (1031). Walton, overwhelmed with emotion, is unable to speak. He feels sympathy for The Creations. By making him feel sympathy for The Creation and acting to save his crew, Shelly makes Walton the hero of her story.

again, thing may be more complex. Walton is so astounded by the sight of the creature, that he has to close his eyes before he can speak.

Don't use "you" in d. & discourse

To understand how Walton becomes a hero, and Frankenstein falls from grace, you ^{one must} have to compare Frankenstein's and Walton's characters and their approach to their individual quests. Walton and Frankenstein share some important qualities. They both desire glory. Like Walton, Frankenstein's desire for greatness started early in life. He tells Walton, "When younger, I felt as if I were destined for some great enterprise. My feelings are profound; but I possessed a coolness of judgment that fitted me for illustrious achievements" (1026). They also share the qualities of patience, endurance, stoicism, self-discipline and intelligence. These similar characters, however, grew up differently.

Walton educated himself while day dreaming in his Uncle Thomas's library. He was an orphan with only one sister. [Whereas, Frankenstein lived with his cousin Elizabeth, his

SF

younger brothers and two very devoted parents, including a father who gave up public office to educate his children.] Frankenstein also grew up with his friend, Henry Clerval, who Frankenstein says, was "constantly with us and we were never completely happy when Clerval was absent" (924). Johanna M. Smith, in her essay, "Cooped Up":

Feminine Domesticity in Frankenstein," neatly describes Frankenstein's upbringing. She writes:

The Frankenstein home seems a model of ideologically correct relationships. Not only are Alphonse and Caroline happily married, as parents they are "possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence."

Together, we are told they guide Victor with a "silken cord. (275)

quote marks

?

Not only is Frankenstein blessed with ideal parents, he also benefits from, as Smith writes, "the harmony produced among the household's children by their opposite yet complimentary traits" (275). Frankenstein had an ideal childhood. Smith goes on to argue that Frankenstein felt "'cooped up' by domesticity and its protections" (278). She argues that Frankenstein, although grateful for his family at the same time felt resentful of the constraints the family placed upon him.

Walton by contrast does not have family constraints. Earlier in life, Walton was constrained. He writes about how disappointed he was to learn "that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a sea-faring life" (913). Presumably his uncle and his uncle's family are now all dead because Walton has inherited the fortune of [his] cousin" (913). Walton feels no obligation to respect his father's wishes and embarks on preparing himself for ocean voyaging. The only family Walton has is his sister, and although she may not like him voyaging to the Arctic, she does not constrain him.

Frankenstein and Walton treat their families differently while pursuing their quests because they view their families differently. Frankenstein's family loves him, but constrains him; Walton's family only loves him. Walton can, therefore, maintain a relationship with his sister because he does not feel she will hold him back from his purpose. Frankenstein, however, must break off relations with his family while pursuing his quest.

Examining Frankenstein's actions as he studies at Ingolstadt shows how completely he breaks relations with his family. His obsession begins when he attends a lecture given by M. Waldman, where Waldman states, "The labours of men of genius,

The transition here -- is abrupt. incl the paragraphs on this uses focus. The theme of family is-a-wis Victor and Walton needs to be organized a little more coherently. The whole question of constraints, needs elaboration and definition.

and quotes?

Short pt: Needs development. In some ways, this seems to contradict your earlier argument about how Walton breaks his family and Victor does not.

however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind" (930). Inspired, Frankenstein makes the study of science his sole occupation. He remembers, "The stars often disappeared in the light of morning whilst I was yet engaged in my laboratory" (930). "Two years passed in this manner, during which [he] paid no visit to Geneva" (931), where his family resided. When he completes his studies at Ingolstadt he only has a "thought" of returning to his friends but he decides, instead, to begin a new course of study. He becomes obsessed with creating a human being. "Then a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, urged [him] forward; [he] seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for one pursuit" (933). In this state, Frankenstein fails to notice the changing seasons. "And the same feelings which made [him] neglect the scenes around [him] caused [him] also to forget those friends who were so many miles absent, and whom [he] had not seen for so long a time" (933). During this time his father sent him many letters; to which he did not reply. Frankenstein explains, "I wished, as it were, to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed" (934). Frankenstein purposely isolated himself from his family even though his circumstances would have allowed him to interact with his family. He could have sent a response to the letters he received. He could have arranged a visit with his family, but he chose, instead, to "procrastinate" his feelings of affection.

Anne K. Mellor in her essay, "Possessing Nature: The Female in Frankenstein" argues that Frankenstein's downfall results from a separation of masculine work from domestic affection. She writes:

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Because Frankenstein cannot work and love at the same time, he fails to feel empathy for the creature he is constructing and callously makes him eight feet tall simply because “the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed.” He then fails to love or feel any parental responsibility for the freak he has created. And he remains so fixated on himself that he cannot imagine his monster might threaten someone else when he swears to be with Victor “on his wedding -night.” (275)

Mellor correctly identifies the fault of Frankenstein’s obsessive and solipsistic behavior, but she argues ^{that} it results from his separation from the feminine or domestic realm. I argue that Frankenstein would have avoided his tragic mistakes had he maintained a relationship with any of his friends, within the masculine or feminine realm. [I, undoubtedly agree,] that with Elizabeth’s counsel Frankenstein would have avoided his downfall, but I also contend ^{that} if Frankenstein had discussed his work with his father, his friend, Henry Clerval, or even his professor, M. Waldman, he would have avoided his two mistakes: making and abandoning The Creation.

I do not agree with Mellor’s contention that Shelly created a world where intellectual activity is separated from emotional activity. On this point, ~~Johanna M. Smith~~ in her essay, “‘Cooped Up’ Feminine Domesticity in Frankenstein,” more accurately states that “throughout the novel, gender opposites are represented as compliment...what might seem an opposition between separate spheres is rewritten as complimentary difference” (276). Smith states, “In Henry, moreover, Victor has a paradigm for the successful complementarity of masculine and feminine traits within himself” (276). Following Smith’s logic I argue that if Frankenstein had remained in

you have already introduced this title

contact with his life-long friend, Henry, he may have learned, by Henry's example, to both work and love at the same time. Shelley demonstrates through Walton's character that one can passionately pursue a quest while maintaining a domestic relationship.

Mary Poovey in her essay, "My Hideous Progeny": The Lady and the Monster," explores the notion that contact with friends can help individuals regulate their passions for gaining knowledge. She argues that Shelley shows, through Victor Frankenstein, what can happen to an individual's imagination once it is aroused. The results are not always positive. Smith writes, "[Shelley] sees imagination as an appetite that can and must be regulated—specifically, by the give-and-take of the domestic relationship. If it is aroused but not controlled by human society, it will project itself into the natural world, becoming voracious in its search for objects to conquer and consume" (253). Poovey goes on to argue, regarding Shelley's depiction of the imaginative or Promethean quest, that "Mary Shelley is actually more concerned with this anti-social dimension than with its metaphysical implication" (254). I agree with Poovey. Shelley depicts three levels of anti-social behavior through the three narrators. The Creation is the most anti-social (not by his own choice, but as a result of the way people treat him). He has nobody to regulate his behavior and becomes a murderer of innocent people. Frankenstein chooses to "procrastinate his affections" and creates a disaster which gets worse as he continues to keep his mistake a secret. Finally, there is Walton, who does not develop close relationships with the men on his ship and chooses to sail where he cannot continue his close relationship with his sister. However, as I have explained above, Walton, through his journal writing, is able to combine his work and love. Ultimately, this love gives him the compassion to abandon his quest and feel sympathy for The Creation.

Ok - but one needs to think about the nature of that "relationship ship." It is a pretty tenacious one, you have to admit.

?

mfocused and overlapped #

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is an intriguing work of art that explores the issues surrounding creation and the pursuit of knowledge and beauty. She accepts the constraints domestic relations place on creativity because as her story makes clear, the desire for knowledge, unregulated, can develop into a destructive force. Mankind's desire for knowledge cannot be unleashed^d from the human community, for there is no power in nature to curb an over-active imagination except the power of human love. As Walton has shown us, the love we feel towards are friends and family can save us from making dreadful mistakes in our quest for knowledge and beauty.

The first -
 Generation
 Romantics
 had a greater
 faith in REASON
 and will as
 agents of control
 over the imagin-
 ation

An interesting paper that makes a good case for the centrality of Walton's role in the novel, although that role at times needs clearer exposition. The secondary criticism could be much better integrated into your overall argument. It seems to get sort of tossed in at the end, and the last 3-4 pages need some revision. (Some of the critical material should be moved to the beginning.)

B/B+

The writing is generally fluid, but see me (or a grammar book) about commas. And there is, of course, the unforgivable ~~misspelling~~ misspelling of "Shelley."

You wind up dealing with a central problem in Romantic theory and literature: how to control or contain the Promethean imagination. It would make an excellent MA thesis topic, if you are ever so inclined. I think you have a lot of potential for literary study. Keep in touch.

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- Smith, Johanna M. "'Cooped Up' Feminine Domesticity in Frankenstein." Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism. Ed. Johanna M. Smith. Boston: St. Martin's, 1992. 270-284.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Examinee's Name: [REDACTED] Candidate ID Number: 04784708
 Social Security Number: [REDACTED] Sex: M Date of Birth: 04/11/1964

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

College Where Relevant Training Was Received: RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE
 Undergraduate Major: (I)
 Graduate Major: (I)
 Educational Level: EARNED DOCTORAL DEGREE
 GPA: 3.0 - 3.49

SCORE RECIPIENT(S) REQUESTED

Code #	Recipient Name	Code #	Recipient Name
R8077(A)	RHODE ISLAND STATE DEPT EDUC		

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Test Code	Test Name				R8077				
0042	ENG LANG LIT COMP ESSAYS	165	100-200	150-165	N				

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Test Date	Test Code	Test Name			R8077				
04/24/2010	0041	ENG LANG LIT COMP CONTENT KNOWLEDGE	189	100-200	N				
04/24/2010	0042	ENG LANG LIT COMP ESSAYS	165	100-200	N				
04/25/2009	0524	PRINCIPLES LEARNING & TEACHING 7-12	181	100-200	Y				

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RHODE ISLAND STATE DEPT EDUC			8077	Your Highest Score	Required Minimum Score	Minimum Score Met/ Not Met	Required Passing Score	Passed/ Not Passed Status
Test Date	Test Code	Test Name						
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND COMPOSITION: ESSAYS I. INTERPRETING LITERATURE: POETRY II. INTERPRETING LITERATURE: PROSE III. ISSUES IN ENGLISH: UNDERSTANDING LITERARY ISSUES IV. ISSUES IN ENGLISH: LITERARY ISSUES AND LITERARY TEXTS	4 3 6 4	6 6 6 6	N/C N/C N/C N/C

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