

Principles of Literary Study

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general paper comments

- ▶ “the poem is the poem, not its paraphrase”—Stevens
- ▶ doing more with evidence: look for what doesn't fit
 - ▶ ambiguity, tension, complexity
- ▶ sharpening arguments: make the terms precise
- ▶ mechanics: block quote poetry like you see in *Frankenstein*

review: embedded narratives

- ▶ CN1 [Walton] CN2 [Frankenstein] ...
 - ▶ comparison (how does Walton show us what matters?)
 - ▶ anticipation of themes (human ties; pursuit of glory)
- ▶ invites reflection on CN2 as character in N1
- ▶ reliability
 - ▶ *fabula* events are not in doubt here
 - ▶ Frankenstein's perspective (*sjuzet*) is: motivations, judgments

one more Walton theme

I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. (7)

“The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted, and that the elixir of life is a chimera. But these philosophers...penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe.”
(29)

this book is weird

I slept indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (37)

more frame effects

The tortures of the accused [Justine] did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom, and would not forego their hold. (59)

character

“God knows,” she said, “how entirely I am innocent. But I do not pretend that my protestations should acquit me: I rest my innocence on a plain and simple explanation of the facts which have been adduced against me; and I hope the character I have always borne will incline my judges to a favourable interpretation.” (57)

A character is the effect that occurs when a figure is presented with distinctive, mostly human characteristics.

Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 104.

“I now hasten to the more moving part of the my story.” (83)

Mont Blanc: nice views



Nicolas Sanchez, "Le mont Blanc vu de l'aiguille du midi, plate-forme Rébuffat," digital photograph, 2007, [Wikimedia Commons](#).

Mont Blanc: more views

It is a scene terrifically desolate. In a thousand spots the traces of the winter avalanche may be perceived, where trees lie broken and strewed on the ground. (68)

Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shattered stand (“Mont Blanc,” 107–11)

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And what were thou [Mont Blanc], and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy? (142–44)

embedding challenge!

- ▶ What is the embedding formula for the story of Safie and Felix?
(88ff.)

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CN1 [Walton] CN2 [Frankenstein] CN3 [Creature] EN4 [Creature]

Discussion

- ▶ What is this embedded tale doing here?

good textbooks are valuable

“The book from which Felix instructed Safie was Volney’s *Ruins of Empires*...I heard of the slothful Asiatics; of the stupendous genius and mental activity of the Grecians; of the wars and wonderful virtue of the early Romans—of their subsequent degeneration—of the decline of that mighty empire; of chivalry, christianity, and kings. I heard of the discovery of the American hemisphere, and wept with Safie over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants.” (86)

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- ▶ What does the Creature’s education imply about the things he learns about?

intertextuality

- ▶ How does the Creature learn from his reading (93–95)?

intertextuality

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“I often referred the several situations [in *Paradise Lost*], as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence.... Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition.” (94)

next

- ▶ finish the novel
- ▶ embedding exercise will be due Friday, March 31