

Department of British and American Studies
Dissecting Birth: Pregnancy, Midwifery and
the Woman Questioning the 18th Century
Social and Literary Imagination
Dr. Sarah Schäfer-Althaus

The Birth Without a Woman

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in Context of 18th Century Ideas
on Birth, Motherhood and Midwifery

Name:

Address

Paderborn, 10. 03. 2016

Student ID:

MA English and American Studies

Term:

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1. Introduction

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* was published in 1818 and is considered to be a landmark work in terms of its influence on literature and popular culture. It presents the Story of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist who – in his attempt to create a human being on an artificial level – ends up in 'giving birth' to a monster. Critics as Brian Aldiss are convinced that "[N]o single book offers more meaningful and complex interconnections between literature and medicine than Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; (or, The Modern Prometheus)*" (qtd. in Franklin 71). These interconnections are often perceived as foreshadowing medical methods of modern times, like for example genetic engineering, organ transplants and in vitro fertilization. This critical research paper by contrast focuses on the influences 18th century ideas concerning birth, motherhood and midwifery exerted on the novel's design, since - being published at the beginning of the nineteenth century - it can still be considered to be affected by the morals and principles of the eighteenth century, in which the field of obstetrics which used to be dominated by women was invaded by male practitioners.

In order to prove the criticism employed in *Frankenstein*, this paper will examine the representation of female characters in the novel, which serves to support the reputations of female versus male midwives by portraying women as damsels in distress. In addition to that, the chapter will investigate the critical engagement with infanticide trials, as they were prominent in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Apart from that the role of nature will be analyzed, since Frankenstein's scientific approach is displayed as one interfering with natural processes. By presenting the outcome of his experiments as negative, this paper asserts that Shelley attacks the notion of interventionist science. In addition to that, the creation of the monster will be set in context of eighteenth century midwifery, since the process of infusing life alludes to different practices relating to obstetrics as led by surgeons. For this purpose Sarah Stone's *A Complete Practice of Midwifery* will be included, since it is one of the most famous publications attacking male midwives. Finally, the belief in the power of 'Maternal Imagination' will be studied in context of the monstrosity as defined by the novel and the question of the actual evil spirit of the story will be raised in order to conclude how eighteenth century ideas on midwifery, motherhood and birth are challenged in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

2. The Representation of female Characters

The story of *Frankenstein* is set in the eighteenth century and concerns itself with the scientific theories of that particular time period. This is due to the ideas Mary Shelley grew up with. With reference to H. Bruce Franklin, “[t]he displacement of midwives by male physicians was deplored by Mary Wollstonecraft in her great 1729 manifesto, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*” (75). Jay Clayton adds to this context, that Shelley shared her mother’s beliefs concerning intellectual progress, the virtue of education, and the rationality of women (102). Thus, the criticism on female exclusion of the birthing chamber pervading the story is related to the male intrusion into midwifery.

Just as all other medical fields, midwifery was intended to become a male monopoly in the eighteenth century. Women were legally barred from surgery, since only male midwives were allowed to use obstetrical instruments (Franklin 75). According to Sheena Sommers, in the beginning these caused the reputation of men-midwives to be tattered, since these instruments were used to pull out lifeless infants in obstructed births (90). But their standing changed with the invention of the forceps: “[O]nce it became known that a male practitioner could deliver a *living* child, the fear associated with the sight of a surgeon during lying-in was replaced with hope in cases of difficult births” (90-91). As a result, the superiority of male midwives in medical knowledge was naturalized, since in cases of emergency female midwives were not able to handle deliveries on their own. With male midwives being connected to successful deliveries, the presence of female midwives in birthing chambers decreased.

In *Frankenstein*, this development becomes apparent with the lack of female agency in the novel. The muting down of female influence in a story dealing with the creation of life can be regarded as a comment on the expulsion female midwives, because “as males came to dominate the medical sphere in the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries, they viewed traditional midwives as threatening to their control of health care” (Franklin 71). Franklin also states in this context, that

[a]lthough written by a woman, *Frankenstein* consists almost entirely of male voices and seems to be all about the lives of male beings. The entire novel is narrated in letters from Robert Walton, the would-be grand global explorer. Inside his narrative is that of Victor Frankenstein. And inside Frankenstein’s narrative is that of his creature. Women are thus presented as the objects of male perception, desires, and fears, and the main female character’s primary role is that of victim (73).

Female agency is consequently limited by the narrative situation which consists entirely of male voices and by the conception of female roles which is reduced to being the damsel in distress whose actions are only evaluated through the eyes of men. Since *Frankenstein* is generally considered to be a 'cautionary tale' which presents its readers with a moral, it can be argued, that the absence of female influence in the birthing chamber is designated as a crucial factor leading to the catastrophe of a monster killing innocent people.

However, the presentation of women as victims serves not exclusively to limit their voice and action, but also entails the idea of mothers as being the ones most threatened by this change in the realm of midwifery. As Peter Brooks pointed out, *Frankenstein* is notable for the absence of living mothers: Safie's, as well as Felix and Agatha's mother is dead; Frankenstein's mother also dies after contracting scarlet fever from her adopted daughter, Elizabeth – Frankenstein's intended bride – and the monster of course has no mother, only a father (90). In addition to that, with the deaths of Elizabeth and Justine potential mothers also get killed, so that the image of the dead mother pervades the story:" With reference to Elizabeth Bronfen, it can be claimed that the monster, as a conglomeration of different corpse parts and forbidden to reproduce himself, produces instead a series of feminine corpses (137). As a result, it seems as if, by creating a birth which abandons all female influence, Victor Frankenstein induces the deaths of potential mothers. Hence, the elimination of the maternal alludes to the idea of the death bringing male midwife, as it is proclaimed by Sarah Stone, who was a famous midwife in the 18th century:

Tho' I have made it my Observation within these few years, That more Women and Children have died by the hands of Such Professors, than by the greatest imbecillity and ignorance of Some Women-Midwives, who never went thro', or so much as heard of, a Course of Anatomy (xii).

In order to exemplify the interconnection between male midwifery and maternal death, Victor's success in creating life is followed by a dream foreshadowing Elizabeth's death:

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 (Shelley 53).

In Victor's dream infusing life into an inanimate body is equated with drawing life from the animate body of his bride (Bronfen 134). Since the dead Elizabeth favors the

corpse of Victor's mother, the nightmare underlines her potential maternity, which is endangered by the creation Victor has produced. Thus, the success of the birth without a woman is presented as fatal for mothers and mothers to be.

Moreover, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* criticizes the injustice women faced in the 18th century. This is made explicit in the trial and the conviction of Justine, who has been adopted into the Frankenstein family. Because of the murders the monster commits, Justine is accused of having murdered William, Victor's younger brother and while the wider narrative proclaims Justine's innocence, the story the court is presented with inscribes her death sentence (Botting, *Making Monstrous* 109). The case of Justine reminds of the infanticide trials, which started with the infanticide law of 1624, 'An Acte to Prevent the Destroying and Murthering of Bastard Children' (Staub 53). Until this law has been passed, infanticide had been a private matter, but it was redefined as a crime in the 17th century since the need for female corpses grew among the anatomists, so that fatal laws were imposed to ensure that the source of female bodies will not run dry (54). These trials were notorious, since they reversed the normal rules of evidence: "the statute presumed the mother's guilt in the death of an infant unless she could prove otherwise" (54). In *Frankenstein*, Justine also has to prove her innocence to the court, but although her family member speaks up in favor of her, she is condemned in the end, since the crime she is accused of is perceived as too horrible to be absolved of without convincing evidence: "all judges had rather that ten innocent should suffer than that one guilty should escape" (Shelley 81). As a consequence, the readers who know the real culprit are made to see the impossibility of proving one's innocence in such a difficult situation, so that they feel the injustice many women were confronted with at that time.

Also, the women presented in the novel are epitomizations of the angelic housewife and mother, which contrast the connection drawn between women healers and witchcraft. According to Fred Botting, the woman is idealized in the family while egoistical impulses are attacked for being destructive (*Making Monstrous* 100). Since Frankenstein succeeds in creating a supernatural being by animating inanimate corpse parts he is depicted as the one practicing black magic normally connected to female figures such as witches. The image of his witchcraft is also supported by the descriptions of his early interests:

The raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfillment of which I most eagerly sought; and if my incantations were always unsuccessful,

I attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience and mistake, than to a want of skill or fidelity in my instructors (Shelley 34).

Frankenstein's childhood is coined by books offering ideas on life, death, the supernatural and the undead. As a consequence, in the novel women are freed from their standing as witches, since as the angelic housewives they represent contrasting values to the devilish actions committed by Frankenstein. Thereby, the justification of female expulsion from the realm of medicine is deconstructed.

Furthermore, by ascribing motherly attributes exclusively to women, Shelley refers to the notion of female midwives as being more compassionate than male practitioners. Elizabeth for example is constructed as the complete contrast to Frankenstein: "She was docile and good tempered, yet gay and playful as a summer insect. Although she was lively and animated, her feelings were strong and deep, and her disposition uncommonly affectionate" (Shelley 29-30). With reference to Sommers' *Transcending the Sexed Body*, sympathy and compassion were believed to stem from shared experience and intuitive understanding in the eighteenth century (92). Thus, they were regarded as female attributes. The image connected with male midwives by contrast, corresponds to the character of Frankenstein, who concentrates on his task alone and ignores the worries of his family:

I knew well therefore what would be my father's feelings; but I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination. 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 (Shelley 50).

According to Stuart Sim, "Frankenstein's vision is restricted to the demands of the project and he never looks beyond those" (151). Consequently, it can be claimed that in Frankenstein's lack of emotionality the idea of distanced and unsympathetic deliveries as favored by male practitioners is condemned: "Frankenstein stands as a warning, therefore, about the dangers of scientific enquiry conducted for its own sake without regard to social consequences or moral codes" (157).

Finally, since the main addressee of the letters containing the story of Victor Frankenstein is Walton's sister, Margaret Saville, the implied listener to the male voices presenting a story that deconstructs male superiority in the medical field is female (Franklin 73). Therefore, Mary Shelley addresses a female consciousness with her cautionary tale and as such potential mothers in order to criticize the increasing interest in male midwifery. Furthermore, according to Franklin, the novel was at first

published anonymously which could also be understood as an attempt to challenge the idea of this opinion being gender specific. Since the storytellers are exclusively male, it seems hence as if the superiority of females in the realm of births is a general fact also supported by masculine voices.

3. The Role of Nature

Another important feature of *Frankenstein* is the role of nature, which seems to construct science and artificial creations as binary oppositions. This is explicit especially in the process of creating the monster, in which Victor numbs himself to nature:

The summer months passed while I was thus engaged, heart and soul, in one pursuit. It was a most beautiful season; never did the fields bestow a more plentiful harvest, or the vines yield a more luxuriant vintage: but my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature (Shelley 50).

Since Victor acts preposterously to reason by snatching body parts from graveyards and dissecting rooms while turning away from nature, nature becomes symbol of rational behavior. Anne K. Mellor furthermore argues that Shelley designed nature as feminine and motherly; hence alluding to the idea of ‘Mother Nature’: “A reader of Wordsworth, Mary Shelley understood nature in his terms, as a sacred all-creating mother, a living organism or ecological community with which human beings interact in mutual dependence” (*A Feminist Critique of Science* 130).

This is also illustrated by the subject Victor Frankenstein chooses to specialize in at the University of Ingolstadt, since he decides to apply himself to natural philosophy that is related to physiology (Shelley 46). Mellor states in this context, that the source of the lecture Victor attends for his studies is Humphrey Davy’s *A Discourse, Introductory to a Course of Lectures on Chemistry*, which was published in 1802 (“Frankenstein Is a Mad Scientist Who Attempts to Revise Nature” 80). In his pamphlet, Davy defines nature as female and points out two scientific ways of dealing with her: “One could practice what we might call ‘descriptive’ science, an effort to understand the workings of Mother Nature. Or one could practice an ‘interventionist’ science, an effort to change the ways of nature” (80) Since Frankenstein tries to “penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew [sic] how she works in her hiding places” (Shelley 42), another mother is endangered by his work. Like anatomists in the dissecting rooms, he wants to reveal the secrets of the female body. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, medical professors started to reveal the uteruses of actual

women publicly in 'anatomy theatres', in order to demystify it (Haslem 39). Up to this period, the uterus was perceived as monstrous because of the inexplicability of the processes involved in it. Like these scientists, Frankenstein practices 'interventionist' science, which according to Mellor is nothing less than an attempt to, to penetrate her womb and to appropriate it, to steal female biological reproduction (Mellor, "Frankenstein Is a Mad Scientist Who Attempts to Revise Nature 83). By designing the outcome of his science as harmful, Mary Shelley attacks the interventionist approach.

Apart from that, in the novel's title Shelley even accuses Frankenstein of having disrupted the natural cycle of life just as Prometheus did. By stealing the fire from the gods to give it to mankind, Prometheus overthrew the established order of earth and heaven (Mellor, *A Feminist Critique of Science* 121). Frankenstein is called the modern Prometheus as he tried to overthrow the natural system of female reproduction because he wanted to bring enlighten the field of reproduction:" Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me" (Shelley 49). But just like Prometheus in the myth, Frankenstein is punished for his pride and excessive self-confidence in the end.

4. The Creation of the 'Monster' in Context of 18th Century Midwifery

In the process of the monster's creation, many aspects that have been widely criticized about the emergence of men-midwives in the 17th and 18th century are visible, so that it can be argued that Shelley attacks the male intrusion into the birthing chambers by likening it to the production of a monster.

Firstly, Victor withdraws from society while creating life on an artificial level. He works in a solitary chamber and avoids any contact with his fiancée Elizabeth, which alludes to the expulsion of female midwives from the realm of birth. His attempts to create a new being to banish disease from humanity by eliminating women from the procreative process is another example of medicine, driven by male hubris, which is doomed to failure (Franklin 71). Just like male midwives, Frankenstein attempts to save lives with his work. However, by trying to eliminate disease from the human existence, he ends up in creating a murdering monster: "The monster, initially benevolent, turns his physical strength to violent retribution for the injustice he has

suffered: once a saver of lives, he becomes a merciless destroyer” (Botting, *Making Monstrous* 47). This can be interpreted as an attack on the exclusion of female midwives from birthing procedures. Moreover, when Frankenstein refers to the prospect of the union with Elizabeth, he makes clear, that although he loves her, he is terrified by the idea of marrying her: “To me the idea of an immediate union with my cousin was one of horror and dismay” (Shelley 149). With this statement Frankenstein rejects the belief in natural reproduction and thus wants to exclude women from the reproduction process.

Furthermore, the creation conforms to the image of male midwives turning away from nature by favoring the use of instruments to deliver babies: “With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet” (Shelley 52). The ‘instruments of life’ are symbol of the obstetrical instruments surgeons made use of in birth processes; consequently, Shelley designs the outcome of their artificial practice as negative by comparing the creation of a monster to birth processes supervised by men-midwives. This complies with the attitude presented in *A Complete Practice of Midwifery*, in which Sarah Stone criticizes the male attempt of taking over the business of childbirth from female midwives. By stating that the work done by female midwives, which is not influenced by anatomy classes, causes lesser deaths during deliveries, she clarifies that traditional methods are superior to the excessive use of obstetrical instruments: “Infants have been born alive, with their Brains working out of their Heads: occasion’d by the too common use of Instruments: which I never found but very little use to be made of, in all my practice” (Stone xiii). Shelley refers to this assumption in that she depicts Frankenstein as having given birth to the living dead, since the monster consists of different corpse parts (Shelley 53).

Also, although Frankenstein intended his monster to be good-looking by selecting beautiful features, he ends up in creating a monster with watery eyes and yellow skin scarcely covering the muscles and arteries beneath (Shelley 52). Since he gathered his material from churchyards, dissecting rooms and slaughter houses, the practice of body snatching is attacked in the novel. According to Ruth Richardson’s article on ‘Frankenstein: graveyards, scientific experiments and bodysnatchers’, Mary Shelley grew up during the era of the body snatchers. By the beginning of the 18th century the demand for anatomical subjects grew proportionately, since dissections had become a traditional practice in the anatomical schools. The result was an

increasing demand for anatomical material for which the supply of convicted murderers was insufficient. According to English law, the theft of corpses was not considered to be a crime, because people did not own their dead bodies. As a consequence, grave-robbing became a common medical practice which was paid by anatomists (Frank 400).

The outcome of Frankenstein's body snatching is a death-producing creature, so that Shelley employed criticism on grave-robbery in her novel: "As Victor works among the 'unhallowed damp of the grave', finds his materials for the perfect other in the vaults, charnel houses, dissecting-rooms and slaughter houses, he experiences a preview of his own deanimation as it will be fulfilled in his arctic death" (Bronfen 132). But also dissections, which were only performed by male surgeons and man-midwives in training, are attacked in her novel, since according to Monette Vacquin, Shelley condemned the idea of viewing human beings as mere objects that have to reveal truths in cold laboratories (145). Therefore, it can be concluded that she wanted to express the "need to preserve the difference between living and dead, to draw a non-transgressible boundary between the animate and the inanimate" (Bronfen 138). The tragedy of Frankenstein and his monster implies that dissecting dead objects does not make one an expert with regard to the treatment of living human beings, although that was one of the main assumptions of most male midwives. This attitude is likewise presented by Sarah Stone, who made clear that

[...] dissecting the Dead, and being just and tender to the Living, are vastly different; for it must be supposed that there is a tender regard one Woman bears to another, and a natural Sympathy in those that have gone thro' the Pangs of Child-bearing; which, doubtless, occasion a compassion for those that labour under those circumstances, which no man can be a judge of (12 - 13).

Thus, she argues that dissecting the dead does not equip male practitioners with the character traits necessary to take care of processes as important as births. They do not possess the sympathy women show to other women, especially when in labor, since the natural sympathy arises from shared experience. With this statement, Stone refers to the different reputations of male and female midwives. Whereas women, who gained their medical knowledge from experience, were criticized for the lack of professional learning, men were told to have shortcomings in terms of compassion and sympathy (Sommers 92). However, interest in obstetrics grew, so that the male practitioners leveraged the criticism they faced. They started to assert that the distance from the suffering of childbirth was the decisive factor that allowed them the

objectivity needed to arrive at reproductive truths and that women by contrast were excessively susceptible to the impressions of the senses, which resulted in errors of judgement (Sommers 4; 7). Shelley disagrees with these arguments by showing that his theories do not match the outcome of his science. Moreover, she illustrates that emotional distance is the main reason causing Frankenstein's creature to become a monster. After Victor has given birth to his creature, he abandons all responsibility; hence, he lacks human conscience: "his desire to simply have the problem disappear, as if he had never been involved in it, does not speak well of his character or sense of social responsibility" (Sim 152). According to Shelley's novel, the fact that Frankenstein mimics reproduction with instruments does not relieve him from his moral duty:

Most of the novel, roughly two of its three volumes, can be said to deal with the retribution visited upon monster and creator for deficient infant care. Frankenstein seems to be distinctly a woman's mythmaking on the subject of birth precisely because its emphasis is not upon what precedes birth, not upon birth itself, but upon what follows birth: the trauma of the afterbirth (Borgmeier 54).

Consequently, with *Frankenstein* Shelley argues in favor of female intuition and compassion.

5. 'Maternal Imagination' and Monstrosity

Another value attacked in *Frankenstein* is the belief in the ability of women to influence the appearance of their babies, especially if they happen to be misshapen:

Enlightenment commentators had inherited a centuries-old explanation for why monsters were born: it had been long and widely maintained that 'maternal imagination' could alter the plastic form of a child *in utero* when a mother's desires or fears overwhelmed her and her foetus (Cody 120).

Shelley attacks this notion, since the monster created in the novel was not born by a mother. Also she points out that the only influence exerted on a baby is of a deliberate nature. Victor Frankenstein decides on the outward appearance of his creature, since he is too blinded by his idea of creating life to realize the misshapen physique of it: "[A] resistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit" (Shelley 49-50). Therefore - in being the product of a well-educated scientist - the monster deconstructs the belief in male superiority concerning rationality and the susceptibility to the impression of the senses. In the novel, it is a male protagonist who is dominated by his feelings and is therefore not able to make rational decisions. Monette Vacquin furthermore claims that the monster's ugliness characterizes the overconfidence it emerged from (146). Thus,

Shelley turns the tables and designs maternal knowledge and female experience as preferable to the hubris of male midwives. The lack of motherly bonding turns into the catalyst for the monster to live up to his outward appearance and to bring death to the living; as a result, Frankenstein's behavior causes the misshapeness of his offspring.

With her depiction of a misshapen creation, Shelley also refers to Erasmus Darwin, whose theories have significant bearing on *Frankenstein*, according to Mellor (*A Feminist Critique of Science* 114). While at first, he too claimed that deformities result from either excessive or insufficient nourishment in the egg or uterus and therefore blamed the woman for the fetus' appearance, he changed his mind in 1801: "Interestingly, while Darwin no longer attributed monstrous births to uterine deficiencies or excesses, he continued to hold the *male imagination* at the moment of conception responsible for determining both the sex of the child and its outstanding traits" (117). Shelley also ascribes a huge potential of exerting influence on the child to the male part of reproduction by placing the responsibility for the monster on Frankenstein alone. He however does not pay attention to the outcome of his experiments, but only focuses on the task and his thirst for fame, so that although he saw himself as the benefactor of the world by creating a new and happy species and by restoring the dead to life, he had created a monstrosity and brought death to the living (Nitchie 33).

Still, Shelley illustrates that the tragedy of the story could have been prevented, since the monster "suggests the capacity to develop the finer feelings of humanity, but is given no opportunity to do so" (Sim 155). In contrast to its creator, the monster yearns for companionship and a family life:

you had endowed me with perceptions and passions, and then cast me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind. But on you only had I any claim for pity and redress, and from you I determined to seek that justice which I vainly attempted to gain from any other being that wore the human form (Shelley 136).

Whereas Victor turns away from his family in order to become the greatest scientist in the world, all his creation strives for is to be accepted and loved by the human race. Moreover, the latter is presented as a humane and kindhearted character, whose vengeful spirit emerged from the rejection he experienced: "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous" (95). Victor's creation even offers a solution to his misery and shows harmless tendencies, but it is Frankenstein himself who gives away the chance of helping his own son by destroying the female creation he promised to bring to life. Therefore, sine he is

depicted as “a character of monstrous intentions and practices” (Bishop 63), Frankenstein is often considered to be the real monster of the story. According to Botting, monsters as figures of vice serve their stories as examples of what not to do and as lessons in the danger of vicious behavior and ideas; they reinforce the necessity and naturalness of the terms and values against which they are opposed, so that, if monsters are visible, so too are virtues. (*Frankenstein* 6). If Victor Frankenstein represents the actual monster in the novel, he illustrates that creating life artificially by excluding women from the realm of birth is wrong. In addition to that, his distanced attitude towards his creation is attacked, so that the compassionate and sympathetic behavior connected with female midwives is presented as favorable to the aloofness of male surgeons. As a consequence, the superiority of female of male midwives is emphasized by turning Frankenstein into the truly evil force of the story.

6. Conclusion

All in all, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is not only a narrative foreshadowing future phenomena in science, but also a story about “the monstrous and fatal consequences of masculine creation” (Bronfen 130) and hence, a criticism of male intrusion into the female realm of birth processes. While in the 18th century men tried to exclude women from the medical field, Shelley implies that this attempt puts human survival significantly at risk, since in her novel *Frankenstein* does not succeed in creating life that can survive without women. Frankenstein is designed as a protagonist who lacks conscience and therefore causes his creature to become the monster he is perceived as. The creature even turns into a death-bringing living corpse, so that the idea of male hubris is displayed. Female characters by contrast are epitomizations of the angelic housewives, whose sole purpose is to care for their families. By emphasizing the motherly attributes of women and by setting them in contrast to Frankenstein’s egocentric pursuit of fame, Shelley strengthens the reputations connected with male and female midwives as proclaimed by Sarah Stone. Thus, Victor Frankenstein’s lack of motherly emotions and sympathy as well as his haughtiness serve to deglamorize male midwifery.

Also, in being the product of a well-educated scientist Shelley’s monster deconstructs the notion of male superiority in medical knowledge and blames Frankenstein and his abandoning of responsibility for being the main reason for his creation’s monstrosity, so that he becomes the truly evil spirit of the story. His

interventionist scientific methods furthermore serve to attack medical approaches by anatomists as grave-robbery, the public exposure of female uteruses as well as dissections as insufficient to assist the birth of new life, since they do not provide their practitioners with the compassion and sympathy necessary for this task. The lack of motherly bonding turns into the catalyst for the monster to live up to his outward appearance and to bring death to the living, so that this becomes the main argument Shelley tries to bring across to the female conscience addressed in her novel. Potential women are warned by this cautionary tale not to exclude females from the birthing chamber, like Frankenstein did, since the main victims are children like Victor's younger brother and potential mothers.

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8. Plagiarism Statement

Ich, _____ mit der Matrikel Nummer _____
versichere, dass ich die Hausarbeit mit dem Thema:

selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Die Stellen der Arbeit, die ich anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen habe, wurden in jedem Fall unter Angabe der Quellen der Entlehnung kenntlich gemacht. Das Gleiche gilt auch für Tabellen, Skizzen, Zeichnungen, bildliche Darstellungen usw. Die Arbeit habe ich nicht, auch nicht auszugsweise, für eine andere abgeschlossene Prüfung angefertigt. Auf § 63 Abs. 5 HG wird hingewiesen.

Paderborn, den XX.XX.XXXX

UNTERSCHRIFT