



# **Feminist Aspects in Frankenstein: Anne K. Mellor's and Other Feminist Approaches to Mary Shelley's Gothic Novel**

*Jana Brueske*

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Seminar paper from the year 2009 in the subject English - Literature, Works, grade: 1,3, RWTH Aachen University, language: English, abstract: The Gothic Novel Frankenstein by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) is the most famous of her literary works for it has been reissued, redefined and criticised regularly since its first publication in 1818.

Johanna Smith mirrors with her statement what many critics say about Frankenstein: They define Frankenstein not only as a Gothic Novel, but as a Feminist Novel as well. Some of the feminist literary critics say that “feminist interest in Frankenstein would throw light on the novel’s darkest passages” (Fischer et al 1993, 3), others claim it is an invocation on women’s rights in general. However, all of them agree on the fact that the novel underlines the repression of women in private and public and that it criticizes the patriarchal role and dominating position of men.

In this term paper I am aiming at pointing out the arguments of feminist literary critics that define Frankenstein as a feminist novel. In order to support the thesis of Frankenstein being a feminist novel, I first want to give a definition of Feminist Literary Criticism and its branches.

After having defined Mary Shelley as a feminist (or not) and having summarized what the movement was about, I want to go into detail analyzing Shelley’s Frankenstein in feminist terms.

In my analysis I will firstly put emphasis on Anne K. Mellor’s approach to Frankenstein. She not only gave with “Mary Shelley; Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters (1988), the only full-length critical treatment of Shelley’s works in the 1980s” (Fisch et al 1993,8), but she also summarizes a lot of the arguments many feminist critics have mentioned in terms of interpreting Frankenstein. Mellor therefore provides a good basis for further examination.

Finally, in order to support and enlarge Mellor’s theory I want to introduce approaches by other critics treating the issue of feminism in Shelley’s work. These critics not only detail, object, and analyze Mellor’s statements, but they also add their own ideas. Thereby, it shall become clear if we can really label Frankenstein a Feminist Gothic Novel.

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