

**“I Bid My Hideous Progeny Go Forth and Prosper”:
Frankenstein’s Homosocial Doubles and Twentieth Century American Literature**

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for a doctoral degree in English Literature

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the reoccurrence of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* within twentieth-century American novels. While the inaccurate 1931 film version by James Whale remains the best known adaptation of *Frankenstein*, I argue that Willa Cather, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, and Chuck Palahniuk return to Shelley's 1818 novel to critique racist and misogynistic responses to anxieties about gender and racial power in the age of industrial consumer culture. In doing so, I extend existing scholarship on the American Gothic to demonstrate that *The Professor's House*, *Invisible Man*, *Beloved*, and *Fight Club* represent a specifically Shelleyan Gothic tradition in twentieth-century American literature.

My project draws upon influential feminist and postcolonial readings of *Frankenstein* and on the theoretical work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and later critics who have developed her theory to show how the twentieth-century novels echo themes and motifs from Shelley's novel to critique the destructive effects of male homosociality. Each novel contains a protagonist that resembles Victor Frankenstein and responds to historically specific anxieties about gender, race, and industrial technoscience by creating a doppelgänger who enables participation in a homosocial bond that is initially empowering but proves destructive to women, racial minorities, and eventually the creature and creator figures themselves. My reading reveals unexpected similarities between Cather's *The Professor's House* and Palahniuk's *Fight Club*. Cather's novel appears to glorify Tom Outland as the ideal masculine hero but ultimately reveals him to be a monstrous doppelgänger who acts out the Professor's oppressive impulses; similarly, *Fight Club* seems to romanticize the male violence instigated by the doppelgänger figure Tyler Durden but actually echoes Shelley's critique of male homosociality as monstrous. My reading also reveals

previously overlooked similarities between *Invisible Man* and *Beloved*, both of which feature a black protagonist who surprisingly resembles Victor Frankenstein by creating a doppelgänger to challenge his or her disempowerment by the structures of white male homosociality but end up emulating the destructive homosocial structures they critique. My dissertation shows how all of these writers share Shelley's critique yet move beyond it by offering alternatives to the destructive cycle of violence, embodied in each case by a female figure who resists or reclaims the position of the abject other in the homosocial triangle.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank those who have shown guidance, encouragement, and understanding over the past few years as I toiled away at my own Frankenstein monster.

I appreciate the assistance and kindness of all faculty, support staff, and graduate students that I have had the pleasure of working with during my time in the English Department at the University of Ottawa. I am most grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Anne Raine, whose mentorship, editorial advice, and warm support made this project possible. Your honesty, patience, and faith in my work have transformed my abilities as a reader and writer.

I am forever indebted to the family and friends who always expressed unwavering confidence in my abilities: my supportive parents, Ann and Chris, and my loving sisters Maggie and Caelie, for your constant encouragement and assurance; my greatest fans, Amanda Berloni and Julie Rome, for your laughter and fellowship; and “my best thing,” Jason Turnbull, for your love. You have all provided so much solace and support, whether during discouraging or joyful times, and have always celebrated my achievements no matter how big or small. I thank you.

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“[The] beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart”:

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and the American Gothic Novel

And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper.
(Mary Shelley, 1831 Introduction to *Frankenstein*)

What, then, does it mean, exactly, that the (partial) object itself starts to speak?
(Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies* 174)

Confirming Walter Benjamin’s assertion that “[storytelling] is always the art of repeating stories,” Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* has inspired numerous adaptations in many genres since its 1818 publication (91).¹ In 1831, Shelley “bid [her] hideous progeny go forth and prosper,” and Shelley’s tale of a rebellious science gone awry has taken on mythic proportions on account of its extensive adaptation and imitation by others.² Certainly, the exceptional circumstances surrounding the life of its author and the creation of the novel have captivated and inspired others. The product of a ghost-story competition, *Frankenstein* and its origins are often romanticized. Shelley conceived of the novel’s premise while staying at Villa Diodati in Switzerland in the summer of 1816 — a hotbed of creativity where she was surrounded by writers Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and John Polidori. Increasing *Frankenstein*’s fascination, Mary Shelley admits in the Introduction to the 1831 edition of the novel that it was inspired by a dream. Here, Shelley establishes *Frankenstein* as her own repressed monster, evoking a sense of horror even before the novel begins by connecting her own creative process to the experience of her characters, who are forced to face their own subconscious desires and emotions. Equally important to the appeal of *Frankenstein*’s context is Mary Shelley herself. Born of two brilliant writers, Shelley was the daughter of political philosopher William Godwin

and early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft. Although her mother did not survive the birth, Shelley was influenced by her as she read Wollstonecraft's work and went on to pen *Frankenstein* in all its complexity at the tender age of nineteen. In addition to her highly literary origins, Mary Shelley was also the mistress, and later wife, of the great Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. However, the continued interest in *Frankenstein* by writers, filmmakers, playwrights, and cartoonists for almost the last two hundred years is mainly owing to the accessibility of the story to modern audiences, who can relate to its exploration of fears and anxieties about science and technology, the dangerous ambition of the overreaching male figure, and the rebellion of the oppressed. Presented as a series of letters written by Robert Walton to his sister, *Frankenstein* is the story of renegade scientist Victor Frankenstein, whose use of technology to single-handedly create another being from lifeless matter yields a monstrous doppelgänger who taunts his creator and executes the vengeful destruction of his entire family. More than just a warning against the dangers of hubristic scientific experimentation, *Frankenstein* also offers an important critique of misogynistic and racist reactions to the changing notions of gender and racial identity in the context of industrialization and imperial expansion. Whether because of its historical context or because of the continuing relevance of the novel's themes and images, *Frankenstein* has fascinated and intrigued creative minds well into the twenty-first century.

Critics have examined *Frankenstein's* influence on nineteenth-century fiction and drama and have also explored how the Frankenstein story appears in American film, comic books and television. To some, *Frankenstein's* influence is quite substantial: for George Levine in *The Realistic Imagination* (1981), Shelley's novel provides a useful metaphor for the nineteenth century British realist tradition. As I will show, however, *Frankenstein* also offers a useful

framework for reading twentieth-century American Gothic fiction.³ In this thesis, I argue that the story of Victor Frankenstein's creation of a living human being in order to challenge conventional science and to respond to anxieties about gender and racial identity reappears in various altered forms in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996). While *Invisible Man*, *Beloved*, and *Fight Club* have been connected to *Frankenstein* by critics, *The Professor's House* has not. By reading these four novels together, I show how Frankensteinian motifs recur throughout otherwise dissimilar novels and identify a Shelleyan Gothic tradition in twentieth-century American literature.⁴

In my interpretation of these four American novels, the protagonist in each strongly resembles Victor Frankenstein in that he or she responds to anxieties about gender, race, and science by creating another living being, which then comes to function as a doppelgänger with whom he or she establishes homosocial relations. While these creations at first promise freedom, agency and in some cases, power, they are always revealed as monstrous and destructive. As I will show, *The Professor's House* and *Fight Club* most closely resemble Shelley's *Frankenstein* in that Cather and Palahniuk's version of this Frankensteinian plot serves to criticize a white male protagonist's racist and misogynistic responses to anxieties about gender and racial identity in a materialistic culture of mass production and commodification. In the novels by Ellison and Morrison, however, the introduction of a black — and, in *Beloved*, female — Victor figure complicates the Frankenstein story and demonstrates that the black protagonist's attempt to gain agency and autonomy is unsuccessful because it relies on the same strategies used by white men to bolster their own power at the expense of others. Whether the protagonist comes from a

position of empowerment or disempowerment, each of these novels echoes Shelley in suggesting that creating another being and engaging in homosocial relations that rely on the marginalization and exclusion of others will result in harm to others and eventually the ruin of the creator him- or herself. This project builds upon existing critical accounts of the American Gothic as an unraveling of the nightmarish underside of the American dream — the contradiction Leslie Fiedler introduced in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960) when he wrote, “How can one tell where the American dream ended and the Faustian nightmare began?” (143).⁵ Fiedler and others have shown how American Gothic novels reveal what Fiedler calls “a dream of innocence” and Teresa Goddu refers to as the “dream world of national myth” to be more like a terrifying nightmare (10). This contradiction is embedded in America’s national history: many Europeans came to America with a dream of a nation where freedom, moral purity and prosperity for all would replace what they saw as the social restraint of Europe’s oppressive caste system, the moral depravity of the church and state, and the poverty afflicting the greater portion of the population. For these settlers, America represented a blank slate — a new nation and beginning for those who travelled across the ocean to what appeared to be wide, empty, uninhabited landscapes. Instead, the European settlers brought Europe’s social evils with them to the New World, and the dream became a nightmare as the colonization of America involved the dispossession, slaughter, and enslavement of millions of Aboriginal and African people by whites — horrors described by both Goddu and Louis S. Gross as “the nightmare[s] of history” (10, 89). As Morrison puts it in her discussion of the metaphor of the American Dream and nightmare in *Playing in the Dark*, “The body of literature produced by the young nation is one way it inscribed its transactions with these fears, forces, and hopes” (35), and like Morrison, most

critics discuss how eighteen and nineteen-century American writings explore these historical dreams and nightmares through Gothic images, such as the “aboriginal shadow” in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly* (1799; Fiedler 60), the contradictory image of commerce as “progress and decay” in Brown’s *Arthur Mervyn* (1799; Goddu 32), or the “Dark Woman” in Edgar Allan Poe’s “Ligeia” (1838; Gross 42). According to Eric Savoy, in Gothic fiction this metaphor of dream and nightmare is more than a simple contradiction because the two figures are “not in mere opposition; they actually interfuse and interact with each other” (“Rise” 167). Gothic texts return to the darkness, violence and anxiety “to complicate rather than clarify” the American dream of opportunity and freedom (169).

Identifying the twentieth-century novels in this project as Gothic texts is not unprecedented. For some time, critics have acknowledged all four novels in this study as part of the American Gothic tradition and have analyzed the various ways in which the Gothic conventions used by Cather, Ellison, Morrison, and Palahniuk compare with those of specific nineteenth-century Gothic writers. Morrison’s engagement with the Gothic tradition is the most often analyzed. In particular, Morrison is recognized as part of an African-American Gothic tradition. Critics such as Angela R. Mullis, Liane Weissberg and Linda J. Holland-Toll have viewed *Beloved*’s Gothicism as a counter-narrative to older Gothic texts, such as those by Poe, which use blackness to reference Gothic horrors. Claude Cohen-Safir has also placed Morrison in another sub-genre of the Gothic tradition: the female Gothic. Several other critics have also read *Fight Club* as a Gothic novel. For example, Cynthia Kuhn identifies several Gothic conventions used in *Fight Club* and argues that the importance of Marla’s character is particularly emphasized when read through a Gothic lens (36). At least one critic has also argued

that *The Professor's House* is a Gothic novel. For example, Susan Rosowski argues that Cather not only experimented with Gothic elements in her earlier writing but incorporated them more fully into her later writing (213). A few have also examined *Invisible Man* in relation to the Gothic tradition, such as Mary F. Sisney who argues that Ellison's novel recalls Poe's Gothic tales. To date, a great deal of critical attention has been dedicated to examining the relationship between these novels and the nineteenth-century Gothic tradition.

My project contributes to this critical work on the American Gothic by demonstrating that the novels in this study represent a Shelleyan Gothic tradition that explores the major themes associated with the American Gothic, such as the return of the repressed violence and oppression that is the underside of the American Dream, but does so in ways that echo specific motifs and strategies from Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The significance of Shelley's *Frankenstein* to the American Gothic tradition has already received critical attention. Some critics acknowledge Shelley's influence in general on American literature by naming *Frankenstein* as the text source for the archetype of the mad scientist or the theme of the monstrous, or by using the image of the Creature as a metaphor for the American Gothic — a representation of the horrific return of the repressed.⁶ Other critics acknowledge Shelley's influence on nineteenth and twentieth century American Gothic novels more specifically. For example, Anna Sonser aligns Victor Frankenstein and Sethe by emphasizing *Frankenstein* and *Beloved*'s common themes of the maternal body and exploitation of the colonial or post-colonial subject. Also, Ellen Pifer argues that *Lolita* honors *Frankenstein* and aligns Nabokov with Shelley, Humbert with Victor, and the nymphet with the Creature.⁷ Contributing to this field, I consider in greater detail how the Frankenstein motifs and thematic concerns of Shelley's novel are also found in the novels of twentieth-century American

Gothic writers. When critics discuss the metaphor of the American Dream and nightmare, they focus on earlier Gothic texts in which the dream is the vision of freedom held by the European settlers arriving to the Americas and the nightmare is the slaughter and persecution of Native Americans and African-American slaves throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the twentieth-century novels examined here, the authors address the American Dream as a desire for economic growth and technoscientific progress through the production and consumption of commodities and understand the nightmare as the continued legacy of persecution of Native Americans and African-Americans remodelled as the twentieth century's commodification of human bodies, excessive materialism and consumerism, and racial and cultural appropriation.

My reading of the Shelleyan Gothic is framed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of male homosocial bonding as outlined in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*.⁸ According to Sedgwick, homosociality refers to a continuum of male-to-male bonding which may include male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, or rivalry. The term "homosocial" is meant to suggest homosexuality and at the same time distances itself from it since homosociality is characterized by homophobia. These male relations structure Western notions of gender and sexual politics since they occur within a triangulation of desire where two males are rivals for a female. These homosocial bonds promote male interests and result in the inseparability of patriarchal structures with heterosexuality and homophobia (1, 3, 21). While the homosocial bonding is premised on the schema of the triangle containing two men and a woman, "the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced,

are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent” (21). The bond between the men within the triangle is then as significant as the female presence.

Sedgwick briefly mentions Shelley’s novel in *Between Men* but does not offer a detailed analysis of how her account of homosocial bonding applies to it. While discussing nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, Sedgwick groups *Frankenstein* with early “classic” examples of the genre where “each is about one or more males who not only is persecuted by, but considers himself transparent to and often under the compulsion of, another male” (91). Building on this suggestion, we can see how, as I discuss below, Victor’s relationship to his doppelgänger involves a homosocial bond which reaffirms his white male power through rivalry, male exclusivity, and homoeroticism that requires the abjection of women and racial minorities.

Regardless of whether these American authors intended to adapt or respond to Shelley, *The Professor’s House*, *Invisible Man*, *Beloved*, and *Fight Club* share undeniable resemblances to *Frankenstein*. Each of these very dissimilar novels uses the Frankensteinian motif of creating an unnatural progeny who becomes an uncanny double to his or her creator and enables a homosocial relationship which proves destructive to others and to themselves. Like Shelley, the American novelists use these motifs to critique misogynistic and racist forms of bonding between white men that are best understood through Sedgwick’s account of homosocial relations. Although Morrison engages with nineteenth-century slavery while Cather, Ellison, and Palahniuk focus on twentieth-century consumer culture, all four authors echo Shelley by recognizing that questions of science and technology, gender, and race are intertwined. These Gothic American novels incorporate the traditionally understood metaphor of the dream and nightmare with a creator figure who attempts to realize his or her version of the American dream

of freedom through his or her monstrous creation. This dream of freedom only proves to rely on the nightmarish marginalization and oppression of women and racial minorities.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

My analysis of the four American novels in this project builds upon existing readings of *Frankenstein* which show how Shelley's novel is centrally concerned with the cultural anxieties instigated by the technological advancements during the Industrial Revolution and their effects on gender and race relations. While Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, the Industrial Revolution's technological innovations in the textile industry and the steam-powered factories revolutionized the way people worked, which in effect altered gender roles and their significance, and as a result made gender identities volatile and unstable. Generally, the introduction of factory technology during the Industrial Revolution created a gendered division of labor between men and women with the emergence of grave differences in wages and occupations (Burnette 72; Volti, 26).⁹ For the women who entered into factory work outside the home, a contribution which Duncan Bythell argues has been grossly underestimated, the dynamics of gender relations and identities were transformed drastically by the industrialized workforce. Later in the century, John Ruskin would emphasize the detrimental effects that labour in the factories of the Industrial Revolution had on masculinity specifically. He argues in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) that factory labor "either make[s] a tool of the creature, or a man of him" and that more often the mindless labor makes the workers "less than men" (161-163).¹⁰ More important for Shelley, however, new industrial and labor technology forced men from the home into the factory, which transformed the domestic realm into a female space. As argued by Alice Clark and Elisabeth Prügl, the Industrial Revolution diminished prior equality and reinforcement of the family unit by creating

a rift between male and female labor relations and their respective spaces. As Kate Ellis and Johanna Smith have argued, Shelley's novel records this separation of spheres and feminization of domestic space. As Anne K. Mellor has shown, Shelley's ideals of domestic life where men and women were equally instrumental to the family's welfare were influenced by her mother's lower-class upbringing surrounded by a culture based on cottage industry rather than factory labour — a life equally idealized by the Creature while living among the De Lacey's (*Mary Shelley* 214). In *Frankenstein*, Shelley registers these changes and the resulting anxieties about gender identity in Victor's anxious response to his own relationship to the domestic realm and to the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution — anxieties that motivate him to use a rebellious form of science to create the Creature which reaffirms his masculine power.¹¹

In addition to gender identity, another contemporary issue central to the novel is the dominant white male cultural anxiety about race in the context of the historical connection between industrialization and technology and the enslavement of non-white people. The technologies of the Industrial Revolution transformed England's imperial and colonial conquests that had momentous implications for racial identity and power. According to Marxist historian E.J. Hobsbawm, the Industrial Revolution made colonial trading and manufacturing possible; he famously declared, "Whoever says the Industrial Revolution says cotton" (34). The fusion of the spinner with steam power generated a level of production necessary for the emergence of the factory system (37). The Lancashire textile factories mainly processed cotton which "was almost entirely colonial" (35). Textiles made in England were distributed all over Europe, Asia, and Africa within the underdeveloped markets where the British Empire and Navy held a monopoly (36). As part of England's system of cultural and economic colonialism, the raw material used in

these textile factories was supplied by the slave plantations of the West Indies in the eighteenth century and by those of the American South in the nineteenth century (35). This industrial process, which depended on human slavery and economic colonialism, “preserved and extended the most primitive form of exploitation” — all achieved with the technology of steam power and innovations in textile machinery (36). The technologies and innovations introduced during the Industrial Revolution also increased the power of England’s colonial and imperial conquests. As economic historian Paul Bairoch argues, “The technological innovations resulting from the Industrial Revolution gave Europeans the military capability to conquer and control large and remote territories through not only better armaments but also faster and larger ships and improved communications,” enabling England to establish greater control over colonies in Asia, Australia, South Africa and India (86). Technology introduced during the Industrial Revolution aided and maintained England’s economic and cultural power by exploiting people of color in colonized nations.

While writing *Frankenstein*, Shelley was well aware of these cultural and social issues. The Shelleys, along with most Romantic writers, reacted against the dehumanizing effects of industrialized developments affecting labour and the scientific rationalization of nature and favored creative imagination over instrumental reason. More specifically, Mary Shelley, along with her husband, disapproved of industrial capitalists’ treatment of the working class in England as well as the exploitation of African slaves in the British colonies. Discrediting those who have branded Shelley as conservative by considering only her middle-aged views in the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Paul O’Flinn argues that she demonstrated sympathy for working-class radicals while writing the novel in 1818. O’Flinn argues in his Marxist reading of the novel that “[h]er

letters around the time of *Frankenstein* reveal a woman who shared the radicalism of Byron and Shelley. The result was a politics shaped by a passion for reform, a powerful hatred of Tory despotism with its ‘grinding and pounding & hanging and taxing’ and a nervousness about the chance of the revolutionary violence such despotism might provoke” (197). During the time Shelley conceived and wrote *Frankenstein* at the Villa Diodati, two great Romantic writers influenced her and responded strongly to the Luddite Crisis and the Peterloo massacre, as indicated by Byron’s speech to the House of Lords in 1812 and Percy Shelley’s comments to a bookseller (O’Flinn 196).¹² Percy Shelley wrote the poem “The Mask of Anarchy” in 1819 as a response to the Peterloo Massacre which describes the injustices to which the working class was subjected (Montag 304). In an explanatory note written by Mary Shelley, she explains that Percy “looked on all human beings as inheriting an equal right to possess the dearest privileges of our nature” (*Notes*). Further, Shelley was writing during a highly publicized West Indies’ anti-slavery debate; John Clement Ball observes that *Frankenstein* was written between the Slave Trade Act of 1807 and the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833 (33). On a more personal level, her greatest influences, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Percy Shelley, expressed opposition to systems of slavery.¹³ H.L. Malchow also reveals that Shelley’s journals list readings which suggest an interest in the slaves of Africa and the West Indies (99).¹⁴ Although a white privileged bourgeois writer of famous parentage, Mary Shelley was concerned about how the Industrial Revolution was contributing to economic and social injustices and responded critically to these developments in *Frankenstein*.

Consequently, there are already many critics who argue that Shelley responds to these fears and concerns surrounding the Industrial Revolution in *Frankenstein*. Most address class

struggle and understand the Creature as a metaphor for the proletariat. For critics like Franco Moretti, Warren Montag, Elsie Michie, Chris Baldick and Martin Tropp, the Creature represents the alienated and disenfranchised working class — a rebellious monster created by capitalism. More important for my argument, these critics view Victor Frankenstein's science not just as a challenge to the traditional religious ideas about the limits of human power but also as specifically related to the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution. Moretti argues that Victor's "modern science [is a] metaphor for the 'dark satanic mills'" (85). Mellor also aligns Victor's scientific experiments with the oppressive factories of the Industrial Revolution:

Collecting bones and flesh from charnel-houses, dissecting rooms, and slaughter-houses, [Victor] Frankenstein sees these human and animal organs as nothing more than the tools of his trade, no different from his other scientific instruments. In this sense he is identical with the factory owner who gathers men, his disembodied 'hands' as Dickens' Bunderby would say, to manipulate machines. (*Mary Shelley* 112)

Other critics have focused on how *Frankenstein* responds to the issue of colonial imperialism which is closely connected to the practice of racialized slavery. As Mellor argues, Shelley "identifies [Victor] Frankenstein's capitalist project with the project of colonial imperialism" (*Mary Shelley* 113). That project is represented in the novel by Robert Walton, a British sea captain charged with exploring new territories and making scientific discoveries. Linked to the expansion of British imperial power through the conquest of non-white people, this project is one in which Victor desires to participate with the creation of the Creature as the first in a new race of beings subordinate to their white creator. Gayatri Spivak and others have read the Creature as a

racialized colonial subject and further suggest that race is an important issue in the novel even if it is not as obvious as gender. In this project, I build upon these existing readings of *Frankenstein* to show how Shelley's novel inaugurates a critique of industrial science's effect on the social relations of gender and race that would later be continued by the twentieth-century American novelists.

Shelley begins her novel by establishing that Victor's creation of his monster is motivated by a desire to maintain his masculine power and racial privilege — an impulse that, as discussed above, is rooted in anxieties about race and gender surrounding the Industrial Revolution. First, Victor indicates in his account of his early life that one source of anxiety is his association with the domestic realm which as a result of the Industrial Revolution was being redefined as a feminine space. Victor begins telling his story to Walton by describing his domestic circle. He is feminized in his duty as caretaker, teacher, and nurse to his siblings — responsibilities usually performed by the women of a late eighteenth-century household (Hill 127). He describes his responsibilities and domestic attachments:

[Ernest] had been afflicted with ill health from his infancy, through which Elizabeth and I had been his constant nurses: his disposition was gentle, but he was incapable of any severe application. William, the youngest of our family, was yet an infant, and the most beautiful little fellow in the world: his lively blue eyes, dimpled cheeks, and endearing manners, inspired the tenderest affection. (71)

From an early age, Victor was destined to live out his life in Geneva within the feminizing domestic realm. He notes that he had “a desire to bind as closely as possible the ties of domestic love” and he was secured to marry Elizabeth at a young age by his mother and to stay at the

family home in Geneva (65). Victor's feminization is symbolized in his disposition. He is feminized as a result of his passivity and his constant fainting and falling asleep during times of crisis.¹⁵ Shelley makes clear that Victor's domestic life leaves him feminized and instigates a desire to bolster his masculinity.

Shelley also makes clear that Victor's desire to reaffirm his masculinity is connected to the Industrial Revolution through her representation of the scientific practices he uses to create the monster.¹⁶ The study of science moves Victor away from the feminine domestic realm and into the all-male University which is a kind of brotherhood headed by Professor Waldman and Krempe. Victor describes the clash between his scientific endeavors and his domestic life: "I disclosed my discoveries to Elizabeth, therefore, under a promise of strict secrecy; but she did not interest herself in the subject, and I was left to pursue my studies alone" (68). Also, Victor's creation of his monster is a masculinizing and anti-domestic venture since the Creature cannot integrate himself into the domestic sphere, as seen when the De Lacey children reject him and Victor refuses to make a female partner for him. In addition to separating him from the domestic sphere, Victor's science also separates him from the emasculating and dehumanizing realm of industrial labor. Victor's bourgeois status already separates him from the poor working class who were forced into factory labour. However, his use of science to create the Creature further reinforces his class privilege and masculine authority. As Moretti notes, his activities in the "workshop of filthy creation" put Victor in the position of the factory owner. In contrast to the factory worker who becomes just another cog in the wheel within a standardized industrialized system, Victor controls the means of production and uses his own technoscience to fabricate a singular and original design.

Victor's science also reaffirms his masculinity by enabling him to assert control over the feminine as symbolized by nature.¹⁷ The scientific effort to "penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places...bec[omes] nearly [Victor's] sole occupation" (76). In keeping with this effort to assert masculine control, Victor's science creates a hyper-masculine creature. The Creature is aware of his purpose when he reminds Victor: "Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine; my joints more supple" (85, 126). In addition, the creation of the Creature reaffirms Victor's masculinity since it is accomplished through an act of parthenogenesis — a controlled reproduction without the participation of a female partner. As Mellor notes, "To usurp power over reproduction is to usurp power over production," and this figurative male self-birthing removes the female body from the act of procreation and reclaims the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution in a way that reaffirms rather than threatens masculine power.¹⁸ Also, Victor's unnatural control over reproduction is an act of racial purification and allows him to have full creative control over his offspring which equally reaffirms his racial power. Intending to manufacture the Creature as he sees fit, Victor boasts that he is creating a new race of men (82).

Victor's masculine power is reinforced not only by his practice of science but also by the fact that the Creature he produces comes to function as a doppelgänger with whom he can enter into a homosocial relationship. In portraying the Creature as a doppelgänger, Shelley draws on a literary motif that first appeared as early as 1796 in German Romantic writing and eventually extended into nineteenth-century British and American Gothic fiction.¹⁹ The doppelgänger is typically an exclusively male image within literature and is characterized as a psychological double or a physical replica of another character.²⁰ Whether an alter-ego formed within the

subject or a separate physical manifestation outside the body, the doppelgänger may copy or transform the identity of the subject (Webber 3).²¹ While most doppelgänger images are similar, some emphasize different characteristics more strongly than others. For example, where Dostoevsky's *The Double* emphasizes the visual compulsion and horror in watching one's self as another, Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* focuses on the performance of identity and the inner struggles of good and evil. Shelley was certainly familiar with the motif since Percy Shelley used it himself in "Alastor" and "Epipsychidion." The use of the doppelgänger motif in *Frankenstein* is widely accepted by critics and ironically reaffirmed in the frequent misnomer of the Creature as Frankenstein.

Shelley emphasizes the Creature's function as Victor's doppelgänger in their interchangeability. Apart from the Creature's hideous physical appearance, creator and creation are in many instances similar. At the beginning of Victor's tale, he admits that he sought to create another living being just like himself. He confesses to Walton:

I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself or one of simpler organization; but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man. The materials at present within my command hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an undertaking; but I doubted not that I should ultimately succeed. (81)

Confident in his ability to create a being like himself, Victor's final result is monstrous, and the Creature is rejected by Victor. Yet, the two still bear a strong resemblance. For instance, they often mimic one another in speech: they both quote the same lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry.²² Similarly, as D.L. MacDonald and Kathleen Scherf point

out, the Creature and Victor are influenced by the same works of literature which “help[s] to make [the Creature] into the counterpart of his creator” (24). The books discovered in the abandoned satchel become the Creature’s source of education, and these texts by Goethe, Plutarch and Milton have also influenced Victor. For both Victor and the Creature, Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) guides their understanding of sadness, Plutarch is a source of appeasement, and *Paradise Lost* becomes an analogy for their own story. Further, Victor and his Creature are interchangeable since the lines where their individual identities begin and end are often blurred. Notably, Victor accuses himself of the murders carried out by the Creature and absorbs a sense of guilt for his monster’s actions. Throughout the novel, Victor admits to being “the true murderer,” and claims: “I murdered her,” and “I am the assassin” (115, 208, 209).

Victor also doubles the Creature’s murderous persona when he destroys the unfinished mate for the Creature. Although the mate is incomplete and not brought to life, Victor says, “I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being” (194). Even more, Victor is mistaken for his Creature the night of Clerval’s death. Even though Victor does not share the murderer’s enormous stature, witnesses identify him as the man in a boat by the shore just before Clerval’s body was found, when it was in fact the Creature (199). Equally important, the Creature and his creator exchange positions of power as the novel progresses which further highlights their interchangeability. While at first the Creature chases Victor through Europe to seek his revenge, Victor later perishes in the Arctic hunting the Creature to obtain his own retribution for his murdered family. As result, Victor’s statement that “revenge kept [him] alive” resonates with the feelings of the vindictive Creature (223, 116). The interchangeability between Victor and his Creature emphasizes the doppelgänger image in *Frankenstein*.

More importantly, Victor and the Creature's doubling relationship exemplifies Sedgwick's account of male homosocial bonding in which two men bond through their rivalry in an attempt to reaffirm their male power which proves to be oppressive others. Although Victor insists that "[t]here can be no community between you and me," his relation with the Creature is not actually a rejection but an instance of male homosocial bonding in which conflict and rivalry play a key role. Victor says to the Creature, "[W]e are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall" (126). Then the Creature assures Victor: "I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you curse the hour of your birth" (169). Afterwards, the Creature becomes elusive and haunts his opponent: he later explains to Victor that "[for] some days I haunted the spot where these scenes had taken place; sometimes wishing to see you" (168). Victor notes that the Creature "had followed [him] in [his] travels; he loitered in forests, hid himself in caves, or taken refuge in wide and desert heaths" (191). Again, while Victor chases his monster through the Arctic, "[sometimes], indeed, he left marks in writing on the barks of the trees, or cut in stone, that guided me, and instigated my fury" (226). This antagonistic haunting intensifies their rivalry which creates a kind of codependence even as they threaten each other with acts of vengeance. Their rivalry serves their masculinizing purposes and, therefore, is encouraged by Victor. He points out the life-giving force their rivalry provides when he states that, "revenge kept me alive; I dare not die, and leave my adversary in being" (223). For this reason, it is never Victor that the Creature kills but instead everyone around him — William, Elizabeth, Clerval — for if he were to eliminate his adversary, he would be ending their rivalry. Similarly, the Creature ensures Victor's survival in the Arctic by leaving obvious clues to his whereabouts to maintain the chase. Victor explains: "sometimes he himself, who feared that if I

lost all trace I should despair and die, often left some mark to guide me” (225) and Victor’s own actions also suggest a kind of subconscious desire to keep the Creature vengeful and their rivalry alive. Even though the Creature promised to venture off to far away lands with his new mate, Victor does not complete her and instead enrages the Creature beyond repair, which ensures the continuation of their homosocial relationship (172, 191). Also, he purposefully leaves Elizabeth alone in their room after the wedding even though the Creature has warned, “I shall be with you on your wedding-night,” suggesting that he subconsciously desires the Creature’s return (193). It is then no surprise that upon seeing Victor’s lifeless body on Walton’s ship, the Creature vows to venture to the most northern point and perish alone as though his own death is inevitable with Victor’s demise (244). Confronted with the death of his supposed enemy, the Creature’s sentiments are much too forgiving: “Oh, Frankenstein! generous and self-devoted being! what does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst. Alas! he is cold; he may not answer me” (240). This codependence is also symbolized in the narrative structure. *Frankenstein* is a series of letters written by Robert Walton to his sister which contains Victor’s tale which includes the Creature’s account of events. A frame narrative written in an epistemological circle, the novel moves inward and then outward and reflects upon itself with the recounting of events by each narrator. The reliance that Victor, the Creature, and Walton have upon one another as storytellers reflects their dependence on the homosocial bond to bolster their social power: every narrator’s tale can only exist coherently with the other narratives — the stories told by Victor and the Creature lose context and meaning without the other since they elaborate on important events and clarify misinformation. This strong interdependence between competing men is distinctly homosocial and shows that the

relationship between Victor and his Creature is part of larger structures of white male homosociality and patriarchal power.

Shelley further anticipates Sedgwick in suggesting that the rivalry between men is prompted by homoerotic desire and attraction along with repulsion and hatred. These homosocial relationships exemplify the simultaneous distance from and association with homosexuality which intensify and preserve the homosocial bonds that reinforce male power at the expense of women.²³ Accordingly, Victor and the Creature's relationship contains homoerotic undertones. In Victor's initial description of his monster, he emphasizes the physical attractiveness of the Creature: "His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! — Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness" (85). Although Victor quickly shuns his Creature in horror and disgust, their relations are still suggestively homoerotic. To illustrate, Alphonse and Elizabeth suspect that Victor's distance is a result of a love affair with another since the Creature consumes all of his time and energy (176, 210, 213). Also, both Victor and the Creature destroy their respective female counterparts, Elizabeth and the unfinished female mate, as if jealous of any female rival for the other's erotic attention. Similarly, like a rejected lover, the Creature insists on being with Victor on his wedding night (193). Further supporting their homoerotic attraction, the exclusivity of Victor and the Creature's relationship intensifies their desire and bond. Victor and his Creature are only ever seen together when they are alone: in the laboratory in Ingolstadt, on the ice fields of Montanvert, in the laboratory in Scotland where Victor ruins the female monster, and in Victor's cabin on Walton's ship. The Creature only ever approaches Victor when he is alone, and they are finally seen together by

Walton only when Victor is dead (125, 240). Also, Victor is the only one who knows that the Creature exists throughout the novel, except of course those who hear his story — the reader, Margaret Walton Saville, and Walton.

As a result of the exclusive and homoerotic rivalry between Victor and his Creature, they demonstrate an intensified masculinity along with their homosocial bond. Victor's masculinization is symbolized in his movement away from the female domestic realm towards the desolate Arctic toured only by men. As his rivalry with the Creature strengthens, the once effeminate Victor becomes a violent and aggressive male and in a fit of passion tears apart the Creature's mate (191). Similarly, the Creature's intensifying physical strength symbolizes his growing bond with Victor and resulting masculinization. Victor describes his first encounter with the Creature on the ice fields of Montanvert: "I suddenly beheld a figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices of ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man" (125). The Creature has evolved from feeling weak, abandoned, and frightened to experiencing hyper-masculine force and confidence. For Victor and the Creature, their homosocial bond reaffirms their male power.

Shelley also shows how Victor's male bonding with the Creature is part of a larger network of homosociality which supports white male dominance. Victor's creation of his doppelgänger not only allows Victor to bond with the Creature but also licenses him to engage in homosocial relations with other men in the novel — in particular Walton, who represents a masculine heroism linked to scientific exploration and colonial power. Like the exclusive bond between Victor and his Creature, Victor and Walton share a privileged solidarity through their

homosociality. Their exclusivity is symbolized by their physical location in the Arctic landscape where Victor “must commence a destructive and almost endless journey across the mountainous ices of the ocean, — amidst cold that few of the inhabitants could long endure” (228). Also, in the same way that Victor and his Creature’s relationship is homoerotic, Victor and Walton exhibit sentiments which exceed friendship. For example, blurring the lines between friendship and romance, Victor is sent to be cared for and tended to in Walton’s cabin (58). Now inhabiting a suggestive chamber, Victor becomes the object of Walton’s admiration, and his “affection for [his] guest increases every day” (60). Walton further describes the weakened scientist as “attractive” while using “love” to describe his feelings towards him (58, 60). Not an explicit homosexual relationship, Victor and Walton’s homosocial bond contains homoeroticism which promotes the interests of men and fortifies their male alliance.

The homosocial bond between Victor and Walton successfully reaffirms their white male power in the same way as Victor’s bond with his Creature does. For example, Victor’s bond with Walton motivates him to incite a surge of virile bravado in his speech to Walton’s ship crew:

What do you mean? What do you demand of your captain? Are you then so easily turned from your design? Did you not call this a glorious expedition? and wherefore was it glorious? Not because the way was smooth and placid as a southern sea, but because it was full of danger and terror; because, at every new incident, your fortitude was to be called forth, and your courage exhibited; because danger and death surrounded, and these dangers you were to brave and overcome. For this was it a glorious, for this was it an honorable undertaking. You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactor of your species; your name adored, as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honor and the

benefit of mankind...Oh! be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your purposes, and firm as a rock. (236)

Echoing a Ulysses festering in Dante's *Inferno*, Victor's call to arms harks back to a lengthy tradition of male heroics which accentuates the male authority he has gained from his struggle with the Creature and his identification with Walton.²⁴ In addition, Victor strengthens his homosocial bond with Walton by establishing an acceptance of male violence. He requests that Walton take over the deed of exacting his revenge on the Creature. First, he asks: "allow me the rest I so much desire; or I must die; and he yet live? If I do, swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape; that you will seek him, and satisfy my vengeance in his death" (230). And then again he states: "I ask you to undertake my unfinished work; and I renew this request now, when I am only induced by reason and virtue" (239).

Victor's homosocial bond with Walton confirms their white racial power in addition to a hyper-masculine identity. As critics like Erin Webster Garrett, John Clement Ball, and Margo V. Perkins have argued, both men glorify Western science and perpetuate racist attitudes. While Victor wishes for "a new species [that] would bless [him] as its creator," Walton reveals an imperialistic motivation to his journey: "I shall satiate my 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" (82, 50). Also, Walton unveils his ethnocentrism and his imperialistic and colonial outlook towards his Arctic exploration when he comes across Victor Frankenstein. He notes that "[Victor] was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European" (57). Here, Walton expresses the racist assumption that all non-Europeans are savages and implies that he thinks Victor, as a civilized European, is more worthy

of respect than the “savage” Creature. Victor echoes this assumption of white European superiority when he explains that one motivation for fashioning his Creature was to create “a new species [that] would bless [him] as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to [him]” (82). This comment indicates that Victor craves to reaffirm his racial power just as he wishes to reaffirm his male authority, and his homosocial bond with Walton enables him to assert both.

Shelley shows that the homosociality in the novel not only excludes women from this male-centered bonding experience but also subordinates, marginalizes, and renders them abject. The narrative structure of *Frankenstein* highlights the displacement or abjection of the feminine. Like the homosocial triangle, the novel is methodically divided into three parts with Victor and Walton narrating the first and last sections and the Creature narrating the segment at the center. The male narrators control the narrative in their retelling of events, and all female characters speak or are spoken of through them. Actually, Walton is in complete control over the truth of all tales and the characters within. He boasts about his authority to his sister: “I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he shewed me, and the apparition of the monster, seen from our ship, brought me to a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asseverations, however earnest and connected” (231). At any rate, the women in the novel are completely unavailable as narrators and are literally found in the margins of the text. Safie is at one extremity of the narrative in her letters read by the Creature and found at the peripheral turning point of the novel which begins to move outward and back to the Creature, Victor, and finally Walton as narrators. Margaret Walton Saville is at the other extremity as Walton’s reader, and she is trapped in the margins of the text. As narrators, Victor and Walton have usurped Margaret’s

voice and identity while she passively reads their stories through her brother's letters. Pushing Margaret to the outside of the text, Victor and Walton's exclusively male bonding experience represses female agency. Shelley thus uses the narrative structure of *Frankenstein* to anticipate Sedgwick's point that the homosocial bond between two men results in "isolation, not to mention the complete subordination, of women" within the erotic triangulation of desire (18).

While Sedgwick focuses on the dynamics of power between the genders and the continuity of male dominance, Shelley shows how homosocial bonding between men not only isolates and subordinates women but leads to violence and abjection. In Shelley's novel, the female figures are all abject corpses by the end of the novel — with the exception of Margaret Walton Saville whose body is completely absent to begin with. The bodies of the women in *Frankenstein* are made abject in death in an even greater means of othering and subordinating them, and the novel suggests that their deaths are motivated both by homosocial rivalry and by the desire to destroy the threat of female power represented by the maternal body.²⁵ First, Justine is a maternal figure murdered as a result of Victor and the Creature's homosocial bonding. Although Justine's body is not directly identified as a symbol of reproduction, she is a maternal figure "act[ing] towards [William] like a most affectionate mother" (111). Framed for the murder of William which was committed by the Creature, Justine is executed and made into an abject corpse due to the homosocial rivalry between him and Victor. Next, the Creature's mate is destroyed because Victor is horrified by her potential reproductive capabilities. He notes, "one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and as a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, [they] might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror" (190). Horrified at this prospect and also

prompted to further his homosocial rivalry with the Creature at the expense of women, Victor tears up the female mate with his bare hands and renders her an abject female corpse. It is a “horrid scene” when “trembling with passion, [Victor] tore to pieces the thing on which [he] was engaged” (193, 191). Finally, Elizabeth, Victor’s romantic interest, is also turned into an abject maternal corpse by the end of the novel. Elizabeth’s death, abjection, and oppression are the result of homosocial rivalry since the Creature sought revenge on Victor for destroying his mate, and Elizabeth is a target for abjection by these men who engage in a homosocial bond since she is a maternal figure. For example, Elizabeth is a symbolic reproductive body and potential mother, and Caroline appeals to her at her death: “Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place to your younger cousins” (72). Elizabeth is also murdered on her wedding bed which is associated with procreation through the consummation of marriage to Victor. She is made abject in death; distorted and lifeless, Elizabeth’s face is covered with a kerchief, which hints at a disruption of order or an in-betweenness of abjection that the corpse of the once healthy, young Elizabeth represents (218). Shelley’s representation of the female corpses highlights how male homosocial bonding results in the violent abjection of women.

To further complicate and deepen Shelley’s critique, the Creature holds a contradictory position in the novel since he both participates in male homosocial bonding with Victor and doubles as a feminized and racialized other and a victim of the bond between his creator and Walton.²⁶ Although highly masculinized in his relations with Victor, the Creature is at the same time ostracized by male culture and excluded from the race of men. For one, he is associated with the abject women in the novel. The Creature and the symbolically reproductive or maternal

female bodies in *Frankenstein* are aligned during Victor's dream immediately after he has brought his Creature to life. Victor describes the abject women in his dream:

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. (85)

Since the animation of the Creature prompts the dream of Elizabeth's metamorphosis into Victor's dead mother, Shelley suggests that he functions not only as a hyper-masculine rival but also as an abject female figure. Similarly, the Creature resembles the abject dead female bodies in the novel since he is an abject corpse made from human and animal cadavers. Victor describes the bodysnatching he uses to make his monster: "I dabble among the unhallowed damp of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate this lifeless clay...I collected bones from charnel houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame" (82). Also, like the women in the novel, the Creature is the victim of a homosocial bond. While Elizabeth and Justine are abject victims to the Creature and Victor's homosocial rivalry, the Creature's abjection is a result of Walton and Victor's bond. It is during Victor's storytelling to Walton that he paints the Creature as a monster and encourages Walton to destroy him as he himself destroyed the Creature's mate. Finally, the Creature is aligned with the marginalized female characters in *Frankenstein* because both his creation and their abjection are a result of Victor's desire to reaffirm his masculine power.²⁷ As noted above, the Creature is a product of technological parthenogenesis which represents Victor's attempt to negate the female role in

reproduction. The Creature's abject body then symbolizes the unnatural circumstances of his creation. The female characters are similarly made abject by Victor's desire to reaffirm his masculine power; their potentially procreative bodies are turned into abject corpses by Victor's homosocial bonding and rivalry with the Creature. By showing that the Creature can at once participate in a male homosocial bond that results in the abjection of others and at the same time be made abject himself by the bond between Victor and Walton, Shelley criticizes the homosocial strategy to confirm white masculine power and reveals that it only results in a vicious cycle of destruction.

In showing how the Creature is himself victimized by Victor's homosocial bond with Walton, Shelley shows that the Creature is associated not only with women but also aligned with racial minorities. Critics have thoroughly examined the Creature as a racialized subject. Mellor notes that the Creature is physically unlike Victor and, therefore, non-Caucasian and othered ("Yellow Peril" 2). For Spivak, Victor Frankenstein suffers from "imperialism understood as social mission," where racism becomes a social and cultural duty which results in the inferiorization of racial others as seen with the Creature and his potential mate (255). Many have interpreted the Creature as a figure for various racialized and subjugated groups.²⁸ Anne K. Mellor and Joseph W. Lew read the Creature as an Oriental other, physically aligned with the Bengalis and Mongolians; H. L. Malchow argues that the Creature resembles the West Indies slave foremost in appearance and physical strength; and Eduardo Cadava aligns the Creature's story with the American slave narrative (Mellor 18; Lew, 19; Malchow 37).²⁹ I follow these critics in arguing that just as homosociality between white men reinforces male power and

subordinates women through abjection, it equally solidifies white racial power and subordinates and abjects the racial other.

As these critics have argued, the Creature is racialized when he is immediately rejected and shunned by Victor which places the Creature in binary opposition to the white male European. Walton also racializes the Creature in his description of the monster out on the ice. Echoing the colonizer's first encounter with a foreign being, Walton notes in his letter to his sister that the Creature was "a strange sight...a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island" (57). Victor specifically identifies the Creature as a racial other when he rips apart the mate he promised to him while xenophobically referring to the Creature's potential offspring as a "race of devils" (190). As Spivak argues when she calls the Creature a figure for the colonial subject, the Creature understands himself as a racially oppressed minority. He agrees to leave Europe and live in the wilderness of the Southern Americas if Victor provides him with a mate, as though he were a member of a foreign race who does not belong on European soil (170, 171). Also, the Creature is aligned with Safie, Felix's foreign lover. Learning language simultaneously, Safie and the Creature are both marginalized figures within a western world.³⁰ Shelley thus shows how the Creature's abjection is twofold in his affiliation with the maternal and the racialized body.

In *Frankenstein*, Shelley describes the destructive effects of homosocial bonding to show that the protagonist's effort to reaffirm his white male power is racist and misogynistic. In practicing masculine science, creating his "monstrous progeny," and engaging in homosocial relations first with the Creature and then with Walton, Victor attempts to reinforce existing power structures which only ends in destruction. Although these strategies are initially empowering,

they result in the exclusion, abjection, and destruction of gendered and racialized others, and any power Victor has acquired is destroyed with his death. This loss of power is evident in the Creature's response to this loss and his change of attitude towards Victor: they are no longer homosocial rivals, and the Creature laments his death (240). Shelley's novel warns against a reaction like Victor's which includes a homosocial strategy in response to a fear of a loss of power: it will only result in the destruction of oneself and others.

Frankenstein's Progeny

Frankenstein — the novel and myth — has permeated America's cultural landscape during the twentieth century. The role of *Frankenstein* in the American collective unconscious is now closely associated with James Whale's 1931 film version of Shelley's novel and then the release of seven sequels by Universal which turned the mad scientist and the Karloff monster into popular American icons.³¹ What is less often noticed, however, is that Shelley's novel, rather than the film adaptations, has also had a pervasive influence on twentieth-century American literature. *Frankenstein* was first printed in the United States in 1869, but it was in wide circulation in England at the time and had been adapted for the British stage within its first years of publication.³² Before 1869, American readers would have had access to British editions, and since 1912 *Frankenstein* has not seen a year without reissue or publication in the United States.³³ At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, "[authors] could make scant references to the Frankenstein story, knowing the full meaning would reverberate in every reader's mind" (Hitchcock 120). Novels by Dickens, Balzac, and Melville and the short stories of Hawthorne and Wells alluded to the characters and dialogue in Shelley's novel (Hitchcock 121). According to Chris Baldick's *In Frankenstein's Shadow* (1990), which traces its transformation

from novel to cultural myth, Shelley's novel established monstrosity as a universal symbol for chaos, an image which was adopted in the later nineteenth-century literature of Hoffman, Hawthorne, Melville, Carlyle, Dickens, Marx, and Conrad. According to Elizabeth Young, numerous American art forms use the figure of the black American Frankenstein monster to criticize racism, undermine white power, and defend black violence (5). In addition, Shelley's *Frankenstein* began to receive serious critical attention and further popularity in the 1970s and 1980s due to feminist scholarship which celebrated the novel as an expression of female anxiety about birth and female authorship.³⁴ Similarly, there was renewed critical interest in the late 1990s and 2000s in examining the science of *Frankenstein* and its relation to recently developing debates surrounding cyborg theory, cloning, and biomedical and genetic engineering.³⁵ Whether as entertainment or the subject of scholarly debate, *Frankenstein* has maintained a strong presence in American culture during the twentieth century.

The impact of *Frankenstein* on twentieth-century American literature is measured in the striking similarities between Shelley's novel and *The Professor's House*, *Invisible Man*, *Beloved*, and *Fight Club*. These novels by Cather, Ellison, Morrison and Palahniuk engage with Frankensteinian themes and motifs in ways that go far beyond the well-known images of Victor Frankenstein and his Creature popularized by the film industry, which often ignore the complexity of Shelley's original.³⁶ I am forced to speculate about Shelley's direct influence on these authors, since there is no conclusive evidence to verify it. But whether or not all four of these authors had read Shelley's *Frankenstein* and were consciously responding to it in their novels, paying attention to the Frankensteinian elements in these very dissimilar novels enables us to recognize important similarities between them and helps to reveal the social and cultural

critiques made by these American authors. By examining the similarities between *Frankenstein* and these twentieth-century American novels, I argue that Cather, Ellison, Morrison and Palahniuk contribute to a Shelleyan Gothic tradition in American fiction that critiques hyper-masculine homosocial relations as a strategy for laying claim to the American Dream of freedom and agency and responding to anxieties about gender and race in an industrialized culture of commodification and mass production.

Each American novel in this study includes a character resembling Victor Frankenstein who responds to historically specific anxieties about gender, race, and technoscience by seeking to reaffirm or achieve power and agency through the creation of an ideal child figure who comes to function as an uncanny doppelgänger, the practice of — and/or resistance to — a particular form of science or technology, and the formation of homosocial bonds which have dire consequences for women, racial minorities, and the protagonist him- or herself. For all of the American writers except Morrison, who focuses on the nineteenth-century system of racialized slavery, Victor's anxieties about gender and race in the context of the Industrial Revolution are replaced by similar anxieties in a twentieth-century American culture of consumerism and mass production of goods — a culture which has its beginnings in Victor's industrial age. In addition, each narrative incorporates a Creature figure who is not always monstrous on the surface, but whose actions are always revealed as monstrous: Tom Outland's racist and misogynistic anthropology, the Invisible Man's senseless violence and derogatory treatment of women, Beloved's attempt to terrorize the lives of Paul D and the women at 124, and Tyler's grotesque manipulation of female bodies and desire to destroy civilization with Project Mayhem. Reading *The Professor's House*, *Invisible Man*, *Beloved*, and *Fight Club* as similar to *Frankenstein* in

motif, structure, and critique reveals a common set of concerns and strategies that would otherwise be overlooked.

Sedgwick's theory of homosociality provides a useful framework for reading *Frankenstein*, *The Professor's House* and *Fight Club*, all of which tell the story of white men engaging in homosocial bonding at the expense of women and racialized others. As noted above, Sedgwick herself mentioned *Frankenstein* as an example of male bonding, and she has also referred to the male relations in *The Professor's House* as "the gorgeous homosocial romance" (*Tendencies* 172). However, I have also drawn from more recent studies of the homosocial to account for the more complex relations and intersections of gender and race in *Invisible Man* and *Beloved*. As Todd Reeser argues, Sedgwick's "model should be constantly placed in dialogue with various other factors so that it does not become a stabilized structure beyond reconsideration that has the effect of normalizing masculinity and gender relations" (66). Critics such as Reeser, Terry Castle, and Winfried Schleiner have noted that a major limitation of Sedgwick's theory is its lack of attention to female-female bonds. According to Sedgwick, male homosocial bonding differs from the continuum of women's relations — which include a much more extensive range of possibilities — since "in a society where men and women differ in their access to power, there will be important gender differences, as well, in the structure and constitution of sexuality" (2). However, others have discredited Sedgwick's dismissal of female-female homosocial bonds and have adapted her geometric model beyond the rigid schema of two male rivals bonding over one woman. For example, Reeser has introduced the variable of race to Sedgwick's narrow critique of bonding between white men. According to Reeser, in an interracial male bond, "the non-white man imitates white masculinity in the framework of desire

and may gain access to white privilege or to whiteness itself” (209). I follow Reeser’s lead in my analysis of *Invisible Man* and argue that the narrator enters into a triangulation of desire with white male characters to achieve a freedom and agency as a black man and to reaffirm his male power. Reeser also argues that a bond between two white men is not unlike a bond between two black men, as seen with the Sweet Home men in *Beloved*. According to Reeser, sameness of gender or race causes anxiety about the possibility of homosexual desire between men. Whether the bond includes two white men or two black men, it still includes a female figure within the triangle as a mediating figure and a heterosexual desire to dispel the homosexual panic (207). In *Beloved*, I use Reeser’s analysis of homosocial bonding between two non-white men to examine the men at Sweet Home and the way in which their bonds affect Sethe as an object of desire.³⁷

Reeser and others have also argued, against Sedgwick, that women can be active participants in homosocial bonding and not just marginalized victims. Reeser argues that the male-male homosocial triangle is a misogynistic and homophobic design and that when two bonding men are removed from the equation and replaced with women as subjects in the triangle and not as objects of exchange between men, female homosociality can lead to empowerment (64, 67).

According to Castle, who examines the female homosocial in the work of Sylvia Townsend Warner, the existence of the female-female homosocial triangle is imperative to the undoing of the male homosocial triangle since two women in a triangle only leaves room for one man in the object position (536). Many other critics have moved beyond Sedgwick’s theory to include women in the ways which Castle and Reeser describe. For example, Naomi Miller argues that “[Mary] Wroth succeeds in representing complex networks of female homosocial relations with the power to foster female agency and subjectivity” (182), and Nima Naghibi discusses more

recent female-directed Iranian films that explore “the potential of female bonding to contest traditional cultural as well as legislative prejudices against women” (109).³⁸ Like these critics, I examine the female homosocial bonds in *Beloved* as a means through which Sethe seeks power and agency. However, I also argue that Sethe’s homosocial bond eventually turns destructive because it too closely resembles the structure of the male homosocial relations that have victimized her.

Chapters One and Four discuss how Cather’s *The Professor’s House* and Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* echo *Frankenstein*’s critique of racist and misogynistic white male responses to anxieties about race and gender; for Cather and Palahniuk, however, these anxieties are perpetuated by material culture of mass production and commodification in the early and late twentieth century and not the Industrial Revolution. In this first and last chapter, my central focus is a white male protagonist who, like Victor Frankenstein, seeks to reaffirm his white masculine privilege and power in capitalist consumer culture. Just as Victor creates his Creature as an ideal masculine being who then becomes a doppelgänger with whom he engages in homosocial bonding, Professor St. Peter reanimates Tom Outland and the narrator of *Fight Club* creates Tyler Durden as ideal male figures who function as doppelgängers and engage in homosocial bonding that reaffirms their creators’ white male authority. Although neither Tom nor Tyler is literally created in a laboratory like Victor’s Creature, both are inventions of their creators and both are associated with a masculinizing form of science. The Professor’s masculinizing science is practiced not in the creation of his doppelgänger, as seen with Victor Frankenstein, but vicariously, through his account of Tom’s anthropological practices on the mesa. Similarly Palahniuk’s narrator practices his masculinizing science not in the creation of Tyler but alongside

him when they use chemicals to manufacture soap and homemade bombs for Project Mayhem. Both Creature figures differ from their predecessor in that neither is immediately rejected by his creator: Tom is idealized by the Professor, and Tyler is at first glorified and his wretchedness is glamorized by the narrator. However, Tom's monstrousness slowly becomes apparent through his appropriation of the Native culture on the mesa and abjection of Mother Eve, and Tyler turns into a horrific double who not only instigates all kinds of violence but also threatens to kill his creator. Just as Victor Frankenstein's homosocial relations with the Creature and Walton subordinate women and racial minorities, Tom and the Professor's homosocial bonding reinforces white male power at the price of oppressing women and appropriating the dead Indian culture on the mesa. In contrast, Palahniuk diverges from Frankenstein by including the character of Marla, who occupies the same position as Elizabeth in Shelley's novel as the female figure in the homosocial triangle, but who, unlike Elizabeth, challenges her victimization and aids in the destruction of Tyler. Both Cather and Palahniuk criticize hyper-masculine homosociality's subordination of women and racial minorities and the practice of masculinizing sciences as strategies for resisting the feminizing effects of industrialized consumer culture and reasserting white authority against the threat of racial others — a critique initially seen in Shelley's *Frankenstein*. However, while Cather essentially echoes Shelley's critique but ends with the Professor returning to the same life he began with, Palahniuk suggests that homosociality proves to be more catastrophic in the late twentieth century to men in a post-feminism world, and that the feminine is essential to the survival of men.

Two black Frankenstein narratives, *Invisible Man* and *Beloved*, are the subject of Chapters Two and Three. In *Black Frankenstein* (2008), Elizabeth Young examines the figure of

the black Frankenstein monster in nineteenth and twentieth-century American fiction, essays, film, painting, and other media and argues that black writers and artists have used Frankenstein's Creature as a figure for black monstrosity which they reclaim as a source of resistance to white racism. In contrast, I consider the narrator of *Invisible Man* and Sethe in *Beloved* not as Creature figures, but as characters who resemble Victor Frankenstein in that both seek to claim the freedom and agency denied by a white racist culture through the invention of a Creature — an artificial self or supernatural child — who comes to function as an uncanny doppelgänger and enters into homosocial relations with its creator.

Chapter Two examines Ellison's *Invisible Man* as a critique, like Shelley's *Frankenstein*, of the male response of creating a living being who becomes a doppelgänger when faced with anxieties about male power and racial disenfranchisement perpetrated by a culture of mass production and commodification, symbolized here by electricity. Echoing the Creature's electrification in Victor's laboratory, the Invisible Man is created in the factory hospital where the narrator practices empowering science by harnessing the electricity from his electroshock therapy. Although their creations are similar, the Creature and Invisible Man differ in their monstrosity. The Creature is much more violent and horrifying in appearance than the Invisible Man who shares a body with the narrator as a psychotic projection or internal split. However, the Invisible Man's monstrosity is revealed in his violent and destructive actions against women and other racial minorities when he takes over the narrator — also a result of their homosocial bond. While Shelley indicates in the end that the homosocial bond shared with a doppelgänger figure is destructive to all participants, Ellison envisions a complete takeover of the narrator by the Invisible Man who awaits more rebellious action in his manhole. Though

Ellison is often seen as misogynistic in his writing, I argue that reading *Invisible Man* alongside *Frankenstein* reveals Ellison's critique of racist and sexist responses to anxieties about gender and race surrounding the American commodity culture of the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter Three explores the resemblances Morrison outlines between Sethe and Victor Frankenstein to emphasize that freedom from domination and control cannot be genuinely achieved through the means of the oppressor. Unlike Victor Frankenstein who purposefully constructs his Creature, Sethe unconsciously creates Beloved who becomes her doppelgänger and engages Sethe in a female homosocial bond. However, both creatures are alike in that they are created in a symbolic birthing scene. The Creature and Beloved are also similar since their creators intend through their fabrication to seize or reclaim control over the maternal body. Also, Beloved is physically monstrous like the Creature since she embodies her creator's violent past: the act of murdering her baby. Victor's monster is sewn together from dead body parts, and Beloved is described as sharing a similar physical makeup. While the homosocial bond between Sethe and Beloved initially appears to provide freedom and agency to Sethe, Morrison also shows how harmful these triangulations of desire can be, especially for Paul D, Denver, and even Sethe. Although unlike Victor Sethe is not completely destroyed by her creation, Morrison critiques female homosociality as a destructive strategy for transforming gender and racial identity and stresses that black men and women cannot challenge oppression by recreating the same structures that have marginalized them.

Notes: Introduction

¹ There are two editions of the novel published during Mary Shelley's lifetime — the first in 1818 and the second revised in 1831 by Shelley herself. While most modern editors have chosen to use the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*, I have chosen to use that from 1818. It would seem that tragic events in Mary Shelley's life had a significant impact on the revisions of the 1831 text. I agree with editors D.L. MacDonald and Kathleen Scherf of the Broadview edition of the novel that the "1818 edition is closer to the imaginative act and atmosphere that spawned this influential novel" (40)

² *Frankenstein* is labeled as myth by Caroline Joan S. Picart and Chris Baldick: "The vitality of myths lies precisely in their capacity for change, their adaptability and openness to new combinations of meaning. That the series of adaptations, allusions, accretions, analogues, parodies, and plain misreadings which follows upon Mary Shelley's novel is not just supplementary component of the myth; it is the myth" (Baldick 4).

³ *Frankenstein's* influence on American culture has been examined many times over; however, the novel's influence on American literature is barely noted. For in-depth survey of *Frankenstein's* influence on American culture, see Susan Tyler Hitchcock (142). For readings of *Frankenstein's* influence on specific American texts, see Ellen Pifer, Allan Lloyd-Smith, Joseph Cordaro, Mirello Martino, and Hilde Staels.

⁴ For those who have identified *Invisible Man* as Gothic, see Mary F. Sisney and Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy. For *Beloved* and the Gothic, see Mischelle Booher, Philip Goldstein, Wesley Britton, Beth Vanrheenen, Jerrold E. Hogle, Liliane Weissberg, Gina Wisker, A.T. Spaulding, Sherry R. Truffin, Claude Cohen-Safir, and Cedric Gael Bryant. For *Fight Club* and the Gothic, see Kirsten Stirling and Alex E. Blazer.

⁵ Defining the American Gothic has proven to be difficult, conflicted and sometimes even deemed disadvantageous. For additional studies on the American Gothic, see Irving Malin (1962), David Punter (1980), Donald Ringe (1982), Allan Lloyd-Smith (1989), Louis Gross (1989), Brian Docherty (1990), David Mogen, Scott P. Sanders, and Joanne B. Karpinski (1993), Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy (1998), Charles Crow (2009), Karen Halttunen (2009), Lucie Armitt (2011).

⁶ See J.E. Svilpis, Peter H. Goodrich, Chris Baldick, Teresa Goddu, Maggie Kilgour, Claude Cohen-Safir and Lauren Goodlad.

⁷ Other readings of *Frankenstein's* influence on American Gothic literature include Mirello Martino (Leslie Marmon Silko), Ashley Craig Lancaster (Cormac McCarthy), Theodora Goss and John Paul Riquelme (Octavia Butler), and Bernice M. Murphy (Shirley Jackson).

⁸ Sedgwick was influenced by studies of kinship relations in Claude Levi-Strauss, Gale Rubin, and René Girard.

⁹ Aside from the gender division, the Industrial Revolution also affected sexuality — an axis of identification linked to gender politics (see historians Annette Timm and Joshua Sanborn, as well as Thomas Laqueur).

¹⁰ Shelley pre-dates Ruskin, so he did not influence her; however, his association of factory work with gender identity serves to support the view that Shelley made similar connections between the two.

¹¹ Victor's science has been linked to the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution by Warren Montag, Franco Moretti and Anne K. Mellor, which is discussed in greater detail below.

¹² The Luddite Crisis between 1811 and 1813 was a workers' rebellion that asserted their resistance to the introduction of new technologies in factories, especially the textile industry (Montag, Sale). Already establishing this connection, Warren Montag notes, "At the very moment that *Frankenstein* was published, the British State suspended various civil rights (including that of habeas corpus) in order to more effectively counter the growing combativity of the unemployed and the working poor" (303). The Peterloo Massacre was a series of riots and organized protests in 1819. The irresponsible reaction by authorities leading to the death of a dozen unarmed workers evoked a strong reaction (Tropp 37).

¹³ See Godwin's *St-Leon*, P. Shelley's "The Mask of Anarchy" and Wollstonecraft's *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

¹⁴ These include Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* and Bryan Edwards' *The History, Civil and Commercial, of British Colonies in the West Indies*.

¹⁵ See also Laura Kranzler who argues that Victor is effeminate (43).

¹⁶ For a comprehensive analysis of Victor's science, see Anne K. Mellor, Deborah S. Wilson, Peter Vernon, and Stuart Curran. The exact nature of Victor's science is difficult to pinpoint since Shelley does not reveal the process by which the Creature is brought to life. Instead, Victor's science remains open to constant debate and scrutiny. Critics debate the extent to which different scientific practices from the eighteenth and nineteenth century have influenced Victor, and yet two schools of thought are consistently agreed upon as inspiration for the young scientist. First, Victor is an alchemist in his desires to gain immortality and instill life since he was influenced by Agrippa and Paracelsus in his earlier years. Victor notes that in his youth, while he was still enthralled by such outdated sciences, he "entered with the greatest diligence into the search for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life" (69). Second, with the help of an encouraging Professor Waldman and a less agreeable Professor Krempe, Victor is a natural philosopher which "in the most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly [his] sole occupation" (77). Concerned with the physical universe and the study of nature, actual eighteenth-century natural philosophers such as Humphrey Davy and Luigi Galvani are the likely inspiration for Victor's interventionist approach to the study of nature.

¹⁷ See Mellor for more on Victor's masculinized sciences.

¹⁸ George Levine, Ellen Moers, Margaret Homans, Gordon D. Hirsch, and Dean Franco argue that Victor and the Creature maintain a father/son or mother/daughter relationship. I argue that a lack of either a mother or father at once disintegrates a psychoanalytic reading based on oedipal principles.

¹⁹ The doppelgänger image first appears in the German novel *Siebenkäs* by Jean Paul.

²⁰ Popular examples include Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double*, Poe's "William Wilson," Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Joseph Conrad's "The Secret Sharer."

²¹ For more on the doppelgänger image or doubles in literature, see Otto Rank's *The Double: a Psychoanalytic Study*, Andrew Webber's *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*, Dimitris Vardoulakis' *The Doppelgänger: Literature's Philosophy*, and Karl Miller's *Doubles: Studies in Literary History*.

²² Allusions found on page 61 by Victor and page 163 by the Creature to *Paradise Lost* (XII.646). Anachronistic allusions to Shelley's "Mutability" are made by Victor on page 124 and by the Creature on page 153.

²³ I'd like to be clear in stating that I am interested in exchanges of power through the homosocial bonding experience which includes homoerotic undertones layered with homosexual panic. It is not my intention to deny homosexuality between Victor and the Creature or Walton or disseminate homophobic readings of *Frankenstein*; it is simply not the focus of my argument here. For the Creature as an ideal lover to Victor, see James Holt McGavran.

²⁴ Dante places Ulysses in the eighth circle of Hell (Canto xxvi). Trapped in a flame, he recites the tale of his last voyage (of Dante's own fabrication). Placed in Hell recounting his valiant deeds, Ulysses appears less heroic, which suggests a hint of irony on the part of Dante. Thus, by having Victor's speech echo Dante's Ulysses, Shelley is arguably critiquing masculine heroism as futile and overzealous.

²⁵ See Jen-yi Hsu, Marie Mulvey-Roberts, and Petkou Panagiota for further discussion on the abject in *Frankenstein*.

²⁶ Despite the aggressive masculinity which marks the Creature as Victor Frankenstein's homosocial double, feminist and psychoanalytic critics of *Frankenstein* have long argued that the Creature symbolizes the feminine. Most famously, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that the Creature functions as a figure of Eve in their reading of *Frankenstein* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. According to Gilbert and Gubar, the Creature resembles Eve in that he is nameless, orphaned, and isolated in contrast to male counterparts. His physical appearance is also deformed and distorted, which, they argue, is symbolic of Eve's flawed morality (242). In a similar fashion, George Hirsch maintains that the Creature is psychologically female with protestations to Victor that reflect those of a daughter suffering from "narcissistic injury" or penis envy (134). I would add that the Creature is aligned with nature, which is gendered feminine, in that he is often described as a force which must be conquered and controlled. For example, the Creature's presence continuously generates extreme weather, which associates the monster with a femininity and nature that are disorderly. These instances include Victor's glimpse of the Creature upon his return to Geneva, his meeting with his creation on the mountain of ice upon the summit of Montanvert, and his presence outside Walton's ship trapped in ice (103, 124, 234).

²⁷ For more on the Creature's abjection in connection to the maternal bodies and anxiety in the novel, see U. C. Knoepfelmacher, Marc A. Rubenstein, Barbara Johnson, Margaret Homans, Joyce Zonana, and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. In addition, many critics have linked the Creature's abjection and alliance with the maternal bodies in the novel to Mary Shelley's own fear and anxieties about childbirth owing to her mother's death subsequent to her birth and her own loss of two children before writing *Frankenstein*. In *Literary Women*, Moers first labelled *Frankenstein* as a "birth myth," an expression of Shelley's own feeling of anxiety during afterbirth (93). Similarly, Mulvey-Roberts contends that the novel returns Shelley to the original site of abjection — her mother's death — and "[t]hrough the Frankenstein monster, expiates her matricidal guilt in having caused the death of her mother through her own birth" (199). While anxieties toward maternal bodies are certainly present in the text, for my purposes here, I do not consider them to belong to Mary Shelley. Instead, I argue that the anxiety and fear reside in male culture criticized by Shelley and symbolized in Victor Frankenstein. I do not wish to underestimate the effect of the loss of a mother and two children at the tender age of nineteen, or the detrimental effects it may have upon a woman, yet I am hesitant to disregard the commonality of death during childbirth in the nineteenth century in the same way as these earlier critics.

²⁸ During the nineteenth century, *Frankenstein's* Creature actually became a symbol for race within discourses on slavery. As H.L. Malchow, Anca Vlasopolos and Saba Bahar have noted, member of Parliament George Canning addressed the House of Lords in 1824 using Mary Shelley's Creature as a point of comparison for the effects of slavery. Canning states:

We must deal with the negro as with a person possessing sense, but the sense only of an infant; and, before he is prepared for the enjoyment of well-regulated liberty, to turn him wild in the fulness of his physical strength, in the maturity of his physical passions, and in the infancy of his uninstructed reason, would be to imitate the man who is described in the romance which was published some time back, who constructed a human form with limbs of more than mortal mould, into which he infused passions and strength which was to it only the power of doing mischief; but, being unable to impart to it a soul, he found that he had created only a savage giant, from which he himself recoiled with horror. That would be the effect of sudden and unprepared emancipation. I therefore would proceed gradually, because I would proceed safely. (27)

Shockingly, Canning uses *Frankenstein* as a cautionary tale against abolition and granting freedom to the children of slaves. His case is premised upon the notion that once freed, slaves will run amok like the Creature, terrorizing their masters. According to Malchow, Canning seizes upon three important racial parallels: the childishness, lack of judgment, and implied sexual threat that were attributed to both the Negro slave and the Creature (33).

²⁹ The Creature's link to the slave trade of the West Indies is furthered by Ball, who claims that Victor's relation to the Creature and his wavering between embracing and detesting his creation reflect nineteenth-century British society's fluctuating positions on the West Indian slavery debate (37).

³⁰ For more on Safie and her role in the novel, see Erin Webster Garrett.

³¹ The Universal sequels include *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942), *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943), *House of Frankenstein* (1944), *House of Dracula* (1945), and *Bud Abbott Lou Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948).

³² The first 1869 printing in the United States was of the 1818 edition by Sever, Francis & Co., Boston (Glut 4).

³³ These do not include translations or publications outside the United States. These editions are of both the 1818 and 1831 version of *Frankenstein*.

³⁴ See Ellen Moers, Marc A. Rubenstein, Barbara Johnson, Devon Hodges, Mary Poovey, Gordon D. Hirsch, Mary Jacobus, Margaret Homans, Burton Hatlen, Anne K. Mellor, and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar.

³⁵ See Jasia Reichardt, Frank James and J. V. Field, Deborah S. Wilson, Peter Vernon, David Ketterer, Janis McLarren Caldwell, Anne Gilfoil, Carlos Rezende Seligo, Ann Engar, Andrea Austin, Anne K. Mellor, Stuart Curran, Brigitte Nerlich and David E. Clarke and Robert Dingwall, Katerina Kitsi-Mitakou, Scott Loren, Jürgen Barkhoff, Galia Benziman, Sharalyn Orbaugh, Andrew Bartlett, Theodora Goss and John Paul Riquelme, and Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall.

³⁶ For the most comprehensive list of adaptations of *Frankenstein*, see Donald Glut.

³⁷ For other critics who have included race into their readings informed by Sedgwick's theory of the homosocial, see Cheryl Clarke and Beth Kramer.

³⁸ For more readings which include the female homosocial, see Heather Debling and Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz.

Frankenstein's Creature on the Mesa:

Re(membering) Tom Outland in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House*

One realizes that even in harmonious families there is this double life.
(Willa Cather, "Katherine Mansfield" 109)

I was thinking...about Euripides; how, when he was an old man, he went and lived in a cave by the sea, and it was thought queer, at the time. It seems that houses had become insupportable to him. I wonder whether it was because he had observed women so closely all his life.
(Willa Cather 136)

When it comes to Willa Cather and her fiction, the Gothic is certainly not one of the first things that comes to mind. From the Nebraskan prairie life in *My Ántonia* to Bishop Latour and Father Vaillant's New Mexico in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather's idealization of the American frontier seems anything but horrifying or fear-inducing. However, Cather's postwar novel *The Professor's House* — a requiem to the world before it "broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts" by the cultural shift following World War One — is haunted by Gothic elements: invasive male figures, domestic abjection, claustrophobic atmospheres, a mummified female body, a ghostly young scientist, overpowering guilt, and pronounced irrationality (Cather, "Prefatory" v). In particular, Professor Godfrey St. Peter is a detached and melancholic Gothic hero often described by his dark features who mourns the past and the memory of Tom Outland. In her study of British Romantic influences on Cather's work, Susan Rosowski associates St. Peter's nostalgia with the Gothic. She notes that

[confronted] with the transformations about him in his family, his university, and the world, St. Peter retreats further, to his dark study, to his memory of Tom Outland, and to his former self. This boy's return to St. Peter is as fine an integration of a ghost story into

a psychological novel as occurs in American literature. The boy who offers such promises also tempts St. Peter to embrace death, the temptation heightened by Gothic uses of setting and weather. (216)¹

Cather's interest in the Gothic was not limited to the use of Gothic features in her writing or the characterization of St. Peter. She was interested in engaging with the Gothic tradition, and there is recorded evidence of Cather's familiarity with Gothic stories specifically pertaining to the pairing of alter-egos with science, such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Slote 36). Although an admirer of Stevenson, Cather did not fashion the doppelgänger relationship in the manner of Jekyll and Hyde. Building on Rosowski's discussion of *The Professor's House* and the Gothic tradition, I argue that reading Cather's novel alongside *Frankenstein* reveals interesting similarities between these two very dissimilar novels.

I can only speculate on whether Cather was familiar with Shelley or *Frankenstein*. At the time Cather wrote *The Professor's House* in the 1920s, printed versions of Shelley's *Frankenstein* were in circulation within the U.S., and the myth of Victor and his Creature was inescapable. According to cultural historian Susan Tyler Hitchcock, stories by earlier writers such as Melville, Hawthorne, and Wells made references to Shelley's story, knowing very well that readers would recognize the meaning, so it is likely that readers and writers of Cather's generation would also have been familiar with the story (120). Admittedly, Cather once expressed that she wasn't very fond of woman writers. Yet she noted that "[when] a woman writes a story of adventure, a stout sea tale, a manly battle yarn, anything without wine, women and love, then I will begin to hope for something great from them, not before" (qtd. in Lee 12). Cather's statement demonstrates that she probably would have been interested in an adventure

story such as *Frankenstein* since it meets her criteria and was written by a woman. Either way, there are undeniable and pronounced similarities between *Frankenstein* or *The Professor's House* which I argue is the beginning of a Shelleyan Gothic tradition in twentieth-century American fiction.

Although many critics have discussed the double motif in Cather's fiction and her fascination with the doubling of character in her life and writing, I argue that the image of the double in *The Professor's House* uses a specifically Shelleyan motif of the doppelgänger. Interested in creating her own kind of alter-ego and playing the double in her private life, Cather was equally interested in using it in her fiction. With the image of the double present in her writing, Cather enters a long tradition of American writers using the doppelgänger motif — an image that is surprisingly common in American literature as it is found in the writing of Hawthorne, Poe, James, and Irving. Cather is no stranger to use the doppelgänger motif since the image is found in her earlier short stories, "The Profile" and "Consequences" (Rosowski 213). In her study *Willa Cather: Double Lives*, Hermione Lee attests to the prevalent use of doubling in Cather's fiction when she declares, "It is a crude device, but it is Cather's first extensive treatment [in *Alexander's Bridge*] of her deep and lifelong obsession with doubling" (84). Even with the use of doubling and the doppelgänger motif being well documented and discussed in Cather, *Frankenstein* has gone unrecognized by critics as one likely pretext for the doppelgänger motif in *The Professor's House* and for other important aspects of the novel. Cather's novel does not initially appear to be like *Frankenstein*: a violent story of haunting and destruction where a doppelgänger is created to reinforce white male power and to engage in destructive homosocial relationships leading to the abjection of women and racial minorities. Cather's use of the

Frankensteinian doppelgänger motif goes unnoticed since the doppelgänger's appearance in the novel is only ever through the act of remembering. Unlike the relationship between Victor and the Creature, it is the recollection of Tom Outland by St. Peter which creates the young man as his Frankensteinian doppelgänger.

Cather's *The Professor's House* resembles Shelley's *Frankenstein* since they share undeniable similarities in narrative, characterization, and structure. Reading *The Professor's House* through *Frankenstein* reveals that Cather portrays St. Peter as a Victor Frankenstein figure who responds to anxieties about industrialization and domestication by creating an ideal doppelgänger: Tom Outland. Tom enables the Professor to bolster his white male power through homosocial bonding and is eventually revealed to be a monstrous incarnation of the Professor's racist and misogynistic impulses. Although the Professor does not create Tom in a laboratory like Victor Frankenstein fabricates his monster, he does create Tom Outland as his Frankensteinian doppelgänger by reassembling the dead man as a masculine ideal in "Tom Outland's Story," which recreates him from memory in much the same way as Victor creates his Creature from dead body parts. Although Tom does not evoke horror in his creator as Victor's Creature does, he does resemble Frankenstein's Creature in that he is created as an ideal double, who haunts the Professor and enters into a homosocial relationship with his creator in which the two doubles chase each other to their death. Here, the Professor appears to succeed where Victor did not in creating what he intended: Tom is a successful scientist and an obedient doppelgänger. Just as Victor creates his monster to facilitate homosociality and pursues a science which reaffirms white male power, the Professor's remembering of Tom as his doppelgänger allows for homosocial bonding and the practice of masculinizing and imperialistic science in the form of

Tom's anthropological research on the mesa. Although Tom also practices laboratory science with the invention of his engine, this part of his work is associated with the feminizing aspect of industrial consumer culture; consequently, when the Professor re-creates Tom through storytelling after his death, he focuses only on his racially empowering and masculinizing anthropology on the mesa. Unlike Victor's Creature, Tom Outland never becomes a murderous monster but is admired by everyone who meets him. However, the monstrosity of Tom's and the Professor's misogyny and racism is projected onto other characters, specifically women and racial minorities. By making clear that the Professor's view of his wife and daughters as harsh, materialistic consumers is a misplaced projection, Cather reveals that the female characters in the novel are victims of the male homosocial bond between the Professor and Tom. Although some critics have argued that the Professor's misogyny represents Cather's own views, reading *The Professor's House* through *Frankenstein* allows for a defense of Lillian, Rosamond, Kathleen, Mother Eve, and consequently Cather.² Although Shelley and Cather harbor their own anxieties about industrial systems of production, these female writers are even more critical of the male reaction to this overwhelming new industrial science and its effects on domestic life (287). Through her critical portrayal of the Professor, Cather comments on those who respond to industrialization and modern consumer culture by retreating into a racist and misogynistic homosociality and science to enhance their power and identity as white men.

In *The Professor's House*, Cather responds to cultural anxieties about commodity culture and the mass production of consumer goods that began in Shelley's industrial age. At the time Cather wrote *The Professor's House*, a culture of consumption was transforming the social and cultural climate of the United States. According to Don Slater in *Consumer Culture and*

Modernity, the early twentieth century saw “the emergence of a mass production system of manufacture increasingly dedicated to producing consumer goods...rather than heavy capital goods, such as steel, machinery and chemicals, which dominated much of the later nineteenth century” (13). By the 1920s, Cather was disillusioned by the modern American wasteland which gave rise to an invasive industrial technology encouraging materialism and over-consumption (Cather, “Novel” 41). In Cather’s view, the consequences of the rise in industrial manufacturing of material goods on a mass scale were destructive. Technology used for mass production and sale of commercialized goods symbolized increased control over the natural world and caused increasing distance between humans and the natural world. Stating that “[e]conomics and art are strangers,” Cather understands nature — her artistic inspiration — as in potential ruin at the hands of modern technology and science (*On Writing* 27).³

Like Shelley, who illustrates her own abhorrence in *Frankenstein* for the Industrial Revolution’s influence on race and gender relations, Cather reveals similar concerns in *The Professor’s House* about industrial technological advancements in the early twentieth century and their effect on gender and race. Cather illustrates her own anxieties about femininity and womanhood through the Professor. Well-documented accounts of her cross-dressing, her use of the pen name of William Cather, M.D. in high school, and her desire to keep her life with her female partner private all indicate an anxiety about domestication and femininity. According to Rita Felski, femininity and the domestic sphere were redefined with the rise of modern consumerism in the early twentieth century: “modern industry and commerce encroached ever more insistently on the sanctity of the private and domestic realm through the commodification of the household” (61-2). Like Shelley, Cather registers in her Victor figure her own concerns

about a culture of industry and anxieties about gender and race. Cather creates Professor St. Peter who expresses anxieties about gender in his views about the domesticated women in his family and about materialistic culture. Similarly, Cather's own anxieties about are manifested through Professor St. Peter. As Walter Benn Michaels has shown, revisions to American law cultivated anxiety about race relations at the time Cather wrote *The Professor's House*. Political amendments concerning race were being issued by the American Congress, which endorsed racial segregation and recognition. In 1924, the Immigration Act or Johnson-Reed Act was passed which limited the number of immigrants arriving to the U.S. As a result, a racial analysis of the U.S. population was conducted. Ancestry was registered, which forced American citizens to perceive themselves as racial beings (Michaels "Vanishing" 221). Meanwhile, the Act recognized Native Americans as U.S. citizens (Michaels "Vanishing" 212). This new presence and awareness of a racialized political atmosphere certainly registered with Cather since in *The Professor's House*, she portrayed a Native American culture whose only recognition is filtered through the white Tom Outland and comes only after their extinction.⁴

Although St. Peter is a humanistic scholar opposed to modern science, he resembles Shelley's renegade scientist Victor Frankenstein in that he responds to these anxieties by creating an initially ideal doppelgänger who proves monstrous when his homosocial bond with his creator results in the marginalization and abjection of women and racial minorities. Like Shelley, Cather indicates that the Professor's creation of his doppelgänger is motivated by a desire to reaffirm his white male privilege in response to anxieties about America's industrial technology. The Professor vilifies technological advancements during his lecture as overheard by Lillian and Louie. He debates with a student: "It's the laboratory, not the Lamb of God, that taketh away the

sins of the world...You might tell me next week, Miller, what you think science has done for us, besides making us very uncomfortable” (54-56). Here, the Professor deprecates technological science which he feels only results in distraction through consumerism: empty commodities mass-produced for modern America. The Professor is critical of this culture of commodification in its association with the feminine, which is evident in his relation to the St. Peter women with their continual shopping and house planning. While Victor Frankenstein first embraces his domestic role and then rejects it for fear of feminization, the Professor repudiates domesticity completely. For example, the Professor expresses his disgust with consumer culture and domesticity after a shopping trip with Rosamond in Chicago. An out-of-town expedition made intolerable by its excessive consumption, their trip left the Professor unnerved when he suggests to Lillian, “Let’s omit the verb ‘to buy’ in all forms for a time” (134). The Professor clearly becomes anxious around his daughter and holds an aversion towards her since she symbolizes over-consumption, domestication, and the feminine. The Professor also rejects his girls and the domestication and gross material acquisition they represent when he mentions Euripides’s cave. After having “observed women so closely all his life,” Euripides’ isolation from women and the home is admirable to the Professor who has grown misogynistic in his view of women (136). Thus, the Professor expresses a fear of feminization in his negative association of industrial technological science with consumer culture and women.

To highlight this rejection of consumer culture as feminine further, it is only when consumption is associated with feminine domesticity that St. Peter expresses anxiety about commodity culture; otherwise, he indulges in consumerism and material culture.⁵ First, the Professor enjoys some of the best material objects money can buy, such as fine cheeses, Italian

wines and lamb (154-5). St. Peter admits that when it comes to his favorite commodities, “[he] was by no means an ascetic. He knew that he was terribly selfish about personal pleasures, fought for them. If a thing gave him delight, he got it, if he sold his shirt for it. By doing without many so-called necessities he had managed to have his luxuries” (17). Unlike his wife and daughters’ consumption of goods which he associates with domestication and feminization, St. Peter’s luxuries do not diminish his masculinity or feminize him; on the contrary, these items offer a sense of power by way of class privilege which make them acceptable. Similarly, when Louie treats the St. Peters to a luxurious hotel in Chicago, the Professor is “glad to be in a big city again...and especially pleased to be able to sit in comfort and watch the storm over the water” (75). He makes the exception for the distraction and comfort these indulgences offer, even though the distraction and comfort provided by modern technoscience are what he originally criticized during his class lecture. Such indulgence does not affect his male power but offers a sense of authority through class privilege. Even more, the Professor links a fear of feminization to consumerism and domestication when the family’s small fortune supports his daughter’s “orgy of acquisition,” but it is acceptable to fund his lifestyle and independent work on his massive eight-volume study on Spanish adventurers. St. Peter does not find fault with his own monetary indulgences since his phallogentric study of colonial adventures stabilizes and reaffirms his gender and racial power (135). Not surprisingly then, he does criticize Rosamond and his wife when they use their money to indulge in their domestic luxuries. Yet, even though the Professor refuses any direct gift of money from Rosamond, Mrs. Crane argues that St. Peter remains passive about the Outland fortune staying in his family. She notes that “It’s all the same if it goes to your family, Doctor St. Peter” (116). Like Victor Frankenstein, who rejects the domestic realm

before creating his Creature, the Professor rejects industrial technology and the consumerism it fosters when it is associated with women and domesticity.

In addition to anxieties about gender, the Professor yearns to reaffirm his racial privilege in response to fears about industrial technology. Like Victor, who is a privileged Genevan, the Professor displays a constant need to reinforce his racial power although he is already a privileged white American. While Shelley describes Victor Frankenstein boasting of his European ancestry, Cather characterizes the Professor in terms of his Euro-American heritage: the Professor, “[though] he was born on Lake Michigan, of mixed stock (Canadian French on one side, and American farmers on the other), St. Peter was commonly said to look like a Spaniard” (Shelley 63, Cather 4). Cather’s reaffirming of the Professor’s racial privilege emphasize the importance he places on it and his desire to secure his racial power. Similarly, the Professor praises his ancestors’ colonial quests into Canadian wilderness inhabited by Aboriginal peoples to reaffirm their racial privilege after their defeat in the Napoleonic Wars:

But if he went anywhere next summer, he thought it would be down into Outland’s country...to look off at those long, rugged, untamed vistas dear to the American heart...Else why had his grandfather’s grandfather, who had tramped so many miles across Europe into Russia with the Grande Armée, come out to the Canadian wilderness to forget the chagrin of his Emperor’s defeat? (246)

The Professor’s desire to sustain his racial privilege is evident in his alignment with his racially privileged ancestors. In addition, the imperialistic sentiments in the Professor’s work highlight his compulsion for racial power. The Professor’s *Spanish Adventures in North America* implies a reverence for colonial and imperialistic exploits which proved to be detrimental for the

aboriginal inhabitants of North America. Through his European ancestry, the Professor associates himself with a racial superiority and entitlement found in the narratives of the colonial adventurers, which signals his desire to maintain his racial power. Like Victor Frankenstein, the Professor craves an affirmation of his racial power before creating his doppelgänger.

These anxieties about his privilege as a white male are what lead St. Peter to create Tom Outland as his doppelgänger. Although St. Peter does not literally create Tom in a laboratory in the manner of Victor Frankenstein, the circumstances are similar. Retelling Tom's story, the Professor assembles his dead student for the reader from memory as seen with Victor who assembles the Creature from dead body parts. Tom only ever appears in the novel through the act of remembering — a word which literally implies putting back together, re-membering as opposed to dismembering. In fact, although the Creature and Tom appear to speak for themselves, their stories are told in the middle of the novel by their creators. Not only are these doppelgänger creations made by Victor and the Professor respectively, so are their stories. Additionally, the circumstances in which the Professor remembers Tom are similar to those surrounding Victor Frankenstein's creation of the Creature. For one, just as Victor is shunned by his professors at the University for his interest in alchemists, the Professor is not quite understood or accepted by his colleagues. St. Peter notes:

For all the interest the first three volumes awoke in the world, he might as well have dropped them in Lake Michigan. They had been timidly reviewed by other professors of history, in technical and educational journals. Nobody saw that he was trying to do something quite different — they merely thought he was trying to do the usual thing, and had not succeeded very well. (22)

Similarly, like Victor Frankenstein, who moves between Mont Blanc and the University or the Creature and his family, the Professor is often described as being torn between two worlds or living a double life. For instance, referring to his university and home life, “St. Peter had managed for years to live two lives, both of them very intense” (19). The Professor is often associated with images of duality — upstairs and downstairs, Tom and family, past and present, or new and old house. Both desiring to secure their white male power, Victor and the Professor create their doppelgängers under similar circumstances.

Creating Tom out of dead memories, St. Peter specifically identifies Tom with a past self which signals him as his doppelgänger. At the beginning of the third section of the novel entitled “The Professor,” St. Peter begins to regress back to his younger self who is often associated with Tom. The boy he left in Kansas is referred to as a being outside of the Professor and as a separate entity: “This boy and he had meant, back in those far-away days, to live some sort of life together and to share good and bad fortune. They had not shared together, for the reason that they were unevenly matched. The young St. Peter who went to France to try his luck, had a more active mind than the twin he left behind in the Solomon Valley” (239). This split between St. Peter and his internal “twin” occurs earlier in the Professor’s life but appears in the novel directly after “Tom Outland’s Story,” and this twin appears as a doppelgänger to St. Peter in the same way as the young Outland does when he strolls into his back garden. The Professor clearly links Tom with the boy as though the two were interchangeable: “Tom Outland had not come back again through the garden door (as he had so often done in dreams!), but another boy had: the boy the Professor had long ago left behind him in Kansas, in the Solomon Valley - the original, unmodified Godfrey St. Peter” (239). The boy from Kansas also begins to resemble Tom on the

Blue Mesa. Much like Tom living in Cliff City, “[the] Kansas boy who had come back to St. Peter this summer was not a scholar. He was a primitive. He was only interested in earth and woods and water” like the Tom that the Professor and Kathleen had romanticized and been so fond of (241). By association with the Kansas boy, Tom is the Professor’s doppelgänger.

The Professor remembers Tom as a Frankensteinian doppelgänger since he is an uncanny double just like the Creature. The Creature is a blank slate when he escapes Victor’s laboratory, and Tom arrives on the mesa without any history to speak of: he “had no living relatives, indeed” and admits, “I was a kind of stray and had no family” (30, 165). Also, like the Creature who is always lingering unseen in the background, Tom has a strange and haunting presence about him. For instance, Scott notes to his father-in-law: “You know, Tom isn’t very real to me any more. Sometimes I think he was just a — a glittering idea” (94). Similarly, Tom arrives at St. Peter’s as though he came from out of nowhere and walks straight into the back garden not quite sure of his age or origin (97). Like Victor attempting to make his creature in his own image, it is as though the Professor fabricates Tom as a projection of himself. In addition, like the Creature who torments Victor and appears without warning, Tom haunts the Professor through memory. The Professor is constantly reminded of him by those around him, and his own space is haunted by the mesa in its obvious resemblance in the sloping roof. One could easily mistake the description of the cave in Cliff City for St. Peter’s study space: “a long, low, twilit space that got gradually lower toward the back until the rim rock met the floor of the cavern, exactly like the sloping roof of an attic. There was perpetual twilight back there, cool, shadowy, very grateful after the blazing sun in the front court-yard” (186).⁶ It should also be noted that Steven Trout compares the

Professor's study to a "dugout on the Western Front" when filled with gas from the old stove which links St. Peter with Tom's experiences in the war (170).

As uncanny doppelgängers to their creators, the Creature and Tom are characterized by duality. Like the Creature who moves between being domesticated with the De Lacey's and being a masculinized rival in his struggle with Victor, Tom is at once a domesticated inventor revolutionizing engine technology and a masculinist American cowboy roaming the Southwest. Also like the Creature who moves between the De Lacey's' cottage and roams the wilderness, Tom is similarly disjointed by his life in Hamilton and the one on the Blue Mesa. Furthermore, the conflicting views of Tom and the Creature by other characters illustrate their duality. The characterizations made by others of the Creature and Tom do not match their actions: while the Creature is caring and mistaken for monstrous, Tom is monstrous and mistaken for caring. For example, described by Victor as "the wretch, the filthy daemon to whom I had given life," the Creature contrastingly shows sympathy and altruism when he observes the De Lacey's and wonders if "it might be in [his] power to restore happiness to these deserving people" (103, 140). Tom, however, is glorified by others while quite a monstrous figure on the mesa, whose actions could be interpreted as racist and misogynistic. Ironically, Kathleen and the Professor praise Tom Outland as an anthropological adventurer and protector of nature's secrets. Similarly, when Louie describes Tom to Edgar Spilling, he is unrecognizable next to the man on the mesa. Ironically, Louie is the only character who did not know Tom at all, and the description seems unsuited to the Tom readers come to know in "Tom Outland's Story":

We have named our place for Tom Outland, a brilliant young American scientist and inventor, who was killed in Flanders, fighting with the foreign Legion, the second year of

the war, when he was barely thirty years of age. Before he dashed off to the front, this youngster had discovered the principle of the Outland vacuum, worked out the construction of the Outland engine that is revolutionizing aviation. He not only invented it, but, curiously enough for such a hot-headed fellow, had taken pains to protect it by patent. (30)

Without a single mention of Tom's discovery on the Blue Mesa, Louie's characterization focuses solely on his later accomplishments connected to war and technology — that which garnered the Marselluses a great deal of wealth. Just like the Creature, Tom's characterizations by others oppose his actions and symbolize his position as an uncanny Frankensteinian doppelgänger.

Although Tom does not evoke terror in his creator as Victor's Creature does and was instead created as an ideal man, Cather eventually reveals that Tom can be just as monstrous as the Creature. As I will discuss below, Tom's actions on the mesa can be read as racist and misogynistic, and he is not as virtuous as he seems. Even though the Professor does not see his creation as monstrous, the relationship between Tom and the Professor closely resembles that between Victor and his Creature. For one, in the same way that Victor Frankenstein's creation stems from his desire for a superhuman male counterpart, Tom is mythologized by the Professor as an ideal double. As a man nostalgic for his romanticized past, the Professor fabricates Tom through memory in his image of "what could have been" and as the double he desires himself to be. Further, just as Victor and the Creature are aligned in *Frankenstein*, Tom and the Professor resemble one another in characterization and imagery. Tom and the Professor are similar in their classical ideals and romanticized quests. While Victor and his Creature are influenced by the same philosophical thinkers and writers, the Professor and Tom are aligned against the rest of the

St. Peters in their ideals of beauty and nobility and the family's regard for materialism and superficiality. Finally, like the crazed Victor chasing his Creature into the Arctic towards his own death, the Professor also tries to follow Tom into death when he almost asphyxiates in the attic. They are connected by the image of gas used in the war which took Tom's life (253). Considering *The Professor's House* alongside *Frankenstein* reveals that Tom is the Professor's Frankensteinian doppelgänger — a figure whose relationship with St. Peter closely resembles the Creature's relationship with Victor.

While Victor's doppelgänger facilitates homosocial relations, the Professor remembers Tom as his doppelgänger to engage in a homosocial relationship with his former student. Homosociality between men amplifies male power by promoting male interests and simultaneously marginalizing women. In *The Professor's House*, as in *Frankenstein*, the association of feminized men with a failed homosociality emphasizes the Victor figure's use of the homosocial to affirm his male power. Just as Victor creates distance between himself and Clerval, who is feminized by association with the murdered women in *Frankenstein* since he is killed by the Creature, St. Peter disregards other male characters who are aligned with the feminine and who experience a failed homosociality. First, Professor Crane, a fellow scientist and academic who works with Tom and St. Peter at the University, is feminized for his failed homosociality and rejected by the Professor since a bond with him cannot offer the validation of his male power he is seeking. A weak and sickly man, Dr. Crane is overpowered by his wife and feminized by her initiation of dialogue with St. Peter about the profit acquired by Tom's masculinizing engine. Although St. Peter has befriended Crane, he views him as "a narrow-minded man, and painfully unattractive...St. Peter had had no friend in Hamilton of whom Lillian

could possibly be jealous until Tom Outland came along” (39). With only feminized men found in Hamilton, the Professor remembers the more masculine Tom with whom he engages in a homosocial bond. Crane’s failure to bond with St. Peter is stressed through physical description. His hands, like Tom’s, are described by St. Peter; however, they are not viewed with the same homoerotic sentiments. Tom had a “muscular, many-lined palm, the long strong fingers with soft ends, the straight little finger, the flexible, beautifully shaped thumb that curved back from the rest of the hand as if it were its own master” (103). In contrast, Dr. Crane’s are “deft in delicate manipulation” but “white and soft looking; the fingers long and loosely hung, stained with chemicals, and blunted at the tips like a violinist’s” (125). Similarly, Louie demonstrates feminine characteristics and is, therefore, outlawed by the Professor from a homosocial bonding experience. For one, Louie’s overt and obsessive consumerism softens his character and feminizes his nature. He is always in the company of women rather than men, such as during his summer in France with Lillian and Rosamond where he insists, “It’s to be understood that I always shop with [Lillian]. I adore the shops in Paris” (138). The Professor does show a fondness for Louie, and he is not rejected by the Professor, but instead simply excluded from the Professor’s homosocial bonding with other men. Left out of a private meeting between Spilling and St. Peter in his library, Louie “stood gazing wistfully after them, like a little boy told to go to bed” (32). Lillian attempts to cheer up her son-in-law which only highlights his feminine nature. She appeals to his “feminine” domestic materialism by inviting him to gaze upon her new rug which “revived him; he took her arm, and they went upstairs together” (32-33). Because of his own anxieties about gender, the Professor rejects Dr. Crane and Louie since they are too feminine to engage in the homosocial bonding which serves to reaffirm his masculinity.

Remembering Tom on the mesa, the Professor solidifies their male power by creating a homosocial bond with Tom that is homoerotic and exclusive. Like Victor Frankenstein, whose homosocial relationship with his Creature is characterized by male-centered homoerotic sentiments, the Professor maintains a homosocial bond with Tom which is homoerotic. This homoeroticism is neither homosexual nor platonic: it serves to promote the interests of men and to uphold male power. While Victor Frankenstein expresses a physical attraction to the male form before him in his laboratory, the Professor expresses an intellectual and physical admiration for Tom which encourages their male bonding and reasserts their male power. The Professor's attraction to Tom is emphasized in his eroticized physical descriptions of the young protégé. Cather points out that "[t]he first thing the Professor noticed about the visitor was his manly, mature voice — low, calm, experienced, very different from the thin ring or the hoarse shouts of boyish voices about the campus...the boy was fine-looking, he saw — tall and presumably well built" (95). Again, the Professor is attracted to Tom's physical appearance when he asks Tom to hold still so that he can look

not at the turquoises, but at the hand that held them: the muscular, many-lined palm, the long, strong fingers with soft ends, the straight little finger, the flexible, beautifully shaped thumb that curved back from the rest of the hand as if it were its own master, What a hand! He could see it yet, with the blue stones lying in it. (103)

The Professor's homoerotic attraction to Tom strengthens their homosocial bond and brings these two men closer together. Although Tom's sentiments towards St. Peter are unavailable, Cather equally eroticizes the Professor in remarking that "for looks, the fewer clothes he had on, the better" (4). This alluring and sexualized physical description suggests virility and vigor, which

emphasizes his masculinity — a key element in the homosocial bond. In addition, St. Peter describes his relations with Tom as an affair of the mind, reflecting that he “had had two romances: one of the heart [i.e., with his wife], which had filled his life for many years, and a second of the mind...The boy’s mind had the superabundance of heat which is always present where there is rich germination” (234). St. Peter’s backyard garden — his favorite meeting place with Tom — also contains sexually charged connotations. Evoking homosexual imagery, Tom first enters the metaphorical backside of the yard, which is symbolically sterile, where “he and Tom Outland used to sit and talk half through the warm, soft nights” (7). Highlighting their male exclusivity and movement away from the feminine, their homoeroticism is more evident when Lillian and the girls are away. When the girls were in Colorado for the summer,

He and St. Peter were often together in the evening, and on fine afternoons they went swimming... [H]e and Tom went to the lake and spent the day in his sail-boat.... Over a dish of steaming asparagus, swathed in a napkin to keep it hot, and a bottle of sparkling Asti, they talked and watched night fall in the garden. If the evening happened to be rainy or chilly, they sat inside and read Lucretius. It was on one of those rainy nights, before the fire in the dining-room, that Tom at last told the story he had always kept back.

(154-55)

Following Sedgwick’s model, Tom and the Professor’s romantic encounters and sexualized scenarios suggest a homoeroticism which strengthens their physical and intellectual attraction and, thus, their homosocial bond.

In her article “Across Gender, Across Sexuality: Willa Cather and Others,” Sedgwick notes that in *The Professor’s House*, “the male-homosocial romance represents at the same time

the *inside* lining of the heterosexual bond...and equally its exterior landscape,” crossing “the upstairs/downstairs vertical axis of heterosexual domesticity by the space-clearing dash of a male-male romance” (68-9). Sedgwick and others read the male romance in *The Professor's House* as a closeted homosexual relationship that expresses Cather's own repressed lesbian desires.⁷ I will focus on how male romances in *The Professor's House* echo those in Shelley's *Frankenstein* and how Cather, like Shelley, anticipates Sedgwick's theory of homosociality in *Between Men* by showing how the male homosocial bond between the Professor and Tom at once keeps distance from and associates itself with homosexuality for the purpose of exchanging power between men and promoting male interests. In *Frankenstein*, instead of focusing his affections on Elizabeth, Victor redirects them towards his male creation to facilitate his exchange of power and amplify his masculinity. Similarly, the Professor describes Tom's relationship with his daughter as purely domestic and related to material possessions while insisting that Tom's intimacy lay in his relationship with men. While talking with Rosamond, the Professor makes the clear distinction: “Your bond with him was social, and it follows the laws of society, and they are based on property. Mine wasn't, and there was no material clause in it” (50). Through this description of his bond with Tom, the Professor indicates that their homoerotic relationship reinforces their homosocial bond.

In addition, just like the exclusivity of Victor and the Creature's bond, the isolation of Tom and the Professor's bonding experiences intensifies their homosocial relations and masculinity. While Tom was alive, the Professor bonded with him by spending time alone with him. They travelled alone together to the Southwest and often sat in the garden in the summer when Lillian and the girls were away in Colorado (235, 7). Also, the Professor understands his

relationship with Tom as exclusive from the other members of his family. For example, refusing Rosamond's money which was inherited from the profit of Tom's engine, St. Peter argues: "my friendship with Outland is the one thing I will not have translated into the vulgar tongue" (50). The Professor understands his adventurous Tom as separate and exclusive from Rosamond and Louie's profiteering Tom. Also, in the narrative's present time where the Professor remembers Tom as his doppelgänger, he isolates himself with the memory of Tom and distances himself from his family by refusing to move into their new home. In fact, since Tom is dead and everything about him is remembered by the Professor, their relationship is exclusive since it exists only within the Professor's memory. The reconstruction of Tom through storytelling is like Tom's reconstruction of the lost Indian life on the mesa, which provides a sense of ownership over an idea and an exclusive bond with it.

As seen in *Frankenstein*, the narrative structure of *The Professor's House* represents the doubling of male characters within the homosocial triangle. First, as the story moves between narrators, it turns into a mirrored reflection of the original story much like the duality between men within the homosocial bond — the creator and his doppelgänger. Such a phallocentric filter over the narrative affirms the male power of the creator and creation by emphasizing their level of control over the story and marginalizing the female characters' perspectives. In *Frankenstein*, the story is told by Mary Shelley, Margaret Walton Saville, Robert Walton, Victor, and the Creature. In the same way, the narratives of *The Professor's House* consist of — from the inside out — Tom Outland's experience on the Blue Mesa, Tom's memory, Tom's oral retelling, St. Peter's telling of Tom's experiences, St. Peter's memory of Tom's telling, Cather as omniscient narrator, and Cather's own experience at Mesa Verde which serve as the inspiration and

foundation for Tom's story. The multiple storytellers illustrate the form of the concentric circles in *Frankenstein* which double upon themselves; they represent the doubling of men as seen in the homosocial triangle.⁸ Much like Margaret Walton's reading of the Creature's tale which is filtered through so many storytellers, the reader's experience of Tom's adventurous narrative as presented by the Professor is quite far removed from Tom's original experience on the mesa. Also, it is important to take note of the framing of stories by others in the novel to understand the distance between the reader and Tom. As many critics have pointed out, "Tom Outland's Story" is told to the reader as the Professor's memory of the night in the garden in which Tom tells him his story, not as Tom's direct telling of his memory of his experiences — just as in *Frankenstein* where the reader hears the Creature's story through Victor's retelling of it to Walton. During the middle section of the novel, there are two instances that suggest St. Peter's presence and his interaction with Tom that confirm this section as the Professor's retelling of Tom telling his story: Tom states, "Oh, yes, we found clothes," and "Yes, we found three other bodies," as though answering the Professor's questions which are excluded from the telling (191, 192). The fact that the Professor's dialogue is not present and that Tom is dead at the time of the telling according to the narrative's chronology indicates that the Professor is remembering Tom's telling. The use of storytelling in the novel further highlights the phallocentrism of the homosocial bond since Tom's story is filtered through the Professor and framed by his male-centered views.

The creation of the doppelgänger not only allows for a homosocial bond to form between two men but also enables the practice of masculine sciences. As seen with Victor Frankenstein, phallocentric science solidifies male power and marginalizes women by making them abject.

Unlike Victor Frankenstein, however, the Professor is not a scientist — he actually claims to reject science and technology. Yet, through his remembering of Tom which creates him as his doppelgänger, the Professor engages with Tom's masculinizing science — specifically anthropology — which has the same destructive effects as Victor's scientific practices. Like the masculinizing science Victor uses to build the Creature, the anthropology practiced on the mesa and then remembered by the Professor secures a sense of male power. Tom and his male companions reaffirm their male power when they excavate and conquer the mesa and relics of a dead matrilineal culture. According to Jean Schwind, Cather would have been aware of the social and cultural structures of the fictional tribe. She states that

The matrilocal, matrilineal structure of Pueblo society was recognized as early as the 1880s by archeologist John Bourke, who accompanied the first railroad builders into Arizona and New Mexico. By the time Cather wrote *The Professor's House* in the mid-1920s, Elsie Clews Parsons, Barbara Freire-Marreco, H. R. Voth, and others had published studies indicating the “Crow-type,” matrilineal family structure of the Hopi, Zuni, and Keresan tribes of Laguna and Acoma. (75)

If the Blue Mesa was once a domestic realm ruled by women now dead and gone, Tom's excavation of the relics is a masculinizing science in which the Professor participates through his remembering of Tom's adventures. While at first the mesa was a temptress — Tom “remarked that [he] had my eye on the mesa all summer and meant to climb it” — he reinterprets its inner cliff dwellings as a phallogentric realm (170). According to the Professor's retelling of Tom's story, upon discovering Cliff City, Tom regards it as phallic. He notes, “It was beautifully proportioned, that tower, swelling out to a larger girth a little above the base, then growing

slender again. There was something symmetrical and powerful about the swell of the masonry. The tower was the fine thing that held all the jumble of houses together and made them mean something” (180). Tom’s appropriation of the tower and its meaning by turning it into a phallic symbol fortifies his masculine power and homosocial bond with the Professor who remembers Tom’s telling of his narrative. Just as Victor’s creation of his monster in an act of parthenogenesis moves him away from the feminized domestic sphere, the masculinizing appropriation of the mesa enhances the Professor and Tom’s male authority (Shelley 76).

Victor’s scientific practices move him away from the feminized domestic realm; similarly, Tom’s masculinizing science distances him from the feminizing material culture and domestication denounced by the Professor. Tom, like the Professor, demonstrates a disdain for domestication and materialism and conveys a sense of anxiety about its feminizing effects. For example, while staying with the Bixbys in Washington, Tom takes note of Mr. Bixby who is feminized by his obsession with consumer goods and domestic lifestyle while fretting over dresses and appearance. Their over-consumption was obvious to Tom: “every cab, every party, was more than they could afford” (210). With a clear lack of traditional masculinity, Mr. Bixby “talked about nothing but what Mrs. Bixby would wear” for a week before a reception held by the Secretary of War (210). Mr. Bixby’s feminization is linked by Tom to domestication and consumerism, and his disgust is apparent. Tom notes that the Bixbys came to represent those in Washington whose “lives seemed to me so petty, so slavish” (209). In contrast, the objects on the mesa have the opposite effect on Tom. His excavation and claim over these objects, these artifacts which are not mass-produced or made to feed America’s consumer culture, masculinize Tom. He notes his attachment to the relics after Roddy left: “I had never told him just how I felt

about those things we dug out together, it was the kind of thing one doesn't talk about directly. But he must have known; he couldn't have lived with me all summer and fall without knowing. And yet, until that night, I had never known myself that I cared more about them than about anything else in the world" (216). Although these objects are not mass-produced consumer products, they can be bought and sold as objects of value within a capitalist system, and so Tom contradicts his criticisms of consumer culture — as demonstrated in his judgment of the Bixbys — in favor of the mesa and its objects' masculinizing features. Even though Tom is appalled when Roddy sells the relics while he was away in Washington, he was expecting to be paid for his work and the items he excavated. While on the mesa, Tom kept an account of the items found in a "merchant's ledger" (189). Tom admits to their presumptions: "All our further expenses on the mesa would be paid by the Government. Roddy often hinted that we would get a substantial reward of some kind. When we broke or lost anything at our work, he used to smile and say: 'Never mind. I guess our Uncle Sam will make that good to us'" (200). Although hypocritical, Tom's abhorrence for consumer culture and its feminizing properties highlights his association of the masculine with the mesa and its objects which serves to affirm the Professor and his doppelgänger's male power.

It should be noted that although Tom's invention of the Outland engine would also seem like a masculinizing science since it connects war, one of the most phallogentric endeavors of the twentieth century, with the laboratory sciences that Victor uses to distance himself from the feminine, the Professor rejects this science as feminizing and recreates Tom as a practitioner of masculine sciences on the mesa instead.⁹ The Professor paints Tom's work in the lab as a perversion of Tom's work on the mesa and rejects the Outland engine as a feminizing force. To

illustrate, he compares the Physics building where Tom conducted his experiments to an old Smithsonian building in Washington — a comparison which represents Tom's laboratory science as a part of a feminized and commercial industry by linking it with Tom's disappointing trip to the capital (124). More importantly, Tom's work on the gas, which would serve as the principle of the Outland vacuum, is feminizing since it becomes associated with commercialization and a culture of mass production when the Marselluses use the profits from the Outland engine to build their lavish new home. As Edgar Spilling informs the Professor's family in the novel, he came across the Outland engine during the war when it was used by the Air Service (31). According to Trout, the Air Service modernized World War One, taking out whole cities and battalions from above (*Memorial* 165-6).¹⁰ With the Outland engine being used by the Air Service, it would have been a huge commercial success. The engine and, therefore, Tom's work in the lab are also associated with the feminine since the Outland engine is commercialized, and the capital it secured is linked with the domesticated Rosamond and Louie, who use the profits to build and furnish their home named after Tom. The Marselluses even plan to transfer Tom's whole laboratory to their new extravagant house, reinforcing the connection the Professor makes between laboratory science and domestic consumerism (31). St. Peter underscores Tom's detachment from the commercialization of the engine to Mrs. Crane by emphasizing that Tom and Dr. Crane were not the ones who turned it into a commercial venture: "Without capital to make it go, Tom's idea was merely a formula written out on paper. It had lain for two years in your husband's laboratory, and would have lain there for years more before he or I would have done anything about it" (119). His dismissal of Tom's technological invention from the Professor's idealization of him reinforces his emphasis on Tom's masculine practice of

archeology as a means to affirm his male authority against the feminizing effects of industrial consumer culture and domestication.

For the Professor, the remembering of Tom and his anthropological project on the mesa is not only masculinizing but also racially empowering. By announcing his intention to create a “new species [that] would bless [him] as its creator,” Victor Frankenstein indicates that his science will reaffirm his white racial power. Similarly, Tom’s anthropology solidifies his perceived racial superiority since it exercises control over the extinct Native culture on the mesa, which reflects the Professor’s own idealization of colonial exploits in *Spanish Adventures in North America*. As many critics have already noted, Tom’s attempt to excavate and preserve the Indian artifacts and cultural heritage is symbolically colonial and imperialistic through his appropriation of the Indian culture which serves to validate Tom and the Professor’s white racial power.¹¹ Even if Tom intends to venerate the culture by preserving the artifacts, his appropriation of the extinct Native Americans establishes a cultural hierarchy which supports his belief in a white superiority. Tom’s amateur archaeology is often comparable to an imperialistic exploration of a foreign land. Although Tom highly values and respects the Native culture, he is still a white male appropriating a Native culture for his own purposes, promoting racist myths about a people who cannot speak for themselves and consequently exploiting the dead culture and its people. Echoing colonial language, Tom describes the mesa as “undiscovered land” and notes the allure of untouched territory: “The mesa was our only neighbor, and the closer we got to it, the more tantalizing it was” (170). Soon enough, Tom refers to Cliff City as “our city,” “our mesa,” while Father Duchene refers to dead inhabitants of Cliff City as “your tribe” (190, 201, 197). Tom is filled with a need to possess the mesa, even though it is against his better judgment. Intuitively,

Tom feels that it is best to leave the mesa alone: “I wondered whether I ought to tell even Blake about it; whether I ought not to go back across the river and keep that secret as the mesa had kept it” (180). Even though he expresses apprehension, Tom moves forward and tells Blake about the mesa which leads to them seizing the landscape for themselves. Tom’s practice of cultural appropriation is symbolized in his Mexican blanket: “It was like his skin” (111). Just as Tom borrows Mexican culture as his own here, he appropriates the Native culture on the mesa and re-creates it as his own. Tom further appropriates the Native culture on the mesa as his own when he describes the curios as offering a sense of national identity. He claims a history and ancestral lineage with the Native culture: Tom argues that the relics “belong to this country, to the State, and to all the people. They belong to boys like you and me, that have no other ancestors to inherit from” (219). Reaffirming Tom’s cultural appropriation, the Professor remembers Tom as a museum curator. Matthew Wilson argues that museums represent a “[nostalgia] of the sort promoted by the tourist industry [which] used Native American cultures to reinvigorate the national self-image without allowing their true participation in a national community” (584).¹² As a museum curator, Tom poaches off the Native culture and claims it for himself to confirm his racial power. Just as Victor Frankenstein seeks to affirm his racial superiority in creating his Creature, the Professor’s remembering of Tom’s imperialistic control over the dead culture’s space and material possessions reaffirms his white racial power.

Just as Creature’s reading of Plutarch’s *Lives* echoes Victor’s desire to uphold his masculine power, Tom’s reading material while on the mesa parallels the Professor’s desire for racial empowerment. Tom’s reading material consists of the *Aeneid*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Gulliver’s Travels* (227, 167). Like the Professor’s *Spanish Adventures in North America*, these

are tales of empire-building (with the exception of Swift, whose satire of Dafoe might hint at Cather's own critique of Tom's imperialism). Reading Virgil replaces Tom's excavation work on the mesa once Roddy has sold the relics and left. Tom reinforces this parallel between completing his work on the mesa and reading the *Aeneid* when he describes his final days to St. Peter: "When I look into the *Aeneid* now, I always see two pictures: the one on the page, and another behind that: blue and purple rocks and yellow-green piñons with flat tops, little clustered houses clinging together for protection, a rude tower rising in their midst, rising strong, with calmness and courage — behind it a dark grotto, in its depths a crystal spring" (228). According to Charles L. Crow, reading the *Aeneid* is "a cultural ritual with exactly the same tainted values. Virgil was, after all, a propagandist for Augustus, and a creator of a myth of origin which grafted the model of Empire on western civilization; a model revealed in the Roman symbolism of modern European capitols, and of the Washington from which Tom has just returned" (56). By aligning the *Aeneid*, a celebration of Roman power and imperialism, with his own work on the mesa, Tom understands his own work as racially empowering and mimics the Professor's preoccupation with validating his white racial power.

Like Shelley in *Frankenstein*, Cather reveals the dire consequences that male homosocial relations and imperialistic sciences have on racial minorities in *The Professor's House*. While Victor seeks to reaffirm his white racial power through his science and through male homosocial bonding with Walton which excludes the Creature as a racialized minority, the Professor engages in an exclusively white homosocial relationship with Tom and vicariously participates in Tom's anthropological science which fetishizes, subordinates, and makes abject the aboriginal culture of the mesa. Unlike *Frankenstein's* Creature, who functions as a racial other and is rejected by

his creator and excluded from the homosocial bond between Victor and Walton, Tom is not outwardly monstrous and is not rejected by the Professor. Instead, in his remembering of Tom, St. Peter displaces Tom's monstrousness onto the mythologized Native culture on the mesa. The marginalization of racial minorities in *The Professor's House* echoes the abjection of the Creature as a figure of a racial other and the victim to Victor and Walton's homosocial bond similarly associated with imperialistic scientific practices. Like the Creature, who is set in binary opposition to the white European men epitomized by Victor and Walton, the vanished Native Americans on the Blue Mesa are inferiorized as a people by the men within the homosocial bond and their science. Tom and his white male counterparts adhere to a long Eurocentric tradition of romanticizing a historical past into a narrative watered down by their own Western values and uneducated guesses. They assume: "Probably these people burned their dead" (193). Father Duchene "measured the heads of the mummies and declared they had good skulls" (195). Not only does Tom appropriate the extinct culture as his own, these amateur archeologists exercise a symbolic mastery over the culture by placing their own narrative upon vanished peoples. Father Duchene places his Westernized values and ideals onto the vanished Natives. He states:

I see them here, isolated, cut off from other tribes, working out their destiny, making their mesa more and more worthy to be a home for man, purifying life by religious ceremonies and observances, caring respectfully for their dead, protecting the children, doubtless entertaining some feelings of affection and sentiment for this stronghold where they were at once so safe and so comfortable. (198)

Although Tom and the other white men idealize the Native culture, they place their own interpretation upon the cultural significance of these relics which overrules, overpowers and

devalues a culture that, because it has vanished, cannot provide the correct cultural meaning behind these artifacts. Their idealization of this culture is based on a white estimation of its worth and understandably becomes self-serving to their own racial superiority and power. Moreover, like Walton and Victor's imperialistic ideals out in the Arctic, Tom and his male companions on the mesa recall the colonial rule over North American territories by Eurocentric colonialists who brought with them Christian beliefs and sought the religious conversion of indigenous peoples. As though the Professor would like to remember Tom as such, he notes that Tom discovered Cliff City on Christmas Eve, which symbolizes complicity with Christian dominance over Native religions (181). Father Duchene's presence on the mesa also recalls the imposition of a Christian tradition onto Native culture. Drawing attention to the Father's own work, Tom notes that he "had been among the Indians nearly twenty years...He was able to explain the use of many of the implements we found, especially those used in religious ceremonies" (196). With his help, Tom and Roddy mythologize the Native culture on the mesa within a Christian context and impose a Christian interpretation on a silent Native culture (198). Like Victor, whose homosocial bonds with the imperialistic Walton reaffirm his power as a white man, Tom's and by extension the Professor's re-imagined history for the indigenous people devalues the Native culture as a silent racial other.

Additionally, as noted by other critics, Tom's scientific practices fetishize and inferiorize the Native American culture when he begins his "excavation" of the mesa which further exploits the vanished culture.¹³ Tom devalues the Native culture on the mesa through scientific objectification. For example, Tom directly associates the vanished culture with objects: "Nothing makes those people seem so real to me as their old pots, with the fire-black on them" (101). For

Tom and for the Professor in his remembering, another culture becomes an object to be understood, examined, and fetishized. Echoing Victor Frankenstein's desire to "penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places," Tom's scientific work seeks to decipher and conquer when he states, "I would bring back with me men who would understand it, who would appreciate it and dig out all its secrets" (Shelley 76, Cather 202). Tom's scientific approach treats the vanished Native peoples like scientific specimens and not a dead culture. Similarly, Tom's fetishization of the Native culture is reflected in his scientific approach and objectification towards his findings. It is symbolic that Tom carries Indian pottery in his telescope case (101). More than just taking care of these precious items, Tom devalues the extinct culture by understanding it as objects and relics and then by carrying these items in a case that signifies scientific objectivity. Furthering their objectification of the Native culture, Duchene, Roddy and Tom agree that the mesa's mysteries must be examined by a scientific authority who can further decipher their meaning, an extension of their silencing of the Native culture with their own amateur anthropology: "You must go to the Director of the Smithsonian Institution...He will send us an archaeologist who will interpret all that is obscure to us. He will revive this civilization in a scholarly work. It may be that you will have thrown light on some important point in the history of your country" (199). Again, Tom's desire to further understand and mythologize the Native culture is problematic: the act of interpreting artifacts and mythologizing a vanished culture which cannot provide the accurate meaning behind its relics can devalue a culture. While the Native culture may lose some of its value, Tom, as the all-American adventurer, gains some at its expense. Although Tom's scientific work on the vanished culture on the mesa seems sincere, it still involves white men reinforcing their own homosocial

bond with each other by objectifying and recreating a silenced culture in their own image and for their own purposes. Although the Professor does not practice science himself, in his remembering of Tom as the anthropologist hero of “Tom Outland’s Story,” he creates a doppelgänger who does practice science and idealizes that science as an admirable masculine alternative to the feminizing technoscience of industrial consumer culture. So like Victor, the Professor rejects the accepted science favored by the institution in which he works and pursues a renegade science that will uphold his white masculine power.

While many critics have noted the consequences of Tom’s anthropology for the Native culture on the Mesa, none have discussed its similar implications for white women. These consequences extend beyond the mesa and into the St. Peters’ home and reveal another way in which *The Professor’s House* echoes Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to critique male homosociality as a response to industrial consumer culture. Like Elizabeth, Justine and Caroline, who are abject corpses by the end of *Frankenstein*, the women in *The Professor’s House* are presented as monstrous women. However, these women are aligned with the uncanny busts in the Professor’s office, and Tom and the Professor can be interpreted as the real monsters since they project their own monstrosity onto these women by depicting Lillian as a manipulator, St. Peter’s daughters as petty consumers, and Mother Eve as an adulteress. In *Frankenstein*, Victor’s misogynistic impulses and negation of the female reproductive role are expressed through the Creature’s grotesque appearance and violent actions. Victor blames the Creature for the deaths of William, Justine, Elizabeth, and his father but does not recognize his own responsibility in the unnatural circumstances surrounding the creation of the Creature. In *The Professor’s House*, St. Peter does not acknowledge Tom as monstrous. Instead, he continues to view his creature as

embodying a masculine ideal and displaces this monstrousness onto the female characters in the novel. As a result of the homosocial bonding between Tom and the Professor and the masculinizing sciences practiced on the mesa, women are marginalized and made abject in *The Professor's House*. Echoing Shelley, Cather reveals through the Professor's misrepresentation of women that the monstrousness in *The Professor's House* is indeed the male homosociality and practice of a masculinizing science that is oppressive to women.

Just like the men in *Frankenstein*, Tom and the Professor retain narrative control in *The Professor's House*, and all female perspectives are excluded which allow these men to project their own monstrousness onto the female figures. Cather illustrates the marginal position of women in the novel and their alienation within the narrative structure. Just as Mary Shelley and Margaret Walton Saville lie outside the margins of *Frankenstein*, Cather's own experiences at Mesa Verde in 1915 frame *The Professor's House*, and lie directly outside the text. Also, like Safie at the center of the *Frankenstein*, Mother Eve is contained on the other end of the margin in the center of *The Professor's House*.¹⁴ Cather positions female characters in the margins of the novel to signify the marginalization of women by male characters.

And so, the Professor paints the women at home as monstrous. For example, Lillian St. Peter is often falsely presented by her husband as a tediously petty and acquisitive woman; however, the novel makes clear that she is in actuality trivialized and oppressed by the male homosocial relations between Tom and her husband.¹⁵ The Professor's cold assessments of his wife are often quite resentful and demeaning. She is described as "unreasonable," "intolerant," "intense and positive[, ...] like a chiseled surface, a die, a stamp upon which he could not be beaten out any longer. If her character were reduced to an heraldic device, it would be a hand (a

beautiful hand) holding flaming arrows — the shaft of her violent loves and hates, her clear-cut ambitions” (25, 250). St. Peter is equally deprecating in his description of what for him are Lillian’s wearisome and trivial interests. While describing her affection for their sons-in-law, the Professor notes that she “wasn’t going to have to face the stretch of boredom between being a young woman and being a young grandmother. She was less intelligent and more sensible than he had thought her” (65). St. Peter’s estimations of his wife are oppressive in their rendering of her life and interests as insignificant next to his own.

In a similar fashion, St. Peter’s daughters are misrepresented as annoyingly materialistic and shallow, which also facilitates his homosocial bond with Tom. Characterizing them in such a light subjugates these women and justifies the male exchanges of power between the Professor and Tom. For example, Rosamond is portrayed as unchaste, greedy, and self-centered by St. Peter, as seen in his description of his daughter after their shopping trip in Chicago. The Professor notes her unwavering materialism: “I should say she has a faultless purchasing manner. Wonder where a girl who grew up in that old house of ours ever got it. She was like Napoleon looting the Italian palaces” (135). As previously noted by Honor McKittrick Wallace, Rosamond’s overt consumerism associates her with promiscuity, since materialism is often described as sexual lasciviousness — an association with even greater oppressive connotations (152). Also, St. Peter makes a point of degrading Rosamond’s physical appearance. Although said to be considered beautiful by most, the Professor only sees her flaws: “Her father, though he was very proud of her, demurred from the general opinion”; “[in] the low room she seemed very tall indeed, a little out of drawing, as, to her father’s eye, she so often did” (27, 46). As one of the only female figures within the homosocial triangle with her father and Tom, Rosamond’s

subordination is pronounced in her father's depreciation of her which is symbolized in his focus on her physical imperfections: "He thought her too tall, with rather awkward carriage. She stooped a trifle, and was wide in the hips and shoulders" (26). The Professor devalues Rosamond's femininity to strengthen his bond with Tom, especially since the Professor so strongly admires Tom's physical appearance. In the same way, the Professor criticizes and belittles Kathleen. He describes an aversion to her character: "There was something too plucky, too 'I can-go-it-alone,' about her quick step and jaunty little head; he didn't like it, it gave him a sudden pang" (52). The Professor paints his daughters as frivolous women which leaves them appearing as monstrous as their mother.

The monstrousness of the female characters in the novel is figured in the busts who, like the mummified body of Mother Eve, greatly resemble the Creature in their uncanny status as inanimate yet somehow living. A filthy creation composed of human remains representing at once the dead and the living, the Creature is abject and uncanny. Once animated, the Creature still appears dead with "his shriveled complexion, and straight black lips" (85). Victor's reaction to his Creature emphasizes his uncanniness. Quickly moving between fascination and disgust, Victor "had desired [to create the Creature] 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" (85). The busts also exist in this kind of in-betweenness of the living and inanimate and provoke a similar reaction in the Professor. The first is described by St. Peter as "a full-length female figure in a smart wire skirt with a trim metal waist line" which "had no legs, as one could see all too well...But St. Peter contended that it had a nervous system" (10). He even imagines it as a living being with "a sprightly, tricky air, as if it were going out for the

evening to make a great show of being harum-scarum, giddy, *folle*” (10). But just as the Creature is at once revolting and attractive to Victor, the busts evoke the same uncanny appeal for the Professor. He notes that

[though] this figure looked so ample and billowy (as if you might lay your head upon its deep-breathing softness and rest safe forever), if you touched it you suffered a severe shock, no matter how many times you had touched it before...It was dead, opaque, lumpy solidity, like chunks of putty, or tightly packed sawdust — very disappointing to the tactile sense, yet somehow always fooling you again. For no matter how often you had bumped up against that torso, you could never believe that contact with it would be as bad as it was. (9)

Like Victor Frankenstein with his Creature, the Professor is at once revolted and captivated by the busts. Resembling the Creature, the busts become surrogates of the oppressed female characters in the novel. First, the Professor identifies them as replacements for the real women in his life when he refers to them as a metonymy for a real female body: “[‘the bust’] was a headless, armless female torso, covered in strong black cotton, and so richly developed in the part for which it was named that the Professor once explained to Augusta how, in calling it so, she followed a natural law of language, termed, for convenience, metonymy” (9). Like Victor Frankenstein, who seeks to usurp the maternal function through the creation of his Creature, the Professor takes note of how the busts evoke the maternal as replacements for the women in the novel when he mentions “certain disappointments they recalled” and the “cruel biological necessity they imply” and insists to Augusta, “you can’t have my women” even as he distances himself from the living women in his life (12-13). As surrogates of the women in *The Professor’s*

House, the busts physically recall Lillian, Rosamond, Kathleen, and Mother Eve. For one, the busts are headless, which represents what the Professor perceives as Lillian and the daughters' foolishness. Also, with "its glistening ribs, and its bosom resembled a strong wire bird-cage" placed high above the house in the attic, the second bust recalls Mother Eve, with her "ribs sticking out through the dried flesh," located up on Cliff City (10, 191). Like the busts which are objects personified and brought to life by the Professor, Mother Eve is an inanimate body that comes alive with her characterization and mythology envisioned by the men on the mesa, which is in fact the Professor's perception as the storyteller. Like the Creature, who is unknown to the homosocial Walton throughout most of the narrative and only remains within his imagination until Victor's death, the busts and Mother Eve are unknowable by the men who personify them as animate objects. Just as Victor ambivalently moves from attraction to disgust for his Creature, the Professor finds the bust, and therefore the women in the novel, simultaneously appealing and horrifying. Echoing *Frankenstein*, Cather is critical of the Professor's reaction to the uncanny figures. Like Shelley who paints the Creature in a sympathetic light, Cather wants the reader to also understand that what may seem abject and monstrous is not always as it appears.

By reading the Professor's reaction to the busts as parallel to Victor's reaction to his Creature, we can see that just as Victor misjudges the Creature and then rejects him to enter into a masculinizing homosocial bond with Walton, the Professor misjudges the women of the St. Peter family, and he views them as monstrous in order to strengthen his homosocial bond with Tom and to reaffirm his masculine power. Just as Shelley's representation of the Creature and his experiences with the De Laceys paints him in a more sympathetic light, Cather's portrayal of Lillian shows that, contrary to St. Peter's description of her harshness and frivolousness, Lillian

is one of the most caring and thoughtful characters in the novel. For instance, after the Professor arrives very late walking home from the train station, Lillian was concerned and “[her] heart ached for Godfrey” (136). Also, although the Professor dismisses Lillian’s concern for her sons-in-law as a trifling new love affair, she remains genuinely concerned for their well-being. She makes sure Tom Outland settles into Hamilton, and she protects Louie after he is rejected by St. Peter (104, 32). Like Victor Frankenstein’s misrepresentations of his Creature, St. Peter’s annoyance with his wife is a result of his own inner struggles with anxiety about gender, especially since he notes that when they were young, “he was very much in love and must marry at once” (21-2). In fact, Cather portrays Lillian as very patient with St. Peter while he spends his time remembering Tom and struggling to reaffirm his masculine power. He isolates himself from his family in the old house and makes hostile comments, such as his speculation that Euripides was driven to live in a cave after a life surrounded with women (136). If Cather were using Lillian simply to criticize American consumer culture and materialism, she would not offer these subtle hints that St. Peter misrepresents Lillian’s character. Like the Creature to Walton and Victor, the Professor misrepresents Lillian as monstrousness to facilitate his homosocial bond with Tom.

Any negativity projected onto Lillian is usually associated with her sudden dislike for Tom Outland, the mythologized hero of the novel. Dismissing Lillian as stereotypically foolish and resentful, St. Peter notes, “It was not until Outland was a senior that Lillian began to be jealous of him. He had been almost a member of the family for two years, and she had never found fault with the boy. But after the Professor began to take Tom up to the study and talk over his work with him, began to make a companion of him, then Mrs. St. Peter withdrew her

favour” (151). The Professor also takes note of a sly comment made by Lillian about how his affection for Tom exceeds that for Scott and Louie. Observing his lack of enthusiasm for being a father-in-law, Lillian points out to the Professor, “it’s because you didn’t get the son-in-law you wanted. And yet [Louie] was highly colored too” (38). Lillian’s apparent animosity for Tom is somewhat strange since she appears to be quite fond of him when he first arrives in Hamilton: “[in] those first few months Mrs. St. Peter saw more of their protégé than her husband did. She found him a good boarding-place, took care that he had proper summer clothes and that he no longer addressed her as ‘Ma’am’” (104). Just as Victor misrepresents his Creature and renders him monstrous after the Creature exposes Victor’s violent rejection of him, St. Peter construes Lillian as jealous once she denounces the young suitor for reasons that are not explained, but that a careful reading reveals to be justified. What turns Lillian away from Tom is his unethical courting of both Rosamond and Kathleen. Tom kept a very close relationship with both daughters, and it was “only with the two little girls did he ever speak freely and confidentially about himself” (106). It is also noted that Tom “liked being so attractive to them. A flush of pleasure would come over Tom’s face — so much fairer now than when he first arrived in Hamilton — if Kathleen caught his hand and tried to squeeze it hard enough to hurt, crying: ‘Oh, Tom, tell us about the time...’” (106). While it is Rosamond who finally becomes engaged to Tom, Kathleen’s romantic affection for him is quite obvious. She identifies herself as Tom’s actual love interest and claims a part of him as hers when she declares to her father that “Now that Rosamond has Outland, I consider Tom’s mesa entirely my own” (112). And these feelings do not appear to have been unrequited. After Christmas supper with the St. Peters, Kathleen and Scott have a conversation which may appear confusing and unclear, but becomes clearer in light

of her affections for Tom. It appears that Scott remains insecure about Kathleen's feelings for him because he knows that Kathleen has been intimate with Tom, perhaps even sexually intimate. Kathleen hints that her affections were returned by Tom when, after Scott asks whether she thinks her sister still harbors romantic feelings for Tom, she replies,

"But, oh, Scott, I do love you very much!" she cried vehemently.

He pinched off his driving-glove between his knees and snuggled his hand over hers, inside her muff.

"Sure?" he muttered.

"Yes, I do!" she said fiercely, squeezing his knuckles together with all her might.

"Awful nice of you to have told me all about it at the start, Kitty. Most girls wouldn't have thought it necessary. I'm the only one who knows, ain't I?"

"The only one who has ever known". (92-93)

What appears to be Tom's courting of both daughters is further reinforced by St. Peter's acknowledgement of the strangeness in Kathleen's engagement to Scott (53). Announced directly after Rosie and Tom's promises of marriage, Kathleen's speedy engagement to Scott appears to have been the easiest way to cope with her jealousy and broken heart. If it is the case that Tom was courting both daughters, or at least behaving inappropriately with Kathleen while engaged to Rosamond, Lillian would surely have known or suspected it. By including this sub-plot, Cather makes it clear that Lillian's contempt for Tom is not jealousy, as her unknowing husband assumes, but anger at his inconsiderate treatment of her daughters. In fact, Lillian directly criticizes Tom's lack of skill in personal relations, as the Professor acknowledges when he remembers, "Mrs. St. Peter had insisted that [Tom] was not altogether straightforward; but that

was merely because he was not altogether consistent. As an investigator he was clear-sighted and hard-headed; but in personal relations he was apt to be exaggerated and quixotic” (151). For this reason, it is understandable that Lillian would treat Scott and Louie much differently than Tom. Hence, just as the Creature is misrepresented by Victor and Walton as a fiend, Lillian is misconstrued as a jealous and short-sighted housewife by her husband due to his own preoccupation with his anxieties about his masculine identity. In reality, Lillian’s behavior is a result of Tom’s licentiousness, her husband’s neglect, and the homosocial bond between them which facilitates the marginalization of both mother and daughters.

As with their mother, the novel subtly suggests that, like Victor’s Creature, Rosamond and Kathleen are generous and meaningful characters misrepresented by their father. Although St. Peter implies that Rosamond is greedy with her inheritance — especially through his talks with Kathleen and Mrs. Crane — she proves more unselfish than expected by offering her father a new office, access to Tom’s money, and an all-expense paid journey to France (47-48). Similarly, Kathleen and Rosamond are important to their father’s work and not just hindrances as he often seems to consider them. He notes,

When he was writing his best, he was conscious of pretty little girls in fresh dresses — of flowers and greens in the comfortable, shabby sitting-room — of his wife’s good looks and good taste — even of a better dinner than usual under preparation downstairs. All the while he had been working so fiercely at his eight big volumes, he was not insensible to the domestic drama that went on beneath him.... [S]o, to him, the most important chapters of his history were interwoven with personal memories. (84-85)

His work is literally intertwined with his daughters when he opens the box in his office that contains Augusta's work, which functions as a metonym for the girls themselves:

At one end of the upholstered box were piles of note-books and bundles of manuscript tied up in square packages with mason's cord. At the other end were many little rolls of patterns, cut out of newspapers and tied with bits of ribbon, gingham, silk, georgette; notched charts which followed the changing stature and figures of the Misses St. Peter from early childhood to womanhood. In the middle of the box, patterns and manuscripts interpenetrated. (13)

Passages like these suggest that the daughters are not just empty consumers but are essential to the Professor's creative process and writing. Just as Victor misrepresents his Creature as evil and monstrous in his bonding with Walton, the Professor's homosociality with Tom results in the marginalization of his daughters as superficial and frivolous female characters.

In *Frankenstein*, the Creature as a feminized figure and the female characters — Elizabeth, Caroline, and Justine — are abject as a result of their subordination within the homosocial triangles in the novel. Similarly, not only are Lillian, Rosamond and Kathleen dismissed and marginalized, but Mother Eve, the only female presence on the mesa, is fetishized and rendered abject by the Professor as he engages in homosocial bonding and vicariously practices masculinizing, imperialistic science through his remembering of Tom. Like Victor's Creature, Mother Eve is abject and fetishized in her appearance, seeming to inhabit an uncanny state of simultaneous death and life. Like the abject Creature who is composed of human and animal cadavers, Mother Eve is an archaeological specimen that is "not a skeleton, but a dried human body," not a living presence, but an "arrested identification" (Cather 191, Raine 137).

Like the Creature with his horrific appearance that both attracts and repels his creator, Mother Eve is physically abject and symbolically fixed in a terrifying state in death. Tom notes,

We thought she had been murdered; there was a great wound in her side, the ribs stuck out through the dried flesh. Her mouth was open as if she were screaming, and her face, through all those years, had kept a look of terrible agony. Part of the nose was gone, but she had plenty of teeth, not one missing, and a great deal of coarse black hair...Henry named her Mother Eve. (192)

Mother Eve also recalls the Creature's unfinished mate that Victor destroys: like the female Creature who is created but never animated, Mother Eve hovers between life and death since she is at once a skeleton and a living presence. The two female figures are also linked by name, since the Creature and his mate would have been a monstrous Adam and Eve — the first of their kind. In fact, the Creature refers to a mate as his "Eve" (Shelley 156). In addition to her abject appearance, Mother Eve also resembles *Frankenstein's* two Creatures in that she is subordinated and misrepresented by the male characters on the mesa just as Victor's Creature is rejected and misrepresented by Victor and Walton. Tom and Father Duchene mythologize her as an Eve figure, which superimposes Western patriarchal notions of female sinfulness onto the remains of this aboriginal woman. Just as Victor and Walton misrepresent the Creature as a fiend or devil, Tom and Father Duchene insert Mother Eve into a Christian tradition that holds the biblical Eve accountable for original sin and the banishment of humankind from Paradise. In reality, Mother Eve is a mummified Indian woman, not the Eve of the Book of Genesis, and has nothing to do with the Western myths and misreadings associated with her by these imperialistic explorers. In an interesting twist of fate, Henry is killed by a snake bite, which harks back to the Book of

Genesis and the biblical Eve who was equally ruined by a serpent and was later mythologized by Christianity as exemplary of sexual temptation (194). By including this detail, Cather warns against the domination of women through patriarchal myth-making by the men on Blue Mesa and their inappropriate use of Judeo-Christian tradition. To critique these racist and patriarchal practices, Cather echoes the *Frankenstein* narrative by portraying Mother Eve as an uncanny figure who recalls Victor's Creature and his "Eve" and who facilitates both the homosociality between men in the novel and Tom's masculinizing anthropology. However, unlike Elizabeth and the Creature's "Eve" in *Frankenstein*, who both end up as abject corpses, Mother Eve rejects her subordination and her misogynistic characterization by refusing to leave the Blue Mesa and falling to the bottom of Black Canyon (221). This resistance makes her less like Shelley's murdered women and more like the Creature as a subordinated feminized figure who criticizes Victor in the embedded narrative at the center of Shelley's novel. By falling into the canyon, Mother Eve implicitly denounces the Professor and Tom's homosocial bonds and scientific practices — a final destruction Cather uses to indicate that the homosocial bonds and masculine sciences are violently disastrous, and that ultimately, these men cannot successfully control and dominate women.

Going further than Shelley in her resistance to the male homosocial bonding which marginalizes women, Cather includes the character of Augusta, who serves to emphasize the Professor's marginalization of women and especially maternal bodies. Although a domestic servant, Augusta is the only female character depicted in a truly positive light. Much like Margaret Saville in *Frankenstein*, who is the only female character not killed off in the course of the story but whose body is completely absent from the text, Augusta is desexualized and viewed

by the Professor as a non-maternal body. To illustrate, the Professor highlights Augusta's celibacy when he asks her about the Magnificat which Augusta believes was composed by none other than the Virgin Mary (83-4). As a result, Augusta is not the victim of the homosocial bonding or phallogentric and racist science that cause the marginalization and misrepresentation of the other female characters. The fact that Augusta, who is viewed as non-reproductive by the Professor, is unaffected by St. Peter's homosocial bond with Tom accentuates his subordination of Lillian, Kathleen, and Rosamond who are all literally or potentially maternal and also associated with the busts that represent reproductive femininity, as well as of Mother Eve whose nickname evokes the maternal. Augusta's relationship with St. Peter reveals that his remembering of and homosociality with Tom and his marginalization of women are motivated by an anxiety about sexual reproduction that motivates him, like Victor, to reaffirm his masculine power. Like Victor Frankenstein's act of parthenogenesis, St. Peter's interest in the Magnificat — associated with a sexless pregnancy — emphasizes his anxiety about the reproductive body. Similarly, Augusta's connection to the busts in the attic equally stresses St. Peter's subordination of women in the novel. Unlike the other female characters, Augusta is not aligned with the busts by the Professor; she owns them. They are hers, and when she comes to move them to the new house, the Professor becomes very difficult and will hear nothing of it. She controls them and even understands their monstrousness: "she periodically apologized for their presence" (10). Not aligned with them but in control of them, she is then a desexualized female character instead of a victim of the Professor and Tom's homosocial bond and masculinizing science, which only further highlights the subordination of maternal female figures in the novel.

Unlike Victor's Creature, Tom doesn't initially appear monstrous and his relationship with the Professor is not an obvious violent rivalry that ends in their mutual destruction. However, Cather's ending to *The Professor's House* follows Shelley's novel in suggesting that homosociality is destructive not only to women and racial minorities but also to the men who engage in the homosocial bond. Just like the Creature who disappears into the Arctic to die alone, Tom perishes during the war alone and far from Hamilton. Although Tom is never rejected by the Professor and does not exert a murderous vengeance, his fate ultimately resembles the Creature's. Similarly, like the crazed Victor Frankenstein who chases the Creature to the Arctic and towards his own death, the Professor tries to follow his doppelgänger to his death when he almost asphyxiates from the gas emitted from his stove — previously connected to the image of gas used in the war and thus to Tom's death (253). Although not entirely apparent at first, the parallels between *The Professor's House* and *Frankenstein* further suggest that the white male strategy to create a doppelgänger in response to industrial culture and to engage in misogynistic and racist homosociality is destructive to the men involved.

Aside from all the correlations between *Frankenstein* in *The Professor's House*, Cather makes one important distinction in her novel which suggests that she envisions life after a crisis of white masculinity: the fate of the female characters and the Professor in Cather's novel contrasts with that of the female figures and Victor in *Frankenstein*. For one, while the women in *Frankenstein* have all perished by the novel's close, the female characters of *The Professor's House* find a way to reassert themselves. The St. Peter women live out their domestic lives, and Mother Eve stays with the mesa. Although desexualized by the Professor, Augusta reaffirms her feminine power by saving the Professor from his own destruction in the attic instead of being a

female victim to the homosocial bonds. Further, the Professor does not follow the same fate as Victor Frankenstein. St. Peter returns to his family and new house after — albeit implied — a temporary leave from them. Unlike Victor who perishes along with his monster, the Professor successfully kills his creature. With his story told, Tom is mummified like Mother Eve, and the real Tom is dead next to the ideal Tom enshrined in storytelling. Shelley understood the male crisis as leading only to death, since the Creature and Victor perish in the Arctic and have lost everyone dear to them. Cather suggests the possibility of a successful movement away from this cycle of oppression and violence — something Shelley didn't seem to consider feasible.

Notes: Chapter 1

¹ In addition to Rosowski, Thomas Strychacz has considered the use of Gothic conventions in Cather's fiction. While highlighting Poe's influence on Cather, Strychacz argues that *The Professor's House* evokes Gothic elements as found in Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," such as claustrophobia and psychological torment. For Rosowski, most of Cather's fiction displays elements affiliated with the Gothic tradition. At one point, she verges on making a connection between *The Professor's House* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*. She contends that, "St. Peter conveys the dark, brooding mystery of the Faustian Gothic hero" (215). Unfortunately, Rosowski does not elaborate upon or defend her connection. As a derivative of the Promethean hero which is alluded to in the full title of *Frankenstein*, the Faustian hero is the closest association made between St. Peter and Victor Frankenstein to date. Both the Promethean and Faustian heroes egotistically seek to transcend their earthly limitations by sacrificing their morality.

² Critics who read St. Peter as representing Cather's perspective include Fritz Oehlschlaeger, Janis P. Stout, John B. Gleason, Hsiao-ling Ying, and Michael Schueth.

³ For specific examples in Cather's letters and interviews which contain her opinions on mass culture, see John Hilgart (379).

⁴ It should be noted that Cather's racial sentiments and racism has been much debated and questioned by critics. Although she was fond of Native American culture and nostalgic for the past that it represented, she wasn't fond of "real, live Indians" (Harris 8). When asked to help with their plight, "[she] stubbornly resisted Mabel Luhan's repeated attempts to enlist her support in efforts to save [contemporary Pueblos]" (Harris 7). Critics such as Schroeter and Pizer note that Cather often displayed anti-Semitism in her writing, including essays and interviews (367-68, 58). Considering such evidence, it would seem that Cather shared Tom and the Professor's racism. However, I argue that Cather is critical of the effects of masculinizing and imperialistic male endeavors, such as the homosocial bond and colonial sciences, which are demeaning and oppressive to racial minorities. Although critics have pointed out her own racism, the treatment of the Native culture in *The Professor's House* clearly problematizes these arguments.

⁵ See Matthew Wilson, Jean Schwind, Scott Herring, Stephen L. Tanner, Honor McKitrick Wallace, and David Stouck for more on the Professor and Tom's wavering relation to material culture, consumerism, and the domestic realm.

⁶ See Stuart Burrows and Michael Leddy for further discussion on the physical spaces in *The Professor's House*.

⁷ For more on the homo/heterosexual debate, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Ian F. A. Bell, Scott Herring, Jonathan Goldberg, John Anders, and Christopher Nealon. According to Goldberg, there are very specific gay undertones found in the novel (332). Also, Anders places Cather within a gay American literary tradition and argues that she alludes to writers such as Pierre Loti, Walter Pater, and Marcel Proust: “St Peter’s love for Tom Outland as that between a teacher and his student, Cather follows in a tradition of homoerotic literature ranging from the ‘pedagogic eros of the Greeks’ to Henry James’s ‘The Pupil’” (99).

⁸ Critics David Harrell and Ann Moseley have taken note of the circular structure of the narrative in Cather’s novel.

⁹ Although the timeline of Tom’s life would suggest that he first practices masculinizing sciences and then moves on to a feminizing one, I am concerned with the Professor’s remembering of Tom and his becoming the Professor’s doppelgänger which would first have him practicing feminizing physics and then place him on the mesa according to narrative’s sequence of events.

¹⁰ Trout also notes that Tom’s engine is an imaginative construction on Cather’s part by retracing the history of aircraft engines (“Rebuilding the Outland Engine” 274). He also associates Tom’s engine with the real-life Liberty Engine.

¹¹ For more on Tom as colonizer, see Sarah Wilson, Eric Aronoff, Charles L. Crow, Deborah Karush, and Walter Benn Michaels. While these critics argue that Tom’s endeavors are racist and neo-colonial, I connect Tom’s anthropology with the Professor’s creation of him as his doppelgänger and the Professor’s anxieties towards race.

¹² For more on Tom as museum curator, see Charles L. Crow and Anne Raine.

¹³ See Eric Aronoff and Anne Raine for more on Tom's objectification of the Native American culture on the mesa. See also David Stouck and Matthew Wilson for an examination of Cather's historicity.

¹⁴ The structure of the novel moves inward and then doubles on itself outward like *Frankenstein*, with the Professor's narrative encompassing Tom Outland's story as Victor's encompasses the Creature's. Mother Eve, who appears in the middle, represents the margin where the novel begins to regress and revert upon itself like the tip of a cone. The other opposing margin would hold Cather like Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein* (see chapter one).

¹⁵ For a defense of Lillian St. Peter, see Jean Schwind, Margaret Doane, Stephen L. Tanner, Alice Bell, and Jean Tsien.

“[B]ecoming aware that there were two of me”:

Seeing Black Frankensteinian Doubles in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*

The black tradition is double-voiced.

(Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* xxv)

I sing the body electric

(Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*)

In the first lines of the Prologue to Ellison’s novel, the Invisible Man assures his reader, “I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids — and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me” (3). “One of the Hollywood-movie ectoplasms” that the Invisible Man is referring to is the main character with the same name in James Whale’s 1933 film *The Invisible Man*, based on H.G. Wells’ 1897 novel.¹ While the Prologue’s narrator distances himself from the only invisible man in Hollywood at the time, Ellison equally separates his novel from Whale’s famous film version of *Frankenstein* by instead echoing Shelley’s novel and the original legendary myth in *Invisible Man*. Whether or not Ellison read *Frankenstein* or was even acquainted with the tale can only be assumed: there is no concrete evidence to support Ellison’s interest in or knowledge of Mary Shelley’s work. However, what can be confirmed is the popularity of *Frankenstein* and its film adaptations around the time Ellison wrote *Invisible Man*. Between 1940 and 1950, Shelley’s *Frankenstein* enjoyed widespread circulation with ten different editions printed in the United States alone.² In the years before Ellison wrote *Invisible Man*, “[between] 1931 and 1948, Universal produced eight *Frankenstein* films” (Hitchcock 163). The double feature was a huge success: “New York’s Rialto ran ten sold-out showings a

day” (Hitchcock 183). Regardless of whether Ellison was familiar with the film versions of *Frankenstein*, reading Shelley’s novel and *Invisible Man* together reveals similarities and patterns as found in other twentieth century novels by Cather, Morrison and Palahniuk.

With only two critics connecting Ellison and Shelley, *Invisible Man* and *Frankenstein* are not usually read alongside one another. However, Elizabeth Young points out that there is a tradition of black *Frankenstein* narratives that may have influenced Ellison. In her study *Black Frankenstein*, Young notes that Paul Laurence Dunbar includes in his 1902 novel *The Sport of the Gods* a chapter entitled “Frankenstein” in which he adapts Shelley’s story to criticize white supremacy and black subservience and to escape his own constructed racial identity as monstrous. Since Dunbar was one of the most important black American writers of the late nineteenth century, this novel may have been known to Ellison. Lisa Yaszek reads Ellison’s novel as another black *Frankenstein* narrative which places the narrator in the Creature position fighting against white culture and power.³ While agreeing with Yaszek that *Invisible Man* is a black *Frankenstein* narrative, I focus on how Ellison echoes a Frankensteinian framework in his novel to criticize the narrator’s hyper-masculine response to anxieties fueled by an industry of technological advancement, represented here by electricity. His response of creating the Invisible Man who turns into his doppelgänger and facilitates homosociality with other men is motivated by a desire to reaffirm male power and gain freedom and agency as a black man. As Yaszek argues, the narrator first appears to be a Creature figure fabricated by white culture and rejected as a racialized monster. However, I argue that he also functions as a Victor figure. By focusing on the narrator’s similarities to Victor Frankenstein, I show how *Invisible Man* echoes Shelley’s

critique of male homosociality by showing how homosocial bonding between black and white men results in the abjection and marginalization of women and other racial minorities.

Although the narrator in Ellison's novel is a disenfranchised black man and not a privileged white male like Victor Frankenstein, he resembles Victor in that he creates a doppelgänger to transform his gender and racial identity and to acquire some form of agency as a black man. Echoing Victor, who manufactures his Creature in his laboratory with a rebellious and masculinizing science, the narrator defiantly fabricates his doppelgänger during his electroshock therapy, which is meant to subdue him, in the factory hospital. However, where Victor uses a renegade science during the creation of the Creature to reaffirm his white masculine authority, the narrator creates his doppelgänger, the Invisible Man, who appropriates electricity to achieve autonomy and agency. Furthering the parallel between *Frankenstein* and the *Invisible Man*, the creation of the narrator's doppelgänger facilitates his homosocial relations with other black and white men, which then enhances his masculine power and offers him freedom as a black man. However, as in *Frankenstein*, the practice of subversive science and homosociality is not without consequence. Just as the female figures and then the Creature in *Frankenstein* are marginalized and abjected as a result of male homosocial bonding, in *Invisible Man* the female and black male characters, including the Invisible Man himself, are marginalized, disenfranchised and made abject by the narrator's homosocial bonds. Although Ellison's narrator has similar motivations as Victor and Professor St. Peter in that he seeks masculine authority and power, he also differs from them since he is a black man trying to challenge existing power structures and gain the freedom and agency that were previously denied to him and reserved for white men. In the end, however, the narrator only reinforces existing power structures and

creates a cycle of violence and destruction. Like Victor Frankenstein, whose monster gains full control over him in the isolated Arctic and sends him to his death, the narrator ends up alone in his manhole where his body is taken over by the Invisible Man, who also takes control of the story as the narrator of the Prologue and Epilogue. Yet this creation's destruction of his creator in *Invisible Man* is presented differently from in Shelley's novel, and Ellison, like Cather, envisions life after the male crisis.

Reading Ellison's novel as a Frankensteinian narrative reveals that the narrator of *Invisible Man* is an active creator figure and not simply a docile Creature figure created by other white men as some have assumed. This reading also reveals that Ellison's novel is not misogynistic, as many critics have argued, but rather follows Shelley's in criticizing sexist and racist male responses to anxieties about gender and race in a culture of industry and technological advancement. Although many critics have already examined the failure of the Brotherhood to offer true freedom to the narrator, they have not recognized the extent to which Ellison's critique of this failure echoes Shelley's earlier critique of the failure of the homosocial strategy. In the final pages of *Frankenstein*, Shelley warns that Victor's racist and phallogentric attempts to reassert his white male power in the age of the Industrial Revolution are fleeting since they only end in destruction and violence. In the end of *Invisible Man*, Ellison similarly cautions against the narrator's creation of a doppelgänger and the subsequent interracial homosocial relations with members of the Brotherhood which only perpetuate the marginalization and abjection of others that the narrator initially experienced at the beginning of his story. These similarities underscore Ellison's critique of sexism and racism rather than his complicity with them.

At first glance, the narrator of *Invisible Man* bears many resemblances to the Creature in *Frankenstein*: both are subordinated, rejected, and docile objects created by powerful white men for their own aggrandizement. Like the Creature who is pieced together with dismembered body parts, the narrator is put together by powerful male characters and governing bodies as they see fit. A “skilled scientist,” Norton fashions the narrator as a racial inferior (Ellison 37). Echoing Victor Frankenstein who felt that “life and death appeared to [him] ideal bounds” while making a Creature that would credit him as the maker of his race and would reaffirm his racial power, Norton considers the narrator as “somehow connected with [his] destiny” and understands his white privilege as contingent upon the narrator whose inferiority confirms for Norton his own racial authority (Shelley 81, Ellison 41). Norton’s white power depends on the denial of power to all other racial groups — the master is dependent on the slave for self-recognition as such.⁴ Also similar to Victor, who creates the Creature in his own image and then engages in a homoerotic rivalry with his monster, Emerson projects his own fantasies onto the narrator and turns him into a homoerotic object for his own white male empowerment. Emerson encourages the narrator to “throw off the mask of custom and manners that insulates man from man” while clearly attracted to the racist fantasies of primitivism and black male sexuality which only serve to reinforce Emerson’s racial power (186). Although Victor is not as obvious or forward as Emerson, his homosocial bond with the Creature has homoerotic undertones and insinuations, as seen in his initial description of his creature. The narrator also resembles the Creature in his association with the working class. While many critics have identified the Creature as a metaphor for the disenfranchised factory workers, the narrator of *Invisible Man* is similarly disempowered as a black laborer at Liberty Paints.⁵ Like the early nineteenth-century factory worker that the

Creature represents in *Frankenstein*, the narrator and his under-appreciated counterpart Lucius Brockway are exploited workers who remain essential to the labor machine yet powerless in comparison to the white men who control the industry. Reading Ellison's *Invisible Man* alongside Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the narrator appears at the outset to be a Creature figure since powerful — and for the most part white — male figures resembling Victor Frankenstein mold him into a submissive object for their own confirmation of gender and white power.

Although the narrator appears to be a Creature figure, he also has many similarities to Victor Frankenstein. Shelley opens *Frankenstein* by representing Victor as passive and feminized, which rouses a desire for masculine power that motivates the creation of his Creature. In a similar manner, Ellison introduces the narrator of *Invisible Man* as emasculated, suggesting that he too creates his Invisible Man out of a yearning to solidify his masculine authority. However, while Victor's feminization is associated with his domesticity in the Frankenstein household, the narrator's emasculation is linked to his humiliation at Battle Royal. Although Victor's feminization is less devastating than the narrator's emasculation, in both cases the threat to masculine power stimulates a similar anxiety about gender and race which results in the creation of a doppelgänger. At Battle Royal, the narrator is feminized and symbolically castrated through his mistreatment by white men and his alignment with the objectified female figure Ellison calls the "magnificent blonde" (19). While the narrator attends the event expecting to feel emancipated by breaking racial stereotypes through education and rational speech, he is instead symbolically castrated and reminded of his racial inferiority when he is turned from a guest speaker into a spectacle fighting other black men blindfolded, struggling over coins on an electrified rug, and watching the magnificent blonde. The narrator is feminized as the opposite to

the dominant and powerful white men who represent patriarchal power at Battle Royal. Upon entering, the narrator takes note of the influential men in the room. He relates, “I was shocked to see some of the most important men of the town quite tipsy. They were all there — bankers, lawyers, judges, doctors, fire-chiefs, teachers, merchants. Even one of the more fashionable pastors” (18). The extent of their privilege and power as white men is symbolized in their overindulgence, forcefulness, and lack of restraint: “[all] of the town’s big shots were there in their tuxedos, wolfing down the buffet foods, drinking beer and whiskey and smoking black cigars,” and one is described as an “intoxicated panda” with “beefy fingers” while “[c]hairs went crashing, drinks were spilt, as they ran laughing and howling after [the magnificent blonde]” (17, 20). While at Battle Royal, the narrator is opposed to these men and feminized as an object of humiliation and exploitation. Furthermore, just as Victor Frankenstein’s feminization is reinforced in his alignment with Elizabeth as domestic caretaker, the narrator is feminized in his identification with the magnificent blonde as an object of entertainment for the white male audience.⁶ He identifies with the unnamed female dancer when their fears are aligned: the magnificent blonde has “terror and disgust in her eyes, almost like [his] own terror and that which [he] saw in some of the other boys” (20). Similarly, while the young black men are described as huddled together with “[their] bare upper bodies touching and shining with anticipatory sweat,” they are sexual objects for the powerful men at Battle Royal in the same way as the magnificent blonde who dances for their entertainment (18). Although the narrator is made to watch the magnificent blonde and participate in the scopophilia of the white men, he is equally the object of the white male gaze. These young black men are forced to watch the woman so that in their attraction to her they become sexual objects as the white men watch them.

Although the source and degree of Victor's and the narrator's feminization differ, the narrator resembles Victor in that his feminization creates an anxiety about gender and race which fosters the desire to create a doppelgänger.

Even more than Shelley, Ellison emphasizes that the protagonist's creation of a doppelgänger in *Invisible Man* is motivated by anxieties about race as well as gender. The narrator of *Invisible Man* understands race as a part of subject formation and at first desires to separate himself from the Southern black identity that he sees as disempowering. Believing that to shed the negatively stereotypical black Southern behaviors will change who he is, the narrator is "proud to have resisted the pork chop and grits. It was an act of discipline, a sign of change that was coming over me and which would return me to college a more experienced man...Only here the distance from the campus seemed to make it clear and hard, and I thought it without fear" (178-9). While Victor seeks to reaffirm his white male power, the narrator is motivated to achieve some autonomy and agency as a black man. Nevertheless, the association between race and subject formation is an important factor in both Victor's and the narrator's motivation to create their doppelgängers.

The narrator also resembles Victor in that his quest to achieve agency and authority as a black man is rooted in anxieties about procreation. While Victor's anxieties about race and procreation are revealed in his desire to control reproduction and create a subordinate race, the narrator's anxieties are uncovered during his confrontation with the monstrous reproduction represented by the incestuous Trueblood, who fulfills black stereotypes that secure and promote racial inferiorization. In retrospect, the narrator as the Invisible Man in the Prologue recalls his past anxiety which was evoked by Trueblood: "I didn't understand in those pre-invisible days

that their hate, and mine too, was charged with fear. How all of us at the college hated the black-belt people, the ‘peasants’, during those days! We were trying to lift them up and they, like Trueblood, did everything it seemed to pull us down” (47). For the narrator, Trueblood reinforces negative and oppressive stereotypes of black men by engaging in an incestuous relationship with his daughter and living in poverty among the shack-dwellings in the former slave quarters of the black community. The narrator’s anxiety about procreation and its effect on one’s agency as a black man increases when Trueblood is rewarded by Norton in the form of a one hundred dollar bill for sustaining the negative black stereotype through his incestuous relationship with his daughter (69). The narrator is anxious not only about Trueblood’s reinforcement of black stereotypes but also about the degradation of his race through an incestuous procreation. The narrator’s anxieties about race and procreation are also rooted in his fear not only of this monstrous reproduction but also of the complete annihilation of his race, as symbolized by his work at Liberty Paints. Ellison emphasizes the narrator’s anxiety about racial purification in his working experience at Liberty Paints by using many aspects of the factory as symbols for whitewashing and racial control. For example, the narrator’s job at the factory is to achieve the proper color by dripping black liquid into the white paint “till it disappears” — a strong image for racial purification (200). Also, the entrance at Liberty Paints posts the sign “Keep America Pure with Liberty Paints” — a purity which signifies racial purification (196). Furthering the image, the color of the paint the narrator works with is named Optic White, which suggests that one can only be seen and acquire any form of social power if one is white. The racism of Liberty Paints is also reinforced by Kimbro who checks the narrator’s drip work. He encourages the metaphor of white supremacy: “That’s more like it...That’s the way it oughta be” (205). The

narrator's inability to create the perfect white paint where "a gray tinge glowed through the whiteness" symbolizes this "tightness growing inside [him]" and anxiety about black racial inferiority and the complete destruction of his race (205). Just as Victor creates the Creature to reaffirm his white male authority, the narrator's anxieties about reproduction motivate him to seize control of reproduction by creating a doppelgänger who will enable him to achieve agency as a black man.

Just as *Frankenstein* suggests that Victor's anxieties about gender and race are partly prompted by the Industrial Revolution and its association with slavery, imperialism, and England's identification as a white super power, the narrator's interaction with electricity — as a symbol for the social and cultural changes resulting from industrial development — reveals, as John Wright has argued, Ellison's own cultural anxieties about black racial identity and disenfranchisement by white-dominated capitalist technoscience in 1950s America. Ellison indicates this with the electric rug at the Battle Royal which symbolizes a powerful white phallocentric culture and its mistreatment and inferiorization of African Americans. He describes the spectacle when the narrator advances towards it:

I lunged for a yellow coin lying on the blue design of the carpet, touching it and sending a surprised shriek to join those rising around me. I tried frantically to remove my hand but could not let go. A hot, violent force tore through my body, shaking me like a wet rat. The rug was electrified. The hair bristled up on my head as I shook myself free. My muscles jumped, my nerves jangled, writhed. (27)

The rug and the narrator's relation to this coin grab are a metaphor for the economic conditions of African Americans, their dependence on white capitalist power, and the narrator's

vulnerability to systems of white male authority and dominance. However, like Victor, who practices renegade science to reaffirm his white male power, the narrator eventually recognizes that he can use the power of electricity to practice his own renegade science that enables him to find freedom from his inferiorization as a black man. When Victor witnesses lightning strike an oak tree and discovers electricity, he is “excited” and “astonish[ed],” calls electricity the “fluid from the clouds” and “dazzling light,” and links it to a superhuman or godlike status (70). Victor then uses the power of electricity to play God and create his Creature with the “spark of being” (84). Similarly, during the Battle Royal, the narrator attempts to redirect the power of the electric rug which is intended to assert control and domination: “I discovered that I could contain the electricity — a contradiction, but it works” (27). Later, in the factory hospital, he redirects the oppressive electricity to create his doppelgänger, the Invisible Man.

An alter ego or kind of psychotic split, the Invisible Man is created in the factory hospital just as the Creature is created in Frankenstein’s laboratory. Ellison’s Invisible Man differs from Shelley’s Creature in that he is not a separate character but inhabits the same body as the narrator who creates him. However, Ellison makes clear that the Invisible Man is a Frankensteinian doppelgänger since he and the Creature share similar creation scenes, evoke a sense of duality and horror, and haunt their creators. Much like the Creature, who instantly disappears after his animation and only returns towards the middle of the novel, the Invisible Man is not immediately visible or recognizable to the narrator after he is created. Instead he haunts and gradually confronts the narrator, eventually takes over his body entirely, and, as described in the Prologue and Epilogue, goes underground to practice his renegade science of stealing electricity from Monopolated Light and Power.⁷

While in the factory hospital, the narrator might appear to be the Creature figure, created by and victim to the white doctors. However, I argue that the doctors in the factory are not the Victor figures in this scene but instead serve as a catalyst to the narrator's own creation of the Invisible Man and symbolize the white power the doppelgänger is meant to rebel against. Much like M. Krempe, Victor's professor at the University Ingolstadt who challenges him and his knowledge, the doctors in the factory hospital represent dominant Western institutions and knowledge and provide motivation for the narrator to create his doppelgänger. In *Frankenstein* Professor Krempe attacks Victor's origins as well as his arcane scientific interests when he asks, "in what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies, which you have so greedily imbibed, are a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient?" (Shelley 75). Similarly, but to a much greater degree, the doctors in *Invisible Man* reject the narrator's origins and attempt to recondition his social and cultural behavior. The doctors administer electroshock therapy to the narrator to control his memory and behavior as a black racial object. According to Peter Breggin, studies show that electroshock therapy patients "[are] devastated with widespread losses not only in memory, but also in cognitive functioning — the ability to think and learn" (222). The narrator is meant to have his memories erased and his behavior controlled. The doctor is overheard by the narrator explaining that

The machine will produce the results of a prefrontal lobotomy without the negative effects of the knife...You see, instead of severing the prefrontal lobe, a single lobe, that is, we apply pressure in the proper degrees to the major centers of nerve control — our concept is Gestalt — and the result is as complete a change of personality as you'll find in your famous fairy-tale cases of criminals transformed into amiable fellows after all that

bloody business of a brain operation. And what's more... the patient is both physically and neurally whole. (236)

The electroshock therapy is meant to oppress and subdue the narrator — a direct attack on his race and social and cultural makeup. As Maureen Curtin has argued, the use of the X-rays in the hospital scenes is an attempt by the white doctors to embed the black exterior into the interior.

She associates the narrator's

equivocal condition with a kind of blackface that prompts his ostensibly disinterested doctors to adapt X-ray film and electric shock therapy, together, to induce an “unmistakable” performance of blackness and then capture it as an interior, essential truth.... That is, X-ray film converts the invisible man's convulsive performance into an objective index of an essential, pervasive, black identity (282-3).

Barbarically treating the narrator as less than human and reducing him to an experiment, the doctor disregards the detrimental effects of the electroshock therapy. When asked by an attendant, “But what of his psychology?”, the doctor responds by stating, “Absolutely of no importance!” (236). Just as Victor Frankenstein is motivated by the challenge of his professors, Ellison's narrator becomes enraged by the doctors' abusive practices and rebels against them by creating the Invisible Man. The narrator describes this anger and then the moment he awoke after creating the Invisible Man:

[S]uddenly my bewilderment suspended and I wanted to be angry, murderously angry.... For though I had seldom used my capacities for anger and indignation, I had no doubt that I possessed them; and like a man who knows he must fight, whether angry or not, when called a son of a bitch, I tried to imagine myself angry - only to discover a

deeper sense of remoteness. I was beyond angry. I was bewildered. And those above seemed to sense it. There was no avoiding the shock and I rolled with the agitate tide, out into the blackness. When I emerged...I lay experiencing the vague process of my body. I seem to have lost all sense of proportion. (238)

In this moment of creation, the narrator describes the anger which causes him to rebel against the doctors, and then the sense of disembodiment caused by the creation of the Creature figure.

The creation scene in *Invisible Man* also resembles the one in *Frankenstein* in that it is described as a symbolic birth.⁸ Victor openly identifies himself as the Creature's father, and without a female body present, symbolically gives birth to his monster. Glorifying his parthenogenetic capabilities, he states, "No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs" (Shelley 82). Similarly, the narrator compares his creation of the Invisible Man with a birthing process. After the shock treatment, and now sharing a body with his doppelgänger, the narrator describes the machine-like umbilical cord: "I felt a tug at my belly and looked down to see one of the physicians pull the cord which was attached to the stomach node, jerking me forward" (243). The experience is further aligned with a birthing process when the narrator claims that he hears a frantic woman's cries like those of a woman who is giving birth. He asks, "Who was it that screamed? Mother? But the scream came from the machine. A machine my mother?" (240). Also, there is a womb exit as found in the birthing process: "[t]he nodes off, the nurse went over me with rubbing alcohol. Then I was told to climb out of the case" (244). It might appear that this scene simply represents a symbolic rebirth for the narrator. However, Ellison emphasizes that it is actually the creation of a doppelgänger who coexists with his creator, as is confirmed by the narrator's acknowledgement of a divided self

upon leaving the hospital: “We, he, him — my mind and I — were no longer getting around in the same circles. Nor my body either” (249-50). Thus, like Victor Frankenstein in his laboratory, the narrator annexes the female reproductive role to create a new, separate being, the Invisible Man, who shares the narrator’s body but functions as his doppelgänger.

As the Invisible Man begins to reveal himself slowly, he is recognizable as a Creature figure like the one in *Frankenstein*. Akin to the Creature whose uncanniness — as both dead and living, at once human and not human — is manifested in his physical appearance, the Invisible Man is uncanny in his disembodiment or corporal ambiguity as an “alien personality lodged deep within” the narrator (249). While giving his first speech for the Brotherhood, the narrator experiences a strangeness within his own body:

I bent forward, suddenly conscious of my legs in new blue trousers. But how do you know they’re your legs? What’s your name? I thought, making a sad joke with myself....For it was as though I were looking at my own legs for the first time — independent objects that could of their own volition lead me to safety or danger. Then it was as though I stood simultaneously at opposite ends of a tunnel. I seemed to view myself from the distance of the campus while yet sitting there on a bench in the old arena.

(334)

This unfamiliarity with his body is caused by the presence of the Invisible Man. Like the physical hideousness that entraps the Creature, the Invisible Man’s invisibility is a metaphor for the stigmatization of his black body as a visual marker of his race. Since the Invisible Man shares a body with the narrator, there is not the same sense of horror and repulsion that Victor experiences when faced with his Creature. Yet, there is a similar uncomfortable awareness of the

doppelgänger's presence. Furthermore, the Invisible Man, like the Creature, laments his physical appearance. Just as the Creature is "filled with bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification" as first seeing himself in a pool of water, the Invisible Man asks, "What did *I* do to be so blue" and aligns himself with Louis Armstrong who bemoans his social stigma that his black body carries when he sings "What did I do to be so black and blue" (Shelley 139; Ellison 12, 15). Although the Creature is distressed by his physical deformity and the Invisible Man is troubled by the color of his skin, these doppelgängers share an aversion to their physical bodies symbolic of their unnatural origins.

Since the narrator and his doppelgänger share the same body, the Invisible Man slowly reveals himself in a less immediate way than the Creature; however, his gradual appearance to haunt the narrator recalls how in *Frankenstein* the Creature lurks in the shadows for the first half of the novel. Like anxious and guilt-ridden Victor after his Creature escapes his laboratory, the narrator of *Invisible Man* describes a new presence looming in the background while contemplating his future after the electroshock therapy. He notes that now "a new, painful, contradictory voice had grown up within me, and between its demands for revengeful action and Mary's silent pressure I throbbed with guilt and puzzlement" (259). With the Invisible Man now haunting him, the narrator "walk[s] with [his] head down, feeling the biting air. And yet [he] [is] hot, burning with an inner fever" (261). He also describes an unfamiliar "hot edge coming into [his] voice" (269). Like the Creature, who always seems one step ahead of the creator he taunts, the Invisible Man is ever-present and sometimes takes over the narrator's body. After the Prologue, the first time the Invisible Man emerges is during the eviction scene. When the marshall pulls out his gun, the narrator describes his internal struggle with his yet unnamed inner

doppelgänger. He declares: “I knew that they were about to attack the man and I was both afraid and angry, repelled and fascinated. I both wanted it and feared the consequences, was outraged and angered at what I saw and yet surged with fear; not for the man or the consequences of an attack, but of what the sight of violence might release in me” (275). Eventually, the narrator admits to this divide between himself and this new contradictory speaker coming out of him:

I counted fifty greetings from people I didn’t know, becoming aware that there were two of me: the old self that slept for a few hours a night and dreamed sometimes of my grandfather and Bledsoe and Brockway, and Mary, the self that flew without wings and plunged from great heights; and the new public self that spoke for the Brotherhood and was becoming so much more important than the other that I seemed to run a foot race against. (380)

Just as Victor struggles with his Creature and the guilt of his transgression against nature in creating his monster, the narrator struggles with his inner self and describes a sense of guilt for the shift from his old self to his new self. Again, the narrator’s doppelgänger reveals himself when he takes on the role of Rinehart — a Spiritual Technologist who demands that others “BEHOLD THE INVISIBLE!” (495). During this scene, the Invisible Man takes control as Rinehart, and the narrator recognizes the uncanny presence of his doppelgänger: “Why am I talking like this?” and “Why am I acting from pride when this is not really me?” (488-9). Like the Creature who sneaks up on Victor on the ice fields at Montavert, in his laboratory in Scotland, in his wedding chambers in Evian, and eventually in the Arctic, the Invisible Man hauntingly creeps up on his creator throughout the novel and takes over his body and his story entirely.

Like Frankenstein's Creature, the Invisible Man is more than just a haunting presence but represents his creator's effort to reaffirm — or, in the case of Ellison's narrator, to claim — his masculine authority. While the Creature resists the standardized work of the factories of the Industrial Revolution since he is a unique creation, the Invisible Man undermines white phallogentric system of industrial capitalism when he steals the once disempowering electricity from Monopulated Light & Power. Much like Tom Outland, who practices a renegade science on behalf of the Professor who creates him, the Invisible Man manipulates technology on behalf of the narrator. He explains in the Epilogue: "I have been carrying on a fight with Monopulated Light & Power for some time now. I use their service and pay them nothing at all, and they don't know it" (5). Undermining a racist white capitalist industry, the Invisible Man ensures that he overuses his free light source. He notes that, "In my hole in the basement there are exactly 1,369 lights. I've wired the entire ceiling, every inch of it. And not with florescent bulbs, but with the older, more-expensive-to-operate kind, the filament type. An act of sabotage, you know....When I finish all four walls, then I'll start the floor" (7). Stealing from Monopulated Light & Power offers agency and choice as a black man which was originally lost to electricity that symbolized his oppression within a white-controlled industrial capitalist system. With a freedom never before experienced as a black man, he now identifies with white male inventors who have the privilege of independence of thought and creative control. He notes that, "[t]hough invisible, I am in the great American tradition of tinkers. That makes me kin to Ford, Edison and Franklin. Call me, since I have a theory and a concept, a 'thinker-tinker'" (7). Similarly, the creation of the Invisible Man as a cyborg — half human, half machine — subverts the narrator's previous racial inferiorization and feminization as a machine-like Sambo doll. Although the Invisible Man is still

outwardly defined by race and gender, he transgresses the boundaries of the physical body and his own personal identification with his race and his gender by using electricity to subvert the systems of power it represents, which here is identified as capitalism.⁹ In her essay “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Donna Haraway deploys the metaphor of a cyborg to offer a political strategy for socialism and feminism. She states that her “cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of a needed political work” by opposing the “deepened dualism of mind and body, animal and machine, idealism and materialism” in technoscientific culture (154). In Ellison’s novel, the Invisible Man is a cyborg is like the Creature who opposes dualism and defies gender and racial identification by being an embodiment of living and dead, female and male, racial minority and white supremacist. Using electricity to transgress boundaries and subvert racist phallogocentric systems of order, the Invisible Man re-identifies himself and achieves a freedom and agency as a black man previously denied to him.¹⁰ Undermining electricity which was once a means to control and subordinate the narrator, the final sentence of the novel — “Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?” — implies that the narrator’s voice exists as electrical radio oscillations, broadcast from the underground (581). He “sing[s] the body electric” as Walt Whitman once described in his anthem for a new liberty and democracy of the body and mind (72). The Invisible Man describes the electrification of his spirit: “That is why I fight my battle with Monopolated Light & Power. The deeper reason, I mean: It allows me to feel my vital aliveness” (7). While Victor Frankenstein creates his Creature with masculinizing and imperialistic science to reaffirm his power as a white man, the narrator creates the Invisible Man

to reclaim power over electricity, which was once a means of oppression, and to acquire a freedom and agency as a black man.

As with Victor's creation of the Creature, the narrator's creation of the Invisible Man facilitates the establishment of homosocial bonds with other men that enable him to increase his masculine authority. Douglas Stewart, James Smethurst and John S. Wright have noted that the male characters in *Invisible Man* maintain homosocial bonds which have an effect on gender and race relations. However, I would add that Ellison's representation of these homosocial bonds resembles Shelley's treatment of them in *Frankenstein* in that both authors show how the creation of the doppelgänger facilitates triangulated relations that reaffirm the creator figure's gender and racial identity while marginalizing others. These male bonds follow Sedgwick's model, especially since their bond marginalizes women and other racial minorities. However, since Sedgwick did not account for the variable of race in her theory of the homosocial desire, here I follow Todd Reeser's account of racially coded homosocial triangles. Reeser argues that when a non-white man and a white man bond, "the non-white man imitates white masculinity in the framework of desire and may gain access to white privilege or to whiteness itself" (209). Entering into a triangulation of desire with white male characters, the narrator affirms his male power and tries to find a freedom and agency as a black man which was previously denied to him by imitating white masculinity. This imitation of white masculinity is opposed to the narrator's performance as the black man he thought the white men wanted him to be before the arrival of the Invisible Man.

Ellison stresses the connection between the doubling relationship between creator and doppelgänger and these empowering homosocial relationships by showing how other black men

in the novel who benefit from homosocial power structures are associated with duality and exhibit doubling voices or identities. For example, the narrator takes note of Bledsoe's homosocial relations with powerful white men and his dual, contradictory nature. While in his office, the narrator recalls that Bledsoe is "[influential] with wealthy men all over the country; consulted in matters concerning race; a leader of his people; the possessor of not one, but two Cadillacs, a good salary and soft, good-looking and creamy-complexioned wife. What was more, while black and bald and everything white folks poked fun at, he achieved power and authority" (101). Bledsoe is then associated with doubling after the narrator leaves his office and sees a "double-imaged moon" (146). Similarly, Rinehart is a black man who gains power from homosocial relationships and is equally linked to doubling. The narrator witnesses Rinehart's homosocial bonding while pretending to be him when he states that "[i]t was as though by dressing and walking in a certain way I had enlisted in a fraternity in which I was recognized at a glance — not by features, but by clothes, by uniform, by gait" (485). Rinehart's duality is in his ability to move between personalities. He could be "Rine the runner and Rine the gambler and Rine the briber and Rine the lover and Rinehart the Reverend? Could he himself be both rine and hart?" (498). Just as other black men in the novel are associated with both doubling and homosociality, the narrator's creation of his doppelgänger and their doubled relationship sanction his homosocial relations with white male members of the Brotherhood.

Unlike Victor and his Creature, who are separate entities, the narrator and Invisible Man share one body, which cannot allow for a literal homosocial bond between them. However, the narrator's relationship to his doppelgänger does resemble Victor and the Creature's in that it is exclusive. Just as Victor's relationship to his Creature is only known to them, the narrator's

relationship to the Invisible Man is an exclusive inner psychotic split that is eventually isolated to the *manhole* (symbolically male) just as Victor and the Creature are isolated on the ice fields. However, the narrator and Invisible Man do not have a traditional homosocial relationship since they share the same body.¹¹ Instead, Ellison shows that the narrator's interracial homosocial relations with white male members of the Brotherhood solidifies his male power and provides an agency as a black man in a way that wasn't possible before the creation of his doppelgänger.

Like Shelley, Ellison presents the narrator's homosocial relations with the men in the Brotherhood as exclusive, rivalrous and homoerotic. Symbolically, the Brotherhood is an organization which promotes male bonding: it is compared to a fraternity, which usually houses exclusive male societies popularized by universities and colleges. The narrator notes that the Brothers "stared at [him] as the fellows had done when [he] was being initiated into [his] college fraternity" (308). Although the Brotherhood alleges to represent the interests of all people, regardless of race or gender, in practice it can be exclusionary. Speaking with the narrator, Brother Jack emphasizes the Brotherhood's focus on homosocial bonds among young men: "[Y]ou mustn't waste your emotions on individuals, they don't count....Those old ones....it's sad, yes. But they're already dead, defunct. History has passed them by. Unfortunate, but there's nothing to do about them. They're like dead limbs that must be pruned away so that the tree may bear young fruit or the storms of history will blow them down anyway" (291). The Brotherhood is a homosocial organization that remains exclusive to the needs and concerns of young men. In addition, the members of the Brotherhood often demonstrate a homoerotic admiration for one another, much like that found between Walton and Victor. For example, the narrator takes note of Todd Clifton's physical attractiveness. Upon Clifton's entrance into a Brotherhood meeting:

He wore a heavy sweater and slacks, and as the others looked up I heard the quick intake of a woman's pleasurable sigh. Then the young man was moving with an easy Negro stride out of the shadow into the light, and I saw that he was very black and very handsome, and as he advanced mid-distance into the room, that he possessed the chiseled, black-marble features sometimes found on statues in northern museums...He leaned there, looking at us all with a remote aloofness in which I sensed an unstated questioning beneath a friendly charm. (363)¹²

Tod Clifton is eroticized by the narrator's emphasis on the impact of his entrance, his mention of the pining woman, and his description of Clifton's sculptured features which reinforces the homosociality between men in the Brotherhood. Finally, the members of the Brotherhood also engage in rivalry which enhances their homosociality. For example, the narrator's strong sense of rivalry with the men engaging in homosociality in the Brotherhood is unleashed when he discovers that Brother Jack wrote that anonymous letter which "sent [him] running" (568). Like Victor Frankenstein erratically chasing his rival after he destroys his life, the narrator can no longer restrain himself and loses control. The narrator explains: "Suddenly I began to scream, getting up in the darkness and plunging wildly about, bumping against walls, scattering coal, and in my anger extinguishing my feeble light...How long this kept up, I do not know" (568). The narrator's homoerotic attraction to and rivalry with other members of the Brotherhood indicates that it is an organization that promotes interracial homosocial bonds where black and white men can transform their gendered and racial identities.

As Reeser argues, the interracial homosocial bond allows the black male participant access to the privilege and power of the white male participant. Ellison emphasizes the narrator's

attraction to the privilege and power that the Brotherhood represents: during his first visit to the Brotherhood headquarters, he notes that Brother Jack is “very authoritative” and that “[h]e must be a powerful man” (311). Just as in *Frankenstein* Walton represents the British Empire and leads a scientific mission to uncover “the wondrous power which attracts the needle,” Jack leads a Brotherhood whose members call themselves scientists and view their theory of history and class struggle as scientific (50). Brother Jack notes at the Chthonian: “After all, we call ourselves scientists here. Let us speak as scientists” (306). Their male-centered cause convinces them that they “are champions of a scientific approach to society” (350). Once the narrator joins the Brotherhood, his homosocial bonding with the members of this organization enables him to claim the power and authority represented by its white male members. The narrator’s newfound freedom and agency as a black man is evident when he meets Emma at the Chthonian. The narrator thinks to himself, “I’d like to show her how really black I am, I thought, taking a big drink of the bourbon” (303). In contrast to the narrator at Battle Royal who was an object of racist humiliation when asked to give a speech, now a part of the Brotherhood, the narrator delivers his speeches and “[feels] suddenly that [he has] become more human. Do you understand? More human. Not that [he has] become a man, for [he is] born a man. But that [he is] more human” (346). The narrator also finds a newfound freedom and agency after his first speech with the Brotherhood. In contrast to the Battle Royal where the white men emasculated the narrator by not allowing him to give his speech, now the narrator is free to speak his mind. He claims after his speech at the rally: “from now on, life would be different. It was different already” (353). The narrator not only reaffirms his patriarchal power with the Brotherhood, but he also achieves a freedom and autonomy with his white homosocial bonds. Mimicking a sense

of white male grandeur, the narrator paints himself as a patriarchal figure. For instance, while in bed with Sybil, he writes on her stomach: “SYBIL, YOU WERE RAPED BY SANTA CLAUS SURPRISE” (522). Much like Norton’s association with the big white Father figure, the narrator aligns himself with an image of paternal law and power.¹³ The significance of the freedom and autonomy that the narrator has acquired through his homosocial bonds is evident in his reaction to Brother Tarp’s leg shackle, which is different from that belonging to Bledsoe. While Bledsoe advocates black subordination and his shackle symbolizes a repressive slavery, Brother Tarp’s shackle represents black freedom and overcoming oppression. He notes, after Tarp calls the narrator “Brother” for the first time, that “Tarp’s bore the marks of haste and violence, looking as though it had been attacked and conquered before it stubbornly yielded” (389). When Brother Tarp offers the narrator the leg shackle, it symbolizes how his participation in the homosocial bonds of the Brotherhood have enabled him to gain freedom and agency that had formerly been denied him as a black man.

Although these homosocial bonds seem like a positive transformation for the narrator, they also exemplify Reeser’s point that such interracial bonds “embodying a utopian potential or a new history that rewrites the past can be founded on less progressive actions such as hiding or reorganizing racism” (203). Echoing Shelley’s account of the destructive consequences of Victor’s creation of his Creature and the ensuing homosocial relations, Ellison’s novel shows how the narrator’s homosocial bonds with members of the Brotherhood also prove to be detrimental to women as well as to other black men. Prior to the creation of the Invisible Man, the narrator was only a voyeur or bystander to the objectification of white women and black men, such as the magnificent blonde at the Battle Royal who is fetishized as a sexual object or

Norton's daughter who is made into an object of incestuous desire. After the creation of his doppelgänger, the narrator actually participates in the abjection of women and other black men. While Victor and his Creature's homosocial bonds make the women abject and lead to their murder, Ellison's narrator and his doppelgänger facilitate the exchanges of male homosocial power through the humiliation and abjection of the women in the novel. Ellison acknowledges how the Brotherhood reinforces the subordination and marginalization of women to facilitate the exchanges of power between men. Ras is quick to point out the narrator's and the Brotherhood's misogyny and misuse of women. He argues:

What they give you to betray — their women?... Women? Godahm, mahn! is that equality? Is that the black mahn's freedom? A pat on the back and a piece of cunt without no passion?... These women dregs, mahn! They bile water! You know the high-class white mahn hates the black mahn, that's simple. So now he use the dregs and wahnt you black young men to do his dirty work.... He take one them strumpets and tell the black mahn his freedom lie between her skinny legs — while that son of a gun, he take all the capital and don't leave the black mahn not'ing. The good white women he tell the black mahn is a rapist and keep them locked up and ignorant while he makes the black mahn a race of bahstards. (372-3)

Although clearly misogynistic himself, Ras significantly points out the ways in which these women facilitate the exchanges of power between men. Emma is the first of many women oppressed by the homosociality of the Brotherhood. Jack takes away her dignity as he orders her around the Chthonian. He commands her: "Don't think, act.... We're very thirsty men" (302). As a participant in the homosocial triangle between Jack and the narrator, Emma has her role which

is to enable the homosocial exchanges between the men at the meeting. She distributes money, makes drinks, and offers new identities (310). As Douglas Steward notes, “Emma’s purpose seems to be precisely to lubricate the men’s interactions... all, of course, according to Brother Jack’s instructions” (527). Similarly, the members of the Brotherhood use women to promote their organization. During their parade through the streets, they include “the best-looking girls [they] could find, who pranced and twirled and just plain girled in the enthusiastic interest of Brotherhood” (380). Although the Brotherhood claims to support equality, the organization depends on hierarchies of gender and race. The Brotherhood uses and exploits the women to further the organization’s own male-centered interests.

Most critics have argued that Ellison is misogynistic in his portrayal of women.¹⁴ In contrast, I would argue that the misogyny is the narrator’s, and that the novel criticizes how the narrator begins to participate in its exploitation and objectification of women as he gains power in the Brotherhood. At first, the narrator questions the Brotherhood’s use of women: “Why did they have to mix their women into everything? Between us and everything we wanted to change in the world they placed a woman: socially, politically, economically. Why, goddamit, why did they insist upon confusing the class struggle with the ass struggle, debasing both us and them” (418). However, the narrator eventually embraces the exploitation of women to facilitate his exchanges of power with other men. In his narration of the story, he not only participates in the objectification of women as sex objects, but also presents the women of the Brotherhood as only seeking to involve themselves in the organization to further their own sexual interests. He describes the women as over-sexed and manipulative:

I threw myself into the lectures, defending, asserting the rights of women; and though the girls continued to buzz around, I was careful to keep the biological and ideological carefully apart — which wasn't easy, for it was as though many of the sisters were agreed among themselves (and assumed that I accepted it) that the ideological was merely a superfluous veil for the real concerns of life. (419-420)

The narrator further characterizes the women as sex-obsessed when, upon noting Clifton's entrance at his first Brotherhood meeting in Harlem, he "heard a quick intake of a woman's pleasurable sigh," and "a gasp from one of the women who gazed at him with shining, compassionate eyes" (363, 364). Like Victor, who excludes Elizabeth from his male relationships and attempts to steal her reproductive function and power by creating the Creature, the narrator excludes the women from his homosocial bonds and portrays them as sexualized rather than as reproductive.

Ellison indicates his critique of the narrator's misogyny by aligning the female characters with the uncanny image of the mannequins that the narrator comes across in the street. Like the busts and the body of Mother Eve in *The Professor's House*, which Cather uses to undermine the Professor's portrayal of his wife and daughters, these female mannequins show how the narrator's mistreatment of women is rooted in the anxieties about gender and race that incited the creation of the doppelgänger in the first place. When the narrator sees a mannequin in the street, he states:

I stumbled, hearing the cracking of bones underfoot and saw a physician's skeleton shattered on the street, the skull rolling away from the backbone, as I steadied long enough to notice the unnatural stiffness of those hanging above me. They were

mannequins — “Dummies!” I said aloud. Hairless, bald and sterilely feminine. And I recalled the boys in the blonde wigs, expecting the relief of laughter, but suddenly was more devastated by the humor than by the horror, but they are unreal, I thought; are they? What if one, even one is real — is... Sybil? (556)

First, in their association with the broken bones, these mannequins are reminiscent of the wounded body of Mother Eve in *The Professor's House* and are equally symbolic of women as victims of male violence. Second, the fallen mannequin is uncanny in that it is a disembodied female figure with “the skull rolling away from the backbone,” and its uncanniness horrifies the narrator because although it is “sterilely feminine,” it gives rise to old fears of a lack of control over procreation which symbolizes a lack of control over the future of his race. As previously noted, the narrator expresses fear and anxiety about gender and race in the scene with Trueblood and Norton: incest and especially the breeding of his black race evoke deep-seated anxieties about monstrous reproduction of the black race which he then dispels by creating his doppelgänger. Like Cather, Ellison uses the image of the female mannequins to symbolize the violence committed against the female bodies in the novel and to suggest that the female characters are not foolish adulteresses, as the narrator implies, but victims made abject by the narrator's own anxieties about procreation and by his homosocial bonds with the male members of the Brotherhood.

With this haunting image of the mannequins in the street, Ellison draws attention to how, like Victor and his Creature, the narrator with the Invisible Man mistreats the women in the novel because their potentially maternal bodies evoke anxieties about procreation. Mary Rambo is the first woman rejected by the narrator once he is altered by his newfound homosociality. As

Claudia Tate argues, Mary is a maternal figure whose “physical appearance and her folksy manner may resemble the ‘mammy’ of plantation lore” (168). Mary is also a reminder of the complacency towards black racist stereotypes the Invisible Man is fighting against, and he rejects her as a result. The narrator expresses his dread of these stereotypes in his description of Mary’s money box: “It was a bank, a piece of early Americana, the kind of bank which, if a coin is placed in the hand and a lever pressed upon the back, will raise its arm and flip the coin into the grinning mouth. For a second I stopped, feeling hate charge within me, then dashed over and grabbed it, suddenly enraged by the tolerance or lack of discrimination” (319). This racist image recalls that which the Invisible Man was created to dispel: the complacency of the racist stereotypes evoked by the Sambo doll, the electrified machine, and the incestuous Trueblood. Although Mary is a positive female figure, much like Safie and Margaret Saville who are the only female characters that are not turned to corpses in *Frankenstein* and like Augusta in *The Professor’s House*, she is still a maternal body left in the margins of Ellison’s novel. Just like Safie and Margaret Saville, Mary is found directly in the middle of *Invisible Man* and her location in the novel as a marginal changing point represents her position as a woman and a mammy figure who is marginalized and mistreated by the narrator and his Invisible Man in an effort to subdue their anxieties that she evokes about gender and race.¹⁵

In contrast to Mary, the Renoir woman and Sybil are made abject and demonized by the narrator since their female bodies, like the mannequin, remind the narrator of his anxiety about race and procreation. Rendering these women abject, the narrator follows the Brotherhood’s lead and reaffirms his male authority through the oppression of women. First, the woman that the narrator meets at his Brotherhood talk on the Woman Question, referred to by critics as the

Renoir woman, appears to him as a maternal figure and reminds him of his anxieties about procreation, so he turns her into a sexualized and abject female body to solidify his male power and to facilitate his homosocial bonds with the members of the Brotherhood. The narrator associates her with the maternal when he calls her “the kind of woman who glows as through consciously acting a symbolic role of life and feminine fertility” (409). Later, he symbolically rejects this maternal image in disgust when he comments on her offer of milk: “‘Wine, thank you,’ I said, finding the idea of milk strangely repulsive” (412). Like Mary who embraces black stereotypes and the racist Sybil who perpetuates them, the Renoir woman also reminds the narrator of the black racist stereotypes his doppelgänger was created to subvert, and he turns her into an abject female body as a result. Her racist sentiments are enabled by primitivist sexual fantasies. She expresses her attraction to his speeches: “It’s so powerful, so — so primitive! ... Yes, primitive; no one had told you, Brother, that at times you have tom-toms beating in your voice?” (413). Her racism is further highlighted when the narrator compares their exchange to a love affair between a white plantation wife and a black slave: his “mind whirled with forgotten stories of male servants summoned to wash the mistress’s back; chauffeurs sharing masters’ wives; Pullman porters invited into the drawing room of rich wives headed for Reno — thinking, But this is the movement, the Brotherhood” (416). Her racism reminds the narrator of his anxieties about racial power before the creation of the doppelgänger, and so the Invisible Man, who was created to dispel these anxieties, emerges when the narrator is with her. The narrator describes the struggle with his doppelgänger and the internal duality she establishes inside him through images of mirroring: he sees “[him]self caught in a guilty stance ... and behind the bed another mirror which now like a surge of sea tossed our images back and forth, back and forth,

furiously multiplying the time and place and circumstance” (416). Just as Victor loves Elizabeth but the Creature murders her, the narrator is attracted to the Renoir woman while the Invisible Man loathes her, as indicated by the fact that he “want[s] to both smash her and to stay with her” (415). Because she is a reminder of his old anxieties about procreation and race, the narrator makes her abject in his violent fantasies. The Renoir woman is also aligned with the abject mannequin in the street. When he lingers over her sleeping body, he mentions that she may prove to be uncanny by acting as though the night had never happened: “it was as though she’d never been awake and if she should awaken now, she’d scream, shriek” (417). The Renoir woman reminds the narrator of his anxieties about race and gender, and she is made abject in her depiction as over-sexualized and racist.

Finally, Sybil receives the most extreme form of subordination, and just as Elizabeth is murdered on her wedding bed, Sybil is violated in a sexual context. At first, Sybil is meant to facilitate the exchanges of power between the narrator and the men in the Brotherhood. Wondering how to acquire inside knowledge about the Brotherhood, the narrator notes, “it came instantly clear: It called for a woman. ... [A]t the Chthonian she was usually tipsy and wistful — just the type of misunderstood married woman whom, even if I had been interested, I would have avoided like the plague. But now her unhappiness and the fact that she was one of the big shots’ wives made her a perfect choice. She was very lonely and it went very smoothly” (514, 516). The narrator wonders whether the mannequin in the street is Sybil, and like the mannequin, she is repulsive to the narrator and reminds the narrator of his anxieties about gender and race. As a result, he ridicules and distorts her female sexuality and body as abject. Just as the Renoir woman reminds the narrator about the negative racist black male stereotypes the Invisible Man

was created to subvert, Sybil's primitivist sexual desires arouse anxieties about gender and race in the narrator. Sybil is inclined towards racist taboo desires: while she "thinks [she's] a nymphomaniac," she expresses her desire to be raped by the narrator (519). He explains that she "made a modest proposal that I join her in a very revolting ritual" by acting out her fantasy of being raped by a black man (517). Evoking anxiety in the narrator, Sybil is made abject to elevate the narrator's masculinity. Associating himself with the Law of the Father and patriarchal power, the narrator writes on her stomach with lipstick, "SYBIL, YOU WERE RAPED BY SANTA CLAUS — SURPRISE," an act which not only mocks her desires but objectifies her female body as a writing surface as well (522). Surely, actually raping her would elevate his black masculine identity, but then he would only revert to his old inferiorized self by acting out racist stereotypes used by whites to justify racist oppression. Instead, Sybil is mocked, marginalized and made abject by the narrator — misogynistic exploits which enable the narrator to assert the male power he has gained through his homosocial relations with white men in the Brotherhood.

Finally, like Shelley in *Frankenstein*, Ellison shows that the interracial homosocial bonds in the novel not only turn women abject but also do the same for black men, including the Invisible Man himself. Ellison accomplishes this through a subtle repetition of the Creature's double participation in homosocial bonding in Shelley's novel, in which Victor initially bonds with the Creature and then rejects him through a more empowering bond with the white imperialist Walton. In Ellison's novel, the narrator also rejects his doppelgänger to participate in interracial homosocial relations with members of a powerful white imperialist organization, and even participates in the Invisible Man's oppression by those homosocial relations. This is more

difficult to recognize in Ellison's novel than in Shelley's since the narrator and the Invisible Man exist within the same body, and they are not outwardly seen as two separate entities by the Brotherhood. However, it is indicated by the fact that once he engages in homosocial bonds with members of the Brotherhood, the narrator oppresses other black characters while being oppressed himself. After joining the Brotherhood, the narrator mimics the racist behavior of powerful white members of the Brotherhood. Like Victor, who bonds with Walton whose scientific mission participates in the project of British imperialism and colonialism, the narrator adopts the neocolonial sentiments of the Brotherhood and associates himself with colonial endeavors, as indicated by the fact that his office at the Brotherhood's headquarters contains "a huge map of the world inscribed with ancient signs and a heroic figure of Columbus to one side," symbolizing the Brotherhood's complicity with the colonization of America and the conquest of millions of aboriginal people (361). Then, just as Walton supports Frankenstein's rejection of his Creature, the narrator participates in the Brotherhood's rejection of his own doppelgänger, the Invisible Man, who is the part of the narrator which advocates for racial equality and tries to achieve his own agency as a black man. Even though the Brotherhood does not see the narrator and Invisible Man as two separate entities, the Brothers engage in an interracial homosocial bond with the narrator that simultaneously excludes the Invisible Man as a figure for racial otherness. The Invisible Man, therefore, becomes a victim of the homosocial bond between the Brotherhood and the narrator. The Brotherhood's victimization of the Invisible Man is evident when Emma asks Brother Jack about the narrator, "don't you think he should be a little blacker?" (303).¹⁶ This suggests that the Brotherhood is only using the Invisible Man for his skin color and treating him like an object rather than a free, autonomous black subject. In fact, the

novel supports Ras's Garveyist belief that all whites enslave blacks. Ras frankly describes the Invisible Man's relationship to the Brotherhood: "They sell you out. That shit is old-fashioned. They enslave us — you forget that? How can they mean a black mahn any good? How they going to be your brother?" (371). Not just the Invisible Man but all of the Brotherhood's black members must conform to its notion of blackness and controlled vision of the future, which ironically does not provide freedom or agency for the black subject even if the Brotherhood as an organization claims to envision a future of equality between races. The white male members of the Brotherhood subtly use their black members to their own advantage to enhance their white racial authority. Ironically, the Brotherhood still tries to promote an image of equality, which only further reinforces its racism and abuse of racial minorities within its organization. For example, the Brotherhood's promotional poster advocates racial integration and egalitarianism:

It was a symbolic poster of a group of heroic figures: An American Indian couple, representing the dispossessed past; a blond brother (in overalls) and a leading Irish sister, representing the dispossessed present; and Brother Tod Clifton and a young white couple (it had been felt unwise simply to show Clifton and the girl) surrounded by a group of mixed races, representing the future, a color photograph of bright skin texture and smooth contrast. (385)

However, as noted by Reeser when he argues that interracial homosocial bonds can seem reformist when instead they only reorganize racism, the Brotherhood only appears to offer equality between the races since in actuality it uses its black members to facilitate white power. The narrator states during his first meeting with the Brotherhood that "they expected [him] to perform even those tasks for which nothing in [his] experience — except perhaps [his]

imagination — had prepared [him]” (315). As a spokesperson for the Brotherhood, the narrator participates in the victimization of his own creation — the Invisible Man. Just as Victor denies his Creature the life he deserves, the narrator suppresses the Invisible Man and his desire to advocate for autonomy and freedom for black men by performing according to the Brotherhood’s ideology. Although the narrator is at first described by the members of the Brotherhood as a “wild but effective speaker [who] may be tamed,” they teach him to perform in a way which serves their white ideology, which is in direct contrast to the Invisible Man’s desire to advocate autonomy (351). Denying an interview and a magazine editor’s praises, the narrator describes himself as “a cog in a machine” who “[now] knew most of the Brotherhood arguments so well — those [he] doubted as well as those [he] believed — that [he] could repeat them in [his] sleep” (358).

However, unlike Victor who battles his Creature to the death, the narrator eventually realizes the error of his ways. After seeing Clifton in the street with the Sambo Doll, he notes: “All our work has been very little. And it was my fault. I’d been so fascinated by the motion that I’d forgotten to measure what it was bringing forth. I’d been asleep, dreaming” (444). Witnessing Clifton’s demise leads the narrator to question his own investment in the Brotherhood’s homosocial bonds and his rejection of his doppelgänger, and he then allows the Invisible Man to take over his body and moves underground.

Like Frankenstein’s Creature who outlives his creator, the Invisible Man takes over the narrator’s body at the end of the novel. When Ras cries out that the mob should hang him, the narrator finally recognizes the “confoundingly complex arrangement of hope and desire, fear and hate, that had brought [him] here still running,” and he now knows “who [he] [is] and where [he]

[is] and know[s] too that [he] [has] no longer to run from the Jacks and the Emersons and the Bledsoes and Nortons, but only from their confusion, impatience, and refusal to recognize the beautiful absurdity of their American identity and [his]" (559). At this point, the narrator moves underground and turns into the Invisible Man. Harking back to the Creature's uncanny existence as both dead and alive, the Invisible Man notes while falling asleep in the manhole that "It's a kind of death without hanging, ... a death alive" (566). However, although the novel ends with a Creature figure in isolation from the world and the creator figure completely gone and taken over by his doppelgänger, *Invisible Man* actually envisions a new social order outside of the homosocial strategies the narrator had used to achieve freedom as a black man. Where Shelley gives narrative control to Walton in the frame story of *Frankenstein*, Ellison gives control of the narration not to a Walton figure like One-Eyed Jack, but to the Invisible Man himself, whose story (in the Prologue and Epilogue) frames his creator's story instead of the other way around. This is certainly an important deviation from Shelley, since both novels otherwise maintain a similar narrative structure: both novels contain an exterior frame written in the present tense and interior frame recounting the past. Further deviating from Shelley, Ellison ends the novel with the Invisible Man trying to create a new social order that is not devastating to himself and others. He indicates that his isolation is not a death, like the Creature's, but a rebellion when he explains that "[a] hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action" (13). More importantly, this new social order excludes the destructive violence towards women caused by the homosocial relations between men. While underground, the Invisible Man follows through on the narrator's last-minute attempt to return to Mary and symbolically reverses the harm done to the women by the male homosocial bonds: he finds her in the slave mother singing spirituals underground and

preaching that freedom lies in loving, not hating (11). More than Shelley, Ellison conceives of a life after the crisis for his black male protagonist and embraces a form of defiance that is not racist or misogynistic.

Notes: Chapter 2

¹ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “ectoplasm” is a viscous outer layer or substance which is found on unicellular animals or is “exuding from the body of a medium during a spiritual trance and forming the material for the manifestation of spirits.” It has also been described as gauze-like, as seen with Whale’s Invisible Man who wraps his head in gauze when clothed. Surprisingly, not a single critic has linked this passage to Whale’s film and only Fleissner has connected Ellison’s novel to Wells’ *The Invisible Man*.

² These do not include translations or publications outside the United States (publisher and date): Grosset & Dunlap (1939), Appleby & Co. (1939), Books Inc. (1940), Dent (1941), Dutton & Co. (1945), Gilberton Co. (1945), Gilberton (1946), Editions for the Armed Services (1946), E.P. Dutton (1949), Halcyon House (1949).

³ More specifically, Lisa Yaszek connects *Frankenstein*’s science with that found in the *Invisible Man*. She argues that Ellison uses the language of science fiction to combat white-washed visions of the future with the narrator as a Creature figure.

⁴ See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s discussion of the master-slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

⁵ For the Creature as a metaphor for the working class, see Franco Moretti, then Warren Montag, Elsie Michie, Chris Baldick and Martin Tropp.

⁶ For more discussion on the narrator and the magnificent blonde, see Daniel Y. Kim, Douglas Steward, and Anne Anlin Cheng.

⁷ One other critic views the narrator and the Invisible Man as two characters. Fabre argues that the Invisible Man tells the narrator's story from an older and wiser perspective which separates the two men: "He tells his own story of his past, occasionally emerging from this long flashback in order to comment upon stages of his development from his present perspective" (536).

⁸ See Brian K. Reed and Tracy Wyman-Marchand for more on the function of the maternal during the electroshock therapy treatments in *Invisible Man*. Ellen Moers first labelled *Frankenstein* a "birth myth." Later, Marc A. Rubenstein, Barbara Johnson, Mary Poovey, Mary Jacobus, and Margaret Homans discuss the maternal in *Frankenstein*.

⁹ Johnnie Wilcox links the Invisible Man to cybernetics when he argues that, "[the] process of cybernation empowers the narrator by literally enabling him to manipulate the flow of electricity through his body" (988). In his reading, Wilcox does not separate the narrator from the Invisible Man and therefore does not distinguish the two. As a result, here he refers to the Invisible Man as the "narrator."

¹⁰ Although confusing the Creature for Victor, Raymond Varisco links the Invisible Man to Frankenstein's Creature in a similar way: "He, like all Negroes, is mechanical and invisible - — a creation of the white man's distorted vision...The suggestion perhaps being that if the machine finally destroys its maker, like Frankenstein, what color will the 'machine' be?" (238). I argue, however, that the Invisible Man does not destroy his maker but instead helps him gain a heightened gender and racial identity.

¹¹ The narrator and his doppelgänger differ from the narrator and Tyler Durden in *Fight Club* who also share a body. In *Fight Club*, the narrator believes that Tyler is a separate entity from himself. In *Invisible Man*, the narrator is aware that they share a body and does not see the Invisible Man as a separate person but a different identity.

¹² For more on Tod Clifton as an object of sexual attraction, see James Smethurst (123).

¹³ See Steward for a discussion of the narrator's use of Santa Claus (529).

¹⁴ See Caroline W. Sylvander, Shelley Eversley, Johnnie Wilcox, and Daniel Y. Kim.

¹⁵ As Caroline W. Sylvander notes, "Mary, who nurses the narrator in his post-hospital infancy in Chapter 11, is literally at the center of *Invisible Man*" (79).

¹⁶ Comparing the Brotherhood to Communists, Daniel Y. Kim notes that they both used racial minorities to their own benefit and "sought to enlist blacks in their revolutionary struggle against capitalism" (46).

“You are my creator, but I am your master”:

Monstrous Offspring in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

Unless carefree, motherlove was a killer. (Toni Morrison 155)

Beloved looked at her tooth and thought, This is it. Next would be her arm, her hand, a toe. Pieces of her would drop maybe one at a time, maybe all at once. Or on one of those mornings before Denver woke and after Sethe left she would fly apart. It is difficult keeping her head on her neck, her legs attached to her hips when she is by herself. (Toni Morrison 157)

Unlike Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Cather’s *The Professor’s House*, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* is clearly a Gothic text composed of strange specters, repressed traumas, abject bodies, and physical and psychological enslavement. As a result, many critics have identified and analyzed the Gothic elements in the novel.¹ Morrison’s Gothic novel has been linked by critics to a haunting of re-memory and trauma, taking their cue from Leslie A. Fiedler who argued that the driving force behind the American Gothic is slavery as a repressed national shame (143). For instance, Ellen J. Goldner argues that in *Beloved* “Morrison constructs a gothic version of witnessing, a haunting, that draws on traditions both feminist and African American, which brings what is other into and through the self” (73). More recently, critics have categorized Morrison’s work as a part of an African-American Gothic sub-genre of the Gothic tradition; for example, Cedric Gael Bryant claims that *Beloved* represents a “significant Africanist presence — as *producers* of, and not simply *subjects* in” Gothic discourse (original italics, 541). However, very few have explored the specifically Shelleyan elements in Morrison’s version of the Gothic.

Morrison has acknowledged the impact *Frankenstein* has had on her as a writer. She admired Shelley’s abilities and placed her among the greatest of Western writers. She opens *Playing in the Dark* by admitting to her readers, “I am in awe of the authority of Faulkner’s

Benjy, James's Maisie, Flaubert's Emma, Melville's Pip, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (4).

Specifically, she praises these writers' ability to enter the unknown and understand the process of becoming their characters instead of just observing them. Just as Shelley enters the unfamiliar male experience in *Frankenstein*, Morrison seeks to apprehend the foreign experience of Margaret Garner, the nineteenth-century runaway slave who murdered her own child to prevent her from being returned to slavery. Morrison names Shelley as the only female writer in a list at the beginning of her critique of the ways in which "American literature has been clearly the preserve of white male views, genius, and power" (5). *Playing in the Dark* was published in 1992 after the feminist critical revival of *Frankenstein* in the 1970s and 1980s which established discussions about gender and race in Shelley's novel. For Morrison, who understood the importance of such issues in *Frankenstein*, the "authority" she admires in Shelley's portrayal of Victor Frankenstein implies admiration for Shelley's ability not only to understand but also to critique strategies of white male power — an understanding and critique which Morrison incorporated into her 1987 novel *Beloved*.

Surprisingly, very few critics have noticed any connection between *Beloved* and *Frankenstein*; to date, only two critics have made detailed readings. First, in his discussion of the representations of the female Gothic in American literature, Claude Cohen-Safir traces a clear line through the Gothic tradition from *Frankenstein* to *Beloved*. Cohen-Safir associates *Frankenstein* and *Beloved* in their accessibility, their Gothic and maternal imagery, and their engagement with significant cultural events (111-2). Second, Anna Sonser devotes a chapter in her study *Passion for Consumption: The Gothic Novel in America* (2001) to arguing that "Morrison finishes the sentences begun by Shelley" (28). Sonser focuses on *Frankenstein* and

Beloved's shared preoccupation with the maternal body, power, and exploitation (27). Especially noteworthy for my purposes is her parallel of Sethe with Victor Frankenstein. Sonser shows how Sethe resembles Victor by pointing out that while "Victor needs to dismember his female creation, in order to negate her potential... Sethe dismembers/disremembers her infant daughter, leaving Beloved with a scar where her head meets her neck, a mark which, appropriately, allows Sethe to begin recollecting and rebuilding her own fragmented subjectivity in terms of familial and cultural continuity" (34). Sonser argues that "[b]y reconnecting with the traces of disremembered history through Beloved, [Sethe] begins to deal with the profound fragmentation of black female identity" (34). In this chapter, I build on Sonser's work by arguing Sethe transforms her gender and racial identity not only by disremembering and reconnecting with Beloved but also by engaging in a female homosocial bond with her that is surprisingly similar to Victor's bond with his Creature. While Sonser also compares Sethe with the Creature, Elizabeth, and Caroline, I focus on Sethe's resemblance to Victor to show how *Beloved* echoes the homosocial triangles of *Frankenstein*. I argue that Morrison draws resemblances between Sethe and Victor Frankenstein in order to demonstrate that using the strategies and means of the oppressor to achieve freedom from domination and control does not genuinely provide power of choice or autonomy.

At first glance, Sethe and Victor seem like complete opposites, and their pairing appears illogical. Sethe would strike most readers as more of a Creature figure: her act of infanticide makes her appear to be a monster, but the novel makes clear that the ultimate cause of her violent act is her dehumanizing mistreatment by white slave owners, just as the Creature fabricated by Victor is only monstrous and violent after he is rejected by his creator. However, there are also

many ways in which Sethe resembles Victor. This resemblance can be more clearly seen if we recognize that, although Shelley clearly criticizes the destructive effects of Victor's desire for power, Shelley's novel also reveals some sympathy for Victor's desire to create a human being and to understand the power behind life and death. That sympathy is evident in the fact that Shelley links Victor's desires to use science to create another being to his mother's death. Upon his arrival at university, which had been delayed by his mother's illness and death, Victor is consumed by one sole preoccupation: "Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed?" (79). The subconscious relationship between Victor's new passion and his mother's death remains unregistered by Victor until the night he animates the Creature. Asleep after his creation flees, Victor dreams that the corpse of his dead mother turns into the Creature. By connecting the animation of the Creature to Caroline's death, Shelley suggests a sympathetic view of Victor as a grieving son whose grief motivates him to try to understand the force behind life and death which complicates the more familiar view of Victor as an arrogant and misogynistic scientist who seeks godlike powers over creation. In *Beloved*, Morrison also creates a protagonist who evokes contradictory responses in the reader, since Sethe is not only the victim of horrendous violence and abuse as a slave but also is the murderer of her child. Although any act of infanticide seems monstrous — Paul D accurately describes her love as "too thick" (193) — the point of Morrison's novel is to show that Sethe's (and by extension Margaret Garner's) actions can be justified since she was saving her baby from the horrors of slavery after having herself been the victim of it. It is clearly not Morrison's intention to paint Sethe as an arrogant Victor figure who seeks godlike powers over life and death. She is instead a much more complicated victim of slavery. However, both characters are aligned in their ability to elicit

sympathy as well as revulsion and disapproval in the reader and in the fact that both respond to the loss of a loved one and to anxieties about gender and race by creating another being.

These other beings that Victor and Sethe create also resemble one another even though Victor literally assembles his Creature in a laboratory and Sethe's creation of Beloved is unconscious and a psychological response to trauma. However, the Creature and Beloved are both created under unnatural or supernatural circumstances. The Creature is a being made up of cadaverous parts through an act of parthenogenesis, while Beloved magically walks out of the water up to 124 during a symbolic birth scene with Sethe as her mother, and she is later associated with the body parts of African and African-American slaves. Both the Creature and Beloved at first function as their creator's child and then as a doppelgänger who haunts, becomes interchangeable with, and eventually all but destroys his or her creator.

Whether consciously or unconsciously initiating the materialization of their creations, Victor and Sethe's motivations for the arrival of the Creature and Beloved are similar. First, Victor and Sethe both seek to redefine motherhood and gain control over the female body with the creation of their unnatural progenies — though clearly, their relationships to motherhood and the female body are very different because of their different positions within gendered and racialized structures of power: Victor's intentions are centered on phallogentric control while Sethe's are based on self-definition and autonomy. Victor gains power and control over the maternal by creating the Creature since it is completed through an act of parthenogenesis which usurps the role of the woman in procreation. Creating another being alone as a man, Victor seizes the female power represented by the mother's ability to give birth. For Sethe, who must live with the trauma of slavery and racial oppression as well as the loss of her baby and the pain and guilt

of having committed the act of infanticide, her creation of Beloved and establishment of an intimate relationship with her allow her to regain the control over her role as mother, which had been denied to her during slavery and then lost again with the murder of her baby. With Beloved, she is no longer merely a reproductive body, as she had been as a slave, but a mother and caregiver with the power to create, nurture, and sustain life.

A second similarity between Sethe and Victor is that in both cases the desire to create their unnatural progeny is a response to anxieties about gender and race associated with the changing economic structures of their times. As discussed in the Introduction, Victor responds to anxieties about gender and race perpetuated by the Industrial Revolution, and the creation of the Creature and subsequent homosocial bonding and rivalry are efforts to solidify his white masculinity. The Industrial Revolution that is the context for *Frankenstein* is replaced by the system of American slavery in *Beloved*. The creation of Beloved is Sethe's response to the complete lack of freedom she had experienced as a black female slave and mother and to the more immediate threat of domestic subordination to Paul D. The ensuing female homosocial bond between Beloved and Sethe represents an effort to gain a level of freedom and agency that has been denied to Sethe as a black female slave and might become unavailable if she took on the domestic role of wife to Paul D. Thus, both characters seek to gain power through their unnatural creations, but while Shelley makes it clear that Victor's goal is to empower himself by gaining power over others, Morrison shows that Sethe's objective is not power over others but the power of self-definition and choice.

A final resemblance between Victor and Sethe is the homosocial relationship they engage in with their doppelgängers. Where Victor engages in male homosocial bonding with his

Creature, Sethe establishes a bond with Beloved which can be usefully read through the work of critics such as Todd Reeser and Terry Castle who have expanded Sedgwick's concept of the homosocial to include female homosociality. Like Victor's bond with his Creature, Sethe's bond with Beloved is characterized by exclusivity, rivalry, and eroticism, and also proves to be destructive to other women and racial minorities. Just as Victor's male homosocial bond with his Creature becomes oppressive and disenfranchising, Sethe's relations with Beloved exclude men, particularly Paul D who becomes the marginalized figure in the homosocial triangle, and then further marginalizes Denver, who becomes an Elizabeth figure. Also, both creations eventually become violent and destructive to their own creators as well as to those around them.

Although Shelley's main goal is to criticize Victor's sexism and racism while Morrison's is to help readers sympathize with Margaret Garner's motivations for killing her baby daughter, both Shelley and Morrison are sympathetic to their characters' desires: they evoke sympathy for Victor and Sethe once their doppelgängers completely take over their lives. The punishment barely seems to fit the crime when the Creature murders not only Victor's younger brother but also his closest friend and his wife (not to mention also losing Justine and his father as collateral damage). Sethe loses herself completely to Beloved who has turned violent and demanding. However, at the same time, both creatures' abject physicality and monstrous behavior represents their creators' unnatural transgression against the maternal: just as the Creature embodies Victor's violent impulses to dominate and exclude women, Beloved personifies the violence of Sethe's act of infanticide. Although both are acts of control over the maternal and a violation of a basic human moral code, certainly Victor's technological animation of the Creature and Sethe's murder of her child to free her from slavery are very different. Victor's act is rooted in a white

phallogentric desire for male dominance and control, whereas Sethe's is an act of resistance against that dominance and control.² However, Morrison emphasizes that with the entry into homosocial bonding with the supernatural being she has created, Sethe's quest for freedom and a transformed selfhood result in violent exclusion or oppression of others and threaten to destroy Sethe herself. Morrison's sympathetic portrayal of Sethe stresses the need for new avenues towards black female empowerment that do not simply reproduce the homosocial strategies put in place by the white men at whose hands she had suffered as a female slave. Equipped with the new feminist criticism written about Shelley that was unavailable to other writers who adapted *Frankenstein* earlier in the century, Morrison comes from a unique position as a postmodern black feminist author who is able to rewrite *Frankenstein* with a less destructive and more productive outcome.

Morrison reveals similar motivations in Sethe's subconscious creation of Beloved to those Shelley demonstrates for Victor's fabrication of his Creature. Like Victor, Sethe is first motivated by her anxieties about gender and race influenced by her social and cultural context. Shelley registers Victor's anxieties about his white masculine power against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution and its systems of material production at the beginning of *Frankenstein*. In *Beloved*, Morrison presents Sethe, whose anxieties about her agency and autonomy as black woman are rooted in a similar system of production and commodification: American slavery. While the Industrial Revolution resulted in the exploitation of factory workers, American slavery during the nineteenth century functioned as an even more oppressive system of mass production and exploitation which denied slaves agency as gendered and racial beings. In fact, American slavery and the Industrial Revolution were linked in a very substantial way. Britain greatly

benefitted from the American slave system during the Industrial Revolution because the prospering textile factories in England relied quite heavily on cotton picked by black slaves on American plantations. The Industrial Revolution and American slavery are even further connected since both are similar systems of human commodification that turn human bodies into objects through labor. The American slave system did not simply keep black people in oppressive servitude but also treated human beings as economic objects with exchange value. Although Victor and Sethe's anxieties about gender and race are prompted by similar social and cultural systems, Victor's anxieties are rooted in a possible loss of his white male privilege within the context of the Industrial Revolution while Sethe's fears are based on actual experiences of oppression as a black woman under slavery. Victor is a privileged white European whose humanity is not questioned, nor is he objectified as Sethe is under slavery. What is similar here is that Shelley and Morrison both understand these social and cultural systems as affecting racial identity which is a motivating factor in the creation of both the Creature and Beloved.

If *Frankenstein* records Shelley's understanding of the Industrial Revolution as connected to colonialism and imperialism, Morrison focuses more closely on the objectification and oppression of black slaves during slavery by describing Sethe's complete loss of agency as a black woman, which eventually prompts the creation of Beloved as an effort to gain some of that agency. Morrison first emphasizes Sethe's lack of agency in her description of Sethe and the other slaves as economic objects of exchange. Slaves, such as Sethe, were treated like commodified objects: they had no control over their racialized bodies or their black identity and had no power over defining their selfhood. As Sethe recalls, "anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty

you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up" (295). Morrison further emphasizes their objectification as black bodies when she describes Paul D hearing white men discuss his sale price. More than the monetary value of his body as a laborer, these prices define for a slave his or her worth as a human being: "Paul D hears the men talking and for the first time learns his worth. He has always known, or believed he did, his value — as a hand, a laborer who could make a profit on a farm — but now he discovers his worth, which is to say he learns his price. The dollar value of his weight, his strength, his heart, his brain, his penis, and his future" (267). Slaves were objects in a system of exchange value which established their complete lack of power over their own black identity. The treatment of slaves as objects is exemplified by the figurine in the Bodwins' kitchen which has

a blackboy's mouth full of money. His head was thrown back farther than a head could go, his hands were shoved in his pockets. Bulging like moons, two eyes were all the face he had above the gaping red mouth. His hair was a cluster of raised, widely spaced dots made of nail heads. And he was on his knees. His mouth, wide as a cup, held the coins needed to pay for a delivery or some other small service, but could just as well have held buttons, pins or crab-apple jelly. Painted across the pedestal he knelt on were the words 'At Yo Service'. (300)

Like the money box in *Invisible Man*, these caricatures of African Americans not only reinforce negative stereotypes but also transform African Americans into physical objects — a perfect symbol for the effects of slavery on the body and Sethe's inability to control her sense of self. More than just keeping her in servitude, slavery turns Sethe into an object in a complex system

of the commodification and economy of bodies based on race and strips her of any agency over her self and her racial identity.

Morrison also stresses the negative effects of slavery on a slave's racial identity when she describes schoolteacher's race science. As a number of critics have noted, schoolteacher uses scientific racism to present white superiority as a biological fact and, therefore, to legitimize the system of slavery and his racist treatment of the black slaves at Sweet Home.³ This specifically serves to undermine Sethe's control or power over her identity and the way in which she understands herself as a black woman. For example, schoolteacher performs demeaning examinations on his slaves. Seeking to prove their inferiority as a race with science, "[s]choolteacher'd wrap that string all over [Sethe's] head, 'cross [her] nose, around [her] behind. Number [her] teeth" (226). Using race as a measure of his own power and authority and as a means to degrade his subject, schoolteacher views slaves as animal-like, as indicated by the analogy he uses to explain to his nephew why he should not beat a disobedient slave:

Schoolteacher had chastised the nephew, telling him to think — just think — what would his own horse do if you beat it beyond the point of education. Or Chipper, or Samson. Suppose you beat the hounds past that point thataway. Never again could you trust them in the woods or anywhere else. You'd be feeding them maybe, holding out a piece of rabbit in your hand, and the animal would revert — bite your hand clean off. He punished that nephew by not letting him come on the hunt... See how he liked it, see what happened when you overbeat creatures God had given you the responsibility of — the trouble it was, and the loss... [Y]ou just can't mishandle creatures and expect success. (176)

Schoolteacher also suggests that slaves are inclined towards cannibalism, which is an attempt to prove their inferiority by linking them with the primitive and animalistic associations of the eating of human flesh (177). Clearly, linking slaves to animals relies on the assumption that their black skin makes them less than human. As a result of schoolteacher's race science and Sethe's objectification as a slave, she experiences a complete lack of autonomy or control over her own sense of self as a black woman.

Morrison also echoes Shelley in her depiction of the Industrial Revolution in emphasizing how slavery evoked anxieties about gender as well as race. As discussed in the Introduction, some critics read *Frankenstein* as a response to anxieties about shifting gender roles during the Industrial Revolution: Victor's desire to create his Creature in his "workshop of filthy creation" can be read as a reaction against newly industrialized and standardized working conditions which undermined masculine power and authority. Just as industrial factories reduced workers' bodies to part of the industrial machine, Morrison sees American slavery as a system of (re)production which uses black female bodies as procreative machines and diminishes a female slave's control and autonomy over her body and self. Within the American slave system, black female bodies were the ultimate commodity and important economically since they were able to increase their value without cost to the owner by essentially giving birth to more property. Again, Sethe's exploitation as a female slave is very different from Victor's experience as an educated middle-class white man living through the Industrial Revolution. The similarity here is that both Shelley and Morrison view exploitative systems of economic production as influencing the formation of gender identity and agency.

As many critics have discussed, Morrison highlights the ways in which slavery turns Sethe into a procreative machine and strips her of any control over her gender identity or power of choice as a mother.⁴ Slave mothers are denied their maternal rights and cannot have a relationship with her children: the ultimate attack on female autonomy or power. Baby Suggs describes her inability to nurture her children during slavery. She insists,

Don't talk to me. You lucky. You got three left. Three pulling at your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side. Be thankful, why don't you? I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil...My first born. All I can remember of her is how she loved the burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I can remember. (6)

The fact that Baby Suggs is treated as a procreating machine rather than a mother is indicated by the fact that her eight children had six different fathers (28). Even though slave women are worth more in the eyes of the slave holder since they can turn a profit, for Sethe and the other women at Sweet Home, this has no advantage and is only more oppressive. They have absolutely no control over what happens to their bodies and the children they bear. The commodification of the maternal slave body is also symbolized in the epitaph on crawling-already? baby's tombstone, as Sethe exchanges "ten minutes [of intercourse] for seven letters [on a tombstone]" for her murdered baby; everything is reduced to numbers and the material exchange of the reproductive slave body. As noted by Lara Shapiro and Carole Boyce Davies, Morrison also emphasizes a slave woman's lack of ownership over her maternal body and her ability to mother in the stealing of Sethe's breast milk. Sethe explains to Paul D, "After I left you, those boys came in there and

took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it" (19). As previously noted by critics, Sethe's constant return to the issue of the stealing of her milk — even when Paul D tries instead to address the beating which also took place after her rape — underscores her sense of loss of female agency and anxiety about her gender identity rooted in her role as a mother.⁵

Morrison implies that for Sethe there is a double loss of power over her ability to act as a mother. Not only was she first reduced to a reproductive machine as a female slave, she is also threatened with the loss of her children once again when schoolteacher finds her and her family at 124 Bluestone Road; this threat then drives her to murder her child to save her from experiencing the dehumanization of slavery, which completely cuts off her ability to be a mother to her “crawling already?” baby. Morrison underscores that both Sethe's suffering as a slave at Sweet Home and the lingering effects of this trauma witnessed in her act of infanticide contribute to her complete lack of agency and freedom as a mother and to her unconscious desire to reclaim that power by creating a new being to replace the baby she murdered.

As previously mentioned, both Shelley and Morrison connect Victor and Sethe's creation of their unnatural or supernatural progeny to the loss of a loved one who is symbolic of the mother-child relationship: for Victor, the fabrication of his Creature is connected to the loss of his mother, while for Sethe, Beloved is the return of the child she murdered. However, Shelley and Morrison indicate that the creation of their Creature figures is more than just a revival of a lost maternal bond: in both cases, the creation is also an effort to seize or reclaim control over the female body. For Shelley, Victor endeavors to seize power over the female body by using science to animate the Creature in an act of parthenogenesis and symbolic birth which negates the female

role in procreation. For Morrison, Sethe's creation of Beloved, although subconscious, is also a symbolic birth and an attempt to regain her agency as a mother in response to her dehumanization as a female reproductive body.⁶ Although Victor's Creature is deliberately created in the laboratory while Beloved walks right out of the water and up to 124 Bluestone Road, these creation scenes are both filled with birthing imagery, and it is clear that Sethe is a mother to Beloved just as Victor is a father to the Creature. When Sethe sees Beloved on her front tree stump, a kind of birthing process happens, as she later suggests when she explains that

for some reason she could not immediately account for, the moment she got close enough to see [Beloved's] face, Sethe's bladder filled to capacity... She never made the outhouse. Right in front of its door she had to lift her skirts, and the water she voided was endless. Like a horse, she thought, but as it went on and on she thought, No, more like flooding the boat when Denver was born... But there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now. (61)

Just as Victor becomes the Creature's father as his creator, Sethe symbolically gives birth and is a mother to Beloved. The fact that Beloved walks out of the water also recalls the amniotic fluid that surrounds the fetus before childbirth. Also, Beloved's skin is like that of a newborn: Denver, Paul D, and Sethe all notice that "[s]he had new skin, lineless and smooth, including the knuckles of her hands" (61). Even the fine lines on her forehead are described as "baby hair before it bloomed and roped into the masses of black yarn under her hat" (62). Also, Beloved only has the physical strength of a newborn upon her arrival. Exhausted and only sleeping,

[s]he barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and learned against a mulberry tree. All day and all night she sat there, her head resting on the trunk in a

position abandoned enough to crack the brim of her straw hat. Everything hurt but her lungs most of all. Sopping wet and breathing shallow she spent those hours trying to negotiate the weight of her eyelids... It took her the whole of the next morning to lift herself from the ground and make her way through the woods past a giant temple of boxwood to the field and then the yard of the slate-grey house. (60)

With the characterization of Beloved's arrival as a birth and her demeanor as infant-like, Morrison paints her as Sethe's child and reveals that just as Victor creates the Creature alone as his father and usurps the function of the mother, Sethe symbolically gives birth to Beloved and negates the father's role in procreation. While Victor Frankenstein is masculinized through his act of parthenogenesis, Sethe achieves sole control and agency over her female maternal body and role as a mother.

Morrison establishes that Beloved is more than just a child to Sethe, but is created to subvert slavery's system of reproduction and to restore Sethe's agency as a black slave mother. Because Beloved is born outside the system of slavery, she provides Sethe with a sense of control over her body, a power once taken from her as she was used as a machine for producing more slaves at Sweet Home.⁷ Like the Creature made outside the factories of standardized production, Beloved is not a mere commodity but an offspring without a set economic value. Beloved is handcrafted since she is not controlled by or born into slavery but is Sethe's own unique creation, which counters the commodification of her other children and Sethe's own oppression as a reproductive maternal machine. Now, with Beloved, Sethe can call her children her own, which was only a fantasy while at Sweet Home. She speaks of Beloved: "You are mine You are mine" (256). Creating Beloved in her own way, Sethe nurtures her as her own child and

transforms her identity as a black woman from an objectified slave to a mother who can care for her children. She affirms, “Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children. I never have to give it to nobody else” (237). As that which was stolen from her by the nephews during her rape, milk symbolizes her maternal body, and Beloved’s breath is compared to new milk, making her an embodiment of Sethe’s rebellion against the system of reproduction established by slavery (115). Further reinforcing this image, once Paul D is driven out of 124 Bluestone Road, Beloved, Sethe, and Denver go out skating and use milk afterwards as comfort, which signifies the change in the meaning behind the image of milk and, therefore, Sethe’s newfound control over her black female body. Sethe notes that even though they were tired from their day, “[t]hey went on sipping and watching the fire,” reaffirming that milk has now returned to a positive and comforting symbol for the women of 124 Bluestone Road (206). While the Creature confirms Victor’s white male power as his own unique creation, Beloved undermines the reproductive systems of slavery which stripped Sethe of any ownership or control over her maternal body and provides Sethe with freedom to nurture her children: for her, the definition of black female agency.

Finally, Morrison emphasizes that Sethe’s creation of Beloved undermines schoolteacher’s race science, allowing Sethe to reclaim control over her black female identity once destroyed by schoolteacher. Like Victor’s Creature, whose fabrication is influenced by Victor’s study of alchemy which Alphonse Frankenstein describes as opposite to “real and practical” sciences, Beloved is incomprehensible and unexplainable to the science based on systematic rationality on which schoolteacher claims his racist views are based (Shelley 68). Beloved is part of the unexplained; what she is and where she comes from are never determined.⁸

She is possibly a ghost, a daughter returned from the dead, an ex-slave, or even an apparition of Sethe's mother. Similarly, Beloved performs supernatural feats which cannot be explained scientifically or rationally. For example, Beloved exceeds her apparent physical capacities in a way that defies logic in her first few days at 124 Bluestone Road: Paul D informs Sethe that she "[c]an't walk, but I seen her pick up the rocker with one hand" (67). In addition, Beloved creates new signifiers as though redefining the systems of meaning reinforced by schoolteacher's racist science when he lists the animal and human characteristics of the slaves. When Beloved speaks her name, it is as "though the letters were being formed as she spoke them" (62). Discrediting everything schoolteacher represents and believes which once destroyed Sethe's sense of self and worth, Beloved allows Sethe the freedom of self-definition as a black woman.

Morrison thus shows that Sethe's creation of Beloved is motivated by her earlier objectification and oppression as a slave. However, she also shows that Sethe creates her Creature figure in response to a more immediate threat of a loss of control over the domestic sphere with the arrival of Paul D. This is another way in which Morrison's novel echoes Shelley's: Morrison presents the domestic sphere as a source of anxiety about gender identity for Sethe prior to the arrival of Beloved. In Shelley's novel, Victor is feminized in his association with the domestic attachments and responsibilities, and the fabrication of his Creature in the all-male space of the university becomes a means to move away from the domestic and to reaffirm his masculine authority. Similarly, in *Beloved*, Sethe reacts against the threat of being reduced to a subservient female role with the arrival of Paul D into her domestic space of 124 Bluestone Road. For Morrison, Paul D is a positive figure in Sethe's life; however, it is not the individual character who threatens Sethe but the gendered positions that the domestic ideology forces these

characters into — it is not Paul D but this ideology that is the threat to Sethe's autonomy. The threat to Sethe's feminine and domestic autonomy is symbolized in Paul D's immediate assertion of his masculine presence and authority in Sethe's female-dominated domestic space. While 124 Bluestone Road was housed only by women before Paul D's arrival, they all note the effect his male presence and dominance have on the dynamics of the household. His male presence cannot go unnoticed when he is "[breaking] up the place, making room, shifting it, moving it over to someplace else, then standing in the place he had made" (47). Paul D as a masculine threat over the domestic space upon his arrival is also symbolized in his seduction of Sethe when he takes her breasts in his hands. As Reginald Watson has argued, Paul D attempts to secure some control over of her motherhood in this scene by taking hold of what have come to represent power over Sethe's maternal body as previously experienced with the taking of her milk by schoolteacher's nephews. Even though Sethe is partly relieved that "the responsibility for her breasts, at last, was in somebody else's hands" and Paul D's reunion with Sethe is clearly not one to hurt or injure her nor meant as comparable to the damages caused at Sweet Home by schoolteacher or his nephews, Paul D is still an authoritative male force — albeit respectful — entering her home, even if he is invited in and encouraged by Sethe (21). He is a symbolic figure of male dominance within the structure of a nuclear family he wishes to create with Sethe, so here he represents male power infringing upon the female space of 124. For instance, Paul D desires to impregnate Sethe, which she interprets as resentment for being unable to have complete control over 124:

What did he want her pregnant for?... He resented the children she had, that's what.

Child, she corrected herself. Child plus Beloved whom she thought of as her own, and

that is what he resented. Sharing her with the girls. Hearing the three of them laughing at

something he wasn't in on. The code they used among themselves that he could not break. Maybe even the time spent on their needs and not his. They were a family somehow and he was not the head of it. (155)

According to Sethe, Paul D feels threatened by the female power dynamic in the 124 household, and she reasons that his inclination for children is motivated by a desire to be a powerful male figure in the home. Even though Sethe seems elated with Paul D's arrival, she is also threatened by his desire for her to shift from the authoritative maternal figure to a more submissive wife and mother. Sethe notes that she needs to fix everything Paul D has spoiled. She considers his effect on her and her home: "[t]hey encourage you to put some of your weight in their hands and soon as you felt how light and lovely that was, they studied your scars and tribulations, after which they did what he had done: ran her children out and tore up the house. She needed to get back up from there, go downstairs and piece it all back together" (26). Although Paul D offers to make a life with Sethe a move past their trauma experienced during slavery, Sethe feels that her autonomy is threatened by Paul D and his vision for their domestic life. The arrival of Beloved is meant to solidify Sethe's female agency and freedom.

Just as Morrison suggests that Sethe creates Beloved to reclaim her power as a mother and to reassert her own humanity by undermining schoolteacher's race science, she also indicates that Beloved serves to help Sethe regain control over her domestic space which is threatened with the arrival of Paul D. Beloved arrives just in time to challenge Paul D's masculine assertion of power after he banishes the ghost of the murdered baby from Sethe's house. By banishing the ghost, Paul D is asserting his male power over Sethe's home:

“God damn it! Hush up!” Paul D was shouting, falling, reaching for anchor. “Leave this place alone! Get the hell out!” A table rushed towards him and he grabbed its leg. Somehow he manage to stand at an angle and, holding the table by two legs, he bashed it about, wrecking everything, screaming back at the screaming house. “You want to fight, come on! God Damn it! She got enough without you. She got enough!” (22)

Beloved’s materialization immediately after Paul D drives the ghost out of Sethe’s home is the first indication that Sethe has created her as a means to regain control over the domestic space overpowered by Paul D. It is not long until Paul D realizes that the attempt to uphold his masculine authority is in vain:

He thought he had made it safe, had gotten rid of the danger; beat the shit out of it; run it off the place and showed it and everybody else the difference between a mule and a plow. And because she had not done it before he got there her own self, he thought it was because she could not do it. That she lived with 124 in helpless, apologetic resignation because she had no choice; that minus husband, sons, mother-in-law, she and her slow-witted daughter had to live there all alone making do... He was wrong. This here Sethe was new. (193)

Although wanting to make 124 safe would seem to reflect a desire to protect Sethe rather than to assert power over her, it still relies — as noted here by Paul D himself — on an assumption of female weakness and subordination. With the help of Beloved, Sethe challenges this assumption and asserts that she, not Paul D, has control over her female space. Even Paul D is aware that it is Sethe, and not just Beloved, who does not need or want a male presence in the house. With Beloved’s overpowering of Paul D, he becomes restless and slowly moves out of the female

spaces in 124. Paul D is forced out of the home and goes from Sethe's bed to the rocking chair, to Baby Suggs's bed, to the storeroom and then to the cold house. As though Sethe and Beloved were forcing his actions, Paul D "realized the moving was involuntary. He wasn't being nervous; he was being prevented. So he waited. Visited Sethe in the morning; slept in the cold room at night and waited. [Beloved] came, and he wanted to knock her down" (136). In addition to being slowly run out of 124, Paul D's male influence deteriorates while at 124. Comparing his abilities as a man to his reaction to Beloved's presence, Paul D notes that

[when] he stood up from the supper table at 124 and turned towards the stairs, nausea was first, then repulsion. He, he. He who had eaten raw meat barely dead, who under plum trees bursting with blossoms had crunched through a dove's breast before its heart stopped beating. Because he was a man and a man could do what he would: be still for six hours in a dry well while night dropped; fight raccoon with his hands and win; watch another man, who he loved better than his brothers, roast without a tear just so the roasters would know what a man was like. And it was he, that man, who had walked from Georgia to Delaware, who could not go or stay put where he wanted to in 124 — shame. (148)

Once Paul D leaves Sethe's house, she describes the thrill of regaining her control over the domestic space. She "was feeling the excitement. Not since that other escape had she felt so alive... Oh, today. Now she wanted speed, to skip over the long walk home and be there" (225). This new sense of freedom and autonomy shows that, whether undermining slavery's system of reproduction, schoolteacher's science, or Paul D's masculine authority over 124 Bluestone Road, Beloved is created by Sethe in response to her lack of agency and freedom as a black woman.

Sethe's elation is comparable to Victor's initial sense of exhilaration even at the idea of successfully animating his Creature. However, Victor's reaction quickly turns to horror: a monstrous creature fabricated so that Victor could assert his male power over the feminine. Sethe's empowerment is prolonged compared to Victor's since she is not motivated by a destructive power over others but instead a power over her self and her own agency and freedom.

For Morrison, Beloved not only resembles the Creature in her subversion of her creator's anxieties about gender and race, but she also echoes the Creature in her reflection of her creator's violent past. Like the Creature, Beloved is a reflection of her creator's monstrous act against the maternal: while the Creature's repulsiveness and his murderous actions represent Victor's unconscious impulses to dominate and exclude women, Beloved embodies the violence of Sethe's act of infanticide. To be clear, Morrison is not claiming that Sethe is a monster; in fact, Beloved also embodies the violence that leads to Sethe murdering her child, since Morrison insinuates that Beloved is also a slave mother crossing the Middle Passage. As Deborah Horvitz has argued, the chapter which provides Beloved's perspective describes the experiences on a slave ship suffered by Sethe's mother. Also, Morrison is not describing Sethe as monstrous since the novel makes clear that the violence and oppression of slavery drive her to murder her child. While Victor's act against the maternal is motivated by a desire for masculine power, Sethe's act of infanticide is motivated by a love for her child and the need for agency as a black mother. Nonetheless, her desperate act of infanticide is similar to Victor's animation of corpses in that it seems to go against basic human nature and ethical principles. Beloved embodies all of these traumatic experiences in her connection to dead bodies. Although Beloved is at first very beautiful, unlike the Creature who is immediately repulsive, she is eventually described as

having a similar physical makeup to the Creature. Just as the Creature is made up of various cadavers, Beloved's body is composed of dead parts. As she pulls out a black tooth from her mouth, "Beloved looked at her tooth and thought, This is it. Next would be her arm, her hand, a toe. Pieces of her would drop maybe one at a time, maybe all at once. Or on one of those mornings before Denver woke and after Sethe left she would fly apart. It is difficult keeping her head on her neck, her legs attached to her hips when she is by herself" (157). Like the Creature, who is often referred to as a monstrous object, Beloved is referred to as "it" by Stamp Paid and Ella (313, 315). Stamp remarks to Ella that "Paul D must know who she is. Or *what* she is" (221). Like Frankenstein's Creature, Beloved is abject since she "[disturbs] identity, system, order" by embodying "[w]hat does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 4).⁹ Where Victor is threatened by his Creature's abjection and rejects him as a result, Beloved's abjection, as defined by Kristeva, helps Sethe move beyond the ordered identity as a reproductive machine established by schoolteacher or a submissive wife as desired by Paul D to an identity which disrupts patriarchal order and allows Sethe to become self-empowered. Although Beloved's abjection is initially liberating for Sethe as a resistance to schoolteacher's rationalism, it is also a constant reminder for Sethe, as the Creature's abjection is for Victor, of the violence it represents.

A final way in which Morrison's novel echoes Shelley's is in its portrayal of the homosocial bond that develops between Sethe and her monstrous progeny. As in *Frankenstein*, the creator and Creature figures enter a doubling relationship which facilitates homosocial relations and is initially empowering but eventually proves to be destructive. According to Sedgwick, a homosocial triangle of desire contains two bonding men who are rivals for a

woman. The female presence in the triangle is meant to dispel the homosexual panic between the two bonding men while also acting as an object within the triangle who facilitates the male exchange of power. Terry Castle has argued that while the male homosocial is concerned with the “traffic of women,” female homosocial bonding tends to undo the male homosocial triangle (68, 72). Castle argues that within the model designed by Sedgwick,

the male-female-male erotic triangle remains stable only as long as its single female term is unrelated to any other female term. Once two female terms are conjoined in space, however, an alternative structure comes into being, a female-male-female triangle, in which one of the male terms from the original triangle now occupies the “in between” or subjugated position of the mediator. (72)

Similarly, Todd Reeser notes that the female homosocial bond is a scenario in which men become objects and thus it “could potentially weaken patriarchy” (67). Although Castle and Reese argue that the female bonds are similar to the male bonds since they isolate a male as object at the apex of the triangle, they focus mainly on the lesbian panic in the female bonds as the equivalent of homosexual panic in male bonds. Castle concludes that the ultimate destruction of the male bond is the movement from homosocial to lesbian bonding while Reeser argues that the desire for the male mediator is likely to destroy the female bond in the end (73, 67). Morrison differs from these critics in that she wants to show that the female homosocial bond can resemble the male homosocial bond not just in its homoeroticism but also by including an intense exclusive relationship and rivalry that empowers the female participants while including a third marginalized figure as found in the male model.¹⁰ Morrison suggests that for *Sethe*, the female homosocial bond with *Beloved* offers agency and freedom as a black woman which were taken

from her by men at Sweet Home who engage in homosociality. Like Victor, who asserts his masculine power through male homosocial bonding first with his Creature and then with Walton, Sethe solidifies the agency and freedom she seeks as a black woman by creating a female homosocial bond with Beloved. This bond differs from Victor's in that its goal is to claim agency and autonomy rather than power over others. Yet Morrison echoes Shelley in showing that this strategy of homosociality, even between women seeking autonomy and not power over others, is doomed to fail because it only reproduces the oppressive structures from which Sethe seeks to free herself.

Before engaging in her own female homosocial relationship, Sethe witnessed the effects of these bonds on gender and racial identities from the homosocial relations between men, both black and white, at Sweet Home.¹¹ The male homosocial bonds between the white masters at Sweet Home closely follow Sedgwick's model. Schoolteacher's homosocial bond with his nephews is overtly sexist and racist with detrimental effects to Sethe as the female object within the triangle. Sedgwick also notes that within the homosocial triangle, two men are rivals for a female, but it is through this female that the male rivals exchange their power, resulting in the "isolation, not to mention the complete subordination, of women" (18). Although Sethe is seen as an animalistic slave by schoolteacher and his nephews, the desire which fuels their bonding is evident in the rape of Sethe by the nephews. Before becoming a participant in her own female homosocial relationship, Sethe is the female object to schoolteacher and his nephews' male homosocial bond.

In addition to the bond between schoolteacher and his nephews, Sethe is also the victim of the male homosocial bonds among the black male slaves at Sweet Home. Recent critics have

extended Sedgwick's theory of male homosociality to include the variable of race. According to Todd Reeser, Sedgwick's model for two white men corresponds to a bond between two black men. He argues that "[b]ecause homosexuality is often linked to sameness in the realm of sex and gender (a man plus a man), racial sameness may be a precondition for the threat of homosexuality" (207). Reeser argues that whether or not the male participants are black or white, the triangulation still corresponds to Sedgwick's model since it still includes a female figure and a heterosexual desire to ensure that homosexuality is not a possibility (208). Morrison emphasizes that the black men engaging in homosociality at Sweet Home ward off homosexuality in their triangulation of desire with Sethe. Upon Sethe's arrival at Sweet Home, the men would go as far as having sex with calves before turning to one another (13). As a woman, Sethe is excluded from the male slaves' bonding which is symbolized by their gatherings under Brother, their aptly-named tree (25). Remembering the exclusively male space and Sixo asleep under the tree, Paul D aligns Brother with masculine identity: "Now *there* was a man, and *that* was a tree" (original italics, 27). At the same time, Sethe is the object of desire that facilitates the homosocial bond between the black male slaves. Sethe is sexualized even as a thirteen-year-old girl when she comes to Sweet Home: although they decided to leave her alone and not force themselves on her as the nephews eventually did, Morrison still notes that they abused cows instead (12). Paul D takes note of their unspoken rivalry for Sethe as an object of desire: "each one would have beaten the others to mush to have her" (12). Sethe is later objectified again as a sexual object when these men bond over their voyeuristic group eroticism while watching Halle and Sethe have sex for the first time in the corn fields (32). Arguably, the Sweet Home men's treatment of Sethe does not victimize her at all: in fact, they allow her to

choose Halle. However, it is their restraint against raping Sethe that facilitates the strengthening of their male identity. According to Paul D, “[t]he restraint they had exercised [was] possible only because they were Sweet Home men — the ones Mr. Garner bragged about” (12). Sethe’s victimization by these black male bonds as an object of desire strengthens their male bond. Certainly the male homosocial bond between schoolteacher and his nephews is much more devastating and destructive to Sethe than the male homosocial bonds between the black male slaves at Sweet Home. However, Sethe’s own female homosocial bond greatly differs from the male homosocial bonds at Sweet Home which objectify and demean her; through her female homosocial bond with Beloved, Sethe seeks to transform her identity for her own sake and not willingly at the expense of others.

Having shown how Sethe is a victim of the male homosocial bonds between white male masters and between black male slaves on the plantation, Morrison shows how Sethe creates her own female homosocial bonding with Beloved to acquire agency and freedom as a black woman. Although pursuing different objectives than Victor Frankenstein, Sethe engages in a female homosocial bond with Beloved that is as intensely eroticized, rivalrous, and exclusive as Victor’s relationship with his Creature.¹² The intimacy of Sethe and Beloved’s female homosocial bond is at first evident since they share a mother-daughter relationship. Not only is Beloved created in a symbolic birthing scene with Sethe, but after Beloved’s arrival to 124, she establishes their mother-daughter dynamic since she resembles a child. Like the Creature who is childlike when he took “a long time before [he] learned to distinguish between the operations of [his] various senses,” Beloved displays infantile gestures and learning patterns (128). Just as the Creature must learn to understand language from the De Laceys, Beloved’s language is broken and

childlike. For example, her monologue is without punctuation or even complete sentences: “I am not separate from her there is not place where I stop her face is my own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too” (248). Although they are physically adults, the Creature and Beloved exhibit childlike characteristics which suggest that they both have a parent-child relationship and intimacy with their creators. Eventually, Sethe and Beloved’s intimacy grows beyond the boundaries of a familial relation. Like Victor and the Creature’s attachment which is at once familial (father-son) and erotic, Beloved and Sethe display a desire for one another as mother and daughter that is neither entirely erotic nor platonic. The intensity of their bond is stressed in the exclusivity of their relationship. Like Victor who isolates himself from family and friends even before the successful animation of his Creature, Sethe similarly relinquishes the limited contact she has to the public sphere and does not leave 124 Bluestone Road, isolating herself and Beloved from the world. Also like Victor and the Creature, who always remain in close proximity to one another, Beloved and Sethe are inseparable. Denver observes, “When her mother is anywhere around, Beloved has eyes only for Sethe” (143). Beloved is like the Creature following Victor in the shadows when she first waits by the window, then on the front porch, and finally down the street for Sethe to return home from work. More than exclusivity, there are instances when Beloved’s attraction to Sethe is highly eroticized. For example, Paul D notices Beloved’s attraction to Sethe:

In the evening when he came home and the three of them were all fixing the supper table, her shine was so pronounced he wondered why Denver and Sethe didn’t see it. Or maybe they did. Certainly women could tell, as men could, when one of their number was aroused... But if her shining was not for him, who then? He had never known a

woman who lit up for nobody in particular, who just did it as a general announcement.

(76-78)

Here, Beloved's desire for Sethe appears to be purely sexual, yet her attraction to Sethe is not so easy to pigeonhole. Her desire is also comparable to familial love. However, like the eroticized affection, this familial love exceeds the boundaries of familial affections:

Rainwater held onto pine needles for dear life and Beloved could not take her eyes off Sethe. Stooping to shake the damper, or snapping sticks for kindling, Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes. Like a familiar, she hovered, never leaving the room Sethe was in unless required and told to. She rose early in the dark to be there, waiting, in the kitchen when Sethe came down to make fast bread before she left for work. In lamplight, and over the flames of the cooking stove, their two shadows clashed and crossed on the ceiling like black swords. (68)

Not entirely lesbian nor simply familial love, homosociality is at once homophobic and associated with same-sex desire (Sedgwick 1). The eroticized intimacy between Sethe and Beloved moves their relationship from mother-child to homosocial bond.

As with Victor and the Creature, Sethe and Beloved's intimate bond is most strongly evident in their mimicry of one another. Sethe and Beloved are separate from one another but they are also strangely identical. For instance, Sethe acknowledges their corresponding experiences when she asks, "You disremember everything? I never knew my mother neither, but I saw her a couple of times" (140). Eventually, each gradually reverses into the role of the other just as Victor and his Creature do midway through *Frankenstein*. Denver notes that "it was difficult for [her] to tell who was who": even though she is Sethe's creation and offspring,

Beloved begins to swell as though she were pregnant, taking on the role of mother that had once been Sethe's (283). Beloved also begins to dress in Sethe's clothes and imitate the way she speaks, laughs, and walks (283). At the same time, Sethe begins to regress into a child, which was previously Beloved's role. Denver observes, "there wasn't a piece of clothing in the house that didn't sag on her" (281). Their doubling is expressed directly during their monologue chapters, where Beloved states, "I am not separate from her there is no place where I stop her face is my own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too... she is the laugh I am the laughter I see her face which is mine" (248, 251). Like Victor and the Creature, whose male homosocial bond is solidified in their father-son relationship, the homoerotic undertones of their bond, and their interchangeability, Sethe and Beloved intensify their female homosocial bond through their mother-daughter relationship, the eroticized nature of their connection, and their mimicry of one another.

Sethe and Beloved's homosocial bond also resembles the bond between Victor and his Creature in that it contains an intense rivalry. The rivalry as a race for vengeance between the Creature and Victor is expressed in the terrible acts committed against one another: while Victor abandons his creation and denies him a life of companionship with a female mate, the Creature murders his whole family and destroys his life. The rivalry within Sethe and Beloved's bond is more complicated since Sethe feels guilty for murdering the baby whom she believes Beloved is a reincarnation. Like Frankenstein's Creature, Beloved clearly expresses resentment and murderous rage toward Sethe, but unlike Victor who gains strength in his rivalry with the Creature, Sethe eventually gives up and does not fight back. While the power dynamics in *Frankenstein* move from the Creature chasing Victor all over Europe to Victor chasing the

Creature in the Arctic, the power dynamics in *Beloved* move from Beloved chasing after Sethe to Sethe being overpowered by Beloved. While at first Beloved follows Sethe everywhere and pronounces to Denver that “[Sethe] is the one. She is the one I need. You can go but she is the one I have to have,” towards the end of the novel Sethe is “serving a girl not much older than [Denver]” (89, 285). The shift in power between creator and creation is manifested in the changes to Sethe’s and Beloved’s physical appearance of the once mother and child. Denver observes

Beloved bending over Sethe looked the mother, Sethe the teething child... The bigger Beloved got, the smaller Sethe became; the brighter Beloved’s eyes, the more those eyes that used to look away became slits of sleeplessness. Sethe no longer combed her hair or splashed her face with water. She sat in the chair licking her lips like a chastised child while Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it. (294-5)

At first, Sethe engages with Beloved in her bickering and her antagonistic behavior. Once Paul D has left, Denver notes that “if Sethe didn’t wake up one morning and pick up a knife, Beloved might,” but “[t]he job [Denver] started out with, protecting Beloved from Sethe, changed to protecting her mother from Beloved” (285, 286). Denver mentions that Sethe and Beloved battle for control over the domestic space of 124 — that which Sethe sought with the creation of Beloved and the removal of Paul D as a domestic threat: suddenly, “the mood changed and arguments began...When once or twice Sethe tried to assert herself — be the unquestioned mother whose word was law and who knew what was best — Beloved slammed things, wiped the table clean of plates, threw salt on the floor, broke a windowpane” (284-285). Like the bond

between Victor and his Creature, the relationship between Sethe and Beloved contains an escalating rivalry characteristic of the homosocial bond.

In *Frankenstein*, Shelley demonstrates the detrimental effects of the homosocial relationships between men when Elizabeth falls victim to the Creature and Victor's rivalry and is murdered. As a love interest to Sethe, Paul D is singled out by Morrison as a victim to Sethe and Beloved's female bond by which he is excluded and marginalized. Even as a ghost, Beloved drove men away from 124 Bluestone Road. At thirteen, Buglar and Howard leave their mother's home, "as soon as merely looking in the mirror shattered it (that was a signal for Buglar); as soon as tiny hand prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard). Neither boy wanted to see more; another kettle full of chickpeas smoking in a heap on the floor; soda crackers crumbled and strewn in a line next to the door-sill" (3). Once returned as Beloved, she also drives away Paul D. He highlights her oppressiveness when he compared her to schoolteacher:

If schoolteacher was right it explained how he had come to be a rag doll — picked up and put back down anywhere any time by a girl young enough to be his daughter. Fucking her when he was convinced he didn't want to. Whenever she turned her behind up, the calves of his youth (was that it?) cracked his resolve. But it was more than appetite that humiliated him and made him wonder if schoolteacher was right. It was being moved, placed where she wanted him, and there was nothing he was able to do about it. (148)

Paul D recognizes this female homosocial bond as oppressive to him when he accuses Sethe and Beloved of treating him like a rag doll — reminiscent of the dehumanizing image of the Sambo Doll in *Invisible Man*. He notes that Sethe and Beloved "moved him. Just when doubt, regret and every single unasked question was packed away, long after he believed he had willed himself

into being, at the very time and place he wanted to take root — she moved him. From room to room. Like a rag doll” (261). Also, after leaving 124, Paul D is reduced to living in a cellar. Stamp Paid takes note of this marginalization and dehumanization and asks furiously, “Since when a blackman come to town have to sleep in a cellar like a dog?” (219). More than exclusion and dehumanization, Beloved and Sethe’s bond actually changes his masculine identity. After leaving Sethe, Paul D describes his vulnerability through the image of the tobacco tin which when closed tight had symbolized his repressed trauma. Sitting outside the church, he “held his wrists between his knees, not to keep his hands still but because he had nothing else to hold onto. His tobacco tin, blown open, slipped contents that floated and made him their play and prey” (257-8). Repressing his trauma enabled Paul D to maintain a strong sense of black masculinity, but now Paul D’s tin is wide open, and his strength as a black man is diminished, and Sethe’s female homosocial bond proves to be just as harmful as Victor’s bond with his Creature.

With Paul D driven out of 124 Bluestone Road, Denver takes his place and also becomes marginalized and oppressed by Sethe and Beloved’s homosocial relationship.¹³ With Denver, the female homosocial bond between Sethe and Beloved moves past the challenging of male dominance and assertion of black female agency into perpetuating violence against other women. At first, Denver seems to be a benefitting participant to Sethe and Beloved’s bond. With Paul D gone, the three are an inseparable triffecta: “[w]hatever was happening, it only worked with three — not two” (286). Morrison highlights her inclusion in this female homosocial bond in the image of the infant Denver drinking from Sethe’s breast which is covered in the blood of the murdered baby of whom Beloved is described as the reincarnation. Denver also appears to be an

active participant as a subject and not object in this female homosocial triangle when she is included as a narrator in one of the three consecutive chapters also narrated by Sethe and Beloved with each describing her individual desires — these three chapters begin with a variation of the statement “Beloved, she is mine” (236, 242, 248). Denver’s active participation in the homosocial triangle with Sethe and Beloved is also noted by Sethe: “Obviously the hand-holding shadows she had seen on the road were not Paul D, Denver and herself, but ‘us three.’ The three holding on to each other skating the night before; the three sipping flavored milk” (214). Although encouraging at first, the female homosocial triangle very quickly becomes oppressive to Denver. Much like Elizabeth, who is isolated from Victor’s life after the creation of the Creature, Denver is excluded from Sethe and Beloved’s female homosocial bonding experience. Beloved is clear about who and what she wants — similar to the Creature who is determined to exact revenge on his creator. She explains to Denver, “You can go but she is the one I have to have” (89). Once Sethe notices the scar under Beloved’s chin, she “finger[s] it and close[s] her eyes for a long time, [and then] the two of them cut Denver out of the games... she cut[s] Denver out completely” (282). Eventually, Denver “came to realize that her presence in that house had no influence on what either woman did. She kept them alive and they ignored her” (296). Like Elizabeth who is victimized while the Creature and Victor are empowered, Denver experiences the reverse effect of the bond between Sethe and Beloved which provided strength to her mother and Beloved: she admits, “This is worse than when Paul D came to 124 and she cried helplessly into the stove. This is worse. Then it was for herself. Now she is crying because she has no self. Death is a skipped meal compared to this. She can feel her thickness thinning, dissolving into nothing” (145). Although she is not literally killed as a result of the

homosocial rivalry like Elizabeth is in *Frankenstein*, Denver is equally marginalized and nearly destroyed by Sethe's female homosocial bond with Beloved. By showing how Sethe's bond with Beloved victimizes Denver as well as Paul D, Morrison echoes Shelley in criticizing the destructive effects of the homosocial triangle. Although Sethe as a black woman and former slave comes from a very different social and cultural position and does not seek the access to power Victor Frankenstein desires, her female homosocial bond eventually results in the same oppression and domination of others.

For Morrison, the homosocial bond eventually becomes destructive not only for others but also for the creator. Like Victor who becomes trapped in a battle to the death with his doppelgänger, Sethe's female homosocial relationship with Beloved eventually becomes increasingly destructive and violent for herself. For Shelley, Victor and the Creature's rivalry over the female figures — Elizabeth and the Creature's mate — facilitates their exchanges of male power at the expense of other female figures. For Morrison, Sethe and Beloved are rivals over Paul D. Beloved aggravates her rivalry with Sethe by seducing Paul D in the cold house. Both encounters are sexualized: the Creature murders Elizabeth on her wedding bed, and Beloved controls and manipulates Paul D sexually: "You have to touch me. One the inside part. And you have to call me my name" (137). Even though Beloved does not kill Paul D as the Creature murders Elizabeth, she still turns violent but towards Sethe instead of Paul D. While in the clearing with invisible hands clasping Sethe's neck, Beloved strangles her from afar. Denver confronts her and admits: "I saw your face. You made her choke" (119). Like the Creature who harbors a murderous hatred for his creator but does not kill him, Beloved seeks to destroy her creator but will not murder her. Trapped at 124 Bluestone Road, Sethe, like Victor alone in the

Arctic, endures her creation's violence and torture since, like the Creature, Beloved is her own and the embodiment of their creators' own violent and monstrous act: the act of parthenogenesis carried out by Victor and the infanticide executed by Sethe. With shifts in power and a consistent struggle within Beloved and Sethe's relationship, Morrison demonstrates that, like Victor and the Creature's bond, Sethe and Beloved's homosocial bond can only end in violence even though it was intended to provide freedom and agency.

Morrison echoes Shelley when she emphasizes that it is not the doppelgänger, as monstrous as she appears, that is the problem. Although Beloved seems, like the Creature, to be the destructive force in the novel who ends up in complete control over her creator, Morrison, like Shelley, ensures that the reader sympathizes with this creation as well. This is most poignantly evident when the Creature and Beloved are given the license to speak in the middle of each respective novel. Their innocence draws up sympathy in the reader since they are both childlike without parental guidance, long for their self-motivated creators, and express the horror of their experiences — the Creature in his rejection by Victor and Beloved in her embodiment of the slave experience. Even though both novels end with a sense that the Creature and Beloved must be destroyed or at least cast out in order for their creators to survive, both novels also leave readers with the feeling that these creatures are not to blame. The Creature and Beloved share the same fate: they are never actually destroyed, and both Shelley and Morrison insinuate that they still loom in the shadows. While the reader of *Frankenstein* is never quite certain if the Creature holds true to his promise to die off alone in the Arctic, Beloved's presence is forever questioned, especially since she is said to have been seen once running through the woods naked (315). This Gothic haunting reminds the reader that Victor and Sethe never actually found what they were

looking for in creating their doppelgängers. Like Shelley, Morrison understands it as an opportunity to emphasize that in the search for self-transformation either through power or freedom, strategies learned from other oppressive systems are not sustainable or constructive.

While Morrison echoes Shelley's critique, *Beloved* also differs from *Frankenstein* in an important way. Shelley does not seem to imagine an alternative to the destruction caused by the search for power through the creation of a doppelgänger and male homosocial bonds. Her novel ends with Victor dead. In contrast, Morrison stresses the need for other possibilities and avenues towards self-definition, whether by black men or women. For one thing, Denver is a much more powerful female figure than Elizabeth. She breaks from the female homosocial triangle, leaves 124, and instigates the salvation of her mother. Also, unlike Victor, Sethe survives and moves past her trauma. When she mistakes Bodwin for schoolteacher, she does not steal her children away to save them by murdering them; instead, Sethe attacks Bodwin, whom she sees as the perpetrator, rather than killing Beloved a second time to protect her (309). Also, the community mends itself through this experience. The women in the community come to rescue the rejected Sethe, and in the process, heal their own wounds. Finally, Paul D's manhood is restored and reshaped into a more positive masculine identity: he compares his devotion to Sethe with Sixo's feelings for the Thirty Mile Woman and then returns to tell Sethe that he "wants to put his story next to hers" (322). Where Shelley only provides destruction for her characters, Morrison's novels ends with fewer deaths, but warns that if black men and women are going to challenge their oppression, they must avoid reproducing the circumstances and structures of subjugation and violence that have been inflicted upon them.

Notes: Chapter 3

¹ These critics include Mischelle Booher, Claude Cohen-Safir, Liliane Weissberg, Cedric Gael Bryant, Philip Goldstein, Wesley Britton, A. Timothy Spaulding, Justine Tally, David Lawrence, and Ellen J. Goldner.

² For feminist readings on female power and empowerment, see Linda Alcoff, Amy Allen, Hélène Cixous, Virginia Held, and Luce Irigaray, and Thomas Wartenberg.

³ These critics include Tuire Valkeakari, Heather Duerre Humann, Kimberly Chabot Davis, Mary Jane Suero Elliott, Weiqiang Mao and Mingquan Zhang, Kate Cummings, Lorraine Liscio, Linda Krumholz, Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu, Dana Heller, Jeanna Fuston-White, and Cedric Gael Bryant, Tadd Ruetenik, and Ellen J. Goldner.

⁴ These critics include Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos, Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu, Kate Cummings, and Lorraine Liscio.

⁵ These critics include Lorraine Liscio, Michele Mock, Edith Frampton, Doreen D'Cruz, and Reginald Watson.

⁶ See Keith Mitchell, Nancy Kang, Susan Jaret McKinstry, Jeanna Fuston-White and Mark Ledbetter for analyses of how Sethe's relationship with Beloved allows her to reinvent and reconstruct herself and her traumatized identity.

⁷ It should be noted that although Denver was also not born into slavery, she is not entirely a self-birth or act of parthenogenesis since Sethe still requires Halle and the male role in her creation. Denver is also clearly Sethe's daughter — whereas Beloved's ambiguity and mysterious nature is imperative to her role as a doppelgänger and Creature figure.

⁸ Many have debated just who or what Beloved is and her purpose in the novel. Deborah Horvitz argues that she is a ghost representing the all of the female slaves who died during the Atlantic slave trade and the black American women trying to connect to them. According to Elizabeth House, Beloved is a former slave without any attachment to the supernatural. Susan Spearey and Esther Peeren contest that Beloved is a ghost or specter. Barbara Offutt Mathieson notes that Beloved is the actual return of the murdered baby. Jennifer Holden-Kirwan convincingly asserts that Beloved is the return of Sethe's mother. Indeed, some critics, such as Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, Martha J. Cutter, do not come to a conclusion at all about the nature of Beloved by stating that she is all of these at once: a ghost, a survivor of the Middle Passage, and an ex-slave or a sexually abused prisoner of a white neighbor. Morrison herself has been very unclear about just who and what Beloved is.

⁹ See Claudine Raynaud for more on Beloved as abject. This analysis is concerned with the Middle Passage as in-betweenness in memory, the subjective, and objective experience of the abject.

¹⁰ For examples of critics who read the female homosocial as empowering for fictional and real-life women, see Naomi Miller, Nima Naghibi, Heather Debling and Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Lisa Auanger.

¹¹ When it comes to considering male relations in *Beloved*, most critics are fixed on only addressing the construction of masculinities based on ownership of slavery and its connection to race (see Philip Weinstein, Reginald Watson, and Barbara Frey Waxman). Consequently, while deconstructing these masculine identities of the masters and his slaves, critics have yet to consider the homosocial relationships or their considerable effect on other characters in *Beloved*.

¹² Leila Silvana May is the only critic who comes close to identifying the relationship between the women in the novel as homosocial. Comparing *Beloved* to “Goblin Market,” May notes that her argument is based upon the work of René Girard — noted by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to be her greatest influence for her theory of homosociality — and states that the bond between Denver and Beloved is “a form of triangulated feminine desire” (May 136,133).

¹³ Although it maybe seem contradictory to place mothers and supposed sisters into a homosocial triangle, these familial connections are also found within the triangular relation between Victor, the Creature and Elizabeth. While Victor and his Creature have a father/son relationship, Victor is also Elizabeth’s cousin. The lines between sexual desire and familial affections are blurred; therefore, homosociality between these women in *Beloved* is similar to the homosocial dynamics in *Frankenstein*.

“[T]hou hast made me more powerful than thyself”:

Male Violence and the Frankensteinian Homosocial in Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*

Come on, my enemy; we have yet to wrestle for our lives.
(Mary Shelley 227)

Oh, Tyler, please rescue me...Deliver me from Swedish furniture. Deliver me from clever art...Deliver me, Tyler, from being perfect and complete.
(Chuck Palahniuk 46)

In Chuck Palahniuk’s *Haunted* (2005), a group of misfits participates in a writer’s retreat after responding to an invitation posted in a café in Oregon. Their host, Mrs. Clarke, compares their gathering to a “modern equivalent of the people at Villa Diodati” (82). In one of many references to *Frankenstein* and its author in the novel, Mrs. Clarke is referring to the summer in 1816 when Mary Shelley, with her lover Percy Bysshe Shelley, friends Lord Byron and John Polidori, and stepsister Claire Clairmont, assembled at the Villa Diodati in Switzerland to tell ghost stories which eventually inspired a dream that became *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. In *Haunted*, aspiring writers tell their stories in the “Frankenstein Room” and are “looking for one idea that would echo for the rest of time. Echo into books, movies, plays, songs, television, T-shirts, money,” much like the status Shelley’s own novel achieved in the twentieth century (82). *Haunted* documents Palahniuk’s interest in Shelley’s novel in the 2000s, yet he also demonstrates a great deal of familiarity with *Frankenstein* in his earlier novel *Fight Club* (1996), which I argue echoes Shelley’s novel.

Palahniuk wrote *Fight Club* while a renewed interest in *Frankenstein* was emerging in the early to mid-1990s. The image of Victor Frankenstein as a mad scientist and his Creature as a symbol for science gone awry were compelling comparisons for late twentieth-century scientific

and technological issues such as cloning, genetic engineering and even the assisted-suicide debates involving Jack Kevorkian: there was a fear that pushing the ethical boundaries of scientific advancements would lead to a similar fate as Victor Frankenstein's where his own scientific experiment of creating his Creature crossed ethical lines and ultimately ended in destruction. New film and television adaptations of *Frankenstein* surfaced which tried to remain faithful to the novel. David Wickes, who had already reinterpreted the stories of Jack the Ripper and Jekyll and Hyde, presented a television film version of *Frankenstein* in 1992. More famously, Kenneth Branagh attempted to translate the nineteenth-century novel to film in 1994. Starring Robert De Niro as the Creature and Branagh himself as Victor, this version differed from previous cinematic adaptations in promising complete, unprecedented fidelity to the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*. Palahniuk's *Fight Club* also echoes Shelley's novel, since the protagonist is a Victor figure who creates Tyler Durden who then becomes his doppelgänger.

To date, only two critics have made connections between *Frankenstein* and *Fight Club*. According to Alex Tuss, Tyler Durden is like the Creature who is resentful of his creator and his culture's value system (95). Similarly, Lauren Goodlad claims that the men of fight club are like Victor's monster mourning their imperfect masculine identity and the absence of the feminine (90). I also read Tyler as a Creature figure; however, building on the analysis of these critics, I argue that *Fight Club* echoes Shelley's critique of white male responses to late twentieth-century consumer culture — responses that initiate a racist and misogynistic homosocial bonding which reaffirms their white masculine power.

From the outset, *Fight Club* appears to be a simple and straightforward retelling of *Frankenstein*. Just as Victor Frankenstein is emasculated by his inclusion in the domestic realm

and expresses an anxiety about his white male power as a result of the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution, the narrator of *Fight Club* is feminized and reveals anxieties about his white male privilege in a similar culture of mass production and technological advancement. Motivated by fears about his white male power, the narrator, like Victor, creates another living being who functions as his doppelgänger, Tyler Durden. Afterward, they engage in homosocial bonding — first together and then with other men in fight club — and practice a rebellious science with Project Mayhem to reaffirm the narrator's white male authority. Like Frankenstein's Creature, Tyler embodies the narrator's monstrosity, but creator and creation project this monstrosity onto the women and racial minorities in the novel who are marginalized and made abject. Like Elizabeth in *Frankenstein*, Marla is the female figure within the homosocial triangle, so she is marginalized and associated with an abject reproductive femininity. However, by replacing the passive Elizabeth with the strong female character of Marla, who embraces her abjection and her monstrosity even before occupying her place within the homosocial triangle, Palahniuk stresses that homosocial relations cannot succeed as a means for ensuring white male power in the post-feminism world of the late twentieth century. In fact, these homosocial tactics will become detrimental not only to the participants but also to other men outside the triangle, such as Bob Paulson. Although *Fight Club* seems to be invested in the masculinity it critiques, Palahniuk warns more strongly than any other writer in this project against the use of homosocial bonding as a means to secure white male power and demonstrates that the consequences of white male homosociality have become exponentially worse in the later part of the twentieth century.

Until now, some critics have argued that *Fight Club* offers an escape for men besieged by a consumer-driven emptiness found within the postmodern, middle-class, white male subject

while others have objected that the novel is a dangerous stimulant to rage against a system of economic and cultural order without providing any real solutions and instead creating new problems.¹ The former praises *Fight Club* for its ability to empower men who feel emasculated by the feminization of consumer culture. According to Scott Wike, “By isolating a series of fantasy-types related to the broken promises of society, Tyler Durden and [the narrator] are able to construct fight club as a means for alleviating the problems caused by those unfulfilled promises” (73). However, critics in the latter group criticize fight club’s tactics and claim that this boy’s club only exacerbates the original problem rooted in the members’ perceived lack of masculine power without offering a solution. According to Henry Giroux, *Fight Club*

defines the violence of capitalism almost exclusively in terms of an attack on traditional (if not to say regressive) notions of masculinity, and in doing so re-inscribes white heterosexuality within a dominant logic of stylized brutality and male bonding that appears to be predicated on the need to denigrate, and to wage war against, all that is feminine... while simultaneously refusing to take up either in a dialectical and critical way. (5, 15)

While these critics understand Palahniuk as intentionally glorifying homosocial strategies, which could easily be argued is an interpretation encouraged by David Fincher’s film version, I argue that Palahniuk himself finds fault with the homosocial as a means to pacify male angst, and that reading *Fight Club* as echoing Shelley’s *Frankenstein* makes clear how, far from being a simple Jekyll and Hyde story, Palahniuk’s novel uses Shelleyan motifs to warn against the misogynistic, racist and heteronormative male homosocial bonds cultivated by fight club and Project Mayhem.

As Jay Clayton observes, “Romanticism and postmodernism share the distinction of being the two most significant counter-Enlightenment discourses the West has produced” (56). Palahniuk’s postmodern critique of capitalism as destructive rather than progressive parallels Shelley’s Romantic challenge to the cultural values and ideals of Enlightenment’s scientific and technological progress. Like *Frankenstein*, *Fight Club* presents a protagonist whose desire to reaffirm his white male authority is motivated by anxieties generated by industrial capitalism and consumer culture.² Palahniuk stresses the narrator’s feminization within the workplace, which is characterized by the same tediousness and monotony as the eighteenth-century factory that was one factor in Victor’s decision to create his monster. Late twentieth-century capitalism and its culture of mass production and consumption were bred out of the standardized factory production of goods introduced by the Industrial Revolution through innovations such as the steam engine and the assembly line. With the replacement of American workers with the mechanization of production on a mass scale, workers were transplanted out of the factory and into the office, which only furthered and reinforced the image of workers as just another cog in the wheel. Powerless and just another copy of a copy, male workers are emasculated as they become commodities in a mindless working environment. The narrator describes the monotonous environment symbolic of the workers themselves: “[everything] where I work is floor-to-ceiling glass. Everything is vertical blinds. Everything is industrial low-pile gray carpet spotted with little tombstone monuments where the PCs plug into the network. Everything is a maze of cubicles boxed in with fences of upholstered plywood” (137-8). Similarly, in the office where the smooth functioning of business outweighs the value of the workers’ lives, the narrator explains the way in which his job as an insurance adjuster measures the cost of human life

against that of the recall of a defective car part (30). Treating workers as faceless interchangeable automatons, capitalism strips workers of their identity and weakens their sense of power. For male workers, this perceived disempowerment is associated with feminization. Sitting through another office presentation, the narrator sarcastically explains how his boss “tells Microsoft how he should choose a particular shade of pale cornflower blue for an icon” (49). Since colors and shades are traditionally a female interest, the narrator is feminized by his work. Palahniuk thus echoes Shelley in showing how late twentieth-century capitalist systems of labor, like the factory work of the early nineteenth century, leave the narrator feminized.

Just as Victor’s feminization is related not only to fears surrounding the Industrial Revolution and its systems of standardized production but also to his domestication within the feminized space of the home, the narrator of *Fight Club* is emasculated by his domestic obsession with the home within America’s late twentieth-century consumer culture of mass production.³ Palahniuk is not the only late twentieth-century writer to connect anxiety about male power with a feminizing culture overrun by consumerism and domesticity. The late twentieth century experienced a surge of American films and novels mainly depicting white middle-class men experiencing a crisis of masculinity induced by late capitalism, consumer culture, and the alienation of a white bourgeois lifestyle; the more notable examples along with *Fight Club* include *American Psycho* (2000) and *American Beauty* (1999). Although the association between consumerism and femininity as a postwar construction was present as early as in the 1920s, as already seen in Cather’s *The Professor’s House*, Susan Faludi argues that this association was intensified in the postwar period.⁴ According to Faludi, soldiers, who experienced the hardships of the Great Depression and World War II, fell directly into over-consumption upon their return

home in an attempt to create a better life for their families than the one they had experienced (36-7). Raised by these men, their sons were emasculated by their consumer excess and domesticity in comparison to their fathers who were war heroes. This feminization of men due to over-consumption and a culture based on commodification continued well into the late twentieth century. *Fight Club* addresses this nostalgia for a lost era of male heroism and characterizes a passive consumer-driven masculinity as a disgrace when one of Tyler's drones echoes him: "We don't have a great war in our generation, or a great depression, but we do, we have a great war of the spirit. We have a great revolution against culture. The great depression of our lives. We have a spiritual depression" (149). Because domestication is traditionally associated with women, the narrator of *Fight Club* believes that he has become feminized by what the narrator calls "a nesting instinct." While in *Frankenstein* Victor's feminization is reflected in his passive demeanor, in *Fight Club* the narrator frankly describes the behavioral effects of his emasculating culture and the boring uniformity of everything as a result: "The people I know who used to sit in the bathroom with pornography, now they sit in the bathroom with their IKEA furniture catalogue. We all have the same Johanneshov armchair in the Strinne green stripe pattern... We all have the same Rislampa/Har paper lamps made from wire and environmentally friendly unbleached paper" (43). The narrator is feminized through his fixation on domestic consumerism. This fixation is practically obsession, and the narrator adopts a compulsive need to acquire feminizing material objects:

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed.

The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you. (44)

While Victor Frankenstein is preoccupied with the feminizing domestic affairs of care taking, the narrator is more concerned with filling it with material objects instead of people. Nonetheless, it likewise threatens the narrator's white male power. Aware of its effects on him and other men, the narrator expresses concern that corporations and a consumer-driven society are taking away the traditional masculine enterprises from the late twentieth-century male. He observes that

since England did all the exploration and built colonies and made maps, most of the places in geography have those secondhand sort of English names... Fast-forward to the future. This way, when deep-space exploration ramps up, it will probably be the megatonic corporations that discover all the new planets and map them... Every planet will take on the corporate identity of whoever rapes it first. (171)

While the traditionally masculine venture of exploration and colonization had once provided an arena for masculine adventure, the corporate capitalism that has superseded it leaves men feeling emasculated and feminized because this cultural system pacifies them through consumption. The pursuit of empty mass-produced material possessions begins to strip men like the narrator of their masculine power and leaves the narrator dependent on his domestic possessions and their ability to define who he is. After his condo blows up, he remarks, "I loved my life. I loved that condo. I loved every stick of furniture. That was my whole life. Everything, the lamps, the chairs, the rugs were me. The dishes in the cabinets were me. The plants were me. The television was me. It was me that blew up" (110-1). His insomnia is "just the symptom of something larger": the threat to his white male power where "everything is so far away, a copy of a copy of

a copy” in a world revolving around mass production and domestic consumerism (19, 21). The narrator has become a passive consumer, emasculated since he only finds meaning in people and things he doesn’t actually choose for himself. His predicament echoes that of Willa Cather’s Professor, who is similarly trapped and feminized by domesticity and feels that “[his] career, his wife, his family, were not his life at all, but a chain of events which had happened to him” (240). Completely desperate and distraught at his feminization through enslavement to domestication, the narrator believes he can be free only through death, as indicated by his description of dying in a plane crash: “Look up into the stars and you’re gone. Not your luggage. Nothing matters. Not your bad breath...you will never have to file another expense account claim. Receipt required for items over twenty-five dollars. You will never have to get another haircut” (31). Just as Shelley acknowledges the effects of the Industrial Revolution on masculinity through her representation of Victor’s feminization, Palahniuk highlights how late twentieth-century consumer culture leaves the narrator anxious about his male power.

Like Victor, the narrator equally expresses a fear of losing his racial power. Just as Victor boasts of his racial background at the very beginning of his tale, the narrator is well aware of his racial privilege and shamelessly practices cultural appropriation as a consumer. For example, he admits that the contents of his condominium include a “set of hand-blown green glass dishes with the tiny bubbles and imperfections, little bits of sand, proof they were crafted by honest, simple, hard-working indigenous peoples of wherever,” or “clever Njurunda coffee tables in the shape of a lime green yin and an orange yang that fit together to make a circle” (41, 43). However, while Victor Frankenstein seeks to reinforce his racial authority by creating another species, the narrator conveys a desire to reaffirm his racial power as a white male. He has the

economic power to exploit other inferiorized cultures by buying the consumer goods which take advantage of them, yet the narrator still expresses an anxiety about gender and racial power. He comment that he is a “slave to [his] nesting instinct,” and aligns his position as a consumer to that which has been historically occupied by black slaves (43). According to David Savran in *Taking it Like a Man*, the late twentieth century witnessed the sudden emergence of the disaffected, victimized, white middle-class American man which became symbolized in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people. While at first thought to be carried out by a foreign terrorist, the bombing was executed by a white middle-class American male, Timothy McVeigh, who viewed the bombing as an act of insurgency against what he perceived to be his victimization and loss of power to the equality of women and racial minorities (3-5). Similarly, in *Fight Club*, the narrator’s anxiety about racial power motivates the creation of Tyler so he can practice his own violence and carry out bombings with Project Mayhem.

At first, the narrator responds to his anxieties about his white male power by attending support groups; however, this only exacerbates the problem and further feminizes him. While Victor Frankenstein is feminized by his duties as caretaker and nurse to his siblings before leaving for Ingolstadt, the narrator is feminized by his addiction to the support groups, which represent a traditionally feminine space with open emotional expression and encouragement. It is here that the narrator can cry and release his emotional tension while comforting others, which temporarily cure his insomnia (17). In particular, the testicular cancer support group, ironically called Remaining Men Together, is the narrator’s retreat into a female space where all the men lack “their balls” — a symbolic token of their loss of masculine power that is also indicated by their letting Marla, a woman, into a group that is supposed to be only for men. Except for the

narrator, who only pretends to suffer from testicular cancer, the attendees of Remaining Men Together are literally castrated and symbolically emasculated by their disease. The narrator's feminization is further reinforced through his relationship with his grief partner Bob. Their relationship is founded on their shared feminization: "Bob loves me because he thinks my testicles were removed, too" (17). In response to the loss of his testicles, Bob grew breasts. More than just an excess growth due to hormones suspended upon a male body, these breasts are maternal, and the comfort the narrator finds there further feminizes him. He observes that "Bob's big arms were closed around to hold me inside, and I was squeezed in the dark between Bob's new sweating tits that hang enormous, the way we think of God's as big" (16). He continues with this maternal image when he refers to his new sleeping patterns. After cuddling with Bob, "[babies] don't sleep this well" (22). Furthermore, the narrator's feminization is symbolized by his inner animal that he concentrates on during meditation sessions in the support groups. The penguin, a bird that cannot fly, represents the narrator's stunted masculinity and inability to reaffirm his male authority (20). Like Victor Frankenstein's comforting home life in Geneva "from which care and pain seemed for ever banished," the narrator's support groups make him feel as though he "was the little warm center that the life of the world crowded around" (Shelley 71, Palahniuk 22). However, when the formerly all-male support groups are infiltrated by an actual woman, the narrator becomes aware of how emasculated he really is. Although the support groups remain a space that the narrator enjoys, Marla's presence there reinforces the narrator's feminization just as Elizabeth in *Frankenstein* reminds Victor of his anxieties about gender in the domestic space of the home. Like Victor, who is compelled to go to the masculine spaces of the

university and the laboratory, the narrator must leave the comforting feminine space of the support group to create his doppelgänger and to reaffirm his white male power.

Following Victor Frankenstein's lead, the narrator of *Fight Club* creates Tyler Durden, who becomes his doppelgänger, to challenge his fears about gender and racial disempowerment and reinforce his white masculine power. In contrast to his unsuccessful attempt to alleviate his fears with the big-breasted Bob, Tyler is created, like the Creature, in a symbolic birthing scene without the presence of a maternal body. Although the narrator does not literally create his Tyler in a laboratory as Victor does, the moment of creation where Tyler materializes on the beach echoes Victor's attempt to usurp the female function by giving life to an ideal masculine figure. As previously noted, many have considered *Frankenstein* a birth myth, and the creation of Tyler on the beach is also a symbolic birth since he and the narrator are surrounded by water — traditionally a symbol of amniotic fluid and the birthing process. More like Beloved rising out of the water to join her creator, Tyler is not literally built like Victor's Creature; however, the inclusion of a creation scene into *Fight Club* is the first indication that Tyler Durden is a Frankensteinian doppelgänger.⁵

The doppelgänger relationship is also indicated by the fact that, like Victor and the Creature who are interchangeable in *Frankenstein*, Tyler Durden and the narrator of *Fight Club* mimic one another. For instance, just as Victor and the Creature quote the same lines from Milton, the same words often come out of Tyler and the narrator. While blackmailing the hotel manager to provide a paid leave of absence and holding a gun to Raymond Hessel's head, the narrator notes that "These are Tyler's words coming out of my mouth. I am Tyler's mouth. I am Tyler's hands" (114, 155). Whatever the narrator says is usually revealed to come from Tyler

first. For example, the narrator later credits Tyler as the source of his rantings about the enslavement by consumerism and that freedom can only be gained through the shedding of all material possessions (52). Similarly, Tyler and the narrator often speak for one another. Just as the Creature's story in *Frankenstein* is told by Victor through Walton, the narrator and Tyler often tell each other's stories. For example, when the narrator goes to the hospital after a fight and gives a narrative of the events that caused his injuries, he reports that "Tyler speaks for me" (52). Like Victor and the Creature, whose identities become interchangeable when Victor takes the blame for all the Creature's acts of murder, Tyler's and the narrator's personal histories begin to resemble one another. For example, both their fathers failed to remain a constant presence in their lives. While "Tyler never knew his father," the narrator "knew [his] dad for about six years, but [he doesn't] remember anything" (49, 50). Also, with the rise of fight club, Tyler and the narrator begin to mimic each other in appearance. Emphasizing their physical similitude, the narrator mentions that "Tyler and I were looking more and more like identical twins. Both of us had punched-out cheekbones, and our skin had lost its memory, and forgot where to slide back to after we were hit" (114). Similarly, without knowing that Tyler does his bidding while the narrator sleeps, the narrator shares Tyler's experiences. While Tyler is having sex with Marla, the narrator recalls, "All night long, I dreamed I was humping Marla Singer," even though he actually is sleeping with her as Tyler (56). A Frankensteinian doppelgänger, Tyler believes even in the end that they must either live or die together. Like the Creature who goes off to die alone in the Arctic once he has killed Victor, the narrator explains that when "[the] barrel of [Tyler's] gun [is] pressed against the back of [his] throat, Tyler says, 'We really won't die'" (11). Although Tyler isn't really sure what will happen if he shoots the narrator, he conjoins their fates in the same way that the Creature must die once Victor has perished. Since it is not

revealed until the end of the novel that the two men are the same person, the fact that Tyler and the narrator imitate one another in appearance, personal histories, and speech indicates that Palahniuk presents Tyler as a Frankensteinian doppelgänger.

Although Tyler does not at first appear to be an abject and dangerous Creature, he slowly reveals his monstrous character as an embodiment of the narrator's rage against the forces that have appeared to disempower him. Like Frankenstein's Creature, Tyler is meant to be a perfect version of his creator. Where the Creature reminds the reader that Victor "hast made [him] more powerful than [Victor him]self," Tyler embodies the ideal masculinity the narrator feels he lacks. He admits, "I love everything about Tyler Durden, his courage and his smarts. His nerve. Tyler is funny and charming and forceful and independent, and men look up to him and expect him to change the world. Tyler is capable and free, and I am not" (175).⁶ Where Victor intends his Creature to be perfect and is horrified when that turns out to be not the case at all, the narrator of *Fight Club* expects his doppelgänger to "rescue [him].... Deliver [him] from Swedish furniture. Deliver [him] from clever art" and "Deliver [him] ... from being perfect and complete," and is only later appalled and disgusted by him when Tyler takes his rebellion to a violent and unruly level with Project Mayhem (46). While the Creature evokes an immediate sense of horror in his creator, Tyler does not; however, both creators' intention to reaffirm their white male power with the creation of their creatures remains the same, and Tyler eventually elicits a similar sense of disgust and monstrosity in the narrator. Much like Tom Outland, whose monstrosity is slowly revealed as the charismatic all-American cowboy echoes colonialist sentiments as an amateur anthropologist and untrustworthy breaker of hearts, Tyler becomes a manipulative and fascistic cult leader who selfishly enlists brainwashed fight club members to wreak havoc and

violent destruction all over the city to promote his own ideals and ideologies. Although Tyler's magnetic personality is initially enticing to the narrator and even the reader, his monstrosity is hinted at in his abject living conditions. He lives in a dilapidated and abandoned home which "is a living thing wet on the inside," where "shingles on the roof blister, buckle, curl, and the rain comes through and collects on top of the ceiling plaster and drips down through the light fixtures," "everything wooden swells and shrinks," "nine layers of wallpaper swell[] on the dining-room walls," and a "fart smell of steam from the paper mill, and the hamster cage smell of wood chips" permeate the house (133, 57, 58). Eventually, Tyler becomes as physically abject as the repulsive Creature: his hand is burnt and scarred with lye, his face is ruined with bruises from fight club, and he is shot through the neck with a bullet.⁷ He is masochistic by nature and even beats himself up in front of the union leader of the projectionist's association. The common thread between Frankenstein's Creature, Tom Outland, the Invisible Man, Beloved, and Tyler Durden is their association with the abject and the uncanny and their inability to fulfill their creator's intentions to transform his or her gender and racial identity permanently.⁸

Nevertheless, Tyler does differ greatly from Victor's Creature, which signals important differences between Palahniuk's perspective and concerns and Shelley's. While Victor creates another physical being, the narrator in *Fight Club* simply creates an alter-ego or psychopathic projection that he believes is a separate being from himself. Although the narrator is convinced that he and Tyler inhabit different bodies, Tyler explains how they are one and the same:

We both use the same body, but at different times... Every time you fall asleep... I run off and do something wild, something crazy, something completely out of my mind...

We're not two separate men. Long story short, when you're awake, you have the control,

and you can call yourself anything you want, but the second you fall asleep, I take over, and you become Tyler Durden. (163-167)

As a movement between sleeping and waking, the narrator awakes on the beach where he first meets Tyler and asks, “If I could wake up in a different place, at a different time, could I wake up as a different person?” (33). He does just that by living out his days as an office worker and his nights as Tyler. However, the novel offers more than a simple imitation of “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” where one personality transforms into another within the same being. Victor’s and the narrator’s creations are much more similar than different. Throughout the whole novel, the narrator believes that Tyler exists apart from himself, and he watches himself as Tyler and even interacts with him. In this sense, the narrator of *Fight Club* resembles the narrator of *Invisible Man* who, while organizing Clifton’s memorial, goes “around giving orders and encouragement in a feverish daze, and yet seeming to observe it all from off to one side,” an out-of-body experience which indicates the split between Ellison’s narrator and his doppelgänger the Invisible Man (450). Once the narrator discovers that he is Tyler, he not only realizes that his interactions with him were imaginary, but he also remembers himself as his doppelgänger. Here, the counterpart to the Creature’s narrative that is found in the middle of *Frankenstein* is the narrator’s remembering himself as Tyler in *Fight Club*: “I walk out into the night around First Methodist, and it’s all coming back to me. All the things that Tyler knows are all coming back to me... All of a sudden, I know how to run a movie projector. I know how to break locks and how Tyler had rented the house on Paper Street just before he revealed himself to me at the beach” (198). Here, as in *Frankenstein*, the reader’s sympathy for the creator figure dissipates once he or she is privy to the Creature figure’s version of events. In *Frankenstein*, the

victimization of Victor by his horrendous creation suddenly becomes questionable when the Creature presents his own perspective: “You accuse me of murder; and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature” (127). Where Victor at first seemed a victim to his monster’s vengeance, he is then revealed to be responsible for his own pain because as a father-figure he rejected his child. Similarly, while the narrator in *Fight Club* initially seemed to be a victim of Tyler’s violence and controlling cult-like leadership, the narrator becomes accountable for his own misery once his earlier account of events is supplemented by his new memories of himself as Tyler.⁹ But Tyler, unlike the Creature, does not gain the reader’s sympathy: he does not assume the position of the victim, nor does he complain of his creator’s rejection of him. Unlike Frankenstein’s Creature, Tyler is as narcissistic and independent as he is hyper-masculine. He does not seek the approval of his creator but instead ensures that his creator desires his approval. Nonetheless, as in the other American novels, Tyler still embodies his own creator’s monstrosity, and his confident divergence from the Creature in *Frankenstein* intensifies Palahniuk’s warning against the phallogocentric strategy of enlisting a male counterpart to engage in homosocial bonding to reaffirm white male power.

With the creation of his doppelgänger, the narrator now has the male duality necessary for the homosocial relations that will reinforce his white male authority. Just as Victor engages in a homosocial bond first with the Creature and then with Walton, the narrator participates in a homosocial relationship first with Tyler and then with the other men in fight club and Project Mayhem. Making Tyler’s purpose very clear, the narrator draws a direct connection between the creation of Tyler and the homosocial bonding that bolsters his male power. When the narrator blackmails the manager at the Pressman Hotel, he hits himself in front of the manager with the

same violence practiced at fight club and immediately thinks of the creation of Tyler: “without flinching, still looking at the manager, I roundhouse the fist at the centrifugal force end of my arm and slam the fresh blood out of the cracked scabs in my nose. For no reason at all, I remember the night Tyler and I had our first fight. *I want you to hit me as hard as you can*” (116). Here, the narrator aligns Tyler, his doppelgänger with whom he had his first fight, with the beginning of fight club and the homosociality that ensues — their blackmail which forces the manager to pay the narrator full salary to stay quiet about his urinating in the hotel’s soup after making it appear like the manager beat him up. As in *Frankenstein*, the doppelgänger is created to engage in a homosocial bond between that dispels the narrator’s anxiety about feminization and disempowerment.

Like Victor and his Creature, the narrator and Tyler conform to Sedgwick’s theory of homosociality in that they engage in homosociality that is exclusive and homoerotic and involves a male rivalry which reaffirms male power.¹⁰ Much like Victor’s secrecy about his relationship with the Creature, the exclusivity of the narrator and Tyler’s relationship is evident in the fact that they are the only ones who know about their bonding, since to others they are the same person. With fight club and Project Mayhem born out of Tyler and the narrator’s homosocial bonding, these groups serve to illustrate the exclusivity of their bond on a larger scale. The “first fight club was just Tyler and [the narrator] pounding each other” (46, 49). From then on, these violent gatherings grow, but they remain exclusive to men, which is highlighted in their house rules. The first rule is that “you don’t talk about fight club” (48). Even though fight club goes nationwide, it remains exclusive, confidential, and accessible only to men. The narrator describes this exclusive bonding experience he finds everywhere he goes: “The shuttle takes me to

downtown Phoenix and every bar I go into there are guys with stitches around the rim of an eye socket where a good slam packed their face meat against its sharp edge. There are guys with sideways noses, and these guys at the bar see me with the puckered hole in my cheek and we're instant family" (156). It then goes without saying, as the narrator explains, that "[you] don't say anything because fight club exists only in the hours between when fight club starts and when fight club ends" (48). Even more than Ellison's *Brotherhood*, fight club remains exclusive to promote male power, serving to reinforce the importance of fight club and the bonds between men. Anticipating Tyler and the narrator in *Fight Club*, Brother Jack warns the Invisible Man that "[o]ur discipline demands therefore that we talk to no one and that we avoid situations in which information might be given away unwittingly. So, you must put aside your past" (309).

Afterwards, fight club evolves into Project Mayhem, and here we also find an all-male group that serves to reaffirm their masculinity. Like fight club, "the first rule about Project Mayhem is you don't ask questions about Project Mayhem" (119). Also, the rules suggest that there are only men allowed in Project Mayhem. The use of the pronoun "he" are in the rules: "no applicant will be considered unless he arrives equipped with the following items" (127). As seen with Victor's exclusive bonds with the Creature and then Walton, fight club and Project Mayhem remain completely exclusive to men and promote homosocial bonding and male interests while reaffirming the narrator's masculine power.

The homoerotic undertones between the narrator and Tyler have already been thoroughly discussed by critics, who focus mostly on how they reinforce heteronormativity rather than being homosexual in nature.¹¹ However, I will focus on how the homoeroticism between Tyler and the narrator is characteristic of the homosocial bonding which promotes male interests and reinforces

the narrator's masculine power as stipulated by Sedgwick's theory of homosociality. Like Victor describing his initial impression of his Creature, the narrator of *Fight Club* takes note of Tyler's beauty when they first meet. He explains: "How I met Tyler was I went to a nude beach. This was the very end of summer, and I was asleep. Tyler was naked and sweating, gritty with sand, his hair wet and stringy, hanging in his face" (Palahniuk 32). Their homoeroticism is also signified by the scar of Tyler's kiss found on the narrator's hand. The erotic undertones are difficult to ignore: "The scar on the back of my hand is swollen red and glossy as a pair of lips in the exact shape of Tyler's kiss" (85). Also, the novel is framed by a suggestively homoerotic scene: Tyler's gun positioned in the narrator's mouth functions as a phallic symbol and suggests the performance of a sexual act. The narrator also often acts as though he and Tyler are a romantic couple. For example, he feels rejected when Tyler pays less attention to him: "I am Joe's Broken Heart because Tyler's dumped me" (134). In addition, Tyler displays homoerotic tendencies in his obsession with male genitalia. He splices images of penises into children's films and feels empowered by threatening men with castration.¹² While working as a film projectionist, "Tyler does this. A single frame in a movie on the screen for one-sixtieth of a second. Divide a second into sixty equal parts. That's how long the erection is. Towering over four stories tall over the popcorn auditorium, slippery red and terrible, and no one sees it" (30). Like Victor's initial reaction to and ensuing obsession with his Creature, the narrator's homoerotic relationship with Tyler creates a male bonding experience which reaffirms their male power.

Like Victor Frankenstein and his Creature, Tyler and the narrator's homosocial bond is characterized by rivalry. Since Tyler and the narrator's relationship is initially one involving

admiration and not hatred, much like Tom Outland and the Professor's, the narrator only becomes Tyler's greatest adversary once he discovers that they share a body. Tyler becomes a threat to his maker's existence, and their rivalry and homosocial bonding intensify once they are recognized as the same person: "Oh, this is bullshit. This is a dream. Tyler is a projection. He's a dis-associative personality disorder. A psychogenic fugue state. Tyler Durden is my hallucination. 'Fuck that shit,' Tyler says. 'Maybe you're my schizophrenic hallucination.' I was here first. Tyler says, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, well let's just see who's here last'" (168). But while the homosocial relations between Victor and the Creature remain private, the bond between the narrator and Tyler expands to include other men. After the narrator creates his doppelgänger and forms a homosocial relationship with Tyler, fight club becomes an extension of their bond and further solidifies their intensifying masculinity. With Tyler as fight club's ringleader, these gatherings of disillusioned and insurgent men bare-knuckle fighting in dark alleys and basements stimulate male homosociality, which further reinforces Tyler and the narrator's bond and their male power. Fight club's purpose is clear: to promote a hyper-masculinity through rivalry, violence and physical mutilation. The group's voyeurism at fight club reinforces hypermasculinity and the homosocial rivalry among men. The narrator notes that "You aren't alive anywhere like you're alive at fight club. When it's you and one other guy under that one light in the middle of all those watching" (51). The rule of "only two guys to a fight" suggests that all others must watch and that voyeurism is as much a part of the fight club experience as fighting itself (49). Watching or being watched, fighters are voyeurs and objects of voyeurism within a homosocial rivalry. According to the narrator, fight club succeeds in making him feel more masculine where other traditional methods fail. Celebrating the effects of organized male

violence while discrediting the passivity of other accustomed notions of manliness, he argues that fight club really makes you a man, while gyms “are crowded with guys trying to look like men, as if being a man means looking the way a sculptor or an art director says” (50). He also states that compared to fight club, other masculinizing pastimes such as watching football on television, are like “watching pornography when you could be having great sex” (50). Since all else has failed to provide middle-class men with any real sense of male power, fight club is hailed as a means to reinforcing male authority — and it certainly seems successful. Fight club appears to empower even the most powerless of men: “You saw the kid who works at the copy center, a month ago you saw this kid who can’t remember to three-hole-punch an order or put colored slip sheets between copy packets, but this kid was a god for ten minutes when you saw him kick the air out of an account representative twice his size then land on the man and pound him limp until the kid had to stop” (49). The success of fight club is measured by its ability to masculinize even the weakest men: “You see a guy come to fight club for the first time, and his ass is a loaf of white bread. You see the same guy here six months later, and he looks carved out of wood” (51). Through male violence and homosocial bonding, these men develop physical resiliency, virility, and aggressiveness, which the members of fight club understand as defining their masculine identity. In their eyes, they become greater men, and afterwards these men exude male power. The narrator describes, “[after] a night in fight club, everything in the real world gets the volume turned down. Nothing can piss you off. Your word is law, and if other people break the law or question you, even that doesn’t piss you off” (49). Bringing the homosocial experience to other men which only intensifies the all-male experience with numbers, Tyler has his members start a fight with a stranger along with participating in the organized male violence.

The mission is to “remind these guys what kind of power they still have” (120). More than just a boy’s club, it actively enhances the masculinity of these men through the experience of physical pain and suffering.¹³ Tyler and the narrator’s homosocial bond extends into fight club which not only masculinizes other men but also reaffirms Tyler and the narrator’s male power.

The narrator’s homosocial bond with Tyler and its extension into fight club represent a rebellion against the emasculating capitalist system of alienated labor and domestic consumerism which previously left him feminized and anxious about his racial power. Just as Frankenstein’s Creature can be read as an embodiment of resistance to the emasculating effects of nineteenth-century factory work, Tyler’s actions at work rebel against the powerlessness and dependence of minimum-wage workers. For example, while working for the Pressman Hotel, Tyler “stopped the elevator and farted on a whole cart of Boccone Dolce for the Junior League” (80). The narrator proudly boasts, “Tyler and me, we’ve turned into the guerrilla terrorists of the service industry. Dinner party saboteurs” (81). Tyler reclaims his power as a worker by calling himself and the narrator the “Robin Hood Waiter [who] Champions Have Nots” (116). Afterward, with the formation of Project Mayhem, these relatively harmless rebellions become more aggressive while the members reap a stronger sense of male power. Attacking the Commissioner who functions as a symbol for the privileged white upper class, Tyler explains their position and power:

The people you’re trying to step on, we’re everyone you depend on. We’re the people who do your laundry and cook your food and serve you dinner. We make your bed. We guard you while you’re asleep. We drive the ambulances. We direct your call. We are

cooks and taxi drivers and we know everything about you. We process your insurance claims and credit card charges. We control every part of your life. (166)

Under-appreciated and feminized by work within a capitalist society, the narrator creates Tyler who rebels against the narrator's feminization through destruction. For example, he attempts to destroy the Parker-Morris building — another filing-cabinet style building that strips workers of their identities — so that he and the narrator can reaffirm their male power. Arguing that these buildings destroy male authority by emasculating men through tedious labor, Tyler notes that, “It’s so quiet this high up, the feeling you get is that you’re one of those space monkeys. You do the little job you were trained to do. Pull a lever. Push a button. You don’t understand any of it, and then you just die” (12). Tyler attacks such symbols of corporate capitalism by convincing the very men that work in these buildings to destroy them (121). Similarly, Tyler challenges the narrator's disempowerment in the workplace by blackmailing his boss to provide him with a paid leave of absence. Tyler threatens to ruin his business by revealing to a local newspaper that he mixed a variety of his bodily fluids in with the food he served: “Hello, I said, I’ve committed a terrible crime against humanity as part of a political protest. My protest is over the exploitation of workers in the service industry” (115). Tyler represents masculine power by outwitting and manipulating the narrator's slavish and feminizing workplaces.

The bond between Tyler and the narrator also challenges the narrator's previous domestication and consumerist lifestyle. In *Frankenstein*, Victor's invention of a singular, unique Creature challenges the production of standardized goods that emasculated men during the Industrial Revolution. In a similar fashion, the narrator of *Fight Club* creates his doppelgänger to challenge the feminizing effects of his consumer-driven culture. Like the Creature, who is

brought to life by Victor in a unique act of parthenogenesis, Tyler is created outside the systems of mass production of identical consumer goods, which is symbolized by the fact that his creation scene includes the creation of a work of art that cannot be commodified. When the narrator first meets him on the beach, Tyler is placing logs in the sand to create a “giant shadow hand [that] was perfect for one minute, and for one perfect minute Tyler had sat in the palm of a perfection he’d created himself” (33). An experience that cannot be bought and sold, Tyler’s art opposes the feminizing consumer culture and its mass production of goods. Simply put, you cannot find Tyler’s art at IKEA. Also, where the products that the narrator owned began to own him, Tyler destabilizes the power of these consumer goods by altering their purpose and intended use. For example, he uses mass-produced consumer goods, such as Diet Coke and orange juice concentrate, to make explosives and to engage in masculinist destructive violence under the guise of Project Mayhem (13). Further, Tyler rebels against emasculating domesticity in his work as a projectionist. By splicing frames of pornography into children’s films, he inserts an aggressive masculinity into films that indoctrinate consumers into an emasculating domesticity. As the narrator explains,

You’re a projectionist and you’re tired and angry, but mostly you’re bored so you start by taking a single frame of pornography collected by some other projectionist that you find stashed away in the booth, and you splice this frame of a lunging red penis or a yawning wet vagina close-up into another feature movie. This is one of those pet adventures, when the dog and cat are left behind by a traveling family and must find their way home. In reel three, just after the dog and cat, who have human voices and talk to each other, have eaten out of a garbage can, there’s a flash of an erection. (29-30)

By controlling the technology behind such films, Tyler controls and masculinizes the feminized domesticity symbolized in the content of these films and the emasculating consumer-driven society that mass-produces them. In addition, just as Frankenstein's Creature destroys Victor's domestic space by murdering his family members, Tyler destroys the narrator's condominium and all the material goods which have emasculated him: "Something which was a bomb, a big bomb, had blasted my clever Njurunda coffee tables in the shape of lime green yin and orange yang that fit together to make a circle" (43). While the narrator understood each object as a metonym for his identity, Tyler blows them up — literally and metaphorically — to help him reject this domesticated and consumerist form of self-expression and regain his masculine power and authority. Tyler again undermines the power of consumer goods while working at a private dinner party: he leaves a note for the hostess warning that he has urinated in one of the bottles in her perfume collection. Justifying his actions as an act of revolt against the value we place on expensive consumer goods despite their detrimental effects, Tyler "says how they kill whales... to make that perfume that costs more than gold per ounce. Most people have never seen a whale. Leslie has two kids in an apartment next to the freeway and Madame hostess has more bucks than we'll make in a year in bottles on her bathroom counter" (83). Finally, Tyler attacks one of the biggest promoters of consumerist greed by filling credit card buildings with homemade bombs. By filling them with bombs made from consumer goods, he reinvents these buildings as powerful phallic symbols of destruction used in the masculinist enterprise that is Project Mayhem (12). For the narrator, Tyler's sabotage of consumer culture and the material goods that represent its power challenges the narrator's feminization and is another step to reaffirming masculine power.

As in *Frankenstein*, however, the initially empowering homosocial bond between Tyler and the narrator quickly turns into a terrifying and destructive haunting. Like Victor, who “grew restless and nervous [every] moment [he] feared to meet [his] prosecutor,” the narrator is haunted by Tyler, especially after he becomes painfully aware of Tyler’s destructive violence and ability to organize an army of men to do his bidding (189). Even when Tyler is away establishing Project Mayhem all over the country, he still makes his presence felt: “after a month a few of the space monkeys had Tyler’s kiss burned into the back of his hand” (133). Just as the Creature “[leaves] marks in writing on the barks of the trees, or cut in stone, that guided [Victor] and instigated [his] fury,” Tyler leaves traces of himself and his influence even when he is apparently not around (226). When the narrator is chasing after Tyler all over the country, he always seems to be two steps behind his doppelgänger, yet Tyler appears to be purposefully leaving clues and encouraging the rivalry over their shared body. When he asks about Tyler Durden, “[t]hey say, never heard of him, sir. But you might find him in Chicago, sir” (157). He cannot catch his doppelgänger and remains haunted by his presence: “Every bar I go into, punched-out guys want to buy you a beer. And no, sir, they’ve never met this Tyler Durden. And they wink” (157). Tyler’s looming presence is felt further when the narrator, who has begun to rebel against Project Mayhem and its stunts, wakes up in his office with the “smell of gasoline on my hands” (138). The narrator understands that the haunting smell of gasoline insinuates his involvement in a project by the Arson Committee and the influence of Tyler Durden even though he has no recollection of what happened. Further, the Creature and Tyler both manipulate their creators into betraying what they see as their own moral standards. While the Creature tries to force Victor to create another “hideous progeny” to be the monster’s mate, Tyler influences the narrator to blow

up his condominium and convinces him to lie to the police: after the explosion, “a police detective started calling about my condominium explosion, and Tyler stood with his chest against my shoulder, whispering into my ear while I held the phone to the other ear, and the detective asked if I knew anyone who could make homemade dynamite” (110). The narrator knows very well that his doppelgänger can make homemade dynamite, and it becomes clear that Tyler has blown up his apartment and controlled the narrator’s actions. Tyler is connected to the destruction of the narrator’s life just as the Creature is found overshadowing every tragedy in Victor’s. The culmination of the antagonism between the narrator and Tyler is similar to that between Victor and his Creature. Just as the Creature warns Victor, “You are my creator, but I am your master; — obey!” and demands he follow his instructions to create him a mate, Tyler warns the narrator, “if you fuck with me, if you chain yourself to the bed at night or take a big dose of sleeping pills, then we’ll be enemies. And I’ll get you for it” (168). Much like Victor and the Creature’s relationship, the once empowering bond between Tyler and the narrator quickly turns into a terrorizing and harmful relationship.

As in *Frankenstein*, the narrator’s creation of Tyler as his doppelgänger, which is meant to reaffirm white male authority, fails, mainly because the narrator ends up only taking away the gender and racial power of others he originally feared losing for himself.¹⁴ As seen in *Frankenstein*, the homosocial bonds are simultaneously detrimental to women and racial minorities. Although Palahniuk does not address issues of race as much as Shelley and the other writers in this project, the narrator clearly desires an affirmation of his white power. For example, Tyler promotes imperialistic practices of cultural appropriation and destruction of cultures perceived to be inferior. Echoing imperialistic logic, the members of Project Mayhem

believe they are entitled to destroy the existing capitalist culture and to rebuild it since they are convinced that, “Project Mayhem will break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world” (125). Like Victor, who joins Walton on an Arctic expedition that recalls the European mission to explore and conquer the globe, the narrator and Tyler create Project Mayhem which reproduces the exploitative attitude that had informed nineteenth-century colonialism and imperialism as well as twentieth-century capitalist expansion. The narrator explains how Project Mayhem turns the aggressive impulses of fight club toward a mission of world domination: “I wanted to destroy everything beautiful I’d never have. Burn the Amazon rain forests. Pump chlorofluorocarbons straight up to gobble the ozone. Open the dump valves on supertankers and uncap offshore oil wells. I wanted to kill all the fish I couldn’t afford to eat, and smother the French beaches I’d never see. I wanted the whole world to hit bottom” (123). Like most colonial enterprises, which have exploited indigenous peoples and treated their homelands as exploitable resources, the narrator and Tyler express a desire to ruin rain forests, the ozone layer, the oceans and aquatic life. Although historically the goal of European colonizing projects was not to “destro[y] everything beautiful [the colonizers would] never have” but instead to benefit economically from these exploitive measures, they are similar to Project Mayhem in that they involved asserting white societies’ authority and power by destroying that of others. The narrator attempts to reaffirm his white male power through the creation of his doppelgänger, so the ensuing homosocial bond with Tyler is racist.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor’s homosocial bond with Walton is oppressive to the Creature, who functions as a racialized minority figure and binary opposite to his white European creator. Fight club and the bond between Tyler and the narrator similarly are founded on the exclusion of

the racially disenfranchised.¹⁵ Tyler and the narrator glorify primitivism which is in turn racist. Like many modernist artists before him, Tyler adopts the racialized trope of the primitive to express his resistance to the feminizing effects of industrial capitalist society. He imagines the world that Project Mayhem will create as a primitivist utopia:

We'll paint the skyscrapers with huge totem faces and goblin tikis, and every evening what's left of mankind will retreat to empty zoos and lock itself in cages as protection against bears and big cats and wolves that pace and watch us from the outside... you'll climb the wrist-thick kudzu vines that wrap the Sears Tower... You'll hunt elk through the damp canyon forests around the ruins of Rockefeller Center, and dig clams next to the skeleton of the Space Needle at a forty degree angle. (124-5)

Tyler's idealization of a primitive world is racist in that it only serves his white masculine motives. He appropriates stereotypical images of tribal cultures, such as "totem faces" and "tikis," and perverts them as emblems of an ideal freedom for white men. Similarly, racial minorities are subjugated by the white homosociality in the novel because Tyler, the narrator, and members of Project Mayhem appropriate experiences that are associated with racial minorities to enhance their own white male power. For example, the bond between Tyler and the narrator and their rebellion against industrial consumer culture are strengthened by their shared experience of a chosen life of poverty on Paper Street. But just as Tyler's imagined post-capitalist utopia appropriates stereotypical images of aboriginal cultures, this move to what is essentially a ghetto challenges capitalist consumer culture by appropriating and romanticizing the living conditions that oppress many racial minorities in America as a result of the capitalist system Project Mayhem claims to criticize.¹⁶ The narrator notes the unlivable condition of the building in which

he and Tyler choose to live: “When it’s raining, we have to pull the fuses. You don’t dare turn on the lights... The rain trickles down through the house, and everything wooden swells and shrinks, and the nails in everything wooden, the floors and baseboards and window casings, the nails inch out and rust” (57). Here, Tyler and the narrator are taking cultural appropriation to another level: while the dishes in the narrator’s apartment signaled his desire for an affirmation of his white power, the appropriation of the lifestyle forced upon members of racial minorities by the racist class structures of American capitalism now reaffirms the narrator’s racial authority. This use of images and experiences associated with non-white people to affirm their masculine power in resistance to a feminizing industrial culture is similar to Tom Outland’s and the Professor’s appropriation of the primitive culture on the mesa in *The Professor’s House*. Like Shelley and Cather, then, Palahniuk shows how the masculinizing and empowering homosocial bonding among white men is oppressive to racial minorities.

In addition to their cultural appropriation and romanticization used to reaffirm white male power, Tyler and the narrator’s masculinizing projects are essentially racist in that they use homosociality to solidify the power of white men while marginalizing racial minorities. As Henry Giroux and Nicola Rehling have noted, although Tyler criticizes how these social and cultural systems create unjust hierarchies of class power, his proposed solutions — fight club and Project Mayhem — completely ignore the plight of racial and ethnic minorities in addition to all other minority groups and focus only on the alienated and supposedly oppressed state of white middle-class men. As argued by Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark*, “[t]he act of enforcing racelessness in literary discourse is itself a racial act” (46). While the suffering and victimization of middle-class white men are worthy of concern, Tyler completely ignores the much more

detrimental effects of capitalism and consumerism on racial minorities, which essentially encourage more oppression by perpetuating its invisibility. Tyler implies that liberation from capitalist oppression can be freely chosen, as though one's social, political, and economic position and his or her relation to power have absolutely no impact on one's ability to choose the things Tyler glorifies. Not every man can leave his job and family for Project Mayhem just because "it's the best thing that could happen to any one of us" (83). Those luxuries are not in reach for many due to their social and economic position. Moreover, not all American men will be appeased by fight club and Project Mayhem, since these projects do not address the malaise of all American masculinities which certainly differ according to race, class and sexual orientation. Although no specific restrictions or exclusions are made by fight club or Project Mayhem on the basis of race or ethnicity, there is no recognition that men of different races and cultural backgrounds have differing experiences either. Fight club and Project Mayhem are exclusionary and racist since they acknowledge only the experiences of white American males. That being said, Tyler is well aware of the significance of racial markers of difference, and he uses them to reject potential members. When choosing men for Project Mayhem, he prescribes a process of evaluation to test the applicants' endurance: "If the applicant is young, we tell him he's too young. If he's fat, he's too fat. If he's old, he's too old. Thin, he's too thin. White, he's too white. Black, he's too black" (129). Although this is a means to test the will of the applicant to transcend such limiting designations, Tyler is still identifying these characterizations — race, weight, age — as drawbacks or limits to anyone wanting to be a part of the normalizing cult of masculinity that is Project Mayhem. In the end, nearly all men who take part in fight club are white and middle-class — a band of men that excludes not only women but also non-white men

who cannot necessarily find solace in white male violence. Just as Shelley's portrayal of the homosocial bond between Victor and Walton results in the exclusion and oppression of the Creature as a racialized other, Palahniuk's portrayal of fight club and Project Mayhem shows how Tyler's and the narrator's masculinizing project is founded on racist assumptions and results in the marginalization of racial minorities.

Finally, Palahniuk's novel echoes Shelley's in showing how homosocial bonds between men result in the marginalization and subordination of women as well as racial minorities. Some critics argue that the male characters in *Fight Club* are not misogynistic, but that their treatment of women is a direct result of the absence of fathers. For example, Jeanette Trotta argues, "The issue is... the feelings of betrayal, loss, anger, and frustration connected to [the father's absence], not any aversion against women" (136). For critics such as Trotta, when the narrator proclaims, "What you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women," he is not expressing misogyny or an abhorrence of the feminine but instead regret for the way these men have been deprived of more positive forms of male bonding (50). However, such readings overlook or underestimate the destructive effect that male exclusivity and desire for hypermasculine power has on women in the novel.¹⁷ Reading *Fight Club* as an adaptation of Shelley's *Frankenstein* allows us to see how Palahniuk criticizes the male characters' misogynistic use of women as the subordinated and abjected third term that facilitates the exchanges of power between men within the homosocial triangle.

Like minor female characters such as Margaret Saville and Justine in *Frankenstein*, who are alienated or made abject by Victor's male bonding with Walton and the Creature, female characters in *Fight Club* are marginalized and exploited by the homosocial bonds between men.

Bemoaning their crisis of masculinity, Tyler and the narrator exclude women specifically from their quest to reassert their male power. The narrator determines that relationships with women are not the solution to his victimization by the capitalist system of alienated labor and domestic consumerism: “I’m a thirty-year-old boy, and I’m wondering if another woman is really the answer I need” (51). Accordingly, the men of Project Mayhem engaging in homosociality mock femininity as a lesser position and exclude women from their organization. While Tyler and the narrator test their men by taunting them before allowing them to enter the house on Paper Street, the narrator notes that they despise “mister angel face” for his beauty and effeminacy and, therefore, his failure to be sufficiently masculine: “Put him in a dress and make him smile, and he’d be a woman” (128). Also, if Tyler and the narrator’s masculinizing projects symbolically appropriate images from non-white cultures, they also literally steal parts of female bodies and use them as resources to advance their homosocial agenda. Tyler and the narrator steal women’s liposuctioned fat — the ultimate embodiment of abject female physicality — first from Marla’s mother and then from local medical waste incinerators (89, 150). Since they use the fat to manufacture soap which they then sell right back to the wealthy women whose fat was used to make it in the first place, this is nothing short of literal trafficking in women’s bodies. Having first literally rendered the female body abject by reducing it to mere fat, they then objectify and commodify it by selling it as a consumer product. This business not only fuels the finances for Project Mayhem but also reasserts their male power as controllers of the female body and keepers of misinformation. To add insult to injury, the glycerine skimmed from the boiling fat while making soap is used by Project Mayhem to make the nitroglycerine in their explosives. Just as Victor Frankenstein uses dead body parts to construct his ideal male doppelgänger who

then turns out to be associated with the abject maternal body, the narrator and Tyler pursue their masculinizing projects by using abject female body parts to make both household products for female consumers and bombs to facilitate exchanges of power between men in the masculine sphere of war, violence, and terrorism. As a manifestation of Tyler and the narrator's homosocial bond, fight club reaffirms male power and authority by excluding women and abjecting, commodifying, and exploiting female bodies.

More importantly, just as Elizabeth completes the homosocial triangle with Victor and the Creature in *Frankenstein*, Marla Singer facilitates Tyler and the narrator's exchange of male power since she is positioned as the abject female within the homosocial triangle.¹⁸ From the outset, the narrator clearly identifies a triangulation of desire between himself, Tyler, and Marla. The narrator emphasizes the importance of Marla's position within the triangle in terms that strongly recall Sedgwick's account of homosociality. Acknowledging that Marla participates in the exchange of power between himself and Tyler, he explains, "the gun, the anarchy, the explosion is really about Marla Singer... we have a sort of triangle thing going on here" (14).¹⁹ Marla is the beloved within the triangle: "I know why Tyler had occurred. Tyler loved Marla. From the first night I met her, Tyler or some part of me had needed a way to be with Marla" (198). Although the narrator claims to despise Marla, he does admit that there is some part of him that wants her, especially since they eventually develop a romantic relationship. Yet, consistent with Sedgwick's theory, Marla completes the homosocial triangle with Tyler and the narrator since she is imperative to their intense bond. As noted by Sedgwick, "the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful

and in many senses equivalent” (21). Marla incites their male rivalry, as Tyler indicates when he makes a firm and hostile demand to the narrator: “Don’t ever talk to her about me. Don’t talk about me behind my back... If you ever mention me to her, you’ll never see me again” (72). Although the practical reason for this is that Tyler needs to prevent the narrator from discovering that he is a figment of his imagination, it still indicates that Marla is arousing conflict between the male figures, which then serves as a catalyst to their homosocial bond which reaffirms their male power. While Victor leaves Elizabeth alone on their wedding night after he was warned that the Creature would be there to take revenge for his own murdered mate, the narrator uses Marla during his struggle against Tyler once he realizes who Tyler is and that he is trying to take over his life. He explains: “So Tyler can’t take complete control, I need Marla to keep me awake. All the time. Full circle. The night Tyler saved her life, Marla asked him to keep her awake all night” (174-5). Marla’s presence is thus essential to the continuation of the narrator’s intense but antagonistic relationship with his doppelgänger. Holding the female position of the beloved within the Sedgwickian homosocial triangulation of desire, Marla enables the homosocial rivalry and exchange of power between Tyler and the narrator.

As men who value their homosocial bond with each other more than their relationship with the woman over whom they are supposedly rivals, Tyler and the narrator ignore, mistreat, and marginalize Marla, making her an abject figure like Elizabeth is in *Frankenstein*. Aside from when they are having sex, Tyler completely ignores Marla: as the narrator observes, “I never see them together... Except for their humping, Marla and Tyler are never in the same room. If Tyler’s around, Marla ignores him” (65). After Marla leaves, “Not a sound, not a smell, Tyler’s just appeared... The second Marla opens the door, Tyler is gone, vanished, run out of the room,

disappeared... the moment Marla is out the door, Tyler appears back in the room. Fast as a magic trick" (68, 70, 71). Although Marla and Tyler's apparent disregard for one another is due to the fact that Tyler and the narrator share a body, the treatment of Marla is nonetheless oppressive, especially since for much of the novel Tyler functions as an independent character from the reader's point of view. Also, just as Elizabeth in *Frankenstein* is made into an abject corpse by the Creature in a scene of sexualized violence on her wedding bed, Marla is the abject recipient of sexual aggression in her sexual relations with Tyler. Tyler tells the narrator that "Marla is some twisted bitch, but he likes that a lot," and while they are having sex, "you can hear Marla and Tyler in his room, calling each other human butt wipe. Take it, human butt wipe. Do it, butt wipe" (59, 64). While Elizabeth, Justine, and Caroline in *Frankenstein* are all abject corpses by the end of the novel, Marla is abject in her physical appearance, surroundings and lifestyle. Through his control over the narrative, the narrator emphasizes her abjection to ensure that she remains subordinate by his own heightened masculine power. The narrator compares her to waste: "Marla's heart looked the way my face was. The crap and the trash of the world. Post-consumer human butt wipe that no one would ever go to the trouble to recycle" (109). Also, she is associated with abject physicality because she believes she has breast cancer and that her body is dying from the inside out. Much like the Professor who portrays his wife and daughters as monstrous in his telling of the story, the narrator turns Marla into an abject female body. Given that Marla only exists within the narrator's story, the fact that the cancer appears when she meets the narrator suggests that it is the product of his projection of her as abject: "Just before Marla and I met at Remaining Men Together, there was the first lump, and now there was a second lump" (108). Moreover, Marla's abject nature is represented by her physical space and lifestyle.

According to the narrator, “Marla lives at the Regent Hotel, which is nothing but brown bricks held together with sleaze, where all the mattresses are sealed inside slippery plastic covers, so many people go there to die” (58). The hotel itself anticipates the abject with its plastic protecting the mattress. Not only her surroundings but Marla herself is associated with the dead: according to her, the dead often call her, and the narrator reports that “[in] the house on Paper Street, if the phone rang only once and you picked it up and the line was dead, you knew it was someone trying to reach Marla. This happened more than you might think” (109). Marla is further connected to death in her numerous suicide attempts. The narrator relates, “She was doing the big death thing, Marla told me. I should get a move on if I wanted to watch. Thanks anyway, I said, but I had other plans” (59). The narrator’s lack of seriousness given to the matter suggests that he encourages her abjection, akin to Victor who fails to take seriously the Creature’s promise that he will murder Elizabeth on her wedding night.

Unlike Elizabeth, however, Marla seems to choose her abject lifestyle — she participates in her abjection and even encourages it. Marla’s embrace of her own abjection is reflected in the fact that she adores all things rejected and discarded:

What Marla loves, she says, is all the things that people love intensely and then dump an hour or a day after. The way a Christmas tree is the center of attention, then after Christmas you see those dead Christmas trees with the tinsel still on them, dumped alongside the highway. You see those trees and think of roadkill animals and sex crime victims wearing underwear inside out and bound with black electrical tape. (67)

In addition to these abject victims of neglect and violence, Marla is also attracted to junk — the post-consumer waste of the very culture of mass overproduction that once feminized the narrator.

Marla adores the abject version of the objects which originally emasculated the narrator; she welcomes the abjection they embody, makes it her own, and finds her own power in it. Marla also wants to participate in the abjection of her procreative body. While Victor fears the female reproductive body and, therefore, usurps its power through his act of parthenogenesis and unknowingly participates in the Creature's murder of potentially procreative female bodies, the narrator of *Fight Club* doesn't even get the chance to usurp or destroy Marla's female reproductive potential — Marla does it for him. The narrator explains, "After Tyler and Marla had sex about ten times, Tyler says, Marla said she wanted to get pregnant. Marla said she wanted to have Tyler's abortion" (59). Unlike Elizabeth, who is made abject by her role in Victor's homosocial bond with the Creature, Marla sees herself as a perversion of the maternal body and associates her own womb with an abject birth that is an abortion. As though she desires to give birth to Frankenstein's Creature, Marla imagines power in the birth of the unnatural. An even stronger way in which Marla differs from Elizabeth is that Marla does not die by the end of the novel; instead, she dismisses and ridicules the male crisis and victimization expressed by Tyler and the narrator. Although she is characterized as neurotic and a target for male hatred because she defies conservative and submissive femininity, Marla resists the narrator and Tyler and empowers herself in the face of her oppressors. Marla disregards the male crisis by acknowledging and mocking men's fear of women, especially the threat of female sexuality that Victor tried to distance himself from through his act of parthenogenesis. For example, when Tyler arrives to save her from another suicidal episode, "Marla looks at Tyler looking at her dildo, and she rolls her eyes and says, 'Don't be afraid. It's not a threat to you'" (61). Although fight club and Project Mayhem exclude her, Marla equally refuses to join these men. When she

comes to see Tyler/the narrator and the men at the door tell her she is “too young” to join, “Marla doesn’t wait the three days” (133). Unlike the men who do subject themselves to this hazing ritual, she isn’t willing to play the homosocial game and actually subverts her abjection by embracing it. This is an important departure from Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: where Shelley portrays a world in which women are successfully destroyed by male homosocial bonds, Palahniuk’s portrayal of Marla suggests that this destructive form of male homosociality cannot succeed in a post-feminism world where women will not accept such childish, blatant oppression. With such an assertive female figure who refuses to be victimized by the homosocial triangle, who finds power in the abject, and who also turns out to be a savior for the narrator, Palahniuk presents male homosociality as an even a greater failure in the late twentieth century than it was in Shelley’s more pessimistic portrayal of gender relations in nineteenth-century England.

In the end, like the Creature who does not fulfill what Victor anticipates in creating him, Tyler fails to provide the narrator with the white male authority he seeks and indeed almost destroys him instead of empowering him. Despite the fact that Marla successfully resists being destroyed by the narrator’s homosocial bond with Tyler and his followers, those homosocial bonds prove to be much more destructive than Victor’s, not only to the narrator himself but also to other men. For example, Tyler, the narrator, and members of Project Mayhem seek to challenge their own feminization by emasculating men in positions of power. Their attempts to castrate the Commissioner and eventually the narrator only recreate the world they destroyed by assuming that position of control which once gave others power over them. The same is evident in Project Mayhem’s fascist regimentation, which simply replicates the conformity and feminization in the workplace it was supposedly rebelling against. For instance, both office

workers and members of Project Mayhem are referred to as “space monkeys” (12). These men are more like robots in Project Mayhem than they were at the office: they regurgitate what Tyler or the narrator says and mimic his actions, and they will even castrate their own leader — the narrator — if Tyler tells them to. The narrator notes that these men act like victims of an authoritarian regime: “I hug the walls, being a mouse trapped in this clockwork of silent men with the energy of trained monkeys, cooking and working and sleeping in teams. Pull a lever. Push a button. A team of space monkeys cooks meals all day, and all day, teams of space monkeys are eating out of the plastic bowls they brought with them” (130). Project Mayhem is just like that which it tries to destroy — a system where workers are just another cog in a wheel. In Project Mayhem, “[no] one guy understands the whole plan, but each guy is trained to do one simple task perfectly” (130). Not only fascists, Tyler and the narrator hypocritically turn to the same capitalist ventures they rebel against. For instance, their soaps are sold at very high-end department stores with huge profit and return. Without any truly innovative plan, Tyler and the narrator end up trying to rebuild Western culture with the same phallogentric ideals which initially spawned capitalism and consumer culture. It is no surprise then that the narrator’s elevated white male power falters very quickly. Not only does he increasingly feel threatened rather than empowered by his doppelgänger, but he actually participates, via Tyler, in Project Mayhem’s attempt to castrate him — a symbol of his wavering masculine power and continued feminization by the very rebellion he himself instigated with the creation of his doppelgänger. Further highlighting the failure of Tyler and fight club, the members also suffer for their participation in their homosocial bonds. After Marla refuses to play the role of marginalized and abject female victim, this role is occupied by the members of Project Mayhem represented by

Bob Paulson. Bob's body also has an uncanny resemblance to Frankenstein's Creature in its abjection and feminization: just as the Creature is made of the unnatural gathering of dismembered body parts and is treated as a feminized other by Victor and Walton, Bob Paulson's body is mutilated and unnatural, composed of both male genitalia and large breasts that are abject (described as "new sweating tits that hang enormous") and referred to as "bitch tits" which remains derogatory and signals inferiority. The misogyny that, according to the logic of male homosociality, should be subordinating Marla is displaced onto Bob — a testament to Palahniuk's warning against the disastrous effects the homosocial can have not only on women but also on men.

However, like Cather, Ellison and Morrison before him, Palahniuk does offer a different ending than Shelley. Unlike Victor, who is murdered by the Creature he is attempting to kill, Palahniuk's narrator survives the attempt to kill his doppelgänger by shooting himself in the head and is rescued by Marla and the support group members, who represent a kind of feminine power that the male characters have attempted to repress or destroy. This is similar to the end of *The Professor's House*, where the Professor is saved by Augusta; to the end of *Invisible Man*, which closes with the narrator searching for Mary and then finding the female power she represents in the slave women underground; and to the end of *Beloved*, which ends with Denver and the community of women coming to Sethe's rescue. All of these twentieth-century American writers suggest that female power is essential if the protagonists are to survive and find alternatives to their destructive and self-destructive responses to fears surrounding their gender and racial identity.

Despite this important deviation from the original Frankenstein story, these writers all agree with Shelley that this strategy for a transformed racial and gender identity is not without consequence. All the Creature figures, including Shelley's, have the same fate: they linger in the shadows once their story is over while still evoking sympathy in the reader. Tom remains a constant haunting presence for the St. Peters but an unfortunate mummification of a man re-imagined through storytelling. The Invisible Man lingers in his manhole yet remains isolated and alone. Beloved's "footprints come and go" as she still wanders 124 without being seen and still remains the embodiment of a murdered child. Traces of a dead Tyler Durden also linger when the narrator of *Fight Club* is reassured that "everything is going according to plan," which is oddly comforting to the reader (208). Although the American Victor figures are all saved by women, the Creatures remain as traces of the violent impulses that gave rise to them and the caution against destructive reactions to anxieties about gender and race remains universal.

As the most obvious adaptation of *Frankenstein* of all the novels in this project, *Fight Club* would seem to be more appropriate for an opening chapter than a closing one. However, it is important to understand that the Shelleyan Gothic does not begin with Palahniuk but has a much richer history within American Gothic fiction from across the twentieth century than one would expect. Turning to the familiar to understand the unfamiliar, these writers use the Shelleyan Gothic and Frankenstein motifs to make sense of their new and strange societal and cultural concerns. For Cather, the story of Victor and his Creature resonated in a newly modern world of consumerism, materialism and industrial technology. Ellison recognized Shelley's fears of industrialization and awareness of its connection to racist exploitation in his own modernizing mid-twentieth century America. Morrison identified with Shelley's critique of white masculine

strategies for power and found it fitting for her own female doppelgänger story which confronts the horrors and traumas of slavery and motherhood. Finally, Palahniuk related to Victor Frankenstein's reactions to the industrial world of the nineteenth century in his own age of consumerism and mass production and recognized the importance Shelley placed on reinforcing that these reactions were destructive. These four novels are more than just similar adaptations of Shelley's novel; the fascination with *Frankenstein* evolves and culminates with *Fight Club*. The driving force behind these novels is the Creature figure, the doppelgänger with his or her uncanny familiarity and unfamiliarity embodied in his or her monstrousness. This monstrousness, which inevitably becomes displaced onto women and becomes destructive, ends with Palahniuk and turns into mockery. Once we reach *Fight Club*, almost 180 years after *Frankenstein*, homosociality is reduced to boyish trivialities by Marla, who takes abjection and turns it into a source of power — certainly something every reader wishes the Creature could have done back in 1818.

Notes: Chapter 4

¹ For the first school, see Andrew Hock Soon Ng, Jeanette Trotta, Scott Wike and Barbara Pickering, and Stephen Brauer. For the second, see Henry Giroux, Suzanne Clark, Mark Pettus, and Nicola Rehling.

² For more on *Fight Club* and masculinity, see Caroline Ruddell, Kevin Alexander Boon, Krister Friday, Alex Tuss, Ruth Quiney, David Buchbinder, and Murat Göc.

³ Many critics have examined the novel's critique of consumer culture and capitalism extensively: see Per Serritslev Petersen, Ruth Quiney, Eduardo Mendieta, Henry Giroux, Nicola Rehling, Pam Zipfel, Lynn M. Ta, Pamela Church Gibson.

⁴ As discussed in my Cather chapter, Rita Felski argues that femininity and the domestic sphere was redefined with the rise of modern consumerism in the early twentieth century.

⁵ Although Tyler has been labelled a doppelgänger image within the novel by critics, such as Christina Wald, Ruth Quiney, Paul Kennett, Costas Constandinides, and Kirsten Stirling, none have discussed the image in great detail or have directly connected it to the homosocial bonds in *Fight Club*.

⁶ The narrator's view of Tyler as the epitome of the American masculine ideal is further emphasized by the casting of actor Brad Pitt in the film version of *Fight Club* directed by David Fincher.

⁷ See Absjörn Grønstad for more on corporality and masculinity.

⁸ Note that the abjection of Tom, the Invisible Man, Beloved, and Tyler does not relate to the Creature as an abject female figure victim within the homosocial triangle which includes Walton and Victor. Their abjection is specific to the doppelgänger as an uncanny creation reflecting their creator's fears and anxieties who is at once the same but different. The horrific nature of Tom, the Invisible Man, Beloved and Tyler symbolizes their creator's monstrousness or their monstrous past and the sense of the uncanny experienced by their creators.

⁹ This introduction of the creation's perspective mid-novel creates a similar effect in both *Fight Club* and *Frankenstein*: suddenly there are two possible experiences while reading these novels. Once the reader is aware of the creation's perspective — the Creature's victimization and history and the fact that the narrator is Tyler — the beginning of these stories changes and the experience of reading the novels also changes. Like the reader of *Frankenstein* hearing the Creature's story, *Fight Club*'s reader discovers that the narrator is Tyler, and now every story then has two sides: the one the reader originally believed — for example, Tyler and the narrator fighting outside a bar — and the real events taking place which are barely hinted at — the narrator literally fighting himself with others watching in disbelief. For this reason, the narrator notes, "I had to know what Tyler was doing while I was asleep" (32). This idea of unreliable narrators and different storyteller's perspectives which changes the reader's experience of the novel is also seen in *The Professor's House* with the narrative control the Professor has over Tom Outland's Story and in *Beloved* with the different accounts of the baby's murder provided by Stamp Paid, Beloved, and Sethe.

¹⁰ Gök is the only critic to identify Tyler and the narrator's relationship as homosocial.

¹¹ See Andrew Schopp, Thomas Peele, Nicola Rehling for more on homoeroticism and sexuality in *Fight Club*. Schopp discusses *Fight Club*'s homoeroticism and argues that it is not until the narrator shoots himself — figuratively as a sexual image when the gun has finally “done the deed” — that he reestablishes heteronormative order and can finally be with Marla (133). Similarly, Peele argues that “*Fight Club* reinforce heteronormativity by using homoeroticism to represent self-destruction, but also make available some queer representations of masculinity that subverts heteronormativity” (863). Although these critics understand the narrator as reinforcing his straight white masculinity, Peele and Schopp, however, do not link their homoeroticism to their homosocial bonding.

¹² I am not suggesting that gay men as a group have desires and inclinations to hurt other men or even turn violent towards their own bodies. In fact, it is the exact opposite. As stipulated by Sedgwick, there is a difference between homoeroticism and homosexuality. Actually, I would argue that Palahniuk, a gay writer himself, is suggesting that homosociality maintains a homophobic logic. While associating with homosexual behaviors, these men deny their connection to it with the homosocial and turn violent on each other instead as a result.

¹³ For more discussion on *Fight Club* as strictly masochism, see Andrew Hewitt, Nicola Rehling, Lynn M. Ta, and Slavoj Žižek.

¹⁴ For more on the failure of *Fight Club* as social critique or solution to the male crisis, see Henry Giroux, Jesse Kavadlo, Mark Pettus, Eduardo Mendieta, and Suzanne Clark.

¹⁵ For more discussion on *Fight Club* as embedded with racialized fascist ideologies and political doctrines often dictated by the separation of races, see Jennifer Barker and Robert von Dassanowsky.

¹⁶ There are certainly many white Americans also living in these conditions; I am not implying that this is an exclusively African American experience. Statistically, however, the highest majority of Americans living in poverty are black without taking into account the negative media representations of such an African American experience that have plagued American culture in the late twentieth century (Gillens).

¹⁷ Some critics have acknowledged the misogynistic aspects of *Fight Club*. According to Henry Giroux, “The pathology at issue — and one that is central to *Fight Club* — is its intensely misogynistic representation of women, and its intimation that violence is the only means through which men can be cleansed of the disastrous effects that women have on shaping their identities” (18). Similarly, Rehling takes note of how the victimization of men in *Fight Club* can often mask the treatment of women in its complete denial of them. She argues that while *Fight Club* “may appear to be screening ‘masculinity in crisis’, that crisis is not only contained but also used to legitimize a marginalization of women and an assertion of phallic power even as the film [novel] laments male disenfranchisement” (188). Rehling also associates the women in the novel with Kristeva’s notion of the abject (190).

¹⁸ The connection between these two female characters is interestingly emphasized in the casting of Helena Bonham-Carter as both Elizabeth in Branagh’s film version of *Frankenstein* and Marla in Fincher’s film adaptation of *Fight Club*.

¹⁹ Rehling is the only critic to position Marla within the homosocial triangle in the novel (191).

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