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Frankenstein's Monster: The Modern Leviathan

by

Jevon Scott Kimmerly-Smith

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Department of English Language, Literature And Creative Writing  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2014

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Frankenstein's Monster: The Modern Leviathan

by

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## Abstract

A political close-reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as viewed in light of Thomas Hobbes' political and moral theory as he presented it in *Leviathan*. This thesis argues that Hobbesian contract theory has been neglected as an effective lens for political interpretations of gothic literature in general, and shows explicitly how Hobbesian thought features in *Frankenstein*. Hobbes' significance to arguments surrounding the French Revolution and human conflict in general is explored with a focus on the political theories of Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, followed by an examination of the political significance of settings in *Frankenstein*. The study proceeds with an in-depth look at Hobbes' contributions to the political theory of Shelley's closest influences, and concludes with a Hobbesian reading of *Frankenstein* according to *Leviathan*.

## Dedication

I dedicate as much of this work to my creator as He would have, and beg His pardon for the rest.

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## Chapter One

### Churchyards and Charnel Houses

In the opening chapters of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1818) a young Victor Frankenstein discovers to his amazement that an ancient tree on his family property is "utterly destroyed" by lightning (Shelley 24), an anomaly that he claims abolishes his interest in the alchemical works of philosophers like Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa (25). However, his childhood fantasies of resurrecting the dead (24) and rendering the human frame impervious to death (23) come back to him in adulthood, and ultimately inspire his experiments to "bestow animation upon lifeless matter [and]... renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (36). The use of new science to achieve ancient ambitions proves that, although he claims that the alchemists have been dethroned as the "lords of [his] imagination" (25), Victor is still as influenced by them as ever, and this influence is the fuel that propels him beyond the achievements of his contemporaries. The scenario is also fitting to describe Shelley's composition *Frankenstein*, which was written in a period of revolution and democratization that threatened to write out the ancient political systems of Europe. Shelley's description of the monster's piecemeal construction parallels the compilation of the ideas of Burke, Paine, Rousseau, Godwin, Wollstonecraft and Percy Bysshe Shelley in her novel. Shelley constructs her novel, the best new medium to bring political theory to the masses (Rivlin-Beenstock 154), from the bones of their arguments and animates them altogether as the framework for her own philosophy, characterized by a blend of new radical thinking and antiquated conservative systems. Shelley uses the images and theories of Thomas Hobbes much like Victor is inspired by the alchemical origins of

scientific inquiry, and uses his theories as a platform to “[emphasize] her conservative character in contrast to that of her radical family” (182).

Although perfectly suited to even a simple comparative analysis, there is an underwhelming amount of critical scholarship that discusses both Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and the political or moral philosophy of Thomas Hobbes as laid out in *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (1651) or any of his other works. Hobbes’ political theories are concerned with the natural and logical organization of power in a state under the assumption that, left to their own devices, men are naturally self-serving and violent. His argument that a social contract results in a fair, strong, unimpeachable “artificial man” (Hobbes 7) is a perfect political frame for the struggle for power between Victor Frankenstein and the monster. There is an obvious parallel between a monarch who has been granted unreasonable power by his subjects and a creature built to be superior to natural men that becomes something dreadful to them. Aside from cursory references to Hobbes, most literary critics of *Frankenstein* neglect Hobbes’ political theory and imagery entirely; the political analyses of *Frankenstein* that do exist suggest that the philosophers of the French Revolution have, by virtue of their proximity in time and significance to the author, outshone Hobbes as a possible analytical frame. Hobbes’ “leviathan” has been replaced by “Montesquieu’s troglodytes and Burke’s ghosts and goblins” (Devetak 631). As a result there has been critical silence concerning Hobbes’ place in *Frankenstein*.

The relevance of Hobbes to Shelley has been hitherto little explored, with the few notable exceptions that follow later in this chapter. There is an abundance of criticism on political theorists like Burke, Paine, and Rousseau that overlaps with Shelley’s novel

because her parents responded to and/or knew each author personally. As a result, these thinkers had a great deal of influence on Godwin and Wollstonecraft's philosophy, and by extension Shelley's. As they passed on their philosophy to their daughter through their writings, Shelley responded to her parents' works in *Frankenstein* and as a result she responds to the political philosophers that influenced them as well.

While the effect of philosophers like Rousseau and Godwin on *Frankenstein* has been keenly documented by authors like Chris Baldick, Colene Bentley, Sylvia Bowerbank, David Marshall, Ronald Paulson and Diana Reese, the influence of Hobbes' philosophical model has been neglected. Hobbes' political theory, as set out in *Leviathan*, is one of the models that deserve a closer look on the basis of its role as a precursor to Rousseau, Burke, and Paine. One reason that Shelley has not been read in light of Hobbesian philosophy is that scholarship in the last thirty years has been influenced by John Burrow, who argued that "virtually nobody in nineteenth-century England... had employed a conception of human nature or... 'man in society' in terms closely derived from the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes" (Ghosh and Goldman 237). The main reason that Hobbes does not figure more prominently in the political conversation of Shelley's contemporaries is that in the period leading up to the French Revolution his theories were out of vogue in Britain, criticized for their "a-theistic" qualities (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 124), his "unique interpretations of scripture, materialism, and his unrelenting Erastianism" (102). Hobbes' works were all but banned after the Restoration (Martel 4) and "knowledge of Hobbes's life and thought... disappeared from the mainstream of intellectual debate in Britain for well over a century" (Ghosh and Goldman 239). Many English scholars in the Victorian era ignored Hobbes altogether, or addressed his work as

“part of the wider explosion of interest in seventeenth-century history” (237). However, Hobbes retained currency on the continent, where copies of *De Cive* were translated into “Dutch, Russian, Swiss and French” followed by translations of *Leviathan* after 1790 (239). Yet, despite the “continued taint of despotism and blasphemy” that hung over his work in Britain, some English writers still commented on Hobbes “without attribution” (240), and in the later-half of the nineteenth century his work finally began receiving more attention.

Hobbes’ political opus *Leviathan* led to “charges of atheism and treason” that coloured his reputation well after his death, and the work was nearly banned by parliament following Charles II’s return to the throne in 1660 (Martel 4). Even without official action against him, popular opinion of *Leviathan* was that it was “the gospel of cold-headed and hard-hearted unbelievers” and Hobbes himself was called “a supporter of tyranny... and turncoat” which led to Hobbes and his political philosophy all but vanishing from England’s political landscape (Ghosh and Goldman 239). The same material that inspired accusations of atheism and materialism in Hobbes’ lifetime were, ironically, also why *Leviathan* attracted more interest after the French Revolution (240). The violent response of Burke and other defenders of the British monarchy to the “mechanic philosophy” of the philosophes and Jacobins undoubtedly renewed some interest in Hobbes’ highly mechanistic works (Brantlinger 53). Many of the same accusations of “political radicalism and implicit atheism” were levelled against William Godwin as well, despite the popular reception of his 1793 *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (Weston 2). For this reason there is little written about Hobbes in this period, although the anonymous author of the 1790

pamphlet *Observations on the Reflections of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, on the Revolution in France* (believed to be one Mrs. Macaulay Graham), was quoted in Joseph Johnson's *Analytical Review* as saying that "[Burke's] system is shewn to be even more illiberal than that of Mr. Hobbes, and peculiarly adapted to corrupt the minds and dispositions of those in authority" ("Book Review" 419). This representation of Hobbes' political philosophy in the left-wing *Analytical Review* illustrates the demonized position he held as an advocate of the far right among thinkers like Godwin and Wollstonecraft, who were part of Johnson's circle (Fennessy 224). Despite the disdain radical thinkers expressed towards Hobbes' political philosophy in 1790, it was among this group that an appetite for Hobbes' thinking was building towards a revival in the Victorian era, as "individual works by Hobbes slowly began to re-appear, initially from back-street printing houses on the radical fringes of the debate in the wake of 1789" (Ghosh and Goldman 240). The first major reappearance of Hobbes in England would come in 1812 with a re-printing of *On Human Nature* and *Of Liberty and Necessity* followed by *Behemoth* two years later, and a series of lectures by William Hazlitt, "whose popular lectures at the Russell institution were the conduit by which Hobbes's life and thought would become better known among a wider metropolitan audience, including Coleridge, James Mill, and other philosophical radicals" (240). As unlikely as it would seem given his conservatism, Hobbes' revival in popularity was facilitated by the "advanced radical democrats and critics of state power" of the era (243), mostly in appreciation of his work in the theoretical areas of "mind, logic, language, sensation, and scientific method" (243-245). At this time, a reputation as an atheist and materialist undoubtedly worked in Hobbes' favour among intellectuals. Admittedly, "it was... extremely rare for Victorian

readers of Hobbes to endorse or condemn his system on every front,” but the men who brought his ideas back into common usage “were willing to pardon ‘his services to Despotism’ in consideration of ‘his services to philosophy’” and included, among other radical thinkers of note, Mary Shelley’s father William Godwin (244). Jose Harris states that it was “these fierce critics of Hanoverian government who first brought Hobbes’s name back into circulation” (244), and that “Godwin’s novel [*Things as They Are; or, Caleb Williams* (1794)] was designed to demonstrate how Hobbes’s account of mechanical interplay... governed even the minutest relations of everyday life” (245). *Caleb Williams*, a novel that Godwin himself identified “as continuous with *Political Justice*,” written in the hopes of bringing his political theory to the masses, raises questions about the effectiveness of social and “political institutions such as marriage, government and the social contract” (Rivlin-Beenstock 154). Godwin even based the antagonist of the novel “on the figure and philosophy of Edmund Burke” (Davison 124) to whose *Reflections* he had responded in *Political Justice* (121). It was to the “Author of *Political Justice, Caleb Williams, & c.*” that Shelley dedicated *Frankenstein*.

Many elements of *Frankenstein*, including its contemporary setting (123), doubled hero-villain (124), “forbidden knowledge” (125), and justice system that persecutes the innocent (126), are borrowed from *Caleb Williams*. One interpretation of *Frankenstein* even claims, according to Chris Baldick, “Victor Frankenstein [is a] satirical representation of William Godwin” (Baldick 27). Shelley’s novel can be read “as a development of Godwin’s critique of Rousseau, and arguably the most powerful Romantic indictment of the social contract tradition” and uses the image of the creature being composed of parts as “an allegory of the ills of individualism, and of consequent

social breakdown” (Rivlin-Beenstock 25). Shelley further uses her novel to interrogate her father’s “individualism” as it “sanctions a culture based on exclusions,” and makes her own case for inclusivity by illustrating the evils that come from the creature’s disenfranchisement (180); Shelley makes a strong case that “the group, rather than the solitary individual, should be the foundational social unit” (181) and uses the creature to “[allegorize] social contract theory’s failure to unite individuals into a society” as the creature itself “embodies the ills of excessive individualism” enshrined in Godwin’s *Political Justice* (181).

Very little has been written to date on the relationship between Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Hobbes’ *Leviathan*. In the introduction to the Oxford World’s Classics *Frankenstein* (1818) Marilyn Butler cites Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer’s *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (1985) to explain the distinction between the nature of “pre-professional medieval-Renaissance science” which was “personal, secretive, [and] implicated in dangerous magic,” and “Enlightenment laboratory-science,” which was characterized by transparency and the advancement of the human understanding in a “public, officially sanctioned space” (Butler xxx). Unfortunately, Shapin and Schaffer’s book makes no reference to Shelley or *Frankenstein* and did not lead Butler to explore how Hobbes might be used as an interpretive lens for *Frankenstein*.

Loralea Michaelis’ 2007 article “Hobbes's Modern Prometheus: A Political Philosophy for an Uncertain Future” does mention both Hobbes’ *Leviathan* and the creature from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. The article focusses on the preoccupation of Hobbes’ philosophy with the acquisitive nature of men, which she attributes to the

anxiety men feel about providing for an uncertain future, and a sense of alienation from the past (Michaelis 123). Michaelis addresses several Hobbesian arguments featured in Shelley's novel, including the inability of promises to regulate conduct (119), and the inability of rational discourse to bring individuals to "agreement on matters of common concern," while it exaggerates "the different and variable desires" men have (118). The article is framed almost entirely around Hobbes' retelling of the story of Prometheus in *Leviathan*, in which Hobbes neglects the events leading up to Prometheus' punishment (the focus of ancient renditions of the story) and solely concerns himself with the grim future Prometheus "knows will bring him no relief" (102). Michaelis' link between Hobbes' portrayal of Prometheus, modern anxieties about an uncertain future and the growing need to "adapt quickly and effortlessly to change," furnishes the title of the article (101). In her conclusion, Michaelis compares Hobbes' retelling of the Prometheus story to Shelley's "other modern Prometheus," because just as Hobbes writes out Prometheus' past, the creature is alienated from his past by nature of his unnatural birth (124). She also compares the creature's "search for love" to the "search for security" that Hobbes only admits possible under the control of an absolute ruler (124). Michaelis does not maintain the analogy between *Frankenstein* and Hobbes' Prometheus story throughout her article. Her article is only linked to *Frankenstein* in the closing lines and therefore her title does not reflect the degree of her engagement with Shelley's text.

In *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-century Writing* (1987), Chris Baldick goes further in pointing out the association between *Frankenstein* and Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Baldick observes that the image of Shelley's monster and Hobbes' "artificial man" "both reflect the dismemberment of the old body politic...

[and] signal the growing awareness, hastened in the heat of regicide and revolution, of destinies no longer continuous with nature” (Baldick 16). This statement not only demonstrates how appropriately these works correspond as political event and exegesis, but also how the imagery of Shelley’s novel emulates the political allegory of Hobbes’s vision of the state being a manufactured creature “of greater stature and strength than the Naturall [man]” (15). Even though Baldick discusses the Leviathan as an inspiration for the physical shape and scale of Frankenstein’s monster, he never fully explores the ramifications of reading Hobbes’ political philosophy directly into the creature (16). Baldick’s observation potentially reverses the political reading of *Frankenstein* from the creature being cast as poor, disadvantaged, and rebellious into a symbol of the powerful, artificially constructed commonwealth that Hobbes describes in *Leviathan*. This implication that the creature has the ability to stand for aspects of both the English Civil War and the French Revolution, also demonstrates the versatility of Shelley’s novel as a metaphor for civil conflict, or instances of violent political upheaval in general. Baldick further associates the “uneasy feeling of human responsibility involved in [Hobbes’] conception” of political organization with *Frankenstein* in a way that no one else has, noting that government is a “monstrosity” imposing itself on the people who institute it, and observing that “the monsters both of poetic fancy and political organization are made not by nature but by fallible human arts” (15). This uncomfortable sense that man has exceeded himself and created a force beyond his control has no greater representation in the popular imagination than *Frankenstein*.

Baldick also connects the “prodigious proliferation of... ‘Gothic’ novels... [to] a flurry of books and pamphlets provoked by Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the*

*Revolution in France* (1790)” and the “Politico-philosophical novels” of the Jacobinites to the French Revolution (16). Baldick elegantly divides this literature into two camps of horror: the Gothic, which is “preoccupied with feudal forms of unlimited personal power and its tyrannical abuse” (16) and associated with “the spectres of Britain’s primitive, superstitious, corrupt and tyrannical Catholic past” (Davison 25); and the new (mostly) Anti-Jacobinite literature which draws from the anxieties of an uncertain future and the fresh nightmares of the Revolution (Baldick 16). Baldick points to “the Jacobin Novel” as the median between the two, as these works (including those by Shelley’s parents) “are more openly addressed to the social and political issues highlighted by the revolutionary process” (16). Hobbes’ political treatises also satisfy these requirements: from the conservative perspective they approach an uncertain future as the “body politic” is threatened by civil war (14), and the fear of superstitious Catholic influences is, for Hobbes, a contemporary issue that he writes at length about in *Leviathan*. Richard Devetak acknowledges both Hobbes and *Frankenstein* in his article “The Gothic Scene of International Relations: Ghosts, Monsters, Terror and the Sublime after September 11” (2005) and acknowledges that the “monsters, so central to gothic fictions, have also been strange, albeit mostly unremarked, presences in political thought... [that] have helped contribute to tenebrous political atmospheres” (Devetak 631). Unfortunately, Hobbes and *Frankenstein* diverge in his subsequent analysis.

Zoe Rivlin-Beenstock’s 2010 dissertation *The Social Contract and the Romantic Canon: The Individual and Society in the Works of Wordsworth, Godwin and Mary Shelley* encapsulates both Hobbesian philosophy and the works of Godwin, Wollstonecraft and Shelley, but does not link Hobbes and *Frankenstein* together. She

examines *Frankenstein* almost exclusively through the lens of Rousseau's gender politics, and Hobbes is never mentioned in this context. However, Rivlin-Beenstock has brilliantly analyzed Shelley's own contributions to social contract philosophy, treating Shelley as a theorist in her own right rather than only as an adjunct to her parents' philosophical contributions. Rivlin-Beenstock's dissertation provides an over-arching review of social compact theory. Starting with Hobbes as "the first canonical thinker...to suggest that sociability needs to be created artificially by instating a sovereign," Rivlin-Beenstock traces the concept as it was modified by Locke and adapted by Rousseau who, according to her footnotes, "is arguably the most directly influential social contract writer for the Romantic canon" (29). Her overview charting social contract theory from Hobbes to Rousseau, whose influence on *Frankenstein* is well-documented, shows that there is a clear lineage of political thought from Hobbes to Shelley, whom Rivlin-Beenstock counts as a noteworthy reformer who emphasizes the significance of group membership over individualism (181).

While Rivlin-Beenstock's dissertation connects Shelley to social contract theory through Rousseau, her argument does not follow the political foundations of *Frankenstein* from Rousseau back to Hobbes' theory. My thesis is the first to trace these foundations back far enough to expose the lineage of political thought from Thomas Hobbes, to Paine, Burke and Shelley's nearer contemporaries. I proceed to use Hobbes' theory, as laid out in *Leviathan*, as the basis of a political close-reading of Shelley's novel, to show that her novel already embodies many of the ideas that supported his view of absolute monarchy. I show that Shelley's novel is emblematic of Hobbes' thinking if the novel is re-interpreted in a manner that reverses the conventional power dynamics of

the text, valuing the creature for its composition and strength rather than viewing it as a failed experiment or moral consequence of Victor's ambition. This reading demonstrates the extent to which Hobbesian political theory has been overlooked as an influence on *Frankenstein* and that the reading of the novel is significantly enriched by directly applying Hobbes' political theory to the text; it also shows the diversity of the novel as a frame for political conflict, and opens the way for more intertextual dialogue between Hobbesian philosophy and Gothic literature.

Chapter two, "The Labours of Men of Genius" explores the influence of the revolutionary political theory of Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine upon the novel. Burke is of singular importance to the novel because his arguments in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) affirm many of the views expressed by Hobbes, particularly his support for an inherited monarchy; but more importantly because Burke inspired a wave of political responses to his *Reflections* that supported the French Revolution (Baldick 16), most notably those by Paine, Wollstonecraft, and Godwin. Were it not for Burke there would arguably have been no *Political Justice*, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, *Caleb Williams* and, most likely, no *Frankenstein*. *Reflections* itself is a response to radical thinkers who argued that the French revolution bore a similarity to the English Revolution of 1688 (Aldridge 136). Interestingly, these arguments coincided with reprintings of *Leviathan* in continental Europe during the 1790s (239) where French radical thinkers hailed Hobbes as "the true father of revolutionary philosophy" (Ghosh and Goldman 241). Burke firmly denies any similarity between the Revolutions because to do so would be admitting that England could be equally vulnerable to the fate of

France, contrary to his legalistic faith in the “practical, tested methods” of aristocratic rule and inherited powers (Aldridge 136).

The responses to Burke by Paine, Wollstonecraft, and Godwin support the revolutionary cause and embody the radical thought of the age. The second chapter of this work, “The Labours of Men of Genius” looks at their contributions to the political conversation for the purpose of establishing the novel’s place in the political era of the French Revolution. I identify places where Hobbes’ philosophical contributions were either adopted or ignored by Burke or Paine and his fellow radicals, and where his imagery applies, establishing *Frankenstein* as part of a political lineage from Hobbes to Shelley’s contemporaries to prove that his ideas remained relevant even during a period after his death when he was highly unpopular in Britain (Ghosh and Goldman 239-240).

The third chapter, “To Pursue History to Her Hiding Places” relates the novel’s political imagery to the locations where the majority of the story arc takes place. Following recent work by Fred V. Randel, whose article “The Political Geography of Horror in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*” (2003) fills a gap in the scholarship regarding the historical significance of the locations of *Frankenstein*, this chapter looks at Ingolstadt, Geneva, and Mont Blanc in relation to their social and political histories to amplify a political reading of the novel. The goal of this chapter is not only to demonstrate what these places mean to characters in the story, but to illustrate how Shelley has enshrined historical events in her narrative. Randel notes that it is common for “modern European novels” to pay homage to historical events associated with the locations in which they are set (Randel 465). In a text as self-aware as *Frankenstein*, little or nothing is included in the novel that does not either have personal relevance to the

author (Shelley conceived the idea of the novel while staying near Geneva, Frankenstein's home, and travelled with Percy to Chamonix which furnished her scene between Frankenstein and his monster on Mont Blanc) or a deeper cultural value (Butler lix). Understanding what these locations mean either to Shelley, or her readers in Britain and on the continent (*De Cive* and *Decorpore Politico* were translated in France in 1649 and 1652, respectively) is crucial to fully grasping the nuances of the book (Skinner 159-160). Special attention is paid in this chapter to revolutionary activity between the English Civil War and the French Revolution to explain significant differences between the common reading of *Frankenstein* and a Hobbesian one.

As the child of renowned writers of political philosophy, Shelley herself is part of a political dynasty. “[V]irtually all studies of *Frankenstein* acknowledge Godwin and Wollstonecraft’s omnipresence” (Rivlin-Beenstock 184). While both her parents and her husband “consistently defended the radical perspective” in their writings however, Shelley blends these with her own “contradictory perspectives” in her novel (Bowerbank 418) and shows notable independent growth as a writer and political thinker between 1818 and the third edition of her novel in 1831 (Butler 199). The nature of the changes Shelley made between editions show how her opinions changed as she matured (Oakes 66). Some of these changes are, in themselves, instances of rebellion; others are monuments to the memory of her parents and husband as radical proponents of revolution. As their arguments were typically levelled against patriarchic institutions, it makes sense that the nature of rebellion in the novel is frequently figured as tension between fathers and their children, the most basic unit of patriarchal hierarchy. Rivlin-Beenstock points out that Godwin is “surprisingly conservative,” in his writing and

“sanctions a culture [of individualism] based on exclusions” where male society is defined by disregarding women (Rivlin-Beenstock 180). As her only surviving parent, Godwin is the primary analytical focus of chapter four. I compare Godwin’s ideas concerning utility, necessity, and sociopolitical organization (and to a lesser-extent Wollstonecraft’s) to Hobbes’ ideas where there are philosophical tensions or colluding passages in *Frankenstein*. Examining the similarities of these ideas gives the clearest sense of how Hobbes’ philosophy was developed by Wollstonecraft and Godwin and whether Shelley accepted their interpretations.

The fifth and final chapter, “Monster/Monarch: Man/Commonwealth” begins with an exploration of the similarities between Hobbes’ metaphor of the political body of the commonwealth and Shelley’s monster. This chapter explores at length what making Frankenstein’s creature a symbol of the embodied social contract (Leviathan) means to the political interpretation of the novel. The creature’s personality, strength, intelligence, and political maneuvering are read in light of the rights and powers of the monarch outlined in *Leviathan*, as well as the role that Victor plays in opposition. I review Victor’s project from its inception to determine whether Victor is justified in trying to destroy his creature; alternatively, I interrogate the creature’s behaviour and motivations to determine if his rebellion is unjustifiable or vindicated in a Hobbesian reading.

## Chapter Two

### The Labours of Men of Genius

Burke's arguments in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) affirm many of the views expressed by Hobbes, particularly his arguments for an inherited monarchy. The reason for this is that *Reflections* is a response to radical thinkers who argue the French revolutionaries should have the support of the English people because they followed the example of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (Aldridge 136). Burke firmly denies any similarity between the events of 1688 and 1789 because he sees the Glorious Revolution as constitutionally justifiable; he notes that "the two critical periods of the Restoration and Revolution, when England found itself without a king" were both instances when the British people chose to *preserve* "the shape of their old organization" rather than reduce it to "the organic *moleculae* of a disbanded people" (Burke *Ref* 22). These events are the basis of his legalistic faith in the "practical, tested methods" of aristocratic rule and inherited powers (Aldridge 136). In Burke's eyes, the French had still had recourse to "regenerate the deficient part of the old constitution" (Burke *Ref* 22) with the parts that remained like the "foundations of a noble and venerable castle" (35), but they had squandered the opportunity by starting over "as if [they] had never been moulded into civil society" (36). Burke stresses this difference between the British and French revolutions in *Reflections*, as the implication that the French Revolution was like the English Revolution would suggest that the English laws and government could be thrown off as quickly and bloodily as the French.

Burke does not believe in this possibility, saying that “The body of the people of England [will]... utterly disclaim it [and]... resist the practical assertion of it with their lives and fortunes” rather than plunge themselves into the chaos of another revolution or civil war (16). He saw the Glorious Revolution as an instance where the “*antient* indisputable laws and liberties” had been preserved (31) to keep the principle of the hereditary descent of the monarchy sacred (22). His disbelief in the possible recurrence of revolution is partly because his views are largely in keeping with those of Hobbes; while he viewed the Glorious Revolution to be a “just war” he feared that if the arguments of the Revolutionary Society gained popularity there would be no end of unjust wars (30) as “no government could stand a moment” if it could be so easily “cashiered” on the grounds of a sway in public opinion (27). His fear of ongoing civil war is the same theme that Hobbes’ *Leviathan* addresses as he makes a case for an undisputed monarchy and outlines the reasons why revolt is unjustifiable. Hobbes advocates a fearsome and absolute authority which could reliably keep the nation from “[degenerating] into, a civil war” (Hobbes 1.13.11). Hobbes further explains that this absolute authority is immortalized through “the right of succession” as a hereditary monarchy, to prevent men from re-entering to the “condition of war in every age” (2.19.14). Hobbes’ vision was that of a brutal peacemaker, to whom succession meant that there was neither another contest among men for rule of the country, or opportunity for foreign powers to assert their right to contest rule when a country is without a king.

Aside from the security provided by an established crown, Burke also appreciates the doctrine of the hereditary right of kings, which he sees as integral to the natural rights of all English men. He notes that “We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage;

and an house of commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties, from a long line of ancestors” and that this is “the happy effect of following nature” (Burke *Ref* 33). Rebelling against the succession of monarchy therefore seems as unnatural to Burke as arguing against any form of inheritance, or arguing that a child should overthrow his father and lead his family. More importantly, Burke saw in the conclusion of the Glorious Revolution that the “rights and liberties of the subject” were “indissolubly” enmeshed in the *Declaration of Right*, which serves the central purpose of “*settling the succession of the crown*” (17). Deposing a monarch and denying hereditary rule, therefore, does not merely excise a tyrant; it also sets a precedent for all inheritance, including the rights that are the foundation of peace and security. For example, Burke posits that if this principle is violated any unpopular king past or present who inherited the throne could be considered illegitimate (in terms of the Revolution Society’s rhetoric), and the statute laws that they authorized would also be illegitimated; among these are documents that guarantee security for common citizens (23). Just as the king inherits his rights, the same principle (and key documents) protects the rights of all British men; putting the king’s hereditary powers in jeopardy would result in England being subjected to the same situation that the French found themselves in after their revolution.

Burke perceives that the men who have the most influence reorganizing the state after such a revolution are not members of the aristocracy who have been bred and educated to wield power; rather, they are the sort of men who have never had power and are unequipped with the education to make decisions for their fellow men (Burke *Ref* 41-42). This practice is against what he understands as the ‘natural’ order of things, as

generations of breeding produces men naturally fit to take charge of state (49). Burke emphasizes the respect owed to men of great authority and talent, and expresses dismay at seeing so few men of reputation or “practical experience” among the National Assembly after the French Revolution (41-42). Burke fears that even the few men he sees with potential will be either rendered voiceless in a body that will not follow, or wasted on the “absurd projects” of the majority (41).

Worse, the majority of potential leaders are the “meddling, daring, subtle, active [sort], of litigious dispositions and unquiet minds” who do not understand statecraft and are immediately corrupted by sudden opportunities to pursue their own interests in the short-term, particularly by seizing upon positions and property that had been left open or in question during the revolution (42-43). Burke states that putting men like these in charge is worse than merely subjecting them to “oppression from the state,” because “the state [itself] suffers oppression” (49) as they throw trade (36), credit (44), and property into disarray (43). While *Reflections* is at odds with some of Burke’s other work, his view of the revolutionaries rebuilding the state is reminiscent of his views expressed in his satirical work *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), in which he states:

This very monster of mankind appeared in the beginning of his reign to be a person of virtue. Many of the great tyrants on the records of history have begun their reigns in the fairest manner. But the truth is, this unnatural power corrupts both the heart and the understanding. (Burke *VNS* 19)

This demonstrates his belief that given enough power men inevitably become despotic, much like Hobbes’ Leviathan is fierce because it is by nature unchallengeable, and just as both Victor Frankenstein and his creature are initially positive, sympathetic figures who

are slowly corrupted: Victor by his obsession, and the creature by exposure to the cruelty of men and the revelation that he can despotically use his strength to control others.

Like Hobbes' absolute ruler, Burke believed that the representative of a nation "must be left free to exercise uncontrolled his own discretion" and that until he was replaced (by an election in Burke's case, by hereditary succession in Hobbes') he was the embodiment of "the majesty of the people" (Elton 44), just like Hobbes described the sovereign power as the "*right to present* the person of them all" who have contractually "*authorize[d]* all the actions and judgments, of that man" (Hobbes 2.18.1). This representative further enjoyed the benefit of being unimpeachable as long as he was ruler (Elton 44; Hobbes 2.18.3). Even if the king were to become despotic, Burke observes that the English crown is not, based on anything he can find in the British 'constitution,' a public servant in the sense that the Revolution Society asserts he was manufactured by the will of the people to be responsible to them. Rather, Burke states that the king has no responsibility to the people, except as the embodiment of the power and authority of the state. All men are responsible "to obey the law in him" as his subordinates (Burke *Ref* 29). Burke's opinion of the unimpeachable sovereign corresponds to Hobbes' view of the Leviathan, in whom the authority and strength of every member of the commonwealth is invested, making him pre-eminent among men as they cannot question their own authority (Hobbes 2.17.13), or disobey it, or harm it, without having harmed themselves (2.18.6-7). Furthermore, according to Hobbes' philosophy, men are responsible to the Leviathan because the law is indistinguishable from the will of the sovereign authority, and his power to enforce it makes it just (2.21.7).

Burke's argument in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* is, according to Baldick, "tied to a powerful emotional investment in a 'natural policy' which antedates Hobbes's artificial man" (Baldick 17) –which is to say, the rights of inheritance and the means by which the aristocracy naturally breeds men who are fit to lead (Fruchtman 68). Paine argues against Burke's belief that fit leaders are bred in *Rights of Man*, as he believes that "human beings universally [share the] same nature" and questions how one man might be more fit to lead than another (23). Where Burke describes the revolutionaries as "parricidal" and sees the emerging power structure of France as "the great political 'monster' of the modern age," Paine retaliates by re-framing the monarchic system as a "monstrous" or abusive father, and says that "by distortedly exalting some men... others are distortedly debased" (Baldick 20-21). According to Paine, the aristocracy is not only the manufacturer of its own destruction, but has always been "a monstrous regime" and the "artificial exaggerations of wealth, rank, and privilege" have to be abolished to return mankind to a more natural state (20). Wollstonecraft's own responses to Burke, *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), and *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794), support Paine's thesis, and show her belief that the French Revolution originated in "the negligence of the decadent and over-refined French court" (Baldick 21). She agrees with Paine that the Revolution was an inevitable and justifiable response to the inherited regime, and dismisses the horrors that Burke and Godwin attributed to the revolutionaries as acts perpetrated by "'a set of monsters, distinct from the people,'" excusing the majority for the actions of a few (22).

Burke's argument that "liberties can be regularly perpetuated and preserved sacred" by "[no] other course or method than that of an *hereditary crown*" (Burke *Ref* 25) traces

the origin of rights to “some time or another... [when] all beginners of dynasties were *chosen* by those who called them to govern” [my emphasis] and that the law of hereditary rule was thus enshrined forever (15). In his mythic social compact, which was very similar in its composition to Hobbes’, Paine implies that Burke validates his beliefs by the authority of tradition, but does not trace the precedent to its origin (Fruchtman 68). Paine argues that because Burke starts his political analysis with an imagined political compact he not only ignores the original social compact that men came to on equal terms through mutual affection (24), but has also ignored biblical teachings that described “the divine origin of these rights...that God had given them from the beginning” with Adam in Eden (68). Burke has begun his history of the state with a description of circumstances similar to 1 Samuel 8, when Israel first asked for a king (when Burke’s satirical pamphlet *A Vindication of Natural Society* was reprinted in 1858, 1 Samuel 8:19 graced the preface). Burke has ignored the *message* of the scripture however, which Paine had already taken into account in his own work *Common Sense* (1776) when he argues against installing monarchies on the grounds of biblical doctrine (Paine *CS* 13); God clearly warns the Israelites –already formed in a society– *against* appointing a king over themselves, including a description of the things a king would subject them to which God considered reprehensible (1 Sam. 8: 9-18). Paine points to this passage to make an argument that rights preceded political organization, instilled in all men by God along with common sense and “unextinguishable feelings to do good” which “were the guardians of God’s image in the human heart” (Fruchtman 24). Not only were these feelings and natural freedoms deadened when placed under the rule of a monarch (22), but that kings and the aristocracy were *less* than human, ruled by “their basest instincts...

to seek power over others” and “unable to use their natural powers of common sense as [G]od had meant people to use them” (23).

Clearly Paine and Burke hold opposite opinions of the aristocracy. Where Burke states that “permanent property...education, and... such habits as enlarge and liberalize the understanding” (qualities he recognizes in the aristocracy, “permanent property” being a qualification of such) are necessary in a governing body (Burke *Ref* 41), Paine objects that men who come into their positions by birth, have the same odds against them as a peasant in winning the ‘intellectual lottery’ (Paine *RM* 225) and that hereditary succession is “as ridiculous as an hereditary poet-laureate” (134). Furthermore, he perceives that the “aristocracy has a tendency to degenerate the human species” through its practices of “intermarriage” and isolating itself from the “general stock of society” so that the “artificial NOBLE shrinks into a dwarf before the NOBLE of Nature” (Paine *RM* 135). He thus uses the image of physical deformity as a metaphor to underscore moral degradation, again borrowing from the tradition of describing a political body as deformed that can be traced back at least to Sir Thomas Browne’s *Religio Medici* (1643), albeit employed for his own purposes against the aristocracy (Baldick 14). These deformities could either refer to the genetic maladies of inbreeding, or, could be a figurative reference to the way that the nobility is cut off from society which makes them un-relatable and distant (Paine *CS* 9). The aristocracy’s seclusion makes them unfamiliar with the hardships of the world, yet they “act in cases where the highest judgment is required” and their decisions sometimes reflect their ignorance (9). The aristocracy’s inability to relate to the sufferings of others also makes it appear inhumanly cruel, as their

isolation renders them callous to the sufferings of the poor. Without any personal contact with the poor the rich obviously feel no personal responsibility towards them.

Shelley's monster illustrates the damning effects of being excluded from society, particularly as he calls his "vices... the children of a forced solitude" and argues that with "no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be [his] portion" (Shelley 121). The monster's proposed solution, to write himself into the social contract by establishing himself as a new patriarch, is figuratively the same solution as the revolutionaries' (118-119). The monster's intent to travel to the new world and establish a society where he can grant himself the same rights as man, requires that he supplant Victor's position as patriarch. Taking Victor's place either by reason or force is a revolution on the monster's part (119). However, the creature does not propose a radically new form of government or even the abolition of the social contract to which Victor belongs; rather, he explains that in his condition he is like that of the Devil, and "everywhere [he sees] bliss" in the form of society from which "[he] alone is irrevocably excluded" (77-78). His proposal to remedy this is secession from the society of men to reenact the Genesis story "in the vast wilds of South America," where he can live as Adam with another inhuman being (120). The creature claims that he will "again be virtuous" if Victor allows him this indulgence (78), but stumbles into the same logical quagmire that Hobbes acknowledged in *Leviathan*, namely that "Virtue... in all sorts of subjects, is somewhat that is valued for eminence; and consisteth in comparison. For if all things were equal in all men, nothing would be prized" (Hobbes 1.8.1). If relationships between people are the major way Hobbes says we distinguish virtue, then the creature's voluntary exile cannot make him virtuous. Even in the company of his mate, the creature's claim of virtue is really

preeminence, because his mate would have no other frame of reference and therefore virtue is whatever he explains it to be. Hobbes further divides virtue into “two sorts; *natural*, and *acquired*” (1.8.2). Hobbes describes “NATURAL WIT,” which he says is “gotten by use only, and experience; without method, culture, or instruction,” *as part of* virtue; he says such wit proceeds from “*celerity of imagining*” and “*steady direction to some approved end*” (1.8.2). While he could develop his natural wit in isolation, it has to be assumed that his curiosity and problem-solving skills would have to be engaged to do so, which would require a mental life beyond the simple act of foraging the creature implies will be his chief occupation. The creature would not –by Hobbes’ reckoning– be made *more* virtuous by this course of action then, because this occupation is little more than what animals do, and only requires instinct and the use of his basic senses (1.8.2). The other part of virtue, acquired wit, *is* dependent on “method and instruction” and “the right use of speech”; therefore, the creature’s advancement is also limited (1.8.13). Employing the Edenic image of the creature’s secession might be part of Shelley’s conservative critique of the revolution; following the pattern authorized in the Bible for small family units, she justifies a preference for reinstating the system that preceded kingdoms, but she also rejects violent means to do so. In these ways, Shelley supports Paine and her parents’ desire for a radical reorganization of society where human rights are roughly equal, while still founding her opinion in conservative traditions and scriptural authority.

From Burke and Paine the path to Mary Shelley is a very short and direct one, as both Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin responded independently to Burke’s *Reflections* and received only a little less notoriety for their radical opinions than did

Paine (Baldick 16). William Godwin's response, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, was "the most intellectually prestigious... measured... critique of Government from the standpoint of rationalist anarchism" and contested that the government, which is "a Hobbesian 'artificial man' with too many heads," is the true monster in society (24). Godwin argues that any undertaking by this political body, rather than being the effort of a unified whole is "distorted in every joint" by the opinions, private interests, and vices of every person who has a hand in it, so that even well-meant projects become "abortive and monstrous" (24-25). In this way, Godwin recasts the "Hydra" that had come to stand for the "popular rabble" since 1643 (14-15) in the role of 'organized' government, with its many competing interests and intentions (25). While his argument does generally coincide with Paine's that "it is the institutions of the monarchy and aristocracy that are monstrous" (24), he does not go so far as to justify the actions of the revolutionaries, who revolted—in Paine's words— "[against] the established despotism of the [Monarchy], and not against the person or principles of [Louis the XVIth]" (Paine *RM* 97). Godwin's own appraisal of the situation was that, while "the ancient tradition of Burkean thought" did not aid "'the great cause of humanity'," Burke was correct in observing that "'to dragoon men into the adoption of what we think right is an intolerable tyranny'" and that, in their quest to "overthrow tyranny," the French had "become greater tyrants themselves" (Paulson 538).

I revisit Godwin's condemnation of political cooperation in chapter four, as it extended in his eyes from such rigid hierarchical structures as an absolutist monarchy, to the sudden and irrational collective decisions of a mob (Weston 7). While Godwin agrees with Hobbes and Burke that "[s]ociety was originally organized to provide security to the

individual,” and “admits that we still need some kind of social organization to defend our security,” he resents the tendency of these systems to influence other aspects of daily life and evolve into self-serving artificial organisms (Carter xxix). Still, Godwin concedes that, without organization men will “degenerate into chaotic anarchy” (xxix) and hopes for a “form of social organization that [would] stimulate men to be rational, independent, and intelligent” (xxvii) by “provid[ing] men with the proper desires” (xx) that they lack in normal society. Yet, while he cannot hope to see such a system installed without first removing the one in place, Godwin believes “that revolution and physical punishments invariably produce more evil than good” (xxxix). He therefore fundamentally disagrees with Paine about the methods of the French Revolutionaries.

Although Godwin disagreed with Paine on this point, he held great respect for him and was pleased when “he succeeded in being invited to a dinner where Paine was one of the guests [November 13, 1791]” (McColley 3) at the home of the radical printer Joseph Johnson (Aldridge 134). The meeting occurred as Godwin worked on *Political Justice* (McColley 3). While this difference of opinion would cast doubt on Conway’s assertion that Paine had left “the supervisory details [of the second publication of *Rights of Man*] to William Godwin” and a small cadre of like-minded individuals, there is evidence in the form of a note between Thomas Holcroft and Godwin, that they had a copy of the original unedited manuscript and preface before they were published (Aldridge 134-135). This note, a number of editorial corrections between editions, and several short notes in Godwin’s record of “literary activities” imply that he had not only followed the details of the publication, but that he had “Call[ed] on Paine’,” dined with him once on the fourth of November “at a famous meeting of the Revolution Society”, and received responses

from Paine via post all before his dinner on the thirteenth (136). Aldridge himself is skeptical that Godwin “was ever involved with *The Rights of Man*” even if he was involved with *Common Sense* (136), but concedes that it is possible “that the ‘ears and eyes’ of government agents had caused them to exercise extreme caution in its distribution” (135), leaving it ambiguous whether Godwin helped contribute to Paine’s success. The fear of persecution might explain the redaction of “belonging to a committee to oversee *The Rights of Man*” from Godwin’s notes (134), which might also be true if Paine had also had a hand in helping Godwin with his own book, *Political Justice*.

The opposing presentations of the monarchy supported by Paine, Wollstonecraft, and Godwin as a cannibalistic parent (Baldick 21), and Burke’s portrayal of it as a wounded parent under attack by his own children (17) both originate in the image of the “‘body politic’,” in which the state is personified as a being wherein the monarch stands as the symbol for the “integral and sacred whole” and everyone under his rule is understood to be a part of him (14). This concept draws inspiration from 1 Corinthians 12, in which the body is described as “not one member, but many” that are mutually dependent on each other with God and the Holy Spirit uniting men in “the Body of Christ” or the church (1 Cor. 12: 14, 27). In the introduction to *Leviathan*, Hobbes draws from this imagery to elaborate on the political organization of the “STATE... which is but an artificial man... in which, the *sovereignty* is an artificial *soul*... the *magistrates*, and other *officers* of judicature and execution, artificial *joints*” etc. which must function as though they were one body for the greater health of the whole (Hobbes 7). Within this body, all members of the political machinery (including those that only benefit from the general security of the

state) submit their will to the “artificial *soul*” (7) in the same way that the body follows the directions of the brain.

Hobbes believed that the competing interests of men would naturally tear the fabric of society apart in a perpetual war (1.13.3-4), so the viability of this organizational system depended on the strength of a key figure to bend all other parts to his will, as the “political discord... of dismembered and contending organs” (Baldick 14) or the death of this “artificial man” would mean “*civil war*,” riots, and the suffering of all men in the commonwealth (Hobbes 7). To prevent this suffering, “the multitude so united in [the sovereign]... hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is enabled to conform the wills of them all” to direct them to act against their private interests for the good of the whole (2.18.13). Hobbes called the agreement or acquiescence to this arrangement the social contract.

This image of an “*automaton*” given an “artificial life” and soul, framed like “the body natural” but “of greater stature and strength” (7) closely resembles the description Victor gives of his own resolution “to make the being of a gigantic stature... about eight feet in height, and proportionably large” (Shelley 35-36). Victor’s construction of the creature, gathering its parts from a variety of places (Shelley 36), also resembles the embodiment of the masses into one body. Just like the body politic is made up of many people united under a single sovereign, the pieces of many individuals are formed into the creature, yet it has one identity. The creature, in this light, is the physical embodiment of the social contract, and the will of the monarch being exercised over a nation. Hobbes’ belief that the social contract was forged to escape a condition of “war of every one against every one,” where every man had a right to anything he could forcibly keep, also

fits nicely into the *Frankenstein* storyline (Hobbes 1.14.4). As the creature admits, when he was first created he did not think twice about commandeering the “shepherd’s breakfast” or hut while he wandered, but naturally assumed he had a right to it (Shelley 83). This action could be interpreted as a confirmation of Hobbes’ view of mankind’s natural self. The creature has essentially been born into this natural state, with the right “to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature;” unable to trust anyone around him, yet strong enough to take anything he needs by force (Hobbes 1.14.1) unless he is confronted by a coalition of villagers (Shelley 83). His ability to overpower and take command of Victor (77) is also in keeping with a Hobbesian outlook on life and politics whereby one must have a “visible power to keep them in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants” (Hobbes 2.17.1). The monster convinces him first to consent to making a mate (Shelley 122) and then follows, confronts, and threatens Victor when he breaks his oath (139-140).

From this perspective, the creature obviously typifies the monarch of Hobbes’ vision, but the monster’s more obvious acts of rebellion are more frequently interpreted as a depiction of the French or English revolutionaries, whether examined from the viewpoint of Burke or Paine; this outlook results in an alternative reading that is either less or more sympathetic to the creature. For example, if the creature is read as acting like the English revolutionaries, then Hobbes’ interpretation of his actions would be that they are unjustifiable. The monster’s murder of William and framing of Justine for the crime are clearly vindictive acts (117-118); they serve no constructive purpose except to upset Victor and derail the justice system of Geneva (64-65). If Victor *can* be rightly said to be the head of the creature, as he “[attains the] sovereign power...as when a man maketh his

children” (Hobbes 2.17.15) and “could claim the gratitude of his child [more] completely” than a normal father (Shelley 36), then this rebellion would be to the creature’s own detriment, just as any man who rebelled against the commonwealth could be seen to rebel against his own security (Hobbes 2.18.1). Furthermore, the creature might have appealed to Victor’s hubris, or his rationality to get what he hopes for, if the monster had not already “kindled anew in [Victor] the anger that had died away while he narrated his peaceful life” (Shelley 119). Had the monster subjected himself to Victor in the proper spirit of a subject to a king or feudal lord, and shown Victor thankfulness and “gratitude towards [him] for one benefit” (120) then Victor might have felt obligated to provide for the creature. The social contract provides peace because all of the subjects defer to their king, who has the power to enforce retribution if they harm each other (Hobbes 2.17.13). If the creature had not harmed anyone, he might have expected Victor to protect him from other men and give him a mate, but all he can expect afterwards is retribution. The monster’s revenge here is more like the uncontrolled and undirected rage of the mob than the punishment of a king, and thus takes on the monstrous characteristics that Burke saw in the “chaotic and confused nature of revolutionary events” (Baldick 18). Burke’s opinion of the revolutionary attacks on the aristocracy are similarly borne-out here, as Victor and his younger brother are part of the ruling class of Geneva by virtue of their father’s position (Shelley 117). On the other hand, the strength and cleverness that Victor endows his creature with parody the natural talents of leadership that Burke imagines in the aristocracy; portrayed as such, the creature is only stepping into his rightful place of command.

Paine's vision of the aristocracy could also be seen embodied in the nature of the monster. Paine's opinion of human beings, as outlined in *Common Sense*, is that all human beings have "innate moral sensibilities" (Fruchtman 20-21) "rooted in a person's affective nature [that are] the guardians of God's image in the human heart" (24). These feelings of conscience and the love for fellow man were, according to Paine, the very reason that man sought out social interaction. These feelings are a gift from God, without which, "the social compact would dissolve, and justice be extirpated from the earth, or have only a casual existence" (24). Although the creature has innate reasoning and a desire for human sympathy (Shelley 107), he comes to recognize that "the human senses are insurmountable barriers" to establishing himself in *human* society (119). Instead, he feels compelled to remove himself to the farthest reaches of the world with a being of like composition (120). The creature's reasoning (which approaches God-given feelings) and his inhumanity can be reconciled if his first attempts to embody these "innate moral sensibilities" (Fruchtman 20-21) are acts of imitation based on what he sees of the De Laceys (Shelley 88-89) and he never truly possesses them. From Paine's perspective this impersonation would be a mere shadow of real conscience because Victor, not God, created the creature and could not grant him a gift that only God can bestow. A faltering imitation explains the monster's rapidly degenerating capacity to display moral traits –if the creature ever really had a conscience and his tale is not a complete fabrication to manipulate Victor; this would make the creature resemble the aristocracy even more. Paine argues that "kings and nobles...had denied the people's natural equality... [which was] God's original creation" and "had seized power, stolen it, to enforce their

sovereignty” (Fruchtman 71) so that they “lived cooperatively with no one” (25). In fact, Paine wrote in *Rights of Man* that he considered the monarchy so “inhuman” that

If man dared to describe human nature on the basis of “Kings, courts, and cabinets,” he would never have a portrait of genuine humanity [...] only a portrait of a creature “that reflection would shudder at and humanity disown. . . . Man, naturally as he is, with all his faults, is not up to the character... [”] (36)

The monster embodies the inhuman character of the monarchy that Paine envisioned as he learns not just to perpetrate, but enjoy violent acts that torment Victor, but that these statements *can only be true* of the creature. Paine states that, “Every child born into the world must be considered as deriving its existence from God. The world is as new to him as it was to the first man that existed, and his natural right in it is of the same kind” (Paine *RM* 66). The creature’s unnatural creation is the only way that his God-given conscience could literally be explained out of existence. Furthermore, this creature *knows from experience* that it is not equal to human beings, that it is not part of “God’s original creation,” and that it is very capable of forcing others to do its will by intimidation, violence, or plotting (Fruchtman 71). In this way, the monster again stands for the politically elite and corrupt.

Finally, the alternative ‘sympathetic’ reading of the creature (where he stands for the French revolutionaries again) is based on the thinking of Wollstonecraft and Paine. In this interpretation, the creature’s actions have to be viewed specifically through the lens of the creature’s abandonment by Victor (Shelley 40). When Victor flees the sight of his creation, he is left to be self-sufficient, and immediately fends for himself, although he is in effect a newborn (80); were it not for his superior constitution (96), he would probably have frozen or starved to death immediately. This abandonment and impoverishment

allies the creature closely to the French Revolutionaries, as the “widening gulf between court luxury and popular starvation [had] made French life inhospitable” for the poor who would eventually rebel (Baldick 21). In this context Victor, the literal aristocrat and figurative monarch for reasons shown above, who should hold himself responsible for his creature, displays a negligence and callousness to his creature that evokes the aristocracy’s treatment of the poor in France at the time of the Revolution. Thus, the creature is as justified in rebellion as the French people were (in Wollstonecraft and Paine’s eyes), and is not naturally evil, but can be considered “rendered ferocious by misery” (Baldick 22).

Even according to the reading where Victor constitutes an abusive ruling class, Wollstonecraft would not excuse the creature completely, as he clearly stands for “one of the elements of the Parisian crowd [that] deserve[s] to be regarded as monstrous” because of the atrocities it commits (Baldick 22). Paine’s justification salvages the creature’s motivations somewhat, as he argues that, just as generations of monarchs had “lulled [everyone else] into the unwitting slumber of slavery... [and] deadened their natural abilities to think and feel” (Fruchtman 19), they unnaturally “deprived their victims of the freedom to choose and destroyed or badly compromised their sense of self,” leaving them with “a numbing effect on their minds and hearts” (22). As a result, the monarchy’s victimized subjects become incapable of using their innate goodness and compassion; rather than being driven by a healthy yearning for freedom, they suffer abuse until they are forced to respond out of desperation. When they finally reach this point, they cannot be expected to act with self-restraint or good judgment; the warped, unreasoning beings they become must necessarily respond in a manner that is inhuman. A parallel exists in

the events that shape the creature's view of humanity: he is attacked without understanding why (Shelley 83), rejected by the family he admires and looks after (110), shot for having saved a young woman from drowning (115), and threatened by his last hope –an “unprejudiced” child (116). Thus abandoned by his creator and categorically denied by humanity, all of whom constitute a ‘ruling class’ of those better off than himself, the creature is slowly stripped of what humanity he had attempted to imitate and is reduced to moral depravity, and the abuse of his strength, as he “like the arch fiend... finding [himself] unsympathized with, [wishes] to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction, and then... to [enjoy] the ruin” (111).

The creature's self-identification is the deciding factor for giving favour to the Hobbesian reading. The creature's story as he reveals it to Victor is untrustworthy, with the exception of the death of William and the trial of Justine, which can only be taken as proof of his ferocity, and cast doubt on the rest of his tale. That being said, there is no other way the monster could have learned the Miltonic account of Satan and, taking Victor at his word, this literary work is central to the creature's struggle to come to terms with his own identity (96). The creature identifies with two characters from this story, observing that “like Adam, [he] was... united by no link to any other being in existence;” and like Lucifer, the first among the fallen angels whose “bitter gall of envy” the creature relates to (105). Both of these figures sin against their creator and are punished, cut off from God and cast out of Eden or into Hell. Reducing the choice that the creature makes to a moral binary is therefore reductionist. Although the creature compares his ugliness to the form God gave man, limiting the difference between Adam and Lucifer to an aesthetic one is also over-simplified (105). Satan is described in *Paradise Lost* as

“Clothed with transcendent brightness” and, although he is changed, he is not described as hideous or even less than Adam; moreover, he was more beautiful than Adam until he disobeyed (Milton 17). The creature further envies Satan’s position as much as Adam’s because Satan has “fellow Devils” (Shelley 105). These complicate the creature’s choice between role-models, but he most clearly relates to Satan’s feelings of ill-will (105).

Given the political overtones of the novel, the most appropriate distinction between the two figures is their significance as political archetypes. The creature is undeniably the Adam of his race, and he even seeks to have his own Eve made to live in the gardens of the new world (120). This choice would cement his alliance with the Adam archetype, which represents the origin story of human rights described by Paine. Adam, the creation which God made in his own image and impressed with “unextinguishable feelings’ to do good... [to preserve His] image” (Fruchtman 24), is the progenitor, the basis, and fundamental precedent for all rights. He symbolizes the personal authority of the individual to use reason to live amicably under his own governorship. This sounds like what the creature *claims* to be his sole desire, to form sympathetic bonds with other creatures so that he can live without fearing “the barbarity of man” (Shelley 84). It might have been possible for the creature to make a case for these rights if he had approached Victor in the spirit, or even guise of Adam. However, Victor did not share God’s wisdom in imparting his creature with a moral code, and in his ambition to create “A new species [that] would bless [him] as its creator and source” had the hubris to create something greater than himself (36). The creature is therefore incapable of modelling himself after Adam’s behaviour and becomes monstrous, echoing Paine’s view that creating

government was an error because the type of men willing to seize power were naturally the ones who would become tyrannical rulers (Fruchtman 23).

Ultimately, the creature's self-identification with Lucifer validates a Hobbesian reading of the novel. Not to say that a Hobbesian political paradigm is in itself immoral, but that Lucifer's ambition makes him the preferable archetype (as the monster's creator, Victor correspondingly comes close to a god-figure). There are several similarities that predetermine the creature's position in the Hobbesian and Miltonic paradigms. First, the creature, like the monarch in the commonwealth, is denied the ability to forfeit his power because he is the *only* person who is not "party to the covenant" (Hobbes 2.18.4). He *alone* remains in the "condition of war of every one against every one" (1.14.4). The creature, forced by his unnatural creation to live on the outskirts of a society which is already engaged in a political covenant, exists in the same state as a monarchic figure in Hobbesian political philosophy, particularly as his behaviour grows more authoritative over Victor. In this state he is for all intents and purposes in a war against all of mankind, not by choice, but by the act of Victor joining his parts together. This is also similar to Satan's expulsion from Heaven.

Second, his identification with Satan finally clarifies the position he takes against Frankenstein (Shelley 119). Hobbes' belief that all men are entitled (in the pre-social contract state) to whatever they can take and hold by force (Hobbes 1.13.3) is best represented by Satan, who felt entitled to God's place and tried to take it forcefully by waging "impious war in Heav'n" (Milton 14). The relationship to the Miltonic paradigm clarifies the monster's chosen course in the novel, as he uses murder (Shelley 117) and shows of force (77) to appropriate the things he desires, or to intimidate his creator. His

inclination to take and hold what he wants by force, while recognizing that he is in opposition to a pre-existing social contract places him in the same politicized role as Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*. The creature claims that Victor *owes* him a duty because Victor created him (77) similar to the way that Lucifer claims he and the other angels “held their places by right eternal,” and that God’s appointment of Christ over Satan was “an act of effrontery” (Rebhorn 83). Both of these arguments presume that the subject has inherent rights in a monarchic system that are not merely permitted by the ruler. This is part of Satan’s deception which he uses to seduce other angels; he deliberately perverts the truth “of God’s goodness and justice” (81) by depicting “Him [as] a tyrant who has usurped unwarranted authority” (83). In *Paradise Lost* Lucifer is portrayed “play[ing] the very role of servile flatterer he detests in order to advance himself at the divine court” and he continues to garner support among his supporters by flattering them with “titles of nobility” after they are ejected from Heaven (83), the creature imitates this behaviour when he addresses Victor at their first meeting, calling him “my creator... my natural lord and king” –while at the same time calling himself “the fallen angel” (Shelley 77). Like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, the creature uses flattery and deception wherever possible, and whenever that wavers or fails to persuade he immediately resorts to threats or acts of violence (119). In this way the creature models himself directly after Lucifer, adopting the conspicuous abuse of political terms, as Satan uses “metaphors [for political organization] from our fallen language” to misrepresent the ineffable glory of God and “perverts the true nature of things on a basic linguistic level” (Rebhorn 92); the creature falsely plays to Victor’s ego and flatters him with titles (Shelley 77), trying to inspire Victor to divine benevolence, but also impresses upon Victor that he is not in a position

of strength –revealing that he either does not understand, or does not respect the titles and the offices they signify.

## Chapter Three

### To Pursue History to Her Hiding Places

*Frankenstein* is a novel born from a mind particularly indebted to political thought; as a result, Shelley's work cannot be completely and thoroughly read unless all aspects of the story are equally submitted to the scrutiny of a political lens. In the following chapter imagery, tropes, and phrases related to the most important locations in the novel, Ingolstadt, Geneva, and Mont Blanc, are investigated to establish the setting's historical and political importance to European history. These locations are reviewed to establish how they relate to Shelley biographically, to revolutionary history, and figure into a Hobbesian reading. While Randel has examined what these places mean to Shelley as they relate to revolutionary political thought, this chapter also looks at how their significance changes between Hobbes and Shelley, and how they stay the same.

Ingolstadt and Geneva have special relevance to the story as the sites of Victor's education and his creature's construction. They also have historical importance politically as sources of radical and revolutionary thinking, which Shelley's contemporaries felt as an anxiety towards subversive thinking from the continent, and Hobbes' contemporaries conceived in religious terms as encroachments by the Presbytery and papacy. Mont Blanc is also important, because although little physical action takes place there it is the seat of dialogue between Victor and his creation. It is also where the creature's character develops the most, and the first place readers hold the differing viewpoints of the creature and Victor in mind at once while coming to terms with the idea that the creature is the antithesis of what was expected. Through these locations the following chapter outlines

some of the items of historical and geopolitical relevance that illuminate the nuances of this reading.

The first and most politically relevant location from a revolutionary standpoint is Ingolstadt, the site of Victor's education and the creature's construction, but as Fred V. Randel explains, in Shelley's time it was better known for being central to a popular conspiracy theory. Augustin de Barruel's *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (1799) is one of the undisputed source texts for *Frankenstein*, which we know both Shelleys read six months after Mary Shelley conceived *Frankenstein* (Randel 466) (Butler lvix). Percy Bysshe Shelley's interest in this conspiracy is often attributed to Barruel's *Memoirs*, which points to Ingolstadt as a fount of seditious thought, a base of operations from which secret societies of "Enlightenment intellectuals" were extending their influence to overthrow traditional governments across Europe (Butler 36, 19). The creature's origin in Ingolstadt, followed by the havoc wreaked on its way to Geneva, mirrors the spread of radical propaganda as it was envisioned in the popular imagination (19). Randel points out that the plot of *Frankenstein* while Victor resides at Ingolstadt borrows from Barruel's allegations against Adam Weishaupt, the "found[er of] a secret society called the 'Illuminees' at Ingolstadt on 1 May 1776" (466). Here Waushaupt supposedly "led a double life at the University of Ingolstadt: distinguishing himself in respectable academic pursuits while [he] secretly, in the privacy of his rooms... recruited disciples... infiltrated the Freemasons, penetrated France" and set about disseminating the radical ideas that sustained the Jacobins (467). Barruel's description of these events as "'form[ing] a monstrous digest'... of subversive thinking" is equated to the way Victor gathers his materials together (466-7).

Shelley's account of Victor raiding "the unhallowed damp of the grave... charnel houses... [the] dissecting room and the slaughter house" (Shelley 36-7) also unites Victor, in the minds of her readers, to Burke's description of the philosophes "as sorcerers, alchemists, and fanatical chemists... [robbing graves] to provide materials for arms... [and willing to] sacrifice the whole human race to the slightest of their experiments" (Baldick 18-19). In the same way Victor shows his willingness to "torture the living animal to animate the lifeless clay" (Shelley 36). While such imagery is employed by Burke to describe a force bent solely on destruction –grinding the physical remnants of art and history down to fuel an effort to destroy the remaining vestige of aristocracy (Baldick 19) –Shelley uses this imagery to her own ends. Victor robs graves, just as Burke accuses the philosophes –but by providing Victor's perspective, Shelley repurposes the imagery to explain that his ends are not destructive. In his opinion, Victor's goal is to create *new* life, "and pour a torrent of light into our dark world" (Shelley 36). This shift of focus upholds the complexity of the text. Shelley clearly does not condone Victor's reckless prying into the secrets of life and death, as she makes clear through his "moralizing" after the fact (37-38); but she places Burke's images in a context that shows that from the opposing perspective of the revolutionaries the underlying intent is creative in nature, rather than malicious for its own sake.

The trope of scientists being radically subversive does not originate in Burke's account of the French; it is part of a tradition of accusatory writing levelled at threats to the British crown that goes back to the foundation of chemical and alchemical sciences. Shelley's description of Victor trying to "animate the lifeless clay" (36), for example, is a perversion of the Bible's account of God forming Adam out of clay, but Victor's

particular aptitude in the field of chemistry (32) marks him as one of Burke's "fanatical chemists" (Baldick 18). This image can be traced at least as far back as 1617, when John Hales preached against men who would "exerc[ise] their ingenuity on obscurer passages of the Scriptures" in attempts to confuse or manipulate the faithful for personal gain (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 107). Hales' sermon depicted these men, in a phrase eerily prophetic of Shelley's, as men that "deal with Scriptures as Chemickes deale with naturall bodies, torturing them to extract that out of them which God and nature never put in them" (107). Victor's attempt to thus gain authority over life and death by "pursu[ing] nature to her hiding places" is as threatening an act to heavenly authority (trespassing on God's dominion), as it is to earthly authority by building an inhuman army (Shelley 36).

Victor's actions are the physical equivalent of the doctrinal threat Hales addresses, wherein men might delve into the "impenetrable mysteries" of the Gospel (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 106) and fabricate explanations, thereby claiming "a distinction between fundamentals and accessories of faith" as the Presbyterians did, or "the authority to establish new dogma" like the Papacy (105). Both of these outcomes threaten a religious community because they spur divisions. When lines are drawn on issues people believe to be essential to the well-being of their souls, the perceived stakes inspire fervent reactions. When believers fall on opposite sides of said lines, the clash of opinion has been tantamount to a civil war in the past, and has often escalated into literal bloodshed. Hales and Hobbes believed that the church needs unification based solely on the belief "Jesus Christ is the Son of God," a 'civil war' of this kind was not only unwanted for its own sake, but a redundancy (112). This was particularly true for Hobbes, who preferred the organization of the Anglican Church, but "insist[ed] that all churches must more or

less openly profess their subjectivism” (Martel 110) and that the ruler of the nation should be “the rightful determinant of liturgy and doctrine” (6). The effect of causing disunity in a church is to disquiet the minds of the superstitious and easily-led. Once these church members see their elders and leaders become embittered, their faith is either polarized, which causes more disharmony in taking sides, or they search for greater assurances of their spiritual well-being among more organized and self-assured congregations. From the point of view of an Anglican fearful of Catholic and Presbyterian influences, such divisions in the state-centric Anglican Church would, in Hobbes’ or Hales’ reasoning, create an opening for a larger political force to infiltrate with dogma and superstition for political gain.

Such a suspicion would in part explain why Hobbes’ “scorn for Presbyterian preachers... was extreme and outspoken” (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 96). They pretended to the same powers as the Roman Catholic clergy: to excommunicate the princes of Christian states, and assume political authority over the state by asserting theocratic authority over its subjects (Hobbes 4.44.17). The Presbytery “in the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth” had the further potential to rally support from amongst the working classes (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 92). As Hobbes shows in *Behemoth*, these ministers preached a message that humored sinful behaviour and allowed men to accrue wealth by it, as long as they would duly fill the church’s purse (92). Hobbes accuses these preachers of misconduct, stating that they “applied themselves wholly to the winning of the people to a liking of their doctrines and... persons... to the advancement of the Presbyterian ministers” rather than caring for their parishioners’ spiritual well-being (92).

Hobbes' disdain for the Roman Catholic Church is even greater than for the Presbyterians, as evidenced in *Leviathan*, where he addresses the ways that the Papacy exploits the beliefs of Christians to undermine the power of monarchs. Hobbes asks "to whose benefit it conduceth" that a foreign power can decide whether princes are legitimate heirs to their thrones, have authority to rule under God, or can tell subjects that they no longer have to obey their head of state (Hobbes, 1.12.32)? He acknowledges that these powers over a state make the Pope a dangerous enemy to the monarchic system of law, but it is the means by which the power is wrested from the hands of sovereigns that Hobbes takes issue with. When Hobbes pronounces the Roman Catholic Church to be the "Kingdome of Darknesse" (4.47.21), he does so in the context of a chapter dedicated to "The confusion [caused by] more or less deliberate polic[ies] by corrupt political and religious leaders in order to mislead citizens into subservience" (Martel 109). The power of the "*papacy*" exists, outside of Rome, only "in the fancies of ignorant people...in the fear that seduced people stand in, of their excommunication; upon hearing of false miracles, false traditions, and false interpretations of the Scripture" (Hobbes 4.47.33).

A clear example of this confusion between religious and political authority in *Frankenstein* is borne out after the trial scene of Justine Moritz in Geneva, when she admits "I did confess; but I confessed a lie...that I might obtain absolution" (Shelley 66). At the commencement of her trial, Justine's confidence in her own innocence is enough that she says "if their testimony shall not outweigh my supposed guilt, I must be condemned, although *I would pledge my salvation on my innocence*" [emphasis mine] (63). After her trial this pledge is tested by her confessor, who "threaten[s] excommunication and hell fire" until she is bullied into confessing to William's murder

(66). Excommunication is only one threat, Hobbes identifies, that the Catholic and Presbyterian (Hobbes 4.47.4) churches use to manipulate the fearful and garner power to themselves. Hobbes claims that the belief the soul itself will not die with the body is part of what he called the “Error of *Separated Essences*” –a metaphysical notion where “representational forms...take on a[n imaginary] life of their own and supersede what they purportedly represent” (Martel 121). As Hobbes’ materialism explains, if the soul will die as Hobbes says, then it cannot be in danger of excommunication, and even less in danger of perdition’s fire, as he asks “how an incorporeal substance can be capable of pain, and tormented in... hell or purgatory” (Hobbes 4.46.20). Fear for the well-being of the soul after death, he argues, is an error that originated with the Pharisees when they mingled Jewish law with “the vain philosophy and theology of the Grecians” (4.46.12), and was perpetuated in “Universities, and thence into the Church... from Aristotle” (4.46.14). This doctrine has been preserved by the Church for the reason that becomes obvious: by claiming the power to threaten an intangible and immortal soul, the Church maintains its control over the laity.

Shelley’s example illustrates the Hobbesian problem very clearly: Justine is frightened enough by the threat of a mere *man*, that she ignores both the truth of her God-given senses, and the conscience that God put in her to the point she “[begins] to think that [she is] the monster that he [says she is]” (Shelley 66). In this way Justine has confused the signifier (as the confessor is only an earthly representation) with the source of his authority –*omniscient, almighty* God –as though He is unaware of her innocence or powerless to protect her. Justine figuratively bows to a messenger at the expense of offending the king, when she should “hazard [her] soul upon [her] own judgment, rather

than that of any other man that is unconcerned in [her] damnation” (Hobbes 4.46.37). The confusion of authority she feels when threatened with excommunication is only one of the articles of Catholic faith that Hobbes labels as “superstition” in book four of *Leviathan*, “The Kingdom of Darkness.” Just as Shelley’s depiction of Victor as a chemist and vivisectionist (Shelley 32, 36) bears similarity to Burke’s portrayal of the French Revolutionaries (Baldick 18) and goes back to Hales (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 107), similarities between Victor and Hobbes’ depiction of the clergy carry the weight of anti-Catholic rhetoric that can be traced back hundreds of years.

First among Hobbes’ grievances with Catholic dogma is the perpetuity of pagan occultism in their teachings. A parallel is found in the description of how taken Victor is at a young age with the works of “[Cornelius Agrippa], and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus” claiming to be their “disciple” (Shelley 23). Victor identifies this pervasive occultism as one of the first influences that sets him on the path to damnation, and his interests in the “philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life” shape the course of his studies as an adult (22-23). These fantasies, like the “raising of ghosts or devils” (24), evoke Hobbes’ estimation of the materials that “*ecclesiastics*” use to ensnare the minds of young men, “certain charms compounded of metaphysics, and miracles... and abused scripture” which the clergy use to make them “natural fools” (Hobbes 4.47.27).

Alchemical subjects distract Victor from the “rational theory of chemistry” (Shelley 23), and tempt him to abandon “realities of little worth” (30). Shelley’s version of Hobbesian “metaphysics, and miracles” (Hobbes 4.47.27) stunts the development of Victor’s reason by encouraging his devotion to the inane. Nothing, in Hobbes’ mind, can come of believing these superstitions except allowing one’s mind to become pliant and domitable.

In particular, Shelley's reference to the "raising of ghosts" (Shelley 24) proceeds from the Roman Church, which introduced "all the histories of apparitions, and ghosts... to make good [its] doctrines of hell" (Hobbes 4.46.41). Hobbes claims that the papacy either invented or entertained these fantasies to give force to their claim of performing exorcisms so that people will believe the priesthood has supernatural powers (4.47.15).

The second issue is Victor's study of Latin, the language of priests (Shelley 25). Even though Victor begins learning Latin in Geneva, this instruction is part of a larger indictment against universities, which first held up the Catholic Church in opposition to the sovereigns of nations (Hobbes 2.30.14) and taught Latin because it was the language of the Roman law and faith (4.46.13), even though it is now only "the *ghost* of the old *Roman language*" (4.47.22). Hobbes calls universities "the operatories of the *clergy*," and likens their work to the "enchantment[s]" of fairies (4.47.27). Hobbes shows obvious disdain for the teachings of these universities, as he says in *Behemoth* that "[what the pupils learn] amounts to no more than an imperfect knowledge of Greek and Latin" (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 93) and that qualities of the language itself disguise falsehood, deliver false truths, and obstruct men from finding real truth (Hobbes 4.46.40). This theme of universities acting as sources of inappropriate or subversive learning (as shown above in the case of Adam Weishaupt) is made more explicit in the 1831 edition of Shelley's novel. Marilyn Butler observes that Victor's educators are rewritten here as the "first identifiable villains" and that the reputation of the University of Ingolstadt is impugned as a "notoriously unorthodox" place where Victor is deliberately taught "bad knowledge" (Butler 198). Professor Waldman undergoes a notable change between editions. Where in the 1818 text he credits ancient philosophers and alchemists as having

done legwork for modern science, the 1831 text shows he was “indeed teaching arcane magic under the name of natural science” (199). These changes, added to Butler’s observation that Victor “is given an explicitly religious consciousness,” distance the novel from the scientific as it takes more cues from the arcane (199). The cumulative result of these changes is that the recklessness of the pupil carries less of a burden of guilt, and the monstrous outcome of his experiments is attributed to the malfeasance of a faculty indulging superstition rather than science. As Martel notes, according to Hobbes all Western thought founded in Greek philosophy (as taught in universities) is part of the broad subject he called “demonology,” because the truth cannot be divulged from erroneous principles based on misconceptions of the natural world (Martel 109). The similarities between the universities and the clergy reinforce the suspicions of both. Just as people were suspicious of what was taught in universities, the clergy was suspected of preaching sedition or rebellion, and the cloistered nature of both institutions, little of which was publicly understood, made them mysterious (Davison 127).

Third, Victor’s choice to live in monastic study and his status as an unmarried man likens him to a Catholic priest or monk (Shelley 28). Victor learns secrecy and avoidant behaviour when his father disapproves of authors that interest him (23), and his small family circle accustoms him to solitude and leaves him wary of new people (28). He displays little interest in whether society stands or crumbles, but his infatuation with the idea of being the progenitor of a new race would suggest a greater interest in the latter (36). Victor’s lack of investment in society makes his role in it dubious at best and his ambition (whether he acknowledges it or not) puts him at cross-purpose with the rest of humankind. The portrayal of figures like monks and priests in the popular gothic

literature of Shelley's time as subversive and sexually repressed is exemplified in the underlying theme of taboo sexuality in the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein* (Davison 134). This unconventional sexuality is established in the absence of sexual impetus on Victor's part, who allows his mother to arrange his marriage (Shelley 26), remains at Ingolstadt when his studies are completed instead of returning to marry Elizabeth (33), and whose father sees nothing unusual in Victor's choice to delay his marriage for yet another two years (126). Incest is also implied to have ill-effects on the health of Victor's family – evidenced by Victor's father and brother, and explicit in Victor's betrothal to a close blood relation (Butler 200). Butler notes that these incestuous implications are lessened in the changes made to the 1831 text, as Elizabeth's blood relationship is removed, and Victor's father and brother are markedly healthier (200).

The possibility of perverse sexuality among the priesthood is not a matter of interest to Hobbes per se; however, in his comparison between the clergy and fairies he notes that even though fairies –like priests– do not get married, *some* of them (“incubi”) still engage in sexual intercourse (Hobbes 4.47.30). The allegation that priests also engage in illicit sex is only implied by the framework of Hobbes' analogy, but the intimation that some are incubi-like colours the entire institution. Conversely, Hobbes' primary interest is in the asexuality of the clergy and its justification at an institutional level. Hobbes states in *Leviathan* that the sexless nature of priests stems from a demonological reading of the scriptures by the papacy, who claim the kingdom of God exists *in our time*, which Hobbes says has not been possible since Saul, and will not be on Earth again until the return of Christ (4.44.4). In this reading, the Catholic Church claims to be the present authority, “that is to say, sole heirs of the kingdom of God in this world” and have to be

refused the covenant of marriage because Christ said: “at the coming of [His] kingdom the children of God *shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage*” (4.46.34). The clergy’s power hinges on the public accepting their interpretation (or misreading) of unclear scripture, so wherever it is joined or supported by passages that are clearly worded, these become stipulations to their power. Victor’s dedication to natural philosophy affects him in a similar way; solitude is necessary to perfect his craft at first, but it drives him into figurative, melancholic (Shelley 69) and finally literal isolation (126-127), so that the initial necessity of solitude becomes an irretractable commitment.

The death of Elizabeth at Geneva and resulting pursuit of the monster also recalls to readers the reason that Christian preachers were advised not to marry. Hobbes explains that this custom was a matter of practicality rather than purity, because early Christian preachers were often “forced to fly from one country to another” and “the care of wife and children” put them all at risk (Hobbes 4.46.34). Had Elizabeth survived, Victor would either have been bound to Geneva or have had to take her with him, and given the way the monster travels this would have made Victor’s pursuit impossible (Shelley 173). In this way Victor’s resemblance to the celibate clergy is essential to the plot of the novel, giving him motivation (revenge rather than devotion) and ability. Victor’s nomadic existence also makes him more priest-like; he wanders from town to town alone, travels the wilderness of Russia, and is led by faith like the Jews in Exodus (172-173). As Victor says to Walton:

a spirit of good followed and directed my steps, and, when I most murmured, would suddenly extricate me from seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Sometimes, when nature, overcome by hunger, sunk under the exhaustion, a repast was prepared for me in the desert, that restored and inspirited me. The fare

was indeed coarse ... but I may not doubt that it was set there by the spirits that I had invoked to aid me (173).

While the predominant religious overtones of the 1831 edition are distant from Victor's character in the 1818 text (Butler 199), Victor's *lack* of religious observance and superstition actually serves to make him *more* priest-like in a Hobbesian reading. His indifference to solitude and darkness, comfort in churchyards and respectful observance of decay are vigil-like (during his studies), making him appear to be someone accustomed with last rites and funerary procedure (Shelley 33). Hobbes says that superstitions regarding the dead proceed from the belief that the soul is immortal and therefore can be subjected to eternal suffering, and that the duties of priests are inventions that exploit these superstitions (Hobbes 4.44.16). Such is the power of exorcism already discussed. Victor's admission that he does not share in any of these superstitions makes him capable of flaunting them without fear of the consequences; as a result, he walks in churchyards (Shelley 33) visits "charnel houses," and sits vigils with the dead, with all the confidence of a man of God that believes in both the matter of superstitions and the remedy he has against them (34). The belief that souls are "walking abroad, especially in places consecrated, solitary, or dark" is enough to keep the truly superstitious clear of them, and gives the priesthood the 'powers' to consecrate the ground, and to exorcise, conjure, or invoke the deceased, because they believe they can, and there is no real spirit there to demonstrate they cannot (Hobbes 4.44.16). Superstition creates a fearful thing in the priest's mind, but an equal measure of faith dismisses it from thence, vanquishing the 'reality' of it. To the average person who believes, a man that flouts such a persuasive superstition has all the outward appearance of one that *they* believe has the power to

overcome it. Victor's desensitization to religion effectively makes him appear more religious (4.46.18).

Randel also links the historical relevance of Geneva to revolutionary thought and most of the novel's violence to politically significant events there. Although the link between Victor and Ingolstadt points to the university town as the main source of seditious thinking, it cannot be overlooked that Victor also shares the birthplace of the "deeply flawed but uniquely prophetic...intellectual father of the French Revolution," Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Randel 469). If locating Victor's higher education in Ingolstadt is to draw a parallel between Victor and Weishaupt in his university days, his birth and early education in Geneva are a clear link to Rousseau, "whose 'writings mainly contributed to mature' the revolution of France as well as Geneva" (471).

Among the revolutionary events that took place in Geneva that Shelley draws on in her novel, the death of William is the most geographically significant, as his murder at Plainpalais "establishes an equation between the monster's murders and revolutionary violence" (471). Plainpalais was the site of Geneva's greatest instance of revolutionary violence where, after "[a] Revolutionary Tribunal... without credible judicial proceedings or evidence of violation of law," four public officials, two former public officials (who held the same position as Alphonse Frankenstein) and five other persons were executed (470). The wrongful execution of Justine for William's death is attributed to the reaction to these executions, as less than two months after the eleven were killed, four men became "scapegoats" as "Geneva recoiled against radical excesses" (472). This backlash against the initial revolutionary proceedings also shares the sense of injustice that is felt for Justine, as the judges of the second tribunal were "implicat[ed]... in the crimes for

which they condemned the defendants” who participated in the first (472). The similarity continues, as Randel casts Elizabeth’s testimony and Victor’s silence at Justine’s trial as a representation of the “two thousand” women who tried to intervene on behalf of the accused at this tribunal, because “the experiment was too dangerous for men to engage in”; as in the novel, this attempt at swaying the judges was unsuccessful (473). Even though it would be enough to say that these events have always been attributed to the political radicalism of Rousseau (for which Victor inherits blame based on the parallel already drawn for him as the ‘father’ of the creature), Shelley reinforces Rousseau’s culpability for the violence of revolutionary actors by modelling the creature’s scheme after an episode from Rousseau’s life (474). Rousseau admitted that as a young man he stole a ribbon, allowing a young servant to bear the consequence, which he says “betrayed her into a life of misery and friendlessness” which Shelley imitates in the creature’s theft of the miniature from William’s corpse, and subsequently planting it on Justine, allowing her to take the punishment for his murder (474). The fact that the monster frames Justine and Victor remains silent at her trial shows them both to be at fault, and also shows that Shelley holds Rousseau to be as much to blame for the actions of the revolutionaries he inspired as he was for this more personal story (474). Victor, modelled to an extent after Rousseau, inherits the association with revolutionary violence.

The culmination of all of these traits is that Victor, who would have himself considered more than the father of his abominations, becomes a gaunt, pale man “among the unhallowed damps of the grave” and in his “workshop of filthy creation” (Shelley 36). His employments increase his similarity to those Hobbes would condemn as “*ecclesiastics*” or “*ghostly fathers*” who “walk in [obscure doctrine]... monasteries... and

churchyards” and their fictional counterparts, the “Fairies and ghosts [that] inhabit darkness, solitudes and graves” (Hobbes 4.47.24). The aspects of Victor’s character that correspond to Hobbes’ anti-Catholic rhetoric function in a similar way to Burke’s anti-revolutionary rhetoric. Where Hobbes would approve of Victor’s materialism (which Burke would condemn) his methodology is overshadowed by the language and subject matter of the gothic form, which is steeped in the superstition and mysticism he despises in the Catholic Church. Victor’s potential –as a symbol for rational science to be corrupted and stand for institutionalized fear or superstition– is the greatest threat he poses to Hobbesian philosophy. Where a strong leadership under sovereignty is conducive to the peace progressive minds need to flourish, institutions like the Roman Catholic Church divide loyalties in the state, and exploit the weak minds of the masses, threatening to plunge a nation into civil war. The threat that Victor poses to Burke as a materialist *philosophe* is more or less the same, but instead of an individual corrupted at the institutionalized level, Burke sees individualism as the corrupting force. Victor’s ambition puts him at odds with the soul of nationhood, the romantic ideal of selfless devotion to king and history, as progressive individuals pose a threat to all benefits enshrined in the monarchic system. Yet, Shelley portrays Victor sympathetically, demonstrating to readers that their fears do not necessarily have to be demonized.

When Shelley re-introduces the creature on Mont Blanc this textual interplay, combining the imagery of conservative writers and the mentality of enlightenment thinkers, is reflected in the appearance of the creature. Victor “had selected [the creature’s] features to be beautiful,” but despite his intentions “these luxuriances only [form] a more horrid contrast” with Victor’s intentions (Shelley 39), and are even more at

odds with the creature's capacity for eloquence. This encounter allows Shelley's contemporaries to engage both sides of the political rhetoric, simultaneously acknowledging it as monstrous and sympathetic as Victor's confrontation with his double becomes more nuanced. Such a meeting of political ideas and tropes could be unsettling for a dogmatic reader of political thought. By the time Shelley stages the confrontation, her audience has already made assumptions about the nature of the monster; his intelligence, origins, and wanton destruction, but the creature's dialogue with Frankenstein subverts these assumptions. The creature's sympathetic demeanor, articulateness, and story of his own 'origins' after he left Victor at Ingolstadt are designed to shock audiences into a re-evaluation the creature.

The creature's origin narrative on Mont Blanc also showcases the creature's developmental background, which is a central element of "Enlightenment treatments of natural law" (Reese 49). The structural framework of the account plots the creature's progress "from pure unsorted sense perception to the formulation of ideas, and eventually to the attainment of literacy" in a way similar to the "Eighteenth century 'philosophical fictions'" that were used as extended metaphors for the advance of human society (49). Reese credits John Locke as the inspiration for the thematic movement from the senses to comprehension (49) whose work on the subject was a source of inspiration for Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "Mont Blanc," in which he struggles to reconcile Locke's theory of knowledge (that matter has an inherent quality which is separate from the qualities attributed to it in the human mind) (Kapstein 1047) and Godwin's theory of necessity, which maintains that all existence is merely "an indissoluble chain" of causality devoid of moral characteristics (1055). Both systems of thought are conformable to a materialist

world view and echo Hobbes' mechanical theory concerning human behaviour. Hobbes states:

The original of them all, is that which we call SENSE, for there is no conception in man's mind which hath not at first, totally or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense. The rest are derived from that original... The cause of sense, is the external body, or object, which presseth against the organ proper to each sense, either immediately... or mediately... which pressure, by the mediation of the nerves, and other strings, and membranes of the body, continued inwards to the brain and heart[.] (Hobbes 1.1.2, 4)

to show that all thoughts are delicate impressions on the mind that originate outside of the body, and that no thing which we can conceive of originates independently of sense. This belief that all conscious thought is reactionary is the principle statement of Hobbes' determinism and leads to Godwin's theory of necessity, which presupposes that "in the events of the material universe everything is subjected to necessity" (Godwin 158). This theory extends to the characters of men, which are only "the result of a long series of sense impressions, communicated to his mind and modifying it in a certain manner" (161). This theory, in Godwin's reasoning, abolishes the construct of free will, and reveals that we never act freely, as we are shaped entirely by our environment (168), and must always act according to necessity (245). For a time, Percy and Godwin shared this materialist viewpoint, based on the "French materialists of the Enlightenment, who apotheosized *l'homme machine*" an image that Mary Shelley would develop into an antagonist (Oakes 64). In his poem "Mont Blanc," Percy struggles with Locke's theory especially, which emphasizes that what we perceive to be our own intuitive interpretations of the world around us are in reality the secondary characteristics of external matter, which imperceptibly impress upon us what we take to be spontaneous insights of our own making (Kapstein 1048). At the same time, the "ambiguity and

obscurity of the poem” shows that he refuses to entirely accept “the substantial existence of the material universe,” because to do so would be an adoption of both Locke’s theory of knowledge and Godwin’s necessity, which would require that he admit “that his mind...like everything else in nature, [is] passive” and has no real part in conceiving original ideas, only interpreting information (1052). Although Percy “had not yet rejected materialism” (1058), he maintained that, on some level, the mind “is mysteriously free and creates to some degree the objects of its knowledge” (1048). The outcome of reading the novel in light of these philosophies would be a more sympathetic reading of the creature, who can claim to be a product of his environment more than anyone considering the rapid development of his mind and the singular treatment he receives from humanity after he is abandoned. These deterministic theories, wherein all action originates outside the body, highlight an external locus of control or determinism, and imply that the individual only reacts to an outward assault of stimuli (Herbert 36). The sense that events are beyond the control of the individual is reflected in the sense of helplessness that underlies Hobbes’ political theory, where the natural state of man leaves him constantly vulnerable, and also shapes the a-moralistic outcome of Godwin’s necessity, where everything that happens is merely the inevitable outcome of an event lost to memory. Even the actions that we feel to be evil are as natural an outcome as the effects of gravity (Kapstein 1055). The relevance of “Mont Blanc” to the setting of Shelley’s novel would suggest that the crimes of the creature are, at most, the necessary culmination of events that preceded Victor’s birth, and therefore unimpeachable.

More importantly, readers recognize that their presumption of the creature’s innate monstrosity aligns them with tertiary characters of his story, obliging them to accept that

they judged him prematurely. For example, they might relate to the frightened shepherd and recognize their own cowardice in the face of the unknown (Shelley 83). Reading the story from Victor's perspective, they would picture themselves taking up arms against the creature, but when the creature gives its own account of the tale, readers might recast themselves among the villagers who attacked the creature, and acknowledge that they were previously willing to join in tormenting the innocent, sympathetic figure (83). Reflecting on their initial response to the creature (in light of discovering that it is a sympathetic, thinking being) should be unsettling to opponents of the Revolution, because they would be forced to acknowledge their own susceptibility to mob mentality, especially at a time when the reasoning powers of women and children (who rally the village against the creature) were undervalued (83). The elite might interpret this mass hysteria as the folly of the masses, but it is such a *human* reaction that everyone has probably reflected on how easily s/he can be pressured to act irrationally. Those who supported the Revolution might similarly have to come to terms with the image of Felix, who attacks the creature that he had unknowingly called "*good spirit, wonderful*" and benefitted from in ways he did not know (91). Some revolutionaries might have even been brought to wonder whether they acted hastily, as it was well-known that "Louis XVI had been above all a reformer... [already ushering in] Religious toleration, the abolition of torture...Habeas Corpus, freedom of the press" and acknowledged, as Burke had, that "the *ancient régime* in 1789 was at its most enlightened" (Elton 10). These advancements notably took a step backwards during the Terror, just as Felix, seemingly a member of the upper-middle class in the revolutionary government, faces a trial that is a mockery of justice (Shelley 98) and loses everything trying to undo the injustice he sees (101).

Similar to the way Shelley leads readers to re-evaluate their assumptions about the nature of Victor's creature, Shelley also calls into question whether the senses can be trusted to present us with the whole truth. The reactions of secondary characters to the creature's appearance are often entirely inappropriate if they understood his intentions, as demonstrated by Felix's assumption that the creature is attacking his father while it is prostrating itself and begging for help (110). In contrast, his father is more 'enlightened' by his blindness because he must privilege reason rather than vision. This representation of blindness leading to understanding is the most contradictory to the popularly accepted motif of light representing enlightenment, and challenges the whole system of images in the novel, particularly Victor's pronouncement that "from the midst of the darkness a sudden light broke in upon [him]" when he discovers the secret of reanimation (34). Of course, the reality is that he deludes himself and is so caught up in the details of 'seeing' that he blinds himself to his occupation for two years (39).

Randel and others suggest that by having Victor's creature born at Ingolstadt, Shelley "accepts [Barruel's] metaphoric equivalence between the French Revolution and the monster" but does not entirely support his demonization of Enlightenment era thinking (Randel 467). Ronald Paulson confirms this reading, pointing out how the term "*illumine*" was applied to several ideas by individuals both in favour of and against the revolution, often in "diametrically opposed ways" for both "right and wrong, [or] as royal authority and as human liberty" (Paulson 549). Shelley's intention is therefore ambiguous, although Paulson tends toward the reading that imagery associated with light corresponds to enlightenment thinking or education. It might be for this reason that Paulson also chooses to read Weishaupt into the character of M. Waldman. Weishaupt

makes the assertion that “The labours of men of Genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the advantage of mankind” (546). Paulson deems this sentiment fitting for the Illuminati, who “were sworn to further knowledge for the betterment of mankind, no matter what the cost or means” (546). Paulson also identifies several instances of light imagery corresponding with education, including when Victor reads alchemical works as a boy, and when he learns the nature of “lightning electricity as... utterly destructive” when it destroys “an old and beautiful oak” (549). If these images are symbolic, they are also instances of foreshadowing, as they come *before* Victor is enrolled at Ingolstadt and both happen under foreboding circumstances, as Victor only “chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa” because of bad weather (Shelley 22), and the lightning storm comes to Geneva “from behind the mountains of Jura” (24) to the northeast (the direction of Ingolstadt). The claim that imagery like this is meant to be taken as symbolic of the Illuminati is difficult to support, as it precedes any mention of Ingolstadt, the primary link between the novel and Barruel’s conspiracy theory (17); but there are clear links between these images and the monarchic system, as Paulson points out that the image of the oak struck by lightning resonates well with the image of the “British Oak” (Paulson 550) a long-standing symbol of the British monarchy since Hobbes’ time, when Charles II hid himself in an oak tree after his father’s execution (Weber 508). It is tempting to read the lightning strike as a metaphor for the Enlightenment overcoming the aristocracy, and if the oak is read to stand as the strength of the monarchy –as it has been traditionally– then it would appear that Shelley has taken a definite stance in favour of Revolution.

While the birthplace of the creature implies that he is representative of revolutionaries, it is no less true that the monarchic system is equally discredited as the opposite force. For example, where Victor's education at Ingolstadt might be interpreted as symbolic of seditious thought by conservatives, the opposite system –traditional monarchic rule– naturally falls to the “exploded systems” of Magnus and Paracelsus (Shelley 29). Thus the system that opposes the “enlightened and scientific age,” which conservative thinkers like Burke validate by virtue of being “a thousand years old,” are forced to feel their age when M. Krempe calls them “as musty as they are ancient” (29). More to the point, no system in the novel is guiltless, as a serious reader will point out that the older, invalidated systems of natural philosophy inspire Victor to create new life, and Enlightenment science makes it possible. One cannot be blamed without recognizing the responsibility of the other; the new system can be considered an offense to the ‘divine’ monarchy or traditional government, but if the monarchy had appealed to the majority of subjects, they might not have felt rebellion was necessary. As Paine asserts that it was the aristocracy and the “parental callousness of primogeniture... [that was] the true *parent* of the Revolution” “rather than any innovators or Illuminati” (Baldick 21).

While supporters of the Revolution like Wollstonecraft and Paine, who point to “the negligence of the decadent and over-refined French court” and other practices of the aristocracy (21), applaud the revolutionaries for rebelling against “the despotic principles of government... in the original establishment, many centuries back” (Paine *RM* 97) and praise this rebellion as the height of dispassionate reason they would be challenged to explain the treatment of Louis XVI. Burke's criticism that the French revolutionaries “rebel[led] against a mild and lawful monarch” (Burke *Ref* 18) and the reality that “the

Revolution... was not directed against Louis XVI at all[,] it was directed against Louis XIV, *le roi soleil*, and Louis XV” (Elton 10) makes one ask: if Paine argues that a nation should not be unfairly bound by the rulings of former governments, why should a moderate king be hated for the behaviour of his predecessors while he is in the midst of beneficial reforms? When both are laid side by side, neither is apparently just or reasonable, and it is in the struggle between Shelley’s title character and his creation that these issues are considered together in the minds of Shelley’s readers.

There is a further connection between this observation of rebellion against a moderate ruler and Victor. While Victor is in Geneva, his father is clearly described as a benevolent, even-handed and loving father, making him an ideal ‘type’ of the benevolent ruler, whereas Clerval’s father seems only introduced to the text to show that he is holding his son back from higher education and enlightenment out of obstinacy (Shelley 27-28). The figure of the benevolent ruler in political philosophy is often perceived as destined to fail. King Louis XVI was acknowledged to be the “most enlightened” and moderate ruler in France’s memory, but the Revolution took place in his lifetime, because such rebellions “do not come from the down-trodden. Revolutions come from those who have newly tasted power and find that it is good” (Elton 10-11). While Victor takes no direct action against his father in Shelley’s novel, his father’s *laissez-faire* style of child-rearing “continually engaged [Victor] in endeavoring to bestow mutual pleasure” within his “secluded and domestic” family unit (Shelley 28). This lack of socialization outside of people committed to his happiness is undoubtedly why Victor has an “invincible repugnance to new countenances” and lacks the tools to “make [his] own friends, and be [his] own protector” (28). Victor’s idyllic socialization in Geneva leads to his voluntary

withdrawal to the fringes of society in Ingolstadt. With only a limited ability or interest to forge human relationships he is left without balance in his life. Here he engages only in the pure sciences that interest him, but there is no supervision, censure or moral center to point out the obvious ethical lines he is crossing. . His idyllic childhood, devoid of the traditional horror stories used to frighten children into behaving also leaves him without the ethical basis that would have kept him from straying later (33). This issue of fatherhood and paternal influences shall be taken up again in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4

### Patriarchy, Compact, and Rebellion

From birth, Mary Shelley was surrounded by influential and brilliant individuals, all of whom were radical philosophers, supporters of revolution, and disestablishmentarians. As a result *Frankenstein* is, above all else, a political novel in which she has responded to the philosophies that informed her upbringing. However, as a radical among radicals Shelley's novel stands as evidence that she freely questions and disagrees with as many opinions held by her mother, father, and husband as she accepts, which has led to a novel not written to one political end, or even in one voice. Even more problematic for establishing a consistent political interpretation is that Shelley's rebelliousness manifests between editions of her novel. Whereas both her parents and her husband "consistently defended the radical perspective" in their writings, Shelley blends these with "contradictory perspectives" that reflect her own conservatism (Bowerbank 418). Despite the Shelleys' early attempts to live according to a blend of Godwinian and Wollstonecraftian programs, Mary Shelley's thinking grew more conservative as time moved on (418). Marilyn Butler notes changes between the 1818 text and the 1831 edition that show a trend towards conservatism, including making the work more religious, dissolving Victor's ties to "materialist science" (Butler 199) and purging lines that echo her father's opinions (200). She does so notably by cutting Elizabeth's line denouncing retributive justice as "executioners, their hands yet reeking with blood of innocence, [believing] they have done a great deed" (Shelley 67) and replacing it with thoroughly religious sentiment, "Learn from me, dear lady, to submit in patience to the will of Heaven!" (Butler 218). The nature of the changes made between editions either

show that her opinions changed as she matured, or that, as the influences of her circle weakened, she felt freer to express her opinions (Oakes 66). As shown in chapter two, political tensions in Europe were mostly between the radical thinkers who sought to promote democracy and independence and the supporters of conservative patriarchal institutions. As the novel internalizes this struggle, it makes sense that paternal relationships play a key part in the novel, as the family unit is the basis of the oldest patriarchal constitutions, and thus demonstrates the most basic example of rebellion –the tension between parents and children. This chapter focusses on the difficult father-child relationships in *Frankenstein* as an obvious symbol of revolutionary conflict against established authority. The secondary focus is on Godwin’s political influence as Shelley’s surviving parent, which seems appropriate as the novel was dedicated to him, and the novel serves as the outlet through which Shelley espoused personal criticisms of her father and his philosophy. In a sense, the novel is her rebellion against Godwin’s moral and political philosophy as much as it engages questions of contemporary political organization and rebellion in Europe.

The representation of fathers in the novel is crucial: four father-child relationships among the main characters is proof that Shelley meant to draw attention to the various iterations, but the relationship between Shelley and her own father, or more appropriately her father and his ideology, has more influence on the story. Victor’s materialism –which was a major concern of the previous chapter –is shown most notably in his account of occupying churchyards, an engagement he directly associates with his father’s educational program which allowed no room for superstition (Shelley 33). Victor, of course, did not choose this program for himself as a child, when he eagerly consumed all

manners of occult and pseudoscientific material, which his father denounces, telling Victor “do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash” (23). The difference of interest between Victor and Alphonse is one of the earliest conflicts in Shelley’s novel, and the most palpable contradiction: that Victor’s interests are dismissed by his father, leaving him to secretly educate himself (23). Victor’s boast that he had never “feared the apparition of a spirit” (33) implies a disbelief in the supernatural, despite his open acknowledgement that he attempted to raise ghosts as one of his childhood pursuits (24). Despite Alphonse’s disapproval, Victor’s decision to proceed in secret shows that he has a rebellious streak, for which he avoids taking responsibility by blaming his father’s unsatisfactory explanation (23). His rebellion also foreshadows the activities he will engage in as an adult, when he will –again– implicate Alphonse’s desire that his son have nothing to do with the supernatural or arcane, as a driving force towards Victor’s pursuit of the same. This tone is revisited at Ingolstadt where his professor M. Krempe asks him “in what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies... are a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient?” (29). Krempe’s comment is worded similarly to Victor’s semi-accusatory lament, that if Alphonse “had taken the pains to explain to [him], that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded, and that a modern system of science had been introduced... under such circumstances, [he] should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside” (23). The similarity of Victor’s lament to Walton to M. Krempe’s derision indicates that Victor still blames his father for not guiding him away from the knowledge that inspired his monster. The reality is that Victor’s self-indoctrination in the supernatural as a boy is a better explanation for his lack of apprehension as an adult; but the reason that Shelley provides

points to Alphonse's aggressive response to superstition as the cause. The relationship between Victor and Alphonse is part of a systemic tension between fathers and children in the novel, also evidenced by Walton's father, who tried to prevent him from taking to the sea on his death-bed (which Walton's uncle kept trying to thwart in memory of his brother) (6); Henry Clerval's overbearing father (28); the Turkish merchant and his daughter Safie (101); and even Victor's mother Caroline, who is forced to support her father when his injured pride forces them into friendless destitution, rather than accepting Alphonse's help (18-19). The tensions between fathers and children are dioramas of the discord in the patriarchic systems of Europe during a period of increasing democratization. The struggle of each child is against a father that represents an established way of thinking; Walton desires to expand the frontiers of human exploration (6), Clerval would prefer to expand the boundaries of his own understanding (27-28), Safie claims control over her romantic future (102), and Victor alternatively blames his father for a lack of guidance and refuses to obey him in his quest to overcome the boundaries of life and death. The tension between Victor and his father originates in his father's materialism, as his quickness to explain the properties of lightning (24) and enroll Victor in classes of natural philosophy (25) are instances that point to his support for a materialist world view at odds with his son's fixation on the romantic. Butler notes that the nature of Victor's education changes in the 1831 edition so that Alphonse is less scientific; thus, Alphonse is incapable rather than unwilling to redirect Victor's interests, lessening his responsibility proportionately to Victor's, whose interest in alchemy is reduced to "a childish enthusiasm" (Butler 198). While Butler attributes this change to an effort to secure the third printing of a novel that had already attracted too much negative

attention, the change in the familial dynamic seems as pronounced as the change in scientific motivation, when only the scientific element was offensive enough to merit censorship (1). These changes demonstrate that Shelley connects the scientific responsibility for Victor's experiment to Alphonse's degree of paternal responsibility, and lessening Victor's guilt necessitated a more moderate treatment of his father. In the 1818 text, she deliberately highlights the difference between paradigms of father and child as a fundamental cause of the tragedy about to occur but, by the time she reaches her third edition (where Godwin's radicalism is the least accentuated and her own conservatism most strongly pronounced), Victor and Alphonse are pardoned to an extent, and the tension between them is diminished.

*Frankenstein's* treatment of overbearing fathers in 1818 is gently handled. Alphonse's desire to keep Victor from alchemical authors and superstitious/religious themes is not rooted in malice, but rather because he sees them as an irrelevant waste of time (Shelley 23). Clerval's father believes "that learning [is] superfluous in the commerce of ordinary life" despite Henry's desire to "possess a cultivated understanding" (Shelley 28). Clerval's father thinks he is discouraging Henry from wasting his time in a meaningless pursuit, like Alphonse does with Victor, so that he can learn a practical trade and take over the family business (28). The character of Clerval's father becomes less sympathetic in the 1831 edition, when Shelley changes his motivation from being an extension of "his favorite theory" (similar to Godwin as a philosopher with lofty ideals) (28) to being "narrow-minded" (Butler 212). Clerval's own opinion of his fate changes: whereas in the 1818 text he is "well pleased" to become his father's partner (Shelley 28), in the 1831 text Shelley states that Henry "deeply felt the misfortune of being debarred from a liberal

education,” highlighting the frustration of being under his father’s rule (Butler 212). The only overbearing father who is demonized in the 1818 version (Victor’s relationship with his creature is not properly fatherhood as he takes no role in rearing or educating it) is the Turkish merchant, who rejects the idea of Safie marrying a Christian (Shelley 100).

According to the creature’s account, Safie’s desire to marry Felix is mingled with a desire for the freedom to exercise her mind beyond “puerile amusements” and “take a rank in society,” despite her father’s religious stance (99). Shelley’s use of the word “puerile” in such close association with the religion of “Mahomet” is a direct nod to her mother’s work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, where Wollstonecraft describes (in her second chapter) the debased existence of women who are “kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence” (Wollstonecraft 19). Once again, this relationship is in keeping with the overall trend of fathers exercising inappropriate or biased control over the education of their children. Shelley further uses this account to fictionalize some of Mary Wollstonecraft’s argument for the betterment of women’s education. The image that Safie dreads, of being “immured within the walls of a harem” (Shelley 99), is one of Rousseau’s recommendations for the education of women; in *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft quotes his proposal that rather than learning the activities that were traditionally impressed on young women, Rousseau thinks that women should develop the talents that will make her more “pleas[ing to] her future husband” and “fit her for a Harem of an Eastern bashaw” (Wollstonecraft 85-86). Wollstonecraft responds that this course of study would be antithetical to his own observation that the impression of a person’s physical attractiveness will diminish within a year of marriage (90). If beauty will fade so quickly, then the talents of a harem girl will quickly lose interest as well (90).

Shelley's depiction of Safie's mother being captured and sold into a harem for her beauty recalls Wollstonecraft and Godwin's impressions of marriage: Godwin calls marriage a "despotic and artificial means... [of maintaining the] possession of a woman" and "the most odious selfishness" (Godwin 303), and Wollstonecraft—although she does not outright condemn marriage—likens it to the social institution of absolute monarchy, and says that "[the] *divine right* of husbands" deserves to be challenged equally to the divine right of kings (Wollstonecraft 41). Both of these depictions highlight (from the perspectives of radical Jacobin writers) the arbitrary and oppressive nature of the relationship, which Shelley illustrates as literal entrapment. Wollstonecraft's problem with the institution of marriage is not the union of man and wife per se, but that men too often overvalue the most basic qualities of women, and that men who are enthralled with the idea of "a pretty, useful companion, without a mind" not only degrade the woman, but are themselves reduced to being "sunk in the brute," or deprived of real company (90).

The only male figure in the novel who truly appreciates the "charm of life" and appreciates that "nothing pleases us more than to observe in [others] a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast" is "the brute" (Shelley 90). The monster's plea for a mate "as hideous as himself" in whom he can "excite sympathy" is both a mature and progressive request, and shows that his miserable condition does make him more attuned to the necessities of life that Paine and Godwin felt society would corrupt (Shelley 120). The creature's ugliness also makes him more sensitive to the plight of Shelley's female contemporaries, as "the violence of Rousseau's general will... disavow[ed] 'the 'private sphere' of female nonsubjects, slaves, and servants'" as his appearance is only "represent[ative of] broader normative injunctions about values which unite individuals

into a community”(Rivlin-Beenstock 206). Among the human beings in the novel, Shelley has seen fit to provide several examples of married life. All of the marriages (with the exception of Safie’s mother) glorify the women’s good qualities: Safie demonstrates independence and marries for love, Caroline Beaufort is an industrious woman who supports her father (19) and has a husband who displays “gratitude and worship in his attachment to [his wife]” by the third edition of the novel when Shelley re-writes him significantly to make his marriage seem less out of homosocial obligation (Butler 204). Even young Victor “[looks] upon Elizabeth as... [his] to protect, love, and cherish” (again, by the third edition, after he was rewritten to take a greater interest) (Butler 207). Men in the story are thus shown to progress less rapidly than the creature in many ways.

Yet Shelley goes further to express her mother’s feminist perspective: by saying that Safie’s mother “won the heart of [her] father” (Shelley 99), she takes power from the man and re-writes the merchant’s choice to marry her as a feminine initiative, despite the basis of the attraction being physical (99). Wollstonecraft acknowledges this argument in *Vindication*, that women were gaining power over men by playing to masculine desires “like Turkish bashaws” and manipulating their would-be masters, but Wollstonecraft ends this point by denouncing the fruits of their cunning as “temporary gratifications” at the cost of their virtue (Wollstonecraft 40). Shelley completes the transformation of male prerogative into female initiative in the relationship between Safie and Felix, as Felix is first attracted by Safie’s beauty, but is won over completely after Safie “[finds] means to express her *thoughts*” [emphasis mine] in an act where Felix is neither the instigator nor neglecter of her feelings (Shelley 99). Safie’s decision to follow her lover into exile is

also made independently. Furthermore, her adventure is exclusively female: she is attended by a woman from Leghorn and it is the “woman of the house” who takes her in when her attendant dies in Germany (102). Safie’s adventure is a very strong portrayal of a woman overcoming obstacles for which she was never trained, and Safie’s letters to Felix demonstrate a confident “forwardness” that Shelley would have believed characteristic of her mother (Rubenstein 190).

Safie’s choice to follow her mother’s wishes for her spiritual and educational well-being, then, is conflated with her elopement with Felix; this decision not only makes Safie’s bold move to escape her father more illustrative of her independence, but it recasts the marriage as means to an intellectual end (Shelley 102) rather than “thoughtless and romantic youth” pairing off on the basis of a few encounters (Godwin 302). Safie’s account has already been read by other critics as a fictionalized parallel of Mary’s elopement with Percy, with Safie’s mother playing the part of Mary Wollstonecraft, encouraging her daughter to “aspire to higher powers of intellect” through *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Rubenstein 169). This re-writing of Mary’s elopement with Percy would not lessen the sting of betrayal Godwin felt (Butler xi), but does attempt to reframe it in philosophically justifiable terms. Although Godwin had openly declaimed marriage as an evil that would be best to abolish (Godwin 303), he had hypocritically married twice –the second time to Mary Jane Clairmont, who had an “uneven relationship” with young Mary Shelley (Butler ix). Between this antagonistic feminine authority and “patriarchy run riot” that characterized paternal authority in Shelley’s time (Bell 59), the drive to leave home must have been equal to being unbearably cloistered, and the Shelleys undoubtedly viewed their relationship as an intellectual engagement,

“sealed by their enthusiastic reading of her mother’s and father’s books” (Turner Sharp 78).

Alphonse’s influence over his son’s education in the 1818 text has very clearly led to atheistic materialism in his son, despite Victor’s former interest in the supernatural; this parallels Godwin’s childhood to an extent. Godwin’s father was a “dissenting minister,” (Bell 52) –part of a tradition of religious teaching with a politically radical message in favour of the anti-monarchic “voice of the English Revolution” that had opposed the return of Charles II to the throne (53). Godwin himself characterized Cromwell’s rule as “usurpation,” implying his own lack of support for the parliamentary position (Godwin 100). Although Godwin “trained for the ministry” and accepted “the title of ‘Reverend’” after his own father’s example (Bell 52), early exposure to “Rousseau and the French materialists” and his consequent loss of faith compelled him to withdraw from ministry (Carter xi). Godwin’s early reading would likely have met with the same disapproval from his religious father that Alphonse showed to Victor’s reading (Shelley 23). The political message of his father’s faith served as the foundation for Godwin’s own radical political perspective, and survived his conversion to atheism as “deep-ingrained habits of thought” (Bell 52). The moral sensibility of the dissenting ministers, that it is proper to “set the interests of God above those of the family,” seemingly caused an uncomfortable relationship between Godwin and his father (53). This highly moralized upbringing, combined with the materialist philosophy of an atheist, provided the foundation for his utilitarianism. Godwin believed that “right behaviour is to be determined by applying the criterion of utility to each individual act” (Carter xiii).

Godwin's utilitarianism caused him "to look for the future benefits of society and place these above the claims of personal interest" (Bell 53). As a rational philosophy, Godwin's utilitarianism led him to argue in *Political Justice* that personal attachments should be secondary to achieving the greatest possible utility, to the extent that, if given the choice to sacrifice a family member in order to save a person of note to humanity, there should be no compunction in saving the latter, although the family member would surely die (Carter xix). Carter states that Godwin did not intend to imply that the agent making the decision would not feel the pain of loss, but that he believed that "the benevolent man...motivated in all cases by the desire to do the right thing" would be compelled to act against his personal interest (xix). Godwin extended this scenario to the conclusion that the family member, or any person about to perish, would also chose the life of the person of note over their own or be unjust in demanding to be saved (Godwin 70-71). Kathleen Bell points out that Godwin loads the argument, outlining the many vices his loved one might have, that naturally make the person of note a worthier choice, a move that she attributes to the "assumption of recognizable moral authority" that Godwin would have acquired in his training for ministry (Bell 53). Bell points out that Godwin's argument, casting the loved one as a person of note's *servant*, "allows his reader to indulge in class prejudice and assume that, in most circumstances, a servant is of less value than a man of rank" (53). This implication of class prejudice is interesting, since the most notable Jacobin writings usually attribute the most damnable qualities to men of rank (Brantlinger 67). Here Godwin very clearly asserts that those men who have a more cultivated mind are "further removed from the state of a mere animal" than the servant, who is of lower "worth and importance than the other" (Godwin 70). This

instance of loading every convenient vice onto the loved one or servant is more than a slip of private prejudice, as it is part of Godwin's larger rebuttal to Burke's belief that only men who understand loyalty and feel interpersonal sympathy in the form of "domestic affection (and patriotism)" are capable "of any broad sociability" (Weston 13). To distinguish his viewpoint from Burke's and encourage a foundation of morality uninfluenced by personal indebtedness, Godwin demonizes the servant or familial representative (Godwin 71). This "apparently heartless rejection of instinctive domestic attachments" roused the public imagination against him, and coloured their opinion of his utilitarian system (Weston 2).

In his introduction to Godwin's *Political Justice*, K. Codell Carter defends Godwin's rationality by arguing that he never meant the good and rational man to be entirely dispassionate and emotionless, but that he meant for "every act... [to] be accompanied by... compassion and sympathy" for humanity in general, effectively treating all people with the same deference as blood relations (Carter xviii). Roland Weston contradicts Carter's interpretation, pointing out that Godwin was antagonistic to the thought of "brute and unintelligent sympathy" as if it was infectious, spreading from person to person without pause for rational analysis (Weston 6). Sympathy should not be such a point of contention with Godwin, seeing as it "was characteristic of the religious and political radicalism of the mid-seventeenth century" (7) which served as the foundation of his training as a dissenting minister (Bell 52). Possibly, the relationship between these political tenets and "mob violence" was a primary concern for Godwin, as any level of cooperation, especially amongst such a disorganized body as a mob, was incompatible with a man seeking truth via reason (Weston 7). Alternatively, Godwin's conversion to

atheism may have made him loathe his former religious beliefs, although it would be difficult to rationalize such a claim considering that his radicalism (which would initially have been a tenet of his faith as a dissenting minister) persisted. Even if Carter is correct in assuming that Godwin's intention was to form a philosophy espousing a universal kinship towards mankind, in practice Godwin seemed to be less than sympathetic, particularly to his own children. One example was his response to the death of his grandson William; when Godwin, with "characteristic insensitivity to the suffering of others," criticized Mary's grief as it reduced her in his eyes, to "the commonality and mob of [her] sex" (Bell 58). Clearly, Carter's interpretation that Godwin's philosophy leads to a nigh *familial* love for all of mankind (Carter xviii) might have uncomfortable repercussions considering Godwin's treatment of his own children (Bell 58).

Shelley uses other works to respond to Godwin's philosophic valuation of life. In response to Godwin's scenario of the person of note and the servant, Shelley took the opposite stance: that "the claims of the exceptional individual cannot be allowed to take precedence over the sufferings of the anonymous many" just as on the occasions of her children's deaths, her feelings of grief were the same "necessary and morally correct reaction" as every other human being ought to feel under the circumstances (60). Shelley does not experience human sympathy as the rational, general, well-wishing for humanity that Godwin envisions; nor does she reduce human experience to a list of accomplishments. Shelley demonstrates her understanding of human sympathy as early as the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, as the monster's desire for a mate comes from his desire for "the interchange of those sympathies necessary for [his] being" (Shelley 118) that he had hoped to find with the De Lacey's and quickly discovered was impossible to

secure from human kind (109). The creature is so unlike humanity that his experiences are unique and un-relatable, and he understands “the human senses are insurmountable barriers” to mutual understanding and coexistence (119). To Shelley, true human sympathy requires direct participation in the most common human responses, reducing one to “the ‘commonality and mob’” (Bell 60). Shelley recognizes that her father’s ideal of disinterestedness forces the onlooker to become a judge of all of humanity –setting them apart from the people whose benefit they are deciding. For every man to have a “conscious relationship [with]... the truth rationally discerned,” every man must be placed in a position to pass judgment on and for each other, which is really just creating a multitude of abstract kings (Weston 6). In this way, Godwin’s republicanism *does* show men to be equal, but paradoxically in equal possession of the same negative qualities that encouraged the Jacobins to speak out against the monarchy in the first place. What Godwin proposes in his theory of benevolence comes from the same assumption that Paine makes about common sense –that it is distorted by the influence governments assert over the minds of people (Fruchtman 22). Godwin only differs from Paine in that Paine would democratize the people; Godwin thinks government in any form is “not only unnecessary but wholly corrupting” (Weston 6).

The ends of Godwin’s argument for individualism are, in actuality, the beginnings of Hobbes’. Godwin’s radical reduction of government to the rule of individual conscience is the same as Hobbes’ depiction of the state of nature, where every man can also behave according to his own reason, except that Godwin believes optimistically that men will behave according to peace and general benefit, rather than personal gain. Although many of Godwin’s arguments denounce promises, covenants, governments, and all forms of

cooperation as evil, he still believes that one can act in the interest of the general good, and that the majority will do likewise. This trust that others will act according to anything other than self-interest is the basis of cooperation. In the republican state Godwin describes *as a bare minimum of necessary government*, there are still more problems that arise. Godwin argues that the best scenario is where “the first business of government” is to ensure “that no man exceeds his sphere,” which is “limited by the co-ordinate sphere of his neighbor” (Godwin 114). Force may be used by “every man to defend himself from violation” only in “cases of absolute necessity” (114). Godwin describes the power of this government as a “combination of the powers of individuals to control the excesses of each other,” which is to say, that if threatened by his neighbour it is up to each man to defend himself, until the more ambitious or less reasonable man becomes a threat that it will take more than one person’s power to subdue (114).

The nature of governmental power in Godwin’s republic is therefore no more than the state of war Hobbes described in *Leviathan* more than one hundred years earlier (Hobbes 1.14.4-5). As if Godwin recognizes the similarity, he declares that it is up to the community to self-police so that this cumulative force does not become despotic, which begs the question –if the majority becomes despotic, what force is left to oppose it (Godwin 114)? Godwin tries to further distinguish the difference between *his* republic and Hobbes’ social contract or state of war by asserting that in his system a man “is bound to nothing,” (115) because, in his view, any form of promise, or governance, is a form of evil (although he admits sometimes a “necessary evil”) (105). Godwin envisions that this man, “bound to nothing” will take part in civic affairs when necessary because it is an opportunity to exercise authority in “common deliberation” and then go back to

being “bound to nothing” (115). In Godwin’s denunciation of the socially-contracted state, he lists among its projected reasons for failure that “human understanding . . . where its independence and integrity are sufficiently preserved” renders it nearly impossible for men to reach consensus on all of the propositions open to debate (101). So how can it ever be expected that any “common deliberation,” in a state conceived to foster fierce independence and cultivate higher understanding, will result in a clearer agreement, unless it concerns only the most rudimentary issues (115)? Furthermore, this man, *does* find himself “bound to nothing” as the group which came together to make a collective decision goes back to being individuals just like himself, each “bound to nothing” (115). He will either obey because he consented, as Godwin explains, or because he fears “that a greater mass of evil will result from his disobedience” (115). This choice is, again, no different from the submissive acquiescence that Godwin demonized in his chapter on the social contract, choosing “the least evil” of two given alternatives (100). What reason, then, is there for any man to follow any course of action proscribed by a collective? Godwin has explained that men should break their promises if time proves that they hinder the best use of their property of faculties (104-105); he has also declared that force is only to be used “in cases of absolute necessity” (114). So there is no reason whatsoever to follow a proscribed course of action. As far as Godwin asserts that promises should never be allowed to interfere with our personal use of reason (106), what recourse is left to the individual who finds that “common deliberation [has resulted in] . . . the erroneous judgment of a whole people” –as Godwin notes that these decisions will take longer to be overturned than even under a despotic authority (115)?

When the whole of it is taken together, Godwin's system is supposed to benefit the rational man and allow him to act according to his reason, but it equally preserves the obstinate man by creating an environment where there is no check to his will unless he strays into the murky area of Godwin's thought where force becomes justifiable.

Godwin's political theory is founded on the optimism that "rational and intelligent beings [will act] as if they are rational and intelligent" but is as easily exploded by *meeting* the average human being under prolonged duress (107). Godwin sets out to write a refutation of Hobbesian social contract theory but, by insisting such basic forms of cooperation as marriage, "common labour and common meals," and even planning for one's future happiness ("cooperation with [one's] future [self]") are all evil (Franta 700), he rejects the first principle of his work, that "a state of high civilization" is the "most desirable state of man" (Godwin 13). Godwin promotes a life without "industry; ... commodities that may be imported by sea; ... no arts; no letters; no society" –in reality– one that is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1.13.9). He feebly defends his idealized existence by countering Hobbes' point that, without cooperation, there is "no culture of the earth; no navigation... no instruments of moving [or] removing such things as require much force" (1.13.9) with a Frankensteinian appeal to industrialization. Godwin advocates that the effort to "pull down a tree, to cut a canal [or] navigate a vessel" should be lessened by "the complicated machines of human contrivance" to reduce men's dependence on one another (Godwin 301).

Mary Shelley effectively rejects her father's view of promises and the social contract in *Frankenstein*, as every promise that is broken ends in calamity. Felix begins by making a vow to the merchant that, because the miscarriage of justice is personally repulsive to

him, he will break the merchant out of prison (Shelley 98). Godwin would laud this decision, as it is “an obligation which arises out of no compact” but from “the irresistible deduction from the wants of one man, and the ability of another to relieve them” (Godwin 102). Shelley has constructed this scenario as a perfect example of her father’s argument; the governmental system in place is unjust, and Felix’s reaction is properly motivated by an internal impression that justice must be virtuously served. If Shelley designed this scenario to illustrate her father’s sense of moral obligation, the outcome must embody her own view on the subject: as a result of Felix keeping his promise, he violates civil law and the De Lacey family suffers the penalty of the state (Shelley 100-101). As Godwin says later in his chapter on promises in *Political Justice*, “it is no more fitting that I should bring upon myself calamity and death, than that I should suffer them to fall upon another” (Godwin 109). Shelley might be cautioning her readers against blindly holding up her father’s moral ideals without acknowledging the fact that his doctrine is also cautious and self-interested (109).

The promise the Turkish merchant makes to Felix in return is a more complex example of the kinds of promises that Godwin describes. Shelley has based this part of the story more literally on an example from *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, where Godwin states that because “we are ignorant of their principles of conduct” our dealings with Arabs “do not afford us a sufficient security, as to the particulars of our intercourse with them” (111). Shelley has taken the character of the Turkish merchant from this example, and furnished the circumstances of his promise from the text immediately around it. First, the merchant’s desire to betray Felix, and to deny him the promised marriage of his daughter on a religious basis (Shelley 100), shows that he is “a man

greatly deficient in delicacy of moral discrimination” because he has made a promise insincerely, for the purpose of manipulating another (Godwin 110). However, the change in Felix’s circumstances alters the conditions of the merchant’s promise and Godwin’s theory absolves the merchant in this respect. In respect to seeking after the greatest general good, keeping his promise to Felix would alleviate Felix’s pain, but from a father’s perspective it would subject Safie to the misery of the De Lacey’s exile, and he would feel the pain of never seeing his daughter again. When the merchant offered his daughter to Felix he was able to provide for her, but his impoverishment makes him a poor candidate to care for Safie now (Shelley 101). Godwin might consider the change in Felix’s circumstances as an instance where the promise had depreciated into “a material obstacle to utility” and as such could be knowingly broken (Godwin 110). This example could alternatively fit under Godwin’s heading of distributing property; now that the merchant enjoys his freedom, he can further benefit from his use of property by marrying Safie to a wealthier suitor as part of a business arrangement should he see fit (104). Not marrying Safie to Felix would assuredly (in her father’s reasoning) be for the greatest good, as he can now secure better conditions for Safie, and not disadvantage himself by marrying her to a Christian (Shelley 100).

The promise that Victor makes to the monster is of the latter kind, where “information, afterwards acquired, persuades [the promise- maker] to violate [it]” (Godwin 110).

Victor’s decision to create the second creature is based on the promise that the monster would leave Europe and never threaten man again. This promise was undoubtedly for the greatest general benefit (Shelley 124), but upon Victor’s realization that the nature of the second creature could be as volatile as the first’s, he feels it necessary to break his

promise rather than risk compounding the danger to humanity (138). Even if satisfying the monster's desire would have compelled him to leave, Victor's reason for destroying the second creature is according to his duty to the human race, and thus virtuous (Carter xiii). Yet the monster has become so sympathetic up to this point and is so tortured by the last-minute destruction of his mate that his reaction, while terrifying, is understandable and calls Godwinian morality into question. If Felix's motivation could be perfect, and leave him in ruin, and the merchant's motivations can be justifiable although they are impure, then how is utility as laid out in Godwin's *Political Justice* a desirable project? The suffering Victor causes by breaking his compact and the revenge the monster takes against him indicate that Shelley rejects her father's belief that compacts are evil, and sees that more evil results from breaking them than from making them.

Colene Bentley observes that Shelley places stock in "compacts and promises as forms of connectivity, because she deems them important to moral action" (Bentley 346). In her own experience, "ethical action" is not what she has seen from her father's utilitarianism, nor has "the possession of shared traits" ever led to a sense of community, particularly in her personal relationship with her father (346). What Shelley *has* shown is that promises that are broken are punished with loss, as Safie's father loses a daughter (Shelley 102), and the monster's revenge deprives Victor of Clerval (148), Elizabeth (166), and his life (186). Shelley's portrayals of promises are in keeping with her political view, that "the integrity of the political community over time...depends on individuals understanding that they will be held to account –now and for the foreseeable future– for their freely given pledges to one another" (Bentley 346). Bentley further suggests that Victor's decisions to break his promise to the monster and his reluctance to make commitments to

family and friends (e.g. delaying his marriage to Elizabeth promised to his mother) are part of Shelley's critique of Paine's "pragmatic approach to creating political community," which she does not believe can be accomplished with such a loose concept of culpability (346).

While Bentley observes that this theme of making and breaking promises in *Frankenstein* is clearly not in agreement with Paine or Godwin's political thought, she never acknowledges Hobbes, to whom the theory of political contract is forever indebted. Hobbes recognized that, as covenants are abstractions in the minds of men, they are not guarantees against men like Paine and Godwin, who see little value in holding them inviolable (Hobbes 2.17.12). Bentley points out that Victor's "horror... in perpetuity" comes from the realization that the monster and his mate could spawn generations of monsters, for whom he would be responsible based on the contract he forges with the monster on Mont Blanc (Bentley 345). Paine's argument that a contract made by men today cannot be binding for others to follow is therefore the source of Victor's anxiety (345). If the monster is capable of procreating, then the agreement Victor makes to protect mankind from the monster and his mate is only a stopgap measure, because it would not be binding on their offspring. Rivlin-Beenstock points out that the female creature herself constitutes the second-generation of her race, and can similarly "refuse to comply with the Rousseauvian male creature's rules and violate a patriarchal social contract made before her birth" (Rivlin-Beenstock 209). Even worse, from a Godwinian perspective, the monster could just as easily abandon the promise if it no longer served utility—in whatever way the monster's diseased mind might rationalize utility. These political frameworks clearly demonstrate the weaknesses of promises and the anxiety

they can create for the man with no real hope of enforcing them; but more to the point, they emphasize the difference between a promise and a contract, which Bentley has neglected in her analysis. Strictly speaking, a promise is only the oral signification of a contract shared between two people, that can either be a statement of intention or worded as a term in what can properly be called a compact or contract (Hobbes 1.14.13) if some action has already proceeded to show good faith and merit the completion of the promise in return (1.14.16-17). For example, the monster's threat, "I shall be with you on your wedding-night" (Shelley 140), is a promise, merited by an action which precipitated it (Victor destroying the monster's mate) (139), but it is not a contract because the action was in proper terms a "*violation of faith*" or the failure to uphold one's side of a contract (Hobbes 1.14.11). The deal that was struck on Mont Blanc, on the other hand, was a proper contract. Victor would produce the monster's desire, and upon delivery of this promise the monster would be obliged to perform his promise in kind; both parties have a reciprocal stake and expectation in the proceedings (Shelley 120). This contract, however, is as far from "community building" as Bentley imagines, and properly an agreement to withdraw or annihilate the community developing between the creation and creator (Bentley 326). The fact of the matter is, as far as Shelley believes, that contracts and willfully keeping pledges are the foundation of political community: these not only *must* "be held to account" but they *cannot* be "freely given" because accountability and reciprocity are the foundations of social contract, which is properly "community building" (346). As Hobbes shows in *Leviathan*, society begins with the notion of a promise as the foundation of a political system, but it must be expanded. Where a promise between two men is easily broken, each man can only depend on the other as far

as he can hold him under his power (which negates the purpose as each man could potentially resort to force in the first instance) (Hobbes 2.17.1-2). Thus, for promises to work as a foundation for civilized life, force or the palpable threat of force is a necessity. To distinguish society from the state of war, men cannot be left to enforce promises themselves, so they must all agree to lay down that power; however, as force is still a necessity, some “man, or assembly of men” must retain this power (2.17.13). The agreement between all the parties who give up their right to enforcing their covenants, and the understanding that those who retain the power of force for use in “concern [of] the common peace and safety,” is the expansion of *contract* into *social contract* (2.17.13). In the examples already shown, Shelley seemingly validates the social contract, and the understanding that force will be brought against men who break covenants in her novel. The issue of force here creates a complication in the novel, and will be addressed in a following chapter (1.14.18).

## Chapter Five

### Monster/Monarch: Man/Commonwealth

The figure that dominates Hobbes' introduction to *Leviathan* is not only a metaphor for the institution of constitutional monarchy, but is analogous to the physical being of Frankenstein's creature. The Leviathan is an imitation of a man "of greater stature and strength than the natural," and is a better comparison to Frankenstein's monster than any other found in the rhetoric of political science (Hobbes 7). Hobbes' political theory is as much indebted to the spirit of scientific enquiry as Shelley's novel, without becoming what would be termed "science fiction." Hobbes' own fascination with the scientific discoveries of his day, especially those of William Harvey, who "had demonstrated the motion of the heart and circulation of the blood... instituting a revolution in medical science," and informed the metaphor that equates "the heart and blood" to the "sovereign and commonwealth" in Hobbes' introduction (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 62). Harvey's work also inspired Hobbes to write his own political ideas in scientific fashion, working from definitions and first principles towards what he believed were logical conclusions that would be self-evident. Scientific advances of the day also authorized his understanding of the senses, which is the foundation of the nature of man and by extension his political science (Overhoff 25).

There are numerous points of similarity between Hobbes' introduction in *Leviathan* and the plot of *Frankenstein*. The first several lines themselves correspond to the plot of *Frankenstein*, in that man has imitated the works of God and created an "artificial man" imbued with "an artificial life...giving motion to the whole body" (Hobbes 7). The

following blazon of body parts and their equivalent offices in Hobbes' grand metaphor evokes Shelley's image of Victor stitching together pieces of various cadavers as he endeavors to build a giant, taking months to scavenge for materials from various sources so that he can furnish his creation with desirable "luxuriences" (Shelley 36-37, 39). Even the metaphoric "*matter...and the artificer*" of the introduction corresponds to *Frankenstein*, as the material from which the "artificial man" is made is (mostly) "*Man*" as it has been put together by man (Hobbes 7). Most importantly, the theme that dominates Hobbes' introduction is the same that makes up the crux of Shelley's novel: the matter of sympathy, whereby Hobbes says we can "*read [our]self*" in other men and vice versa (8). The creature's account of his education in volume two shows this much, "that *wisdom* is acquired, not by reading of *books*" (7). The creature is a very bad reader, who not only takes all printed word for truth (including fiction) but retains nothing except that which reaffirms his biases and justifies his self-pity (Turner Sharp 82). Wisdom cannot come of reading man either (Hobbes 8), as the creature believes he can by observing the De Laceys (Shelley 91), because he is not already wise enough to read himself, which is partly a fault of his construction (Hobbes 8). The true nature of sympathy, Hobbes explains, is to read all of mankind in our selves and by extension understand them. Hobbes believes this is possible because all men are roughly "equal, in the faculties of the body, and mind" (1.13.1). If all men are roughly equal, then it is no great feat to imagine that the motivations and sensations of other men are similar to one's own. The creature's artificial birth, denies him this assumption because he is aware that he experiences the world so much differently. The creature does not have the benefit other men naturally have of seeing similarities between themselves and other men. To be

authentically sympathetic is “harder than to learn any language, or science” (Hobbes 8), as the creature discovers (Shelley 95). Shelley’s novel demonstrates how a deficit of sympathy turns a sensitive being into a brute, seemingly to make her readers more sympathetic to outcasts with good natures, but there is an untapped power in sympathy. According to Hobbes, once you can read all of men in yourself so that you can feel what they feel and understand their motivations, you will be more capable of ruling them (Hobbes 8). The creature himself, as a literal assembly of the bodies of multiple people, is a perfect symbol of this sympathy, but is incapable of feeling it.

Further, the creature corresponds to Hobbes’ image of an artificially engineered automaton better than any other philosophers who describe either natural man being corrupted by society (Rousseau 59) or the “troglodytes...ghosts and goblins” that succeeded them in light of the French Revolution (Devetak 63). None of these stress either the manufactured nature of the creature or its singularity, which is the sole motivation behind its antisocial crimes; after all, even fairies and ghosts live in communities with their own kind –of which the monster has none (Hobbes 4.47.24-25). The creature recognizes that his own construction separates him from humanity, both in constitution and “loathsome” appearance, to the point that he rejects himself as “a blot upon the earth...whom all men [disown]” (Shelley 96). The creature’s hopes to mitigate its appearance by means of “gentle demeanor and conciliating words” (91) meet with failure, as his appearance proves too much of an obstacle, even after he has dedicated himself to society’s protection and restrains himself from using force against it (110). This failure leaves the threat or use of violent force as the creature’s only recourse to get what he wants. Once he recognizes that Victor has made him “more powerful than [his

maker],” he finally begins to act according to his nature rather than in imitation of humanity (77); suggesting that, as the world of man around him is already in a state of civilization, to which he has been denied entry, he remains in the state of war described by Hobbes (Hobbes 1.14.4). In this state of war the creature, like any man, has the right to use his own force to provide what he needs for himself, and also “*ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of attaining it*” (1.14.4). On Mont Blanc, the monster says that he will remove himself to the new world once he has what he needs from Victor, leaving the rest of mankind in peace so long as he is (Shelley 120). His position in the midst of thriving governments and communities bears similarities to Hobbes’ figure of a monarch. The monarch is the only person in a constitutional monarchy who has not been part of the covenant to construct the position, and the source of his own power lies in this natural right, which all other men have given up to live in peace while the monarch may still use it freely (Hobbes 2.17.12-13). The creature’s birth, or more properly construction, is emblematic of the position of the monarch in Hobbes’ theory, although the presence of constituted governments around the creature complicates the reading, as does the fact that he is empowered by the act of one man rather than a community of individuals. As the creature begins with Victor, it is fitting to start there.

As discussed above, Victor exhibits characteristics attributed by Hobbes to Catholic priests in “The Kingdom of Darkness.” First, Victor’s practices that show him to be part of the kingdom of darkness are initially displayed in Victor’s juvenile reading which, steeped in occult imagery (Shelley 24), recalls Hobbes’ “charms compounded of metaphysics” (Hobbes 4.47.27). Alchemical authors such as Agrippa and Paracelsus engage in subjects Hobbes considers demonological, or based in “confusion” that is so

pervasive it not only “mislead[s] citizens into subservience,” but even overpowers the minds of the demonologists themselves, until “they become incapable of recognizing anything but their own fantasies” (Martel 109). As Victor begins his studies in earnest, Shelley depicts him as part of what Hobbes calls “the dark doctrine” (or ghost story) “of the walking abroad, especially in places consecrated, solitary, or dark, of the ghosts of men deceased; and thereby to the pretenses of exorcism and conjuration of phantasms” (Hobbes 4.44.16). Hobbes had already remarked that these “fearful tales” are themselves the cause of ghosts, when men “believe they see...ghosts walking in churchyards” because they remember these stories and have overactive imaginations, or else they really witness “the knavery of such persons, as make use of such superstitious fear, to pass disguised in the night, to places they would not [want to] be known to haunt” (1.2.7). Victor collects materials for the creature from “the unhallowed damp of the grave [and]... charnel houses” this way (Shelley 36). The “supernatural enthusiasm” (33) that keeps Victor on task and so preoccupied that his “taste for... simple pleasures” is destroyed and he “neglect[s] the scenes around [him]” (37), is exactly the sort of demonological occupation that Hobbes describes (Martel 109).

Since Victor’s obsessive search for knowledge becomes his “sole occupation” which he “exclusively... pursue[s] for its own sake” (Shelley 32), it becomes demonological for the more literal reason that it violates the law of God. Not only is Victor’s pursuit to create life in itself a blasphemy that any of Hobbes’ or Shelley’s contemporaries would recognize but, as far as Victor has allowed natural philosophy to take the place of God and dedicated all of his hopes and efforts to the dream of “a new species [that will] bless [him] as its creator and source” (36), he is denying “dependence on the true God” and

worshipfully pursuing “representations of [his] own fancies” (Hobbes 4.45.10). Doing so is a violation of the first commandment according to Hobbes, because even though Victor has not established himself as a god or founded a religion around his creation, he has nevertheless replaced God with something else that occupies His place (4.45.10).

Furthermore, Victor’s effort “to animate the lifeless clay” and make his dream of “a new species” a physical reality (Shelley 36) is literally “making up a figure out of the parts of diverse creatures... [to create]...the resemblance of some phantastical inhabitants of [his] brain” which is properly an idol (Hobbes 4.45.16). As the construction of the creature is a performance of Victor’s devotion to his scientific beliefs, the creature is the object of his worship and his duties towards it include the “months [spent] successfully collecting and arranging [his] materials[,]...midnight labours” and “profane” acts (Shelley 36). Victor also sacrifices his own health and vigor to the idol of his science, which becomes visible as the creature’s body comes together while he becomes “pale with study, and...emaciated with confinement” (36). This condition plagues him again at the end of his life. Walton finds him on the arctic ice, “dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering,” once his obsession turns from creating to following the monster (13). As it is understood that an idol has no power of its own but only that which men give it (normally the power they believe it to have and thus allow it), so Victor literally gives up his vitality to give the creature form and life. He becomes “lifeless” with fatigue and a “nervous fever” that nearly kills him after its birth (43). Victor’s effort to create a new being also violates the second commandment God gave the Israelites to “*not make to themselves any image to worship, of their own invention*” (Hobbes 4.45.10). As the creature is a physical embodiment of Victor’s science, which has already been shown to

stand in the place of God for him, he has violated divine law and strayed into demonology as it is commonly understood (Martel 114). What Victor has done is attempt to make *his* “[g]od into a finite, portrayable, and knowable being” (114-115).

The being that Victor conceives is, in the strictest sense, what Hobbes would consider an “idol,” and the thing that supposedly animates it a “phantastical *demon*,” which is a term that Hobbes uses synonymously for the idea of the animating principle behind an idol (Hobbes 4.45.26). It must be pointed out that, in Hobbes’ terms, an “idol” is literally only in the minds of worshippers, as the demons which men believed to possess physical bodies were really only their explanation for senses in organs of perception they did not yet understand, called “spectra” (4.45.8). These could also be termed hallucinations, optical illusions, or any of the sensations men have that, for lack of a more scientific designation, are referred to colloquially as “the creeps.” Otherwise, “demon” was the general name given to a medical or psychiatric illness that men could not account for, although they *believed* at the time that it was a physical thing that overtook the body (4.45.4). Hobbes refutes this belief as a superstition, explaining that although there are angels and demons in the Bible, no “man’s body was possessed or inhabited by them” because supernatural entities do have physical bodies, “though subtle and invisible” (4.45.8); since a “corporeal spirit” cannot occupy the same space as another “body of flesh and bone... full... of vital and animal spirits,” scriptural accounts of possession must not be by literal demons or malignant spiritual forces (4.45.5). Victor’s creature, on the other hand, can properly be conceived as a biblical demon in Hobbes’ terms, as he has a body and moves swiftly enough to appear “subtle and invisible” (4.45.8): fading into

the darkness, scaling “nearly perpendicular” cliffs (Shelley 56), “[fleeing] with more than mortal speed” and (apparently) throwing its voice to seem near, or all around (172).

Just as the creature’s birth is an act of idolatry and mocks the biblical creation story, the physical creature is a perversion of God’s promise that we will be resurrected with new bodies, a promise that Hobbes takes literally in *Leviathan* to mean that we will be raised again in the flesh “*as the angels of God in heaven*” whom Hobbes also takes to have tangible bodies (Hobbes 3.34.23). The creature’s physical form is stronger and swifter than man’s (Shelley 77), survives on the vegetable matter that man was satisfied with in the Edenic state (120), and is impervious to environmental conditions (174). All of these traits make his body preferable to ours and imitate the bodies promised to us when God raises our bodies again (Hobbes 4.44.15); but the creature’s hideousness is a mockery of his power. The creature is superior to us in almost every way, but for all of Victor’s intentions it is more ugly (Shelley 39), and shows that Victor’s creation is only a forgery of the imitation of God, and a flawed human rendering at that. The failed impersonation of humanity makes his physical appearance even more monstrous and demonic. The fact that the creature is built from human parts also points to Hobbes’ illustration of the body politic being a collection of people’s individual wills, submitted to the authority of a single unifying authority, as explained already in chapter two.

Even though Victor explicitly calls his creature a “daemon” or “devil” (56), the fact that he uses these terms before the creature commits a crime either reduces the significance of the label to a prejudice based on appearance or shows that he is apprehensive that his work is inherently transgressive. Victor first uses the terms “creature” (38), “wretch,” and “being” (39) to describe his creation, which are all

sympathetic terms shared by characters like Victor and Justine. Once he uses the term “demonological corpse” (40), the creature is notably distanced from other characters, and from that point is almost exclusively referred to by the appellations of “monster” (twenty eight times), “demon” or “devil” (thirty-one times). “Monster” literally refers to a “creature which is part animal and part human... large, ugly, and frightening” or to the root word “monēre” which means “to warn” (OED). Thus, the term serves as both a physical descriptor and an appropriate expression of Shelley’s use of the creature as a literal warning to her readers not to follow in Victor’s footsteps (Baldick 10). The terms “demon” or “devil” share the same negative connotation as they represent the main antagonists to humanity in the Bible, rather than the more vague term “monster.” Victor is never referred to in these religiously significant terms, even though he is framed as the creature’s double in the novel. The use of these religious monikers thus alienates the creature from other characters in the novel in a textual sense. The division between terms accentuates the dichotomy between Victor as a godlike creator figure and the creature as his opposite, but it is not until the creature admits to murdering William that he can justly be called a monster (117), nor until he declares his enmity against all humankind (79) that the name demon is accurate. Hobbes reasons that demons are either evil angels (Hobbes 3.34.23-24) or the physical enemies of God’s people on Earth, who are “the *Enemy*, the *Accuser*, and *Destroyer*” (3.38.12-13). Hobbes’ classifications of demons would also include Victor as far as he represents the Roman church and creates the monster. Interestingly, the creature is well-equipped to be both the “*Enemy*” and “*Destroyer*” by merit of its form, which inspires enmity in man and has abundant strength, but his role as “*Accuser*” is one that he only begins with the potential to fulfil, and deliberately chooses

to become by framing Justine for William's murder (Shelley 118). This distinction provides context for a scene which otherwise makes little sense. The motive given for framing Justine is that he will never have the affections of a beautiful woman, which is poor motivation given that he is already aware he can take things by force and that she is not "so beautiful as she whose portrait [he] held" (118). If his motivation is jealous rage, the crimes of passion he might commit include rape or murder, but framing someone is a calculated offense; it serves to either injure a specific party (which Justine is not, because he is unaware of her connection to the house of Frankenstein), or draws attention away from the real criminal. As the creature has not revealed himself in Geneva, framing Justine is superfluous. The monster could just walk away and keep the miniature, which has more draw for him in his lonely condition than it provides motive for Justine, who would only have had to ask Elizabeth for it (64). The monster committing his act of "mischief" chiefly for the pleasure of undermining the "sanguinary laws of man" makes more sense than framing a random woman for a murder he would never be charged with (118). His actions cement his role as accuser.

The most important factor that casts the creature as demonic is his self-identification with Lucifer in *Paradise Lost* which, as noted in chapter two, illustrates his choice between the paradigm of human rights imagined by Paine, or Hobbes' commonwealth. Had he identified with Adam he would have aligned himself with Paine's belief that God made Adam in his own image, complete with a conscience that protects the inalienable human rights of others (Fruchtman 24). In Paine's view, these rights are universal by virtue of being born human, as the rights were passed along to each generation to govern themselves and make their own choices as Adam had initially. Adam had a creator, but

otherwise he and Eve were without society and ruled by conscience, not by government or civil law (Shelley 105). This is representative of the model of republicanism that Paine and Godwin believed was best-suited to men. The creature is alienated from human rights by his unnatural creation, and seeing that he is unlike human beings, he selects Lucifer as his role-model instead. Lucifer was one of many angels but he was esteemed beyond them, which corresponds to a king among men or a constitutional monarchy with God at the head. By choosing Lucifer over Adam, the monster makes an argument that he should not be alone, because at least “Satan had his companions... to admire and encourage him” (105). Lucifer also represents the ambition to rebel against authority (or power) and take by force what one feels entitled to. This ambition is seen plainly when the monster seeks Frankenstein out and threatens him to get what he wants. This encounter confirms Hobbes’ view of the state of nature, where every man takes what they need by force (Hobbes 1.13.3). The creature naturally exhibited self-serving behaviour when he claimed a shepherd’s hut and food (Shelley 83). The declaration he makes later that the place was as “divine a retreat as Pandaemonium appeared to the daemons of hell” (83) ties his act of procurement to his choice of Lucifer as a role-model. He also continues to knowingly pilfer from the De Laceys for “[a] considerable period” before he discovers he can feed himself from the woods more easily than they can support him and themselves (which would lead to his discovery and rejection) (88).

The creature’s imitation of the De Lacey family in volume two must be distinguished as the *imitation* of mankind’s virtues. The creature already understands by this point that he can use force or terror to take what he wants from a single man, but he has also experienced the terror and confusion of confronting a community of men at once, and

knows the difference between his own strength and that of a group (83). The equality of men's power over one another is pointed out in *Leviathan*, where Hobbes says that "as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger as himself" (Hobbes 1.13.1). The creature recognizes that although he can overpower one or several men quite easily, he cannot hope to grapple successfully with the whole world. His strength, stature, and appearance become detrimental to him because he appears as the danger that other men must protect themselves from by banding together (1.13.1). The creature decides to abandon the use of his strength at this time, and resorts to imitating man so that he can gain compatriots instead. The creature's resolve to learn language is what Hobbes describes as a "secret machination" (1.13.1). Shelley's aggressive word choices present the creature's frame of mind as one centered on conquest (1.13.1). The creature invades part of the De Lacey home to observe the cottagers surreptitiously, and resolves not to reveal himself until he "become[s a] master of their language" because he thinks that will help "make them overlook the deformity of [his] figure" (Shelley 90). The language used here is only a rendering of the impressionistic intent of his mind before he actually had terms to describe it, but his intent is characterized by force even if his methods are more subtle. Note that the creature does not say he will wait until he can speak to them persuasively or express his feelings and intentions, he says he will wait until he can "*make* them overlook the deformity" [my emphasis] (90). The creature's understanding of language at this point is as "a godlike science," as though the right combination of words will "[produce] pleasure or pain...in the minds and countenances

of the hearers” consistently (88). The creature’s desire to “*master... their language*” shows that he intends to weaponize this science, and use it on the De Lacey’s (90).

Aside from language, the creature imitates other things the De Lacey’s do, including using tools and chopping wood (88). This benefits the creature directly: since he can provide more firewood in a night than Felix can in “several days,” they can make their fire hotter (88), thus improving the creature’s living conditions by heating his hovel through the bordering wall of the cottage (84). Beyond this improvement, the creature recognizes that every time he does a chore unbidden and unobserved, the De Lacey’s take his favours for the work of a “*good spirit*” and are happy for it (91). As he sees the De Lacey’s as “superior beings” and “the arbiters of [his] future destiny” these actions are fitting –first because they preserve the family until spring, and he cannot rest his future hopes in dead protectors; second, because it is right to pay homage to a protector, and the creature can observe by now that human beings give payment in exchange for goods, services and board; third, because he intends to reveal himself to them once he has the right words, and being able to reveal himself as the “*good spirit*” is a persuasive proof that they can trust him and that he deserves their help (91). Imitating humanity ultimately fails for the creature because he is so vastly different from human beings. The last attempt he makes to earn humanity’s favour is in volume two when he rescues a young woman from drowning (115). The girl is unconscious when he drags her out of the water and the man who follows after her assumes the worst, shooting the creature when he expects gratitude (115). The creature finally resolves that no matter what he does, men will never accept him. At this point, all “feelings of kindness and gentleness... [give] place to hellish rage,” so the creature finally “vow[s] eternal hatred and vengeance to all

mankind,” recognizing that he is destined to be set in opposition to the entire species of man (116).

The creature’s physiognomy always excludes him from the community of man, not because the creature is inherently evil (as Shelley shows at length), or for lack of trying to ingratiate himself to man, as he is shown to be very industrious in applying himself to the subjects and activities he thinks will garner affection. The fact that the creature cannot win the love of humanity stems from his very creation. Victor already reads as the archetypal representation of the Roman Catholic priesthood, and therefore his actions – including the construction of the creature– have to be read in light of a Hobbesian suspicion that they are intended to deceive or destabilize communities.

Starting from the assumption that Victor’s actions are not as magnanimous as he claims in the initial stages of the creation process, the difference between *renewing life* and *creating life* has to be discerned. Victor claims that in time he could “renew life where death had... devoted the body to corruption” (36) and implies that the goal of his experiment was to restore life to those who are dead or dying, as it was his childhood dream to discover “the elixir of life... banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death” (23). The applications of this experiment, although alchemical and superstitious in its foundations, would ultimately be medical, and similar to the intentions of Dr. John Hunter in his “Proposals for the Recovery of People apparently drowned” (1776). Victor differs from Hunter in the respect that his science is anti-social, because Hunter, unlike Victor, “shewed [his observations and experiments] to a Society of which [he was] a member” (Hunter 412) for the express interest of promulgating scientific understanding to be improved upon and employed for

the betterment of humanity (413). Hunter's experiment was also only intended to restore "the action of life suspended for a time" (413) unlike other scientists whose attempts to "revive" dead bodies were similar to Victor's hopes of creating life (Oakes 63). The act of restoring life is medical, and beneficial to mankind, but Victor's project of playing with the "ideal bounds" of life is an act of creation; it does not preserve a human life, but creates a new being whose continued absence would have made no difference to humanity (Shelley 36). Furthermore, Victor's hopes of creating "[a] new species" of "many happy and excellent natures" is an admission that he is less interested in ever discovering the power to "renew life" than in creating an abundance of new ones (36).

The secluded and surreptitious act of building the creature is in itself anti-social (which begs the question whether the circumstances of the creature's birth do not shape its personality), but Victor's fantasy that it will be part of a much larger project takes on the nature of an anti-social design in a Hobbesian reading. Victor's hope that "a new species would bless [him] as their creator and source... [and that] no father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as [he] should deserve theirs" assumes that their allegiance to him would supersede the authority of the kings in the countries of their origin, making him the undisputable ruler of a race of non-human beings (36). Victor's calls his antisocial behaviour at this time his "old habits," which included keeping secrets from his family and friends, self-confinement, violating taboos, living in filth, and behaving as a nocturnal creature, depriving him of "all soul or sensation" and dehumanizing him, making him more fit for the company of the subspecies he works to create than man (36). As discussed above, the creature shares traits with demons, and Victor's role in the kingdom of darkness is the image of the Catholic priesthood; thus, the

command of a generation of giants places Victor in the place of “King Oberon... Beelzebub... [or] the *Pope*” (Hobbes 4.47.23). The artificial creatures Victor imagines resemble a perverted resurrection, and what Hobbes calls the greatest “abuse of scripture,” to assert “that the kingdom of God... is the present Church, or multitude of Christian men now living, or that being dead, are to rise again on the last day,” as opposed to the theocratic state of the Jews in the time before Saul (4.44.4). The reality of Frankenstein’s vision is the creation of a stateless nation like the Romani or the Jewish people before 1948, and history has made it abundantly clear that these peoples suffer at the hands of others. The result of Victor’s scheme would be anything but “a torrent of light” unless he believes that they will be the willing slaves of a utopian society (Shelley 36). Either way, Victor’s use of “dark doctrines” to create a nation under him would literally be “setting up an unlawful power over the lawful sovereigns of Christian people” (Hobbes 4.47.17), and the intent behind Victor’s creation results in a being that men *should* naturally fear and despise. If Victor had not abandoned the project and had continued to create beings after his original inclination, then the resulting clash with humanity would eventually have been devastating. The question that arises, from a Hobbesian perspective, is why *does* Victor stop? And why does the result of his experiment turn out so disastrously?

According to a Hobbesian reading, Victor’s creation is the first step in constructing a state to stand in opposition to Christian commonwealths or, even if this is not his intention, he begins to design an under-class that will inevitably come into conflict with man. The first creature he creates is itself the image of the commonwealth in small: he is an artificially created imitation of man, created by man, made of parts of men that

represent the multitude of persons who make up the commonwealth (7). He is also stronger than natural man and of “greater stature” (7) that, combined with his appearance, also makes him a parody of Saul, the first king of the Jews, who “from his shoulders and upward... was higher than any of the people” and *better looking* than anyone else in the nation (1 Samuel 9:2). And just as God’s people were warned that their King would put them in peril (1 Samuel 8:11-18), the creature brings misery down on the head of his creator (Shelley 77). The creature is an overwhelming specimen in both its strength and its hideousness, and upon the completion of Victor’s project, Victor says “the beauty of the dream vanished” and he could no longer stand to be near it (39). If the creature stands for the allegory of the state and Victor stands for a force that is trying to wrest power from the state to himself by setting up an unnatural state beneath him, then his disgust could arise from the sudden realization that what he has created is actually beyond his control. From this perspective, Victor has been counting on the “new species... bless[ing him] as its creator and source” and imagining that they will serve him more faithfully than a father could expect of his children (36). On an allegorical level, Victor attempts to build a state where he would be a king but, instead of building subjects, he over-reached and figured Leviathan on his first attempt: a *nearly* perfect embodiment of the commonwealth, more powerful than any man, including himself. Victor’s fear must have been similar to the realization of some men when they first instituted the commonwealth, and realized that just as Victor “deprive[s] [himself] of health and rest” (39) they had given up their individual rights to the monarch, who has the same potential as the monster to be despotic or benevolent (Hobbes 2.17.13). Faced with a being of undeniable power, and weakened by his role in creating it, Victor recognizes his place in the allegory of

constructing the state as one of the men who put down their right to self-rule, and realizes his hope of being the ruler of many creatures is exploded by the reality that the balance of power is grossly against his interests.

According to Hobbes' views on parental authority, Victor's claim to the gratitude of the beings, which is properly called the "right of dominion by generation...which the parent hath over his [or her] children," is made less complicated because there is no mother, whom Victor would have to contend or contract with for this right (2.20.4). Hobbes declares that children can only completely obey one authority (2.20.4). This dominion "is not derived from the generation [of children]... but from the child's consent, either express, or by other sufficient arguments declared" (2.20.4). Victor is not guaranteed the right to be in charge; the creature which he has created is "more powerful than [Victor]" (Shelley 77) and could choose to acquire dominion over Victor in the other way, by conquest (Hobbes 2.20.4). Victor has created a being (which may very well be immortal) and denied himself of the power whereby a man has "natural force" over his child by "being able to destroy them if they refuse [his governance]" (2.17.15). Victor abandons the creature because he suddenly fears its potential to overtake him, and flees for his life in fear it might "detain" him (Shelley 40). Ironically, as parental authority is invested "in him that nourisheth [the child]... [because] every man is supposed to promise obedience, to him, in whose power it is to save, or destroy him" (Hobbes 2.20.5), Victor deprives himself of the power that he had very nearly acquired. If Victor had gambled on the creature observing the debt it had to him, the creature might indeed have submitted; but as Victor does not guarantee its "*peace and...defense*" and leaves the creature to his

own devices (2.17.13), then it is not properly “[his] creature” and he is not really the creature’s “natural lord and king” (Shelley 77).

Because Victor does not rear him as a subject, the creature eventually realizes his own potential as the figuration of a constitutional monarchy, and although he treats Victor with feigned reverence and says “I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee” (77), he is in fact only performing the same plan he had already tried with the De Laceys –showing a “gentle demeanour and conciliating words.. [to] win [Frankenstein’s] favour” (91). In reality, the creature already recognizes, that by the strength of his (un)natural endowments (77), he is already the “master” and Victor is his “Slave” (140). He must perpetuate his ruse, if he is to convince Victor to build his mate (118), because he still seeks to fulfill the purpose Frankenstein gave him as part of a larger project. The creature was envisioned as one of “many happy and excellent natures” in the design phase, but as Victor abandoned it and precluded the creature’s gratitude, he also left it as one component part of a larger design (36). Just as the state does not function properly without all of its component offices (Hobbes 7), the creature feels incomplete by itself and has a need for community that he requires Frankenstein to fill; this is the “duty” that he requires of Victor (Shelley 77). While the creature might impulsively want to kill Victor, he has an equal compulsion not to, because his need for community can only be fulfilled if Victor creates other monsters (118). Community with Victor can also be guaranteed as long as he is in pursuit, which is why the creature continues to taunt Victor on their journey north, leaving food and directions to follow (174).

When Victor does eventually die, the creature resolves to die with him, because his creator can no longer fulfil his need for community in either sense (190). The creature

reports that he initially wished to be appreciated by “beings” who would ignore his appearance and “love [him] for [his] excellent qualities” (189). The similarity of this to Frankenstein’s vision of a “new species... [with] many happy and excellent natures” (36) reinforces that the creature is, from the beginning, trying to achieve the set of expectations that Victor had for him. Although he claims that the hatefulness of his vices moves him to self-destruction, this assertion does not ‘ring true’; his repeated observation that even Lucifer had “friends and associates in his desolation” suggests that, given a community of beings as evil as himself, he would continue living (189). The true motivation for his suicide is that, with Victor dead, he can no longer satisfy his need for community, and no amount of torture or murder will “consummate the series of [his] being” (190), a phrase with a double meaning: either suicide is the final crime that can provide him satisfaction, or literally, if he is understood to be one component of Victor’s full project, there is no longer any hope of Victor being persuaded to build the complementing pieces.

The creature’s need for community shows how like Leviathan he is, as he also depends on others for purpose. The creature’s rapid development, as related in his tale to Victor charts his greater need for stimulation and humanity as time progresses. At first he barely understands or perceives time beyond sense impressions when he is alone (80), then, with his first discovery of humanity’s existence (no more than a smoldering campfire and some food), he is provoked into problem-solving and basic causal reasoning (81). The first encounters with humanity have less impact on the creature than his interest in their useful material possessions, including food, shelter (83), and artificial light (86). His first lasting bond to humanity, the De Lacey’s, marks an exponential rate of

development; by observing them, his thoughts grow more complex, he begins to understand the basis of emotional comprehension beyond the pleasures or pains of the senses, and he begins to think reflectively (87). The more time he spends with them, the more they strengthen him, firstly by unknowingly providing his shelter (84), then food (88), then the basics of language (89). Eventually the average day in his life goes from spying on the De Laceys and doing simple chores (91) to learning to speak and read (95) and ingesting such advanced literature as “*Paradise Lost...Plutarch’s Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werter*” (103). Throughout the course of his development his limited connection to humanity advances him in ways he does not know. He also grows more dependent on it, until he eventually grows bold enough to try to kidnap and raise William to be his “companion and friend” (117). Even the limited contact the creature has with society strengthens him manifestly, but the strength he gains also becomes a burden. As the creature can neither abide with mankind nor retreat into exile without companionship (120), he has become dependent on community for his strength, and feels a growing need to be acknowledged and sympathized with (120). The creature has already advanced as far as he can in solitude, where he has given birth to “vices,” and he feels that by having “communion with... a sensitive being” he will advance in the realm of virtue, “and become linked to the chain of existence and events” (121). The creature requires community for identity, and thinks it will provide what he lacks.

Similar to the creature, Leviathan’s identity is dependent on those that give it form. The “*sovereignty... magistrates...officers...[and] counsellors*” are the component parts that give it shape and, without community, Leviathan would be more malformed than the creature, by excising organs or amputating limbs (Hobbes 7). Just as the creature would

have withered and starved without stealing from humanity at first (Shelley 88), Leviathan would become enfeebled without the “*wealth and riches* of all the particular members” (Hobbes 7). The creature’s need for validation is also necessary for Leviathan, since it is created by compact for the purpose of the “*peace and common defence*” (2.17.13). The monarch (who is indivisible from the Leviathan as the soul is from the body) is responsible for keeping peace among all members of the social contract by being “a common power, to keep them in awe” (2.27.12). The monarch retains his rights while others voluntarily give up theirs for the mutual defense of all parties involved in the compact that forms the commonwealth (2.17.13).

While *Frankenstein’s* creature may want to kill Victor, he will not because this would release him from the monster’s power. In Hobbesian terms, Victor is the only “subject” the creature has, and he “cannot without [the creature’s] leave cast off the monarchy” (2.18.3-4); the tie that binds them is “only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of [them]” (Shelley 77). The monster has become the monarch, but whatever power he has comes from Victor’s original act of creating him (140). As Richard Devetak describes it, the creature is self-aware of the fact that his role is dependent on Victor’s continued existence, “that their relationship is dialectical and interdependent” (Devetak 625). By giving the creature life and making it stronger than he can possibly hope to destroy or control, Victor has given up his power to one that is set over himself, and has no recourse to withdraw it (77); as the creature is his invention and Victor is responsible for the damage it causes, so the men who institute the commonwealth are said to be the “author of whatsoever he that so beareth their person, shall act, or cause to be acted” (Hobbes 2.17.13-14). The complicated relationship between a representative agent and the

represented body has become truer of the Frankenstein mythology than in the novel itself, as few in the novel are ever alerted to Victor's guilt, but outside of the text in the popular media the monster itself has become infamous by the name "Frankenstein."

Victor can neither free himself from the monster that pursues him (Shelley 57) nor ignore his role in its crimes, which he claims responsibility for after Clerval's death (148). On both the narrative level and in the Hobbesian analogy, the creature is similarly bound to Victor. Like the Leviathan, Victor's creature did not ask to be brought into being (110). The Leviathan (or more properly the sovereign) is left out of the contract that institutes him, because the social contract is not an agreement that he makes with the subject that empowers him, but the agreements between other subjects authorize his power (Hobbes 2.17.13). In Hobbes' opinion, the nature of these agreements means that the sovereign, not having a part in his own installment, has no right to forfeit his power (2.18.4). Likewise, the creature *will not* give up his power over Victor, who is his strongest connection to the world, and his last best hope for community (Shelley 114), nor will he extinguish his own life while this hope persists on some level (77). Thus neither Victor nor the creature can abandon their association with each other, nor can Victor accuse the creature of any crime without acknowledging that he is equally guilty for having given the creature power to perpetrate the acts, as those that have instituted the Leviathan have given the monarch the right to act on their behalf (Hobbes 2.18.6). By extension, according to Hobbesian social contract theory, there is no way for Victor to justly condemn the creature's actions, because any action that the monarch takes is done under the authority that the subject gave up to him, so the subject would be punishing the monarch for the action taken on his own behalf (2.18.6). For this reason, Victor can also

not justly kill the monster because it would be “punish[ing] another, for the actions committed by himself” namely, creating the creature (2.18.7). It is this clause in Hobbes’ social contract theory that gives force to the creature’s charge, that Victor “sport[s]... with life” (Shelley 77).

The creature, on the other hand, may rightfully take any action against Victor, as the sovereign has all “power...of punishing with corporal, or pecuniary punishment” *because* of Victor’s role in its creation –not in spite of it (Hobbes 2.18.14). The monarch’s power rests in his capability to lawfully use his natural right to all things (1.14.4) and the agreement of all others to lay down theirs (1.14.6). The creature’s rights to exact punishment against Victor appear limitless, because “if there be no law made” to restrain Victor’s behaviour, he may assign the punishment that will most effectively “deter” Victor from acting against his interests (2.18.14), including Victor’s destruction of the monster’s bride (Shelley 139). Any punishment that the monster decides will force Victor to consent to his will is therefore lawful, such as murdering Clerval (148). Destroying the bride in this case is a “violation of faith” where payment for services or goods rendered is deliberately retracted (Hobbes 1.14.11), as the creature promised to “leave [mankind] and [Victor] at peace” in return for Victor’s consent to build another creature (Shelley 77). The monster also attaches a punishment to this compact if Victor refuses, to “glut the maw of death... with the blood of [Victor’s] remaining friends” (77). The creature’s action in this instance is therefore justified, as Clerval’s death is not a murder, but an act of punishment for Victor (148), done by Victor’s own authority (Hobbes 2.18.6) in response to the breaking of his promise (Shelley 139), as per previously exchanged oaths where consent was freely given (122). The murder of Elizabeth (165) is a further reprisal

for the destruction of the monster's mate (139), which cannot be held against him either, as the monster has not laid down his natural rights (Hobbes 2.17.13). Thus he still retains his right in the state of nature to all things, and "nothing can be unjust" (1.13.13).

The death of Clerval is truly the most hazardous for Victor in the narrative frame, as he is put in mortal peril at the hands of the novel's third civilian court (Shelley 146-147). But it is also the most telling with regard to his place in the Hobbesian reading. Again, Victor's alignment with the Roman Catholic priesthood is significant here, as Victor has travelled to a foreign country and been charged for a specific and heinous crime (145). Normal circumstances in the novel, as shown by the trial of Justine Moritz (65) and the Turkish merchant (98), represent the civic justice system to be upsettingly prone to passing unjust sentences on victims of circumstance. In the case of Justine, she was found guilty because the "circumstantial evidence" (65) and the "fear, and hatred of the crime" she was charged with was enough to attach an insurmountable stigma of guilt to her in the minds of the jury (63). The Turkish merchant's sentence is passed on him, not because of the crime he is supposed to have committed, but because he is foreign and the courts had reason to be prejudiced against him (98). Victor should by all means face a much greater challenge in Ireland, as he is a foreigner, charged with murder as Justine was, and has *eyewitnesses* (as unreliable as they are) that corroborate each other's statements (146-147). Whereas both of the former cases attracted a death sentence, Victor is not even required to stand at his trial, and every effort is made to prove his innocence (153). The matter that assures his safekeeping, is that the magistrate sends word to his father, who makes haste to help extract him from his circumstances (151-152).

As Victor represents the priesthood, his felicitous release from captivity is not surprising; Hobbes openly complains that all “bishops, . . . priests . . . monks, and friars” can travel abroad, enjoy the security of the state as it is maintained by the sovereign of that land, yet disrespect him and show disregard for the laws of the state (Hobbes 4.47.6-7). These religious figures are exempted from persecution under the law the way that some diplomats enjoy immunity abroad today (as well as exempt from paying into the public system of taxation) because they are under the protection of the papacy (4.47.6-7). This is a destabilizing influence in the state, as it shows the civil authority to be submissive to a foreign power that protects its own subjects from being tried for criminal actions (4.47.7). The acknowledgement of Victor’s father being able to clear Victor (Shelley 151), despite the body of evidence against him (146-147), can be interpreted as a sign of the power of the Pope, who shelters his children while they are abroad (Hobbes 4.47.7), and so they “vanish away from the tribunals of civil justice” (4.47.26). In Hobbes’ time at least, the papacy maintained this power shrewdly in its political dealings with other countries, as sovereigns were bullied by the papacy, which would refuse to perform the ceremony that granted a monarch legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects, or else authorized the subjects to disobey their monarch if he did not bend to the Pope’s authority (4.44.6).

The creature also enjoys immunity from his position as the representative of the commonwealth. He has the right to create laws as he pleases, or amend and repeal them as he so chooses and as often as it is convenient to him (2.26.5-6). The sovereign also cannot be justly tried or charged by his subjects (2.18.7); between these powers, Hobbes acknowledges that the monarch (and therefore the creature) is “not subject” to any laws

which are of his commonwealth, or any other commonwealth which does not first conquer his, because otherwise he would have to set another judge over himself, which would open his subjects to civil war or to being conquered by a foreign power (2.29.9). This place the creature occupies outside the laws of man is demonstrated by the interactions between Victor and the Genevan magistrate he tries to enlist in helping him destroy the monster in volume three. The encounter begins with Victor making an official statement condemning the creature's crimes (Shelley 168). However, once Victor goes into the details of his account, the monster, and the region he is supposed to inhabit amount to the simple truth that whether the magistrate believes his tale is delirium or not, it would be "impracticable" to pursue the monster because the creature is unnaturally stronger and swifter than his officers, in a literal state of nature they cannot pursue (169-170). Although the magistrate offers to pursue the monster as far as he is able, the monster's existence is such that it cannot be put on trial, because there is no power that can hold him to a prison or courtroom (170). So Victor decides that if there is no legal recourse, then he will seek revenge instead of justice (170).

Within the Hobbesian paradigm, the only recourse that Victor has to wrest himself from the creature's authority is if the creature can no longer serve the primary function of the state: to provide its subjects with protection (Hobbes 2.21.21). The failure of the monarch to provide protection is the only circumstance under which Hobbes believes a subject may rightfully shirk the authority of the state and reassert themselves as their own defenders (2.21.21). Victor therefore has no right to rebel because, as I have shown, causing Victor pain falls under the purview of punishment, as does any force that passes down from the state to the subject, and no one else threatens Victor (outside of the civil

courts of Ireland, which is also punishment) (Shelley 147). Thus, without a threat which is set in motion by the monster directly or indirectly, he has no justifiable recourse in the Hobbesian paradigm. In fact, the creature never directly attacks Victor in the course of the novel, so he never comes under *direct* threat from the figure of the commonwealth itself. Even when he is leading Victor into the perils of the arctic, he provides Victor with nourishment to preserve his life (174).

The lack of legitimate recourse to break Victor's compact causes him to take action that is very appropriate for his place in the Hobbesian reading. Victor invokes the "spirits of the dead" and "wandering ministers of vengeance" after the fashion of a priest of the kingdom of darkness (172). He then makes a pilgrimage of his revenge and lives in a remarkably similar way to the creature in solitude and misery (133). Victor's ultimate failure speaks to Hobbes' dislike for the Catholic Church and all inhabitants of the kingdom of darkness, as his address to incorporeal demonic spirits rather than God leads to his destruction, but it also works on the material level. As both Shelley and Hobbes are Christians with conservative principles who have nevertheless written remarkably "atheistic" texts that develop their own "metaphysics, psychology...and ...politics in which the idea of God [plays] no functional role" (Ross, Schneider and Waldman 124), one of the most poignant images in the novel stresses its materialism. When Victor wanders the northern deserts and finds "a repast...prepared for [him] in the desert," he credits a "spirit of good [that] followed and directed [his] steps" (Shelley 173). He takes this as a gift from those forces he called on at the onset of his quest (172), but Shelley is very explicitly pointing to the reality that Victor's "*good spirit*" (91) is just the creature prolonging his torment, for which he must keep Victor alive (174). In the Hobbesian

reading, the sardonic criticism is palpably read-in: even the state that is slowly killing you has more interest in preserving your life than all of the occult forces you pray to.

## Chapter Six

### On a Dreary Night in November...

Although there is no current scholarship that draws a direct comparison between Thomas Hobbes' social contract theory and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, this thesis has made a strong case to expand on Hobbes' theory to fill this void. As I have shown, the efforts of Hobbes' contemporaries to relegate him to an embarrassing chapter in Britain's history only succeeded until individuals more than a century later realized how far he was ahead of his time. Hobbes' description of an a-moral, a-theistic, absolute ruler of artificial construction is the ideal figure to examine in the context of Frankenstein's monster, particularly as far as the story's revolutionary inspirations draw on questions of rule (Hobbes 7). The parallels between the French Revolution and the English Civil war –or more generally any civil conflict– are present in Shelley's work, and this thesis contributes to the long tradition of demonstrating *Frankenstein's* political flexibility and continuing relevance.

This thesis is the first to look at *Frankenstein's* place in a lineage of political thought reaching back to the seventeenth century and to apply Hobbesian theory directly to the novel. A survey of political thought from Thomas Hobbes through Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, and Mary Shelley hereby provides evidence of an affinity between Hobbes' and Shelley's political thinking, especially on the subject of social contract theory.

Frankenstein's creature responds to contemporary political paradigms, as read alternatively as a monstrous representation of the aristocracy, or as a representative of revolutionary violence. While the creature is made to stand both for and against

revolutionary democratization, the more interesting and compelling evidence points towards the creature as a representative of monarchic forces. A close examination of his physical construction, power, animalism, entitlement to those things he feels he deserves from his creator, and attitude towards other characters and their property confirms that, in a Hobbesian reading, the monster is made in the image of an absolute monarch. The fact that the monster occupies the role of the monarch in both the rhetoric of the English Civil War and the French Revolution points to an inherited rhetoric from Hobbes' time, a rhetoric that was used to roughly the same effect more than a century later.

Revolutionary history is also evoked in the settings of the novel. While Randel has noted the significance of real locations such as Geneva and Ingolstadt to *Frankenstein* and the revolutionary-era conflicts that they memorialize, this thesis focusses specifically on contemporary anxieties regarding liberal education and continental influences. Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fears of radical philosophy proliferating in Britain are compared to the concerns of Hobbes' contemporaries over the influences of the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches. Aside from pointing to different expressions of British xenophobia, this comparison demonstrates that the place Victor occupies in Revolutionary-era paranoia has a corresponding incarnation in the English Civil War era. There is also a great deal of evidence for a Hobbesian reading to support Victor's place as a representative of the Roman Catholic priesthood, which establishes his antagonistic position in relation to the creature as a result of his symbolic role as the Hobbesian Leviathan. Victor's education in Ingolstadt and Geneva is accordingly reviewed both in the terms of Burke's allegations against faithless revolutionary intellectuals and against

the original use of the images Burke has adopted that were levelled against supernaturalism.

The fourth part of this study demonstrates that the family unit in *Frankenstein* is a troubled miniature show of the influences of revolutionary angst on the domestic sphere, and explores the father-child relationships in the novel. The most significant finding is that the most important father-child relationships resist patriarchal influences and portray children pushing boundaries into brave new frontiers. This insight into parent-child relationships in the novel is evocative of the larger political atmosphere of Shelley's time as America, France, and parts of Europe moved towards democratization. Shelley also demonstrates a level of tension in her writing as her novel becomes a forum for expressing her personal contention with her father's moral and political philosophy, especially Godwin's comments on the nature of society, promises, sympathy, necessity and utilitarianism. An examination of changes between the 1818 and 1831 editions show furthermore that Shelley's opinions evolved and became more conservative, particularly as she censored passages that clearly exhibited the influences of her inner circle, and rewrote them according to more conservative and religious traditions. Godwinian necessity, materialism, and utilitarianism are called into question and contrasted with Hobbesian theory to show that Shelley's attitudes towards social order coincide more with Hobbes' portrayal of the social contract than Godwinian expectations of individuals arranging themselves in loose but responsible societies sustained by utilitarianism.

Finally, the conflict between Victor and his creature is re-envisioned in strictly Hobbesian terms as a struggle for political power in a world that operates under the assumptions of social contract theory laid out in *Leviathan*. The creature is read as the

Hobbesian Leviathan based on the artificial birth, power, and unnatural gifts that allow it to behave in ways that Hobbes would only deem appropriate for one in the condition of nature. By contrast Victor, who is born into the social contract, is guilty of trying to introduce a new race of beings under his control that would have elevated him to the status of a demigod. Victor is therefore shown to represent the dark threat of the Roman Catholic priesthood and revealed to be the novel's natural antagonist, which in turn sets the creature as the would-be protagonist. The sympathy garnered for the creature is like that allocated to the monarchy, and his faults are excused as his exclusive right to rule according to his own power. The figure of Victor on the other hand more thoroughly deserves the condemnation of Burke and Hobbes, who would cast him as a dangerously subversive element according to their theories of social order and the responsibilities of the subject to the governing bodies over him.

This thesis shows not only that Hobbes' *Leviathan* provides a valid political frame for interpreting *Frankenstein*, it also offers a unique perspective that enriches our understanding of Shelley's most famous novel. This reading illustrates the importance of tracing the lineage of inspirational material for a novel back further than its immediate temporal context through to the founding epistemology, incorporating a level of historicity to the point that an alternative and valid reading can even subvert the commonly accepted interpretation. As well, the lineage of thought should be respected, and the thinkers of antiquity be given their due, as Victor Frankenstein's ancient philosophers laid the groundwork that propelled him beyond the imaginations of those who mocked them (30). The breadth of this examination has been a period of human

progress in political, scientific, and moral development spanning nearly two hundred years, bookended by human suffering and fear.

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