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Power and Insecurity:
Foucauldian Biopolitics in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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English Honors

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Introduction

*The body politic, as well as the human body, begins to die as soon as it is born,
and carries in itself the causes of its destruction. (Rousseau)¹*

In the epigraph, Jean-Jacques Rousseau astutely observes the essential fact that makes both life and politics similarly tragic endeavors: even if they are not destroyed by outside forces, they are destined to be ruined by their own internal processes. As he says, biology dictates that the most accomplished individual will perish, at best, by their own organs' failure; history demonstrates that even if adversaries do not conquer the greatest empires, they will surely succumb to flaws and instabilities inherent in their own institutions. Perhaps the most dramatic—if not the most significant—of those flaws is a state's misapplication of its own power. Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein* has been extensively discussed in regard to biblical and biological power structures that Victor overthrows—here the argument is that it is, in short, unnatural by divine and scientific laws alike for a man to create a new being: that is a clout reserved for women and God. It has been read as well as a religious allegory, and considering the myriad allusions to *Paradise Lost*, this makes some sense. Other critics have interpreted the text in relation to Shelley's contemporary scientific and political revolutions.

My thesis, in contrast to the interpretations briefly alluded to above, utilizes Michel Foucault's biopolitical theories to examine power dynamics in *Frankenstein*. Applying biopolitics to this novel may not be obvious—after all, its narrative focuses on individuals. Yet one may interpret each of its characters as analogous to the groups and institutions involved in political power. In political science, and particularly in the study of international relations, states are often perceived as “unitary actors”—that is, a national government's various components are

¹ *The Social Contract and the Discourses* 257

folded into one synchronous entity to more easily examine its interactions with other states. This establishes a precedent, then, for my similar treatment of this novel's characters as representative of the government. Foucault charts a "genealogy of the modern state and its different apparatuses on the basis of a history of governmental reason" (*Security, Territory, Population* 354)². I apply a similar approach to the histories of *Frankenstein's* principle narrative voices—Walton, Victor, and his creation. I will argue that both Victor and the being he crafts, whom I will call Adam,³ alternatively act out varying forms of the kinds of political power that Foucault later describes; while he, however, schematizes these forms as occurring sequentially, the novel's characters, I argue, combine, waver, or switch—sometimes in the space of a passage—among the options Foucault describes as occurring gradually through time. My large point will be that in *Frankenstein* such vacillations in "governing" strategies generate enormous instability and ultimately tragedy.

Foucault's Biopolitics

In the mid-to-late 1970s, Michel Foucault gave a series of lectures at the Collège de France, titled *Security, Territory, and Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics* in their later English-language publications, in which he attempted to identify what he believed to be a new and developing relationship between occidental governments and the citizens living within their borders. These lectures produced the term "neo-liberalism," a word now widely used in political and economic discourse to indicate globalization of commerce, extensive deregulation of

² This title hereafter is abbreviated *STP*

³ Though *Frankenstein's* creation is never explicitly named in the novel, during their first encounter he compares himself to the Adam of *Genesis* and *Paradise Lost* (Shelley 119). Because I am analyzing his character extensively it seems necessary to assign him a proper name, so I refer to him as Adam throughout this thesis.

industry, and privatization of government services. For Foucault, neo-liberalism, diverging significantly in its approach to governance from that of previous centuries, refers in the broadest sense to the government's increasing tendency to exert its power over its citizens in virtually all aspects of their everyday life. In his lectures, he systematically charts the development of governmental strategies from the early-modern period to the present day. He draws from his work *Discipline and Punish*—in which he analyzes the end of torture as a public spectacle and its replacement by the modern prison and its disciplinary techniques—expanding the scope of disciplinary power to include as its object whole populations rather than just prisons or educational institutions. Under biopolitics, western governments now use subtle, nearly imperceptible tools to compel citizens' compliance and they consider deviance in terms of tolerance thresholds rather than something that should simply not be tolerated.

Foucault's theories of biopolitics are concerned primarily with the interactions between the state and a population, which he defines “not as a subject, a people or a public,” but rather as a “cohort of biological individuals” (Dillon 267). Biopolitics is therefore concerned with “surveillance and the accumulation and analysis of data concerning behavior, the patterns which behavior displays and the profiling of individuals” in order to secure their well-being—these profiles, patterns, and probabilities are important, after all, because a state cannot simply construct an assemblage of effective institutions and protocols without first understanding precisely what they are evaluating (Dillon 267, 276). While the classical sense of security obliged a state only to ensure that its population was physically protected, in biopolitics the goal is more abstract: a state employs its surveillance and statistical models to regulate behavior in order to promote a population's development, or what Dillon calls their “fructification” (271). For the state, the citizen is a body and that body is a machine—a tool which requires

“disciplining, optimization of its capabilities, and the extortion of its forces” (Dillon 271) for its own benefit insofar as it benefits the state.

Yet to achieve the ultimate goal of this convoluted process is in fact virtually impossible, because as a population “fructifies,” it changes and thus ever requires new models of biosecurity, which thus simultaneously sustain and undermine themselves. Its effectiveness is further hampered because biosecurity diminishes the significance of national borders—a population, when not simply a nationality, can and often will transcend such barriers; this movement hinders a state’s statistical and surveillance efforts and tends to render calculations based on them imperfect at best.

Foucault notes a major shift in modern Western governments’ attitudes and discourse regarding war. Though biosecurity pretends to protect its people, one of its tactics for doing so—war—ironically undermines that safety. Thus, Foucault notes the “synthesis between the discourse of war and the discourse of peace” (Spieker quoting Foucault 189) in modern political thought, a concept which has been elaborated since the beginning of the Global War on Terror. Another potential outcome of this paradoxical relationship between war and peace occurs when a democratic government attempts to maintain a balance between security and the individual liberties of its citizens. Mark Neocleous summarizes this concept, stating that “the general claim is that in seeking security, states need to constantly limit the liberties of citizens, and that the democratic ideal is one which always aimed to strike the right ‘balance’ between liberty and security” (131-132). This dynamic establishes a contradiction by which the more one attempts to secure the future, the more one generates what are precariously close to authoritarian restrictions, leading to instability—and perhaps even insecurity—in the present. Government efforts to protect the future involve calculations of probability: aggregations of copious minor risk factors

which individually “may defy strict probabilistic and statistical forms of risk calculation”; and yet, when arrayed as associated possibilities they open space for the inference of futures yet to come” (Moore 56). In effect, modern biopolitics seek to “make life live” rather than “let life live” (Dillon 269).

Thesis Summary

This thesis focuses on Walton, Frankenstein, and Adam’s futile search for security. Such a quest is perhaps understandable, given the plethora of historical circumstances—ranging from the French Revolution to Napoleon’s domination of Europe—that span the novel and make the characters’ lives insecure; just to offer one example, Adam is born in 1793, the year of the revolution’s bloody “Reign of Terror.” In his essay “The Political Geography of Horror in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*,” Fred Randel examines the text in relation to its contemporary geo-political landscape. Responding largely to other similar projects that choose not to include *Frankenstein* in their studies—one specifically omitting it on the grounds that it is supposedly focused more on the future of science than the outcome of its geo-political history—Randel suggests that the novel “is an astute extension and complication of the political geography of Gothic, as applied to the spread of revolutionary ideas, and of revolution itself” (466). He argues that Shelley advocates that society abandon both violent revolution and the Bourbon reconstruction’s inflexibility in favor of a fundamental and peaceful reorganization of social government. For instance, he equates Adam’s suicide by pyre in the glacial North to the Russians’ burning of Moscow in 1812, each destroying something beloved in order to deny it from an outsider—scientific inquiry and Napoleon’s army, respectively (467-468). The novel for Randel, then, becomes an amalgamation of symbols occurring geographically at or near their

real-world counterparts. As I will argue, Frankenstein in particular generates insecurity by experimenting with different sorts of power dynamics.

Thus, rather than focusing on geo-political conflicts, I explore the internal power dynamics in *Frankenstein*, by analyzing the narratives of Walton, Victor, and Adam. I begin in Part I by investigating how the novel's frame story establishes the rational inconsistencies and paradoxes of biopolitics. I am of course applying Foucault retroactively to something written before he advanced his theories, but one of my goals in this thesis is to see the outcome of such analysis on the novel as well as to investigate what such an interpretation might tell us about biopolitics itself. As I shall show, the fallacious logic which informs Walton's chosen departure date and his affinity for Victor in the first part of the novel will be echoed by the principal characters throughout the text.

In Part II, I grapple with what I see as Frankenstein's unstable "governing" process, one which vacillates between discipline and biosecurity. If the goal of control is stability, the character fails miserably, ironically creating volatility at every turn. Victor begins as an individual member of a population, though he early learns the values of governance from his father; his mother's death, however, traumatizes him and inspires him to develop these skills in order to cultivate what we shall call, anachronistically, a model of biosecurity. As I will show, Frankenstein's inability to consistently maintain one political philosophy precedes his own ruin: rather than being a vehicle for implementing order, his exertion of different forms of power tend to develop greater chaos. While Foucault systematically identifies the progressive development of governmentality as a series of stages or eras, each building upon or modifying the last, Victor wavers wildly and desperately between modes of control. His fundamental irrationality contributes to this inconsistency, generating tremendous insecurity in his and his family's lives.

I move, in Part III, to the creation, Adam, who, because abandoned and directionless, finds himself in the Lockean state of nature—that is, exclusive of civil society and everything requisite to it. Originally, he does not aspire to obtain any brand of power or authority, but simply to integrate with society. In his effort to do so, however, he inadvertently learns to employ, like Victor, various manners of wielding power. Significantly, he seems to learn this “naturally,” as he practices surveillance by gazing on the cottagers’ living-space through the “almost imperceptible chink” (125) in the wall of his hovel. Proleptically following Foucault’s genealogical timeline, the creation almost immediately finds himself in the most advanced and modern position of power. When his observations and desire to help the De Lacey’s fail, he leaps toward biopower—bypassing the historical progression of governmental method Foucault describes: a progression through the stages of savagery, barbarism, sovereignty, discipline, and arriving ultimately at the modern biopolitical state. Like Victor, Adam’s subversion of power’s historical progression generates instability, which devolves into a primitive and violent competition at the novel’s conclusion.

Very little scholarly criticism has linked Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* to *Frankenstein* and only one article has applied his work on security and population to the novel.⁴ Offering one reason for this, David Collings’ *Monstrous Society* claims that literary criticism on *Frankenstein* often interprets the novel as a conflict between outmoded alchemy and post-enlightenment science, as an extensive response to Percy Shelley’s poetry, or as an example of the Freudian uncanny by its virtue of being conceived as a ghost story. Collings argues that *Frankenstein*’s significance, in fact, lies in how it presents a tension that exists in the scientific

⁴ See Jeffrey Cox and Jillian Heydt-Stevenson’s “Embracing Insecurity: *The Last Man*, *Frankenstein*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *The Cenci*.” Forthcoming from *Essays in Romanticism* 25.1 October, 2018.

endeavor itself, a struggle “between the activity generated by the quest for the impossible and the shattering effects of realizing that goal” (194-195). That is, the creation is unnatural not because it directly contradicts empirical laws which preclude the viability of resurrection, but because it “would be the result of violating an even more basic, ontological prohibition on achieving the impossible, of altering the biological conditions that underlie all human endeavor” (193-193). In making this argument, Collings employs Foucault’s *The Order of Things* to explain how Victor, following post-enlightenment scientific tradition, interprets the myriad corpses from which he builds Adam as merely assemblages of biological matter (200). While I agree with Collings, I will argue that Foucault’s later work on biosecurity reveals that Frankenstein’s and Walton’s faith in the data which informs biopolitical decisions fails because this is constantly in flux, so each decision must find a new set of data. My thesis thus charts new territory in turning not to Foucault’s best known, but his later, and less-often read political philosophy.

Part I: Travelling for Security

Everything is in continual flux on earth. Nothing on it retains a constant and static form, and our affections, which are attached to external things, necessarily pass away and change as they do. (Rousseau)⁵

The novel's frame story offers the first instance of a character's interest in security and establishes a desire for it as one of the text's central themes. In Walton's first letter to his sister, he writes,

I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible, and diffusing a perpetual splendour. There—for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in previous navigators—there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. (51)

Walton's quest to reach the North Pole represents his desire to establish and guarantee a secure and utopic future—one characterized by beauty and light. The captain employs a litotic rhetorical strategy to emphasize the degree to which he is absorbed by this pursuit—his claim that he finds it impossible to imagine a future of despondency and insecurity serves to underscore the urgency and inflexibility of his aspiration for security. Much as biopolitics aims to encourage a population's development, Walton hopes that his discovery of a passage between Russia and America will comprise an "inestimable benefit" (52) to mankind. His reliance on "previous navigators" resembles a government's employment of calculative measures in support of its efforts towards security. However, Walton fails to note (or perhaps ignores) the obvious fact that for part of the year—indeed, the period during which his first letter, dated December 11, is written—the northern sun does not rise at all. In proclaiming a desire for safekeeping he also introduces one of biosecurity's inherent paradoxes—the paradoxical striving for future

⁵ *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* 68

reassurance tends to produce instability, or even insecurity, in the present—and the irony of the timing of his letter’s date and optimism for the future with the winter’s darkest months foreshadows the novel’s negative outcome.

Walton continually fantasizes about the secure future he seeks while the language he chooses strengthens the parallel between his objective and Foucault’s theory of biosecurity. He remarks, “I may discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle, and may regulate a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever” (51-52). His mention of “power” and regulation evoke the proleptic relationship between a population and the state: according to biopolitical theory, the state’s employment of power is essential both to its efforts towards securing its population and its own continued legitimacy, and regulation is one of its primary agents of influence. To be more secure, a state attempts to influence its population by similarly “render[ing] their [...] eccentricities consistent” (52) with the government’s ideal: that is eradicating anything that differs from the norm.

In his second letter, Walton argues that things can be made secure; however, the irony here is that such a plan requires a static state of politics and behavior, which his situation—dependent on the weather and his crew of less-than-enthusiastic men—lacks. He writes that his commitment to his journey remains

as fixed as fate; and my voyage is only now delayed until the weather shall permit my embarkation. The winter has been dreadfully severe; but the spring promises well, and it is considered as a remarkably early season; so that, perhaps, I may sail sooner than I expected. I shall do nothing rashly, you know me sufficiently to confide in my prudence and considerateness whenever the safety of others is committed to my care. (56)

In arguments that could be applied to the captain himself, biosecurity’s critics identify how as government develops a security plan—informed by the most recent available data—the conditions are already in the process of changing. The statistics upon which a régime has acted

have become quickly irrelevant, and a state finds it virtually impossible to constantly and effectively adapt. Walton's supposed concern for the "safety" of his crew again recalls biosecurity, which focuses on the safety of the population rather than "the safety of the territory, or the safety of the sovereign who rules over the territory" (Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* 65)⁶—in this case, Walton's crew rather than his ship or his own person. By this logic, promoting his crew's welfare will better ensure the Captain's own protection, for a secure company will tend to the ship and their leader's well-being better than he would by his own efforts alone. Walton determines that his future is "fixed as fate," as are the "promises" which inform his calculations. However, although he claims to take the most deliberate care possible in his judgments, there remain too many variables beyond his knowledge for him to make perfectly rational amendments to his chosen day of departure: perhaps those same informants who claimed an early spring may think differently the day following his embarkation, though it would be too late by then to alter his plan.

Walton's expressed admiration for Frankenstein initiates the transition to the latter's story in which Victor represents various manifestations of the state power. Walton believes that "all that [Victor] does appears to spring solely from the interest he instinctively takes in the welfare of those who surround him" (61), yet clearly Victor's intentions are selfish. In Frankenstein's last moments he appeals to the crew's pride, demanding that they further risk their well-being or else "be handed down as men who had not strength enough to endure" (214) their present adversity for the supposed purpose of being "hailed as the benefactors of [their] species" (213). Just as a government protects its own power under the pretense of benevolence towards its citizenry, so too does Frankenstein's effected benevolence only "appear" to be genuine. Walton's

⁶ This title hereafter is abbreviated *BBP*

misrecognition of Victor's motives mirrors his own self-deception, and this incongruity will remain a pattern throughout Frankenstein's narrative. Walton's admiration for Frankenstein enables these established biopolitical themes to follow the narrative's subsequent transition to the latter's perspective.

Part II: Educating for Security

Ambition, avarice, tyranny, the mistaken foresight of fathers, their neglect, their harshness, are a hundredfold more harmful to the child than the blind affection of the mother. (Rousseau)⁷

Frankenstein's first words establish his father, and by extension himself, as a representative of the state. Significantly, his narrative opens with his announcement of his national, political, and specific geographical position. As if he were charting himself on a map, he explains,

I am by birth Genevese; and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics; and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation. He was respected by all who knew him for his integrity and indefatigable attention to public business. He passed his younger days perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country; and it was not until the decline of life that he thought of marrying, and bestowing on the state sons who might carry his virtues and his name down to posterity. (64)

Alphonse Frankenstein is heir to a long line of politicians, and, in being consistently engaged with public affairs, he effectively comes to manifest the administrative state itself, whose reputation of legitimacy hinges on "public opinion" and whose agency stems from "governmentality" (Foucault, *STP* 275, 108). Because each region of eighteenth-century Switzerland operated as an independent city-state, Alphonse ostensibly holds considerable power within the Genevan territory. Though Victor does not seek political office, his father's act of "bestowing [his son] on the state" and transmitting to him those "virtues" associated with legitimacy and governmentality suggest that he, like his father, personifies the state and is capable of employing the sovereign's punitive power, the disciplinary authority of the more modern state, and of utilizing "apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" in the interest his own "survival" (Foucault *STP* 109).

⁷ *Emile* 5

In the process of learning those values, however, Victor describes himself in terms of population and as the object of an associated interest in security. He recalls,

When my father became a husband and a parent, he found his time so occupied by the duties of his new situation, that he relinquished many of his public employments, and devoted himself to the education of his children. Of these I was the eldest, and the destined successor to all his labours and utility. No creature could have more tender parents than mine. My improvement and health were their constant care, especially as I remained for several years their only child. (65)

First as a long-time only child, and then particularly as one of several children, Frankenstein is a member of “a cohort of biological individuals” (Dillon 267)—a population. His father’s “constant care” of his “improvement and health” strongly resembles the state’s concern with the improving the body we call the population. The Frankenstein family becomes a state-population relationship in miniature—Foucault notes that the family is “a privileged instrument for government [...] rather than a chimerical model for good government” (*STP* 105). In this instance, then, Alphonse represents the state, and his interest in his son’s “improvement” parallels the relationship between the state and population rather than that of a father and his son. This interest in the people’s welfare constitutes one of those “virtues” that Victor inherits and which will inform his later behavior.

The children’s education exemplifies the exercise of influence—which characterizes biopolitics—rather than that of discipline or sovereignty. Victor claims that

Our studies were never forced; and by some means we always had an end placed in view, which excited us to ardour in the prosecution of them. [...] [S]o far from study being made odious to us through punishment, we loved application, and our amusements would have been the labours of other children. (67)

The Frankenstein youth here embody the *homo aeconomicus*—rational actors who “pursue [their] own interest, and whose interest converges spontaneously with the interest of others”; it is precisely this rationality that allows their education to be “manageable” (Foucault, *BBP* 270). Rather than prescriptive labor (in this case, their study) under the threat of punishment, the

children's behavior is regulated indirectly when their father simply establishes a desired outcome, thus rendering them more industrious and efficient than they would have been with a prescribed curriculum, which, according to Victor, results in a superior education.

Frankenstein's first encounter with the author Cornelius Agrippa subsequently problematizes his warm recollection of this method of *laissez-faire* learning which, as I will show, leads to disaster. He states that he "cannot help remarking here the many opportunities instructors possess of directing the attention of their pupils to useful knowledge, which they utterly neglect" (68). He blames his father's lack of prescriptive direction—the very method of instruction that he had previously advocated—for his unorthodox and apparently useless interest in Agrippa's writing. Victor here demonstrates an inconsistency of thought, one that initiates a series of logical contradictions which contribute to Victor's later failures and despair, while also offering a discreet criticism of *laissez-faire*—an economic model which can be tremendously fruitful until the effects of some risky, unregulated, and destabilizing behavior compound and generate an irreparable and disastrous outcome.

The works of Agrippa and Magnus inspire Victor's pursuit of a secure future in which disease is entirely prevented. He says,

I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. But the latter obtained my most undivided attention: wealth was an inferior object; but what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death! (69)

By shifting his interest from medicine and from caring for others on an individual basis and redirecting his focus toward supernatural immunity from disease, he establishes a concern with apparatuses of security. Foucault utilizes the example of endemic disease to illustrate the distinction between conventional medical treatment of individuals: he states that reactive practices to manage infected individuals or multiplicities of individuals, such as quarantine, are

typical examples of disciplinary management. A government's transition to vaccination and inoculation, however, marks a trend towards standardizing measures of biosecurity—a proactive method which aims to produce in the future a healthier and more secure aggregate population (Foucault 57-58). Victor's focus on "man" as an aggregate confirms that his concentration is directed towards population rather than the individual "human frame." Frankenstein's elusive "elixir of life" represents vaccination and any other mechanism of security, and its connotation with the fantastic (or even mythical) here hints at biosecurity's inherent practical inefficacy, which is one of the principle targets of biosecurity's critics. Though vaccination has proven to be effective in disease prevention, it has also been blamed for the natural development of deadlier and vaccine-resistant pathogens often referred to as "superviruses" which both undermine the objective of vaccination and may eventually create a plethora of new problems which the government must address.

Still, Victor's approach to his newfound objective, which merges "governing" strategies of biopolitics and discipline, suggests his intent to implement the sovereign's power, an archaic analytical process of penal order that will confound his endeavor to establish security and foreshadow his later struggles. The cycle of life and death comprises a natural circulation, which biosecurity intends to carefully promote, though Frankenstein explicitly proposes to prohibit one essential component of that cycle: death. Foucault explains that such power's employment is based on "a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited" (*STP* 5)—in Victor's case, health and disease respectively. Insisting on perceiving health and disease as two binary absolutes will later render Frankenstein's creation of Adam impossible to manage. Foucault notes that, since "[m]echanisms of security do not replace disciplinary mechanisms, [...] in reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves

change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated” (8). Victor’s analytical process, rather than evolving, wavers, I would argue, between those of penal order and security.

Frankenstein first embraces circulation’s value and then tries to dismiss its role in his work, a subverting, but ultimately impossible move that demonstrates the inconsistent logic which informs his motivations.

Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay [...]. I paused, examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of that darkness a sudden light broke in upon me [...]. But this discovery was so great and overwhelming, that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result. (78-79)

Although here Frankenstein tries to denounce the circulation of life and death in his desire to “murder” mortality, he embraces it, though he doesn’t comprehend this. This is because insofar as he sees decay as a dynamic rather than as a merely static process, he reveals how circulation’s kinetic quality not only fascinates him but is in fact a phenomenon which he finds useful. His unacknowledged (to him) embrace of motion, flow, and exchange contradicts his desire to render that process fixed. The proleptic irony here is that though Victor embodies one of biopolitics’ primary mechanisms, calculation, he further (unconsciously) draws on the second method of Foucault’s system: circulation. In biopolitics circulation and calculation are employed in tandem in its effort to keep a population healthy; in contrast, Frankenstein wants to separate them, not because he wants to keep a group well, but because he strives to eliminate death itself.

The dramatic effects of Frankenstein’s work on his own person demonstrate biosecurity’s misdirected focus on the future. While he is assembling Adam from the remains of various stolen cadavers, he observes that

My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement. Sometimes, on the very brink of certainty, I had failed; yet still I clung to the hope which the next day or the next hour might realize. One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself; and the moon gazed on my

midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding places. (81)

Ironically, in order to secure the future, Victor experiences dramatic costs in the present. With his self-described pallid cheek and withered frame, he nearly resembles a corpse. His obsession with obtaining the absolute certainty of immortality leads him to the brink of death—incongruously, the exact end he intends to proscribe. Here, the moon's detached gaze evokes a distance between natural order and the artificial and tenuous power which Frankenstein wields, though he mistakenly believes that he can, without consequence, pursue natural power "to her hiding places." Like a biopolitical government he stubbornly insists on achieving his goal, clinging to the belief that the beneficial results of his effort exist in the future while failing to reactively identify and address problems as they arise spontaneously.

When he describes his construction of Adam, Frankenstein uses the language of security, anticipating Foucault's notion of neoliberal governmentality.

No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child as completely as I should deserve theirs. (80-81)

This passage solidifies Victor's biopolitical objective of "making life live" (Dillon 269). He creates only one being yet aspires to create "many" creatures, indicating his goal of ultimately producing a multiplicity of biologically similar individuals, and thus establishing Adam as representative of a distinct population. In identifying as a patriarch, he describes himself as a type of deity-shepherd—a role that characterizes the modern government (Foucault notes an etymological connection between the words "father" and "shepherd"). (Foucault, *STP* 138). That is, with his scientific progress he intends to "fructify" this new population and to illuminate and improve their "dark world." Death becomes the "ideal bounds" which his application of

what Foucault would call liberal ideology seeks to transcend, though the tumultuous and unpredictable storm-like qualities of his present enthusiasm foreshadow his failure: what will become his obsessional desire to secure the future will be immediately associated with instability in that future-present.

Victor's subsequent dream, however, betrays that another of his intentions is that of exercising power as a traditional sovereign—an inconsistency which further renders his motives unreliable.

I slept indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror. (84)

Victor's dream further demonstrates his perceived sense that the future can only be secure if death does not exist. The psychiatrist Abraham Brill explains that dreams “which represent the realization of a repressed wish in a form insufficiently or only partially concealed” are “generally accompanied by fear, which interrupts the dream” (42). Frankenstein masks his scientific endeavor with the honorable intent of benefiting mankind, but this dream reveals two conflicting urges: he truly wishes to save Elizabeth from her inevitable death but only because he hopes to ensure she will be his indefinitely. Her maternal qualities cause Victor to associate his fiancé closely with Madame Frankenstein, and by that connection he ascribes to her his late mother's susceptibility to disease and death. When he embraces her, he is reminded of the trauma he experienced after scarlet fever took his mother's life and he reveals the motivation for his actions: his goal is not to influence life, but to eradicate death—and not even death within an aggregate population, but for this one individual: Elizabeth. This goal, though repressed,

contradicts his declared desire to benefit mankind and adds another dimension of inconsistency to his use motivations.

This desire to alter nature's fundamental principles in order to save one individual recalls sovereignty's purpose: protecting the sovereign's life, though Victor's repressed desire is to protect another individual rather than himself—yet another incongruity in his philosophy. Approaching Frankenstein's obsession with power from a perspective differing from my Foucauldian methodology, though one that enriches it, Dionyssios Agiomavritis suggests in "Politics and Monsters: The Unmediated Desire for Order and Meaning in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" that the novel demonstrates the danger that follows one's abandonment of the Aristotelian "Golden Mean" in pursuit of existential fulfillment. He argues that the novel's epigraph (a passage from *Paradise Lost*) primes the reader to link that metaphysical rebellion to the existential rebellion the characters experience, yet while "Milton's Adam embraces the given order," both Walton and Frankenstein defy it. Agiomavritis goes on to demonstrate how the novel's primary characters' anti-social pursuit of fulfillment invariably leads to their tragic ends. As I have argued, the yearning for control that the protagonists crave leads them to pursue that authority in inconsistent, destabilizing ways.

Victor's dream is interrupted by Adam, whose infantile gestures oblige him to recognize his creation's sentience. The resulting cognitive dissonance he experiences compels Frankenstein to abdicate his power and flee.

He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs. I took refuge in the court-yard belonging to the house which I inhabited. (84)

When Adam approaches his maker in bed (one's most personal space) with mannerisms and behavior which resemble a young child's, Victor's response is to see how the "newborn's" smile

and his affectionate gesture demonstrate his infinite—but also, as Victor realizes, unstable—potentiality. Frankenstein had wished to construct a secure future for his creation, which in the creator’s mind required a “beautiful” being, yet he had evidently failed to realize how grotesque Adam’s anatomy truly is: his tremendous size alone differentiating him from all of humanity. Victor had thus failed to apprehend that his creation’s physical abnormality must eventually generate instability for his creation—an instability that must inhibit, or perhaps make impossible, those “happy natures” that he had envisioned for it during his initial enthusiasm. His only recourse seems to be to flee—to “seek refuge”—for once the creature lives, breathes, and moves, Frankenstein recognizes his creation’s difference. Much like he later predicts, as he imagines the female creature turning from her companion “with disgust” and toward “the superior beauty of man” (174), he believes that Adam will soon understand his ugliness and seek vengeance upon his creator. Apropos of this, Foucault states that “if everyone were to know everything about the society in which they live, the government would no longer be able govern and the revolution would take place immediately” (*On the Government of the Living* 15). Thus Frankenstein predicts Adam’s eventual understanding of his exile, recognizes instability as inevitable, and by fleeing from his room literally cedes his territory and preemptively accepts his own removal from power.

As I discussed above, Victor has tried on these positions of authority—sovereignty, discipline, and biopower—but for the first time, he explicitly admits his inability to retain control, though he does not recognize why his plan has failed: “Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment: dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space, were now a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!” (84). Not having factored Adam’s longing for human connection into his calculations, Frankenstein

must face a new and complex set of variables which abruptly destroy the imagined future security which he has been pursuing. Unable to negotiate the instability, he relinquishes his assumed authority. In the words of Pericles, we could say that Victor “blame[s] fortune when [his] calculations turn out to be defective” (Qtd. in Foucault, *GSO* 176).

As he did above when he flees his creation and “the scene of the crime,” Victor continues to abdicate his power when he symbolically relinquishes his self-command by physically relocating and deferring his agency to Henry.

I underwent a kind of rough usage, ill befitting the wounds that my mind had sustained. Ever since the fatal night, the end of my labours, and the beginning of my misfortunes, I had conceived a violent antipathy even to the name of natural philosophy. When I was otherwise quite restored to health, the sight of a chemical instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous symptoms. Henry saw this, and had removed all my apparatus from my view. He also changed my apartment. (92)

Apparently unable to repress the “fatal” experience and unable even to look at the things of his former work, he relies on Henry to move him to a different apartment, as he no longer possesses any of those attributes which marked him as either sovereign or biopolitical governing authority. His situation now resembles that of the population while Henry acts in a governmental capacity to modify his environment so as to promote his gradual improvement. The juxtaposition of his present serenity with his former distress emphasizes how the strenuous, analytical work of creation has muddled his mind and rendered him passive: Foucault repeatedly notes the problems inherent in sovereignty, discipline, and biosecurity, but when these approaches are conflated (an issue Foucault does not discuss) the results—personified here in Victor’s post-traumatic stress—appear to be disastrous to the state.

Frankenstein’s abandonment of authority obliges him to resume his youthful status as *homo œconomicus*, the “man of exchange” (Foucault, *BBP* 225) whose motivation is defined solely by self-interested interactions with other individuals. He recalls that

[a] selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me, until [Henry's] gentleness and affection warmed and opened my senses. I became the same happy creature who, a few years ago, loving and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care. When happy, inanimate nature had the power of bestowing on me the most delightful sensations. (94)

He indicates his position as a member of a population by equating himself to dancing peasants.

He is now subject to biopower, rather than its wielder. This becomes clearer when we examine how his father, Alphonse, employs the language of biopower to demonstrate his own status as government and to reaffirm Victor's standing as regular individual. After the death of young William, Alphonse urges Frankenstein to move from what Freud would call melancholia to mourning—that is, he should lament the loss of his brother without incurring the personal sense of lethargy and abjection which characterize the former:

But is it not a duty to the survivors, that we should refrain from augmenting their unhappiness by an appearance of immoderate grief? It is also a duty owed to yourself; for excessive sorrow prevents improvement or enjoyment, or even the discharge of daily usefulness, without which no man is fit for society. (111)

He follows his initially mild rhetorical question with more imposing language directed at Victor, his tone's change emphasizing his prescriptive power. He advises his son to act as a useful component of the population—that is, he should participate in the circulation of labor within society as well as maintain and improve himself in order to be useful to others. His reference to duty's imperative and the necessity to be useful evoke the conditioning of discipline, which appeals to the "subtle coercion" and "docility-utility" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 137)⁸ characterizing a lifetime of moral education.

Though having previously renounced his pursuit of power in turning himself over to Henry's command, Victor finds himself back in the familiar position of governmental control while creating a female companion for Adam. Frankenstein reports that as he gazed on his male

⁸ This title hereafter abbreviated *DP*

creation, who peers enthusiastically through the window, awaiting the “birth” of his bride,

Adam’s

countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and, trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and, with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew. (174-175)

While engaged in the creation of an “Eve,” Victor realizes that because this new being is female and is ostensibly capable to procreate, he holds the future well-being of this new species in his hands—perhaps even more directly than he did at the time of his first creation. Yet in this instance, he perceives his creation as a threat to humanity rather than its boon. In one final demonstration of power he eliminates the prospective threat with the decisiveness that characterizes sovereignty, reducing the female’s body to a collection of harmless “pieces.”

After repeatedly experiencing adversity that has ironically ensued from power conflicts that he himself has generated, Victor decides that power in all its forms is malicious.

For me the walls of a dungeon or a palace were alike hateful. The cup of life was poisoned for ever; and although the sun shone upon me, as upon the happy and gay of heart, I saw around me nothing but a dense and fretful darkness, penetrated by no light but the glimmer of two eyes that glared upon me. Sometimes they were the expressive eyes of Henry, languishing in death, the dark orbs nearly covered by the lids, and the long black lashes that fringed them; sometimes it was the watery clouded eyes of the monster, as I first saw them in my chamber at Ingolstadt. (187)

This “cup of life” recalls the “elixir of life” which, as I wrote above, represents political governance and biosecurity mechanisms which intend to guarantee the population’s future health. While the population around him remains “happy and gay of heart”—that is, ignorant of their government’s perniciousness—his experiences have taught him that all manifestations of power, whether the palace’s sovereign authority or the prison’s disciplinary panopticon are ineffective; we could add to his nihilistic conclusion that biopolitical strategies as a whole don’t work, since they tend to produce insecurity and instability despite their supposed intentions.

Reflecting on Henry's biopolitical efforts and Adam's desire to discipline, he now regards them as two aspects of the same inevitable malice.

Frankenstein's inconsistent conception of proper governmental method persists to his deathbed, becoming his defining trait even in his life's final moments.

This sentiment of the worth of my nature supported me, when others would have been oppressed; for I deemed it criminal to throw away in useless grief those talents that might be useful to my fellow-creatures. When I reflected on the work I had completed, no less a one than the creation of a sensitive and rational animal, I could not rank myself with the herd of common projectors. But this feeling, which supported me in the commencement of my career, now serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. (210-211)

Though Victor claims to have been motivated by service, his grandiose tone betrays his utter selfishness. He flippantly refers to his population—that is, the collection of common *homo œconomius*—as a “herd,” and, as Foucault notes, the “shepherd acts as he does from egoism and pretends to devote himself to his animals” (*BBP* 140). Because Frankenstein's moral education comes from his father—and the government which Alphonse represents—his narcissism reflects the selfishness of governmental institutions in any form. Thus, Victor inadvertently exposes governmental power's motivation as exclusively self-interested.

Part III: Fighting for Security

*The savage man and civilized man differ so much in the bottom of their hearts
And in their inclinations, that what constitutes the supreme
happiness of the one would reduce the other to despair. (Rousseau)⁹*

While Victor's use of power wavers between that of a sovereign and biopolitical calculators—these are, according to Foucault, two mostly separate categories—the turmoil that Adam experiences is more a result of his departure from Foucault's genealogical timeline of the development of governing strategies. Adam's initial circumstance, resembling the state of nature as opposed to that of civil society, is evidently insufficient for him and thus he denounces the state of "savagery."

This was the forest near Ingolstadt; and here I lay by the side of a brook resting from my fatigue, until I felt tormented by hunger and thirst. This roused me from my nearly dormant state, and I ate some berries which I found hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the brook; and then lying down, was overcome by sleep. It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half-frightened as it were instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes; but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of night. (121)

This young being, now alone, is unable to exist adequately. His manner of subsistence resembles the "hunting, fishing, and natural production" which characterizes "savage society" (Foucault, *BBP* 306). The food Adam finds barely sates his hunger and his clothing is inadequate. He is neither able to secure his person in the present, nor can he hope for security in the future. When he accidentally stumbles into a village, he naturally, therefore, seeks the bounty which civil society produces. Adam's narrative establishes an altogether different politico-economic progression than Victor's—while Frankenstein benefitted from the transmission of political,

⁹ *The Social Contract and the Discourses* 115

economic, and moral values from his own father, Adam must commence from the politically primitive state of nature. Thus utterly alienated from all of civil society, he is forced to find in isolation “shelter from the barbarity of man” (Shelley 124).

In *Isolated Cases*, Nancy Youseff observes that Adam’s monstrosity results primarily from his literal lack of infancy. She expands on feminist criticism’s general response to the novel—an absence of female influence in terms of both maternal nurturing and a physical female body’s presence—arguing that such a lack leads to his complete estrangement from society as a whole. She states that Adam’s early moments of life are sharply contrasted with both Walton’s desire for social reputation as well as the circumstances leading to Victor’s parents’ marriage, and that this isolation and otherness is largely responsible for his monstrosity. Focusing on his segregation, she diverts from established feminist inquiry by presenting the exiled Adam in two ways: first, as a philosophical subject whose newborn moments echo the description John Locke offers in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* on early knowledge acquisition; and second as a being whose later life alludes to Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. In doing so, Youseff argues, Shelley “expose[s] the implausibility, the fantastic functionality” (152) of human development in those venerated texts. If we refer back to the passage in which Adam wakes Frankenstein up from his slumbers, smiling and grinning at his master, only to be rejected, what Youseff claims here makes sense. Perhaps, in fact, it is Frankenstein’s inability to nurture Adam or to apply Locke’s or Rousseau’s philosophical understanding of human development to child raising that leads his creation to choose power over love.

And in fact, it is not long before Adam himself discovers biopolitical power: this occurs when he utilizes his ability to privately observe the De Lacey family.

On examining my dwelling, I found that one of the windows of the cottage had formerly occupied a part of it, but the panes had been filled up with wood. In one of these was a

small and almost imperceptible chink, through which the eye could just penetrate. Through this crevice, a small room was visible [...] (125)

Adam's observations enable him to calculate the actions he must take to improve the family's life, and, by extension, his own. His vantage point allows him "to see without being seen" and thereby to "induce the effects of [disciplinary] power" (Foucault, *DP* 171). He learns that "poverty" represents one of the primary causes of the family's suffering and endeavors to "assist their labours" (Shelley 128). The creation's habit of "observing" and "attend[ing] to the motions of the cottagers" (Shelley 131) enables him to perform acts of calculated intervention—providing wood and clearing paths—that encourage them to perform more sophisticated activities. The family's belief that these actions are performed by an "invisible hand" (131) demonstrates the success of his surveillance. These activities benefit both the servant and his masters—biopower's ideal outcome.

Not only does Adam's surveillance allow him to free the cottagers from hard labor, it allows him to increase his own sophistication by learning how, via language, he might be able to assimilate into civil society.

By degrees I made a discovery of still greater moment. I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. [...] This was indeed a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. (128-129)

Adam falsely believes that language will provide a basis upon which he may relate to the De Lacey family. While his reconnaissance of their language lessons succeeds (he learns while they teach their friend, Safie, to read and write English), his ultimate goal of integration completely fails—in fact, after he learns to speak fluently enough to approach and attempt to assimilate with the cottagers, he is merely physically attacked: Felix never says a word when he casts him out of the house. Adam is perhaps unsuccessful because as he attempts to paradoxically employ biopower to transform his role from that of biopolitical authority to a member of its population.

Colene Bentley's "Family, Humanity, Polity: Theorizing the Basis and Boundaries of Political Community in *Frankenstein*" argues that the novel criticizes "valuing filiation, sentiment, and heredity as the basis for political commonality" (328), advocating instead for a societal standard of inclusiveness. She believes Adam's clandestine assistance of the family and his painstaking development of language—all to the purpose of incorporating himself within this community—are designed not just to elicit the reader's sympathy towards the creature, but to provoke their disapproval of the family's negative response. I agree with Bentley's interpretation of this event, though I believe Adam's desire for community is only one facet of the novel's exploration of power dynamics rather than its principle theme.

His efforts at disciplinary power having failed, Adam adopts the primitive attitude of barbarism.

I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils; destroying the objects that obstructed me, and ranging through the wood with a stag-like swiftness. Oh! What a miserable night I passed! the cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me: now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness. All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment: I, like the arch fiend, bore a hell within me. (149)

Adam's unchecked aggression suggests his renouncement of both the humanity and the biopolitical capacity he learned in his hovel. The barbarian "has to be inhuman, precisely because he is not a man of nature and exchange; he is a man of history, the man of pillage and fires, he is the man of domination" (Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 196). Indeed, the creature destroys the cottage he once loved and asserts his physical prowess upon everything in his environment, clearly abandoning both the biopolitical proficiencies he had learned and his aspiration to integrate with civil society. Lacking the social instruction that cushioned Victor's fall from power, the creation's regression to brutality is perhaps inevitable.

Adam's conflation of ideologies resembles that which plagued Victor, though the former's example causes him to kill while the latter's instance led to the creation of new life.

Here Adam describes the moment when he approaches a young boy, hopeful he will be open-minded. As he approaches this child, unknown to him at this moment to be William

Frankenstein, Victor's brother, the creation states,

Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me, that this little creature was unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him, and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth. Urged by this impulse, I seized on the boy as he passed, and drew him towards me. (154)

Much as Frankenstein wavers between sovereign and biopolitical power, here Adam conflates two impulses: he wants to integrate with society but simultaneously to employ disciplinary power. Though his purpose is to establish a society that he may join, he foils his own ambition by exerting power over the boy's body—the physical manipulation of William as he grabs him and his intention to educate the boy are both characteristic of disciplinary government.

We see Adam deploying disciplinary power in another instance: after instructing Victor to create for him a female companion, Adam deploys disciplinary power in his vague threats of further violence; yet that deployment's success is at first limited by Frankenstein, who fears his creation will destroy Henry:

Sometimes I thought that the fiend followed me, and might expedite my remissness by murdering my companion. When these thoughts possessed me, I would not quit Henry for a moment, but followed him as his shadow, to protect him from the fancied rage of his destroyer. I felt as if I had committed some great crime, the consciousness of which haunted me. (171)

After his failure to assimilate into human culture via an entrée into the De Lacey family, Adam believes his only hope lies with an altogether new society's formation: he demands that Victor create for him a bride; otherwise, he threatens, Victor will suffer from an unspecified "destruction" (156). His physical prowess and previously-demonstrated willingness to use it renders his threats credible, and he hopes to thereby coerce Frankenstein's compliance. After Victor agrees and travels (taking the longest, slowest route possible) to the Orkney Islands to

“give birth” to this new being, Adam follows him, resuming his panoptic surveillance, as it was his most rewarding tool during his tenure at the De Lacey’s cottage. Now, no longer limited to the insulated domestic setting of his previous scrutiny, the scope of his observation has broadened—in persistently stalking Frankenstein, Adam more closely exemplifies the ideal government surveillance mechanism and his disciplinary influence regulates nearly all of Victor’s actions, compelling him to travel and labor against his own wishes. Frankenstein intuits that he is being watched, though he does not know when or even if he is indeed being perceived. Yet as Adam trails Victor, his surveillance and his hope of disciplinary power miscarry: never alone because he fears the “monster” will kill Henry, Frankenstein cannot isolate himself so as to create Eve. Thus, Adam’s designs are at least momentarily obstructed, demonstrating how an individual’s will—in this case Frankenstein’s—can frustrate disciplinary power.

After Frankenstein destroys the second being, Adam abandons his habit of indirect coercion by means of modifying environmental conditions, shifting instead to a threatening military discourse.

Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; -- obey! (176-177)

With the destruction of the female, Adam’s goal of joining a civil society is decisively thwarted; the creature now has no other outlet than to direct his power toward its most primitive employment: violence. With his promise that he will destroy Victor, and his use of the metaphor of slavery he essentially declares war on his creator, vowing, to use Foucault’s words, a “costly and violent relation” (*DP* 137). This shift marks the creation’s ultimate rejection of what, anachronistically, we can identify as Foucault’s historical modes of governance, for although war “may well be the first exclusively historico-political discourse” (Foucault, *SMBD* 57), yet it still

transcends all kinds of governmental structures, since it has been present during virtually all of civilization's existence. The two characters are reduced to combatants and are now, in terms of power hierarchies, essentially equal. However, Adam's awareness of their relationship perhaps lends him a degree of superiority—that is, he initiates the shift in their affiliation from one of hope for a peaceful and loving future to one of brutal combat, while Victor has always seen their link as dominated by furious competition and vengeance.

On their journey north, Adam wages a protracted war against Victor, though the former ironically relies on biosecurity mechanisms to ensure that the latter can survive to maintain the conflict.

Sometimes, indeed, he left marks in writing on the barks of the trees, or cut in stone, that guided me, and instigated my fury. "My reign is not yet over," (these words were legible in one of these inscriptions); "you live, and my power is complete. Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive. You will find near this place, if you follow not too tardily, a dead hare; eat, and be refreshed. (205)

In his final interactions with Frankenstein, Adam deploys a corrupt and malicious manifestation of biopower. Retaining his profound capacity for surveillance, he utilizes it to monitor Victor's movements and condition. He then prudently calculates the most effective manner of support which will keep his prey on track and healthy enough to continue the pursuit, but will not allow him to gain any strategic advantage. Though this expression of biopower is much different from that which Foucault observes, it exhibits how such governmental strategies can be (and in our own time are being) abused in their most negative applications.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this thesis how Frankenstein's principle characters' interactions mirror power relationships described by Foucault more than 150 years later, and how their inconsistent attempts to dominate others results in disaster. Victor benefits from a political heritage and formal education, yet once he acquires authority his lack of self-knowledge joined with his narcissistic desires prevent him from retaining it. Adam inadvertently discovers a sophisticated form of supremacy, though he lacks the social proficiency and the physical *normalcy* necessary to wield it steadily and effectively. The two characters, desperately trying to find safety and security create danger and insecurity, as they try on one authoritarian identity after another, like actors playing parts. History has proven repeatedly that instability still can and does occur for countless reasons despite a regime's consistent application of power, though my reading of Frankenstein suggests that a state's inadequate self-knowledge and caution when exercising its authority almost certainly precedes its ruin. The novel then is a cautionary tale, emphasizing the importance of self-assessment, steadiness, and moderation for any person, group, or institution who holds authority over others—parents, scientists, religious leaders, politicians, businessmen, and construction foremen alike.

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