

Frankenstein's Obduction

by

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## Abstract

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a prelude to the *Anatomy Act of 1832*, which indulged the anatomists' scientific ambition, granting a legitimate and sufficient source of cadavers to dissect legally. When read in concert with the history of anatomy and the historical record of body snatching, including case law and anatomy legislation, *Frankenstein* exemplifies the issues in medico-legal history at the turn of the nineteenth century, for Victor Frankenstein and the Creature's stories are set amid the context of anatomical study, grave-robbery, crime, punishment and the illicit relationship between medicine and murder. This thesis accordingly addresses the medico-legal history of anatomy, the anatomist's ambition and complex inhumanity, and the mingled identity of the anatomical subject as illegitimate and criminal. This analysis demonstrates that *Frankenstein* sheds light upon the anatomist's ambition, the identity of the human cadaver, and the bioethical consequences of meddling with nature.

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To my parents,

Sylvia and Bryon Johnson

You are my twin pillars of strength and support.

It is because of you that I am able to fulfill every goal and attain each accomplishment.

All I am, all I have done, and all I will do, I dedicate to you.

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## Introduction

In 1819, one year following the first published edition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Percy Bysshe Shelley published *Defence of Poetry* in which he stated that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Defence of Poetry" 794).<sup>1</sup> Mary Shelley is one such legislator because, as this thesis demonstrates, *Frankenstein* is a proleptic allegory of the anatomy laws, of the relationship of anatomists with cadavers, and of the dual identity of the human cadaver as illegitimate and criminal. *Frankenstein* is a paradigmatic text in the examination of the cadaver, for there is one key perspective missing in the study of anatomy that appears in *Frankenstein*: the perspective of the anatomical subject. Frankenstein's Creature embodies the blended origins of the human cadaver. There are three essential elements in the definition and examination of an early nineteenth-century British cadaver represented within the matrix of *Frankenstein*: the historical context of the anatomy laws, the ambition and complex inhumanity of the anatomist, and the anatomical subject. This thesis will accordingly be divided into three chapters that address the medico-legal history of anatomy, the anatomist's ambition and struggle for detachment, and the mingled identity of the anatomical subject as illegitimate and criminal.

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<sup>1</sup> The following is a larger excerpt from "Defence of Poetry": "It is impossible to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (794).

*Frankenstein* was first published in 1818, “only a decade before the Select Committee on Anatomy was appointed by Parliament” (Richardson, *Death* xvii). The third and final edition of *Frankenstein* in 1831, marked with a new introduction by Mary Shelley, was published two years following the execution of William Burke in 1829 and one year prior to the ratification of the *Anatomy Act of 1832*. This further places *Frankenstein* at the height of modern medicine, the study of anatomy, its complex birth, and its questionable legality. Prior to the *Act*, the cadavers used by anatomists consisted of murderers sentenced to dissection as well as the bodies of paupers robbed from the grave. The 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* is a prelude to the *Act*, which indulged the anatomists’ scientific ambition, granting a legitimate and sufficient source of cadavers to dissect legally. *Frankenstein* exemplifies the risk within anatomical science, including the historical record of grave-robbing and the trial of Burke and William Hare, who went further than body-snatching and generated cadavers via murder. The anatomists’ unrelenting scientific ambition to know the human form regardless of the law is echoed in Dr. Frankenstein’s determination to fashion a living Creature from lifeless matter. Moreover, the Creature, as a compilation of human cadavers, embodies the mingled identity of the cadaver as a pauper and a murderer.

While body-snatching, grave-robbery, resurrectionists and “[murdering] to dissect”<sup>2</sup> may appear to be the subjects of gothic fiction, they are the historical foundation of modern anatomy (Wordsworth 25). During the eighteenth century, human anatomy became fundamental to the study of medicine and death became critical to the study of life. Consequently, the anatomists’ right to a supply of bodies to dissect was legislated

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<sup>2</sup> Also cited by Tim Marshall in his book, *Murdering to Dissect: Grave-robbing, Frankenstein and the anatomy literature*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995: 1.

through the *Murder Act of 1752*, which granted hanged murderers as anatomical subjects for the Surgeon's Company and established dissection as a punishment above and beyond execution, called a "further Terror and peculiar Mark of Infamy" (604). Thus, medicine and law were linked in the history of anatomy. With the enactment of the *Murder Act*, the anatomists were made agents of the Crown in executing the law. However, the only legally obtained cadavers were those of murderers and the bodies of hanged murderers, which were not sufficient to meet the demands of the anatomists. A black market for cadavers developed and grave-robbing and murder became common practices to meet the demand for bodies.

Ruth Richardson observes that Shelley's use of the churchyard in *Frankenstein* reveals that "a familial preoccupation, as well as events in the social history of medicine, had contributed through some curious transmutation to her important and chilling parable for the modern world" (Richardson, *Death* xiii). In 1809, Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin, published *An Essay on Sepulchres: or, A Proposal for Erecting some Memorial of the Illustrious Dead in all ages on the Spot where their Remains have been Interred*. Richardson notes, "The need to commemorate – to preserve, identify, and signalize – the remains of the dead clearly held some emotional resonance for Godwin" (*ibid*). Honouring the remains of the dead was imperative, and Godwin demonstrated his own position when he "marked Mary Wollstonecraft's grave with a stone" (*ibid*). Mary Wollstonecraft died in 1797, shortly after giving birth to Mary Shelley (*ibid*).

Mary Shelley was already familiar with death even prior to the first edition of the novel (*Frankenstein* xiii-xx). She valued spending time at her mother's grave, taking Percy Bysshe Shelley there during their courtship (Richardson, *Death* xiii). Throughout



Mary Shelley's childhood and early adult life, grave-robbing was endemic, and "from its convenient location and relative isolation [,] the churchyard" where Mary Wollstonecraft was interned "was a well-known haunt of bodysnatchers" (Richardson, *Death* xiii). Furthermore, when the third edition of *Frankenstein* was published in 1831, with an introduction by Mary Shelley for the first time, she had been widowed by her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley's drowning and had lost three of her four children in their childhood. In *Frankenstein*, Shelley uses the churchyard, death, dissection and bodily remains to give life and voice to the composite of corpses that comprises the Creature. When Frankenstein composes a Creature out of dead body parts and brings that Creature to life, Mary Shelley gives the Creature a voice. Frankenstein's Creature is an otherwise unheard voice in anatomical study, for he is the assemblage of cadavers who questions his identity and anonymity – the identity of the human corpse.

According to Joyce Carol Oates, *Frankenstein* and the Creature have "made the great leap from literature to mythology" and have "stepped from the rhythms of" Shelley's pages "into what might be called a collective cultural consciousness" (548). There is a broad range of critical interpretations of the novel. For example, *Frankenstein* has been analyzed as biographical fiction, as gothic fiction, as science fiction and as Romantic literature. Critical interpretations of *Frankenstein* vary from analyses of the different editions of the novel (Anne Mellor), to analyses of the diverse film adaptations of the tale. Critical approaches extend to include psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism, including analyses of women's literature and women writers. Additional analyses include examinations of creation, mythology, dreams, resurrection, human rights, industrialization, population and body politics, monstrosity, the ugly, the sublime and the

beautiful (Anne Mellor), the doppelganger and the psycho-politics of oppression (Anca Vlasopolos).

While the analysis of *Frankenstein* presented here makes selective use of some of the foregoing approaches, my focus remains on punishment, crime and morbid human anatomy. Some critics have suggested that Mary Shelley was using *Frankenstein* as a parable for surgery (Jordonova 66). Surgery, however, was not commonly performed until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Ludmilla Jordonova observes that Shelley's interest was in anatomy, in "Opening organic beings for inspection, and then using them, or parts of them" (66). When read in concert with the history of anatomy and the historical record of body snatching, including case law and anatomy legislation, *Frankenstein* exemplifies the issues in medico-legal history at the turn of the nineteenth century, for Victor Frankenstein and the Creature are set amid the context of anatomical study, grave-robbing, crime, punishment and the illicit relationship between medicine and murder. Frankenstein's science and the Creature as a living cadaver parallel reality allegorically.

The critical framework used to support this analysis includes Michel Foucault's theories on death and life in *The Birth of the Clinic*. Prior to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it had been assumed that when a diseased patient died, the opportunity for medical practitioners to study the disease also halted (Tierney 5). Jacalyn Duffin states that, at "the beginning of the nineteenth century, technology and a reconfiguration of disease concepts changed medical attitudes to anatomy" (32). Moreover, because "diseases became increasingly anatomical, medicine had to move in the same direction" (33). Anatomical science offered an opportunity to study disease further in death in order

to treat disease in life. Death opened the door to new medical questions and answers. To paraphrase Michael Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic*, it was a significant ideological shift for medicine to turn from traditionally viewing and studying life to also viewing and studying a patient after death. As an anatomical subject, the body is opened and viewed. Foucault demonstrates that, given this new focus, the corpse sheds light on the intricate details of life. In Foucault's words, "The living night is dissipated in the brightness of death" (146). That is, death illuminates the medical mysteries hidden within the living body. Thus, it was at the turn of the nineteenth century, and in the context of the elucidation of disease, that "Anatomy and dissection suddenly became not only interesting but essential for medical training" (Duffin 33).

It is of medical and historical relevance that until this time death was an obstacle to medicine, an obstacle that was feared because the opportunity to heal traditionally ended with death. To summarize Foucault, the close study of human anatomy did not simply liberate medical practitioners from their fear of death, it made death useful – a new source of knowledge – and thereby marked this phase in the study of anatomy as a critical turning point in medical history:

[The anatomists] ... integrated that death into a technical and conceptual totality in which it assumed its specific characteristic and its fundamental value as experience. So much so that the great break in the history of Western medicine dates precisely from the moment clinical experience became the anatomo-clinical gaze. (146)

Foucault states that “the gaze dominates the entire field of possible knowledge” (167).

When the human corpse is subject to the gaze, the opened body illuminates the cause of death, the pattern of disease, and the intricate details of the human form – secrets the body fails to reveal until it is opened to view.

The law is relevant to this analysis because the obstacles anatomists faced in pursuing their science were twofold: access to bodies was limited; and, due to the increasing study of anatomy in the science of medicine, “anatomy classes grew ... student numbers increased, [and the] demand for corpses escalated” (Moore 55). In short, according to Jackie Duffin, “problems soon arose because of the limited supply of bodies” (33). The only legally granted bodies to dissect were those of murderers sentenced to dissection. Due to the shortage of bodies, anatomists turned to grave-robbers, known as resurrectionists. The grave enabled the anatomists to pursue their scientific relationship with the dead, as exemplified by Dr. Frankenstein. Judicial punishment was rare in the case of body-snatching. This covert and illegitimate relationship formed a fundamental element of medical history and the pursuit of anatomical science. The lack of a sufficient legal source of bodies required an affiliation that was legally and socially unbecoming to the profession. Moreover, the mingling upon the anatomist’s table of the legitimately obtained bodies of murderers with the illegitimately obtained victims of grave-robbery blurred the identity of the cadaver as both criminal and illegitimate, an association that is embodied in Frankenstein’s Creature.

As the Creature embodies both the legitimate cadaver of the murderer and the illegitimate cadaver of the pauper, identity theory and the doppelganger are central to the critical framework of this thesis. Identity theory is used both to analyze and to recognize

the origins of the Creature and the nature of the Creature as an individual. Addressing the Creature and his origins raises questions of identity, criminality and legitimacy. As Satya P. Mohanty argues, examinations of “identity call for a more general reexamination of the relation between personal experience and public meaning – subjective choices and evaluations, on the one hand, and objective social location, on the other” (29-30). Linda Martin Alcoff adds that we “use identity to talk not only about how one is *identified*, but how one *identifies with*” (340). The Creature’s identity is tied to his origins in the corpses of executed murderers and grave-robbing. Moreover, the Creature’s identity includes the path the corpse travels to land upon the anatomist’s table. The Creature is not merely what he is made of, but who has made him. The Creature’s origins are accordingly tied to his maker, the anatomist and, consequently, theories of doubling and the doppelganger are relevant to the identities of both Frankenstein and the Creature. Frankenstein and the Creature are inseparably tied to one another. Frankenstein is reflected in the Creature because, like Frankenstein, the Creature’s quest for knowledge is all-consuming. Moreover, the Creature mirrors Frankenstein’s lack of humanity because the Creature is unable to live a human life and embodies Frankenstein’s actions in murdering to dissect, which mirrors the medico-legal history of anatomy.

Chapter One of this thesis provides the context of the medical history of anatomy and the laws pertinent to anatomy at the turn of the nineteenth century. In order to read and appreciate the metaphor within *Frankenstein*, one must appreciate the context within which Mary Shelley was writing, the cultural climate between 1818, when *Frankenstein* was first published, and 1831, when the third edition of *Frankenstein* was published. The history of anatomy is critical to this analysis of *Frankenstein*, and the anatomy laws are

critical to appreciating the use of cadavers in medical history. During this time, the study of anatomy became fundamental to the future of medicine. Consequently, murderers were legally dissected in the name of both judicial punishment and scientific progress, pauper graves were robbed for their bodies, and human remains were displaced from their final resting place and relocated in the history of medicine.

In order to know the cadaver, one must first know his creator, the anatomist, for anatomists are vital to the identity of the human corpse as a cadaver. Chapter Two examines the anatomist and his necessary inhumanity. In order to understand the anatomist himself, one must dissect both the anatomist's objectivity and his passion alongside his relationship with his science and his anatomical subject. About Frankenstein as an anatomist, Denise Gigante asserts, "Regardless of how we choose to map Victor Frankenstein onto his socio-historical grid, his subject position is radically threatened by the intrusive reality of his Creature" – the cadaver (566). As the Creature, in part, embodies the anatomist's work on the dissection table, the anatomist also defines himself through his inherent and fundamental association with death.

Chapter Three examines the Creature as the fragmented and illegitimate assemblage of human beings who were members of a community. *Frankenstein* is a paradigmatic text in the examination of the cadaver. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the corpse was a necessary subject in the study of anatomy and *Frankenstein* is a definitive text in which the collective identity of the cadaver is considered.

Frankenstein's Creature is identified through his formation from fragments of anatomical subjects and their blended origins in the gallows and grave-robbery, as well as through his self-awareness. As a living cadaver, the Creature in *Frankenstein* not only reveals the

origins of the cadaver, but also chronicles the social identity of the cadaver amidst issues of legitimacy and crime. The Creature not only demonstrates the relocation the identity of the human corpse as illegitimate and criminal, but also exposes the significance of displacing the individual identity of the corpse as a cadaver.

While this analysis of *Frankenstein* is not an analysis of the novel as science fiction literature, Ursula K. Le Guin's commentary upon the novel as science fiction is relevant to this analysis. In 1976, Le Guin added an Introduction to her science fiction novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which explains the purpose of science fiction and provides Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as an example of a thought-experiment in science fiction. Le Guin argues that like all fiction, "Science fiction is metaphor" (Le Guin, "Introduction" no pag). Science fiction is a thought-experiment, an allegory, using modern devices. In *Frankenstein*, anatomy is expressed through a metaphor of the imagination. Mary Shelley's thought-experiment includes the reanimation of the dead, a composite of anatomical subjects, which is expressed in her own Introduction to her novel in 1831:

I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be, for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the

stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.

(Shelley 9)

Shelley's vision is not to be read literally or prophetically, for "Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive" (*ibid*). Le Guin explains that the "purpose of a thought-experiment ... is not to predict the future" because "the 'future' ... cannot be predicted" (*ibid*). The purpose of a thought-experiment is "to describe reality, the present world" (*ibid*). In science fiction, what authors are "trying to do is tell you what they're like, and what you're like – what's going on – what the weather is right now, today, this moment, the rain, the sunlight, look! Open your eyes; listen, listen. That is what novelists say" (*ibid*). Mary Shelley is communicating, through metaphor, about issues during her time. Shelley's use of the supernatural is, therefore, a metaphor for her present. If the meaning of *Frankenstein* could be reduced to any restrictive terms, such as culture, politics, power, poverty, science, medicine and anatomy, then Shelley would not have written metaphorically, and there would not be analyses with such diversity. As Le Guin says, "the truth is a matter of the imagination" (*ibid*). The 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* is not a commentary upon an unknown future, but rather a metaphorical commentary upon its own time. The meaning of the metaphor lies in the interpretation.



## Chapter I: Obduction

The reform was born in the medical ... culture of which Mary Shelley, as a writer, was a part. ... *Frankenstein* and the Anatomy Act can be seen as identical twins – one in the world of imagination, the other in the realms of legislation. (Marshall 2)

The history of anatomy is critical to the analysis of the anatomy laws and subsequently to the analysis of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. By 1800 the study of anatomy was acknowledged as vital to the study of medicine, which requires that the medical practitioner see and examine the human body for himself. In accordance with the *Murder Act of 1752*, murderers sentenced to both death and dissection could be legally used as cadavers by anatomists. Anatomists were agents of the Crown in executing the law. However, prior to the *Anatomy Act of 1832*, there was an insufficient supply of bodies to dissect. While there was an inadequate supply of cadavers to dissect legally, grave-robbery, and ultimately murder, provided an ample supply of bodies. Torn between the law and the black market, anatomists faced a crisis of supply, legitimacy and respectability as their relationship with the resurrectionists was formed. Grave-robbery was prosecuted and the study of anatomy was linked to murder, which was publicly exposed by the case of William Burke, William Hare and Dr. Knox, in which case Burke and Hare were found to be committing murder in order to sell bodies to the anatomists for dissection. Dr. Knox was found with the last known victim of Burke and Hare's scheme. This case exemplifies the problem faced by anatomists, who were forced to disregard the

law in order to pursue the study of anatomy. Contemporary with the first edition of *Frankenstein* in 1818 and the third and final edition in 1831, pauper remains were stolen from their graves and anatomists were linked to criminal behaviour. *Frankenstein* is not merely science fiction. *Frankenstein* is an allegorical treatise upon its own time and mirrors the history of modern anatomy.

Obduction is currently defined as “a medicolegal autopsy” (*Dorland’s Medical Dictionary* 1297). *Dorland’s* defines an autopsy as “the postmortem examination of a body, including the internal organs and structures after dissection, so as to determine the cause of death or the nature of pathological changes” (182-183). This is a modern medical definition of autopsy, but until the sixteenth century, the autopsy was medically little more than an “examination ... after dissection” in order to “view” the body (Cunningham 190). The autopsy routinely took hold in the scientific community in the sixteenth century, when Andreas Vesalius influenced the new purpose of the autopsy of “seeing-for-oneself”, which took place with a public autopsy (190-191). It was thought that seeing-for-oneself was to see the human body and to therefore know the human body. Opening, viewing and using the human body is critical to inscribing a modern Western understanding of death on life. As Elizabeth Klaver argues, “The autopsy would be the last act of writing on [the] body” (680-681). Similarly, the cadaver “represents the ultimate intextuation of the body to the *corpus* of Western medical science” (*ibid*). The cadaver speaks and communicates to the anatomist. The body has a story to tell, a discovery to reveal.

According to Michel Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic*, death was initially the point at which medicine was halted. Thomas F. Tierney adds that there was no longer a

body to treat, and the role of medicine thereby terminated. Life ended with death as death had extinguished life (5). Foucault explains that in the eighteenth century, death had been seen as the end to the study of medicine because “Death was that absolute beyond which there was neither life nor disease” (140-141). But, as Tierney states, through anatomy the death of the human body would no longer be the end of medical knowledge for the physician. Death would instead be the source of further knowledge and illumination because, as “physicians began routinely examining corpses to determine the cause and manner of death, it now became the point at which physicians would begin their pursuit of the truth” (6). Death moved from being the end of life “to the very foundation of the human sciences” (11). Through anatomy, death acquired a useful, active and instrumental status in medicine and the study of the human body (Foucault, *Clinic* 141). It is in the study of anatomy that death would prove to illuminate disease (Tierney 5).

Before constructing his Creature, Dr. Frankenstein studies the human form through “the science of anatomy” in order to “observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body” (51). At the heart of Frankenstein’s work is the “understanding [of] life through the process of death” (Jordonova 66). The human body reveals all to the anatomist, because it is the body that speaks. Thus, human corpses are Frankenstein’s primary tools in the study of life and death, leading him “to examine the cause and progress” of the decay of the human body:

My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings [, he recalls in his narrative]. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of

death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analysing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life ... (52)

Victor Frankenstein sees life within death. Frankenstein observes that in order to “examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death” (51). As he performs his autopsies, he sees death illuminate life, for on the brink of his discovery to create life out of death he studies “all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life” (52). It is in this fundamental understanding of the connection between life and death that the Creature is conceived:

... from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me--a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised, that among so many men of genius who had directed their enquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret (*ibid*)

Out of the darkness of death and absence of knowledge, Frankenstein sheds light upon life and forms the foundation of his revelation to create life out of death. Shelley is not only depicting the moment of conception in Dr. Frankenstein’s mind’s eye, she is also touching upon the insights of the autopsy, of seeing for oneself. It is through seeing the

human form in death, the underlying concept of the autopsy, that the body reveals its secrets to the anatomist.

Historically death was as essential to the study of medicine as it is to Frankenstein's "scientific pursuit" for the fundamental cause of life. The anatomist required a sufficient and legal supply of cadavers to dissect (Marshall 2; Shelley 50-51). Anatomy and the law were intertwined as early as 1541 when, as a result of the increased study of anatomy, the Royal Company of Barbers and Surgeons in England was endowed with a right to access four executed felons per year to dissect (**32 Hen. VIII, c. 42**; Ross and Ross 109). This grant established a precedent in the study of Anatomy in England in supplying felons as anatomical subjects (109). With this endowment, criminals, penal execution and dissection became intrinsically linked in the study of human anatomy. There was a double purpose, however, in the dissection of felons: the study of anatomy and criminal punishment in the form of a fate worse than death. Thomas H. Tierney states that "dissection as a [criminal] punishment ... was used primarily as a means of heaping greater infamy on the criminal" (16). In a rather short period of time, demand for anatomical subjects grew as the medical community sought to understand and treat disease, which depended upon the study of anatomy (Duffin 33). With only four felons granted per year for dissection and the increase in demand for corpses to study, there were insufficient subjects to meet the demands of anatomical study.

In response to the demands from anatomists for cadavers, the *Murder Act of 1752* was enacted, which legislated that the bodies of executed murderers could be made available for the study of anatomy. This was a significant acknowledgement by Parliament "of the need for the study of human anatomy in Britain" (Richardson, *Death*

35-36). Felons (in general) were no longer granted for anatomical study, but the number of murderers was no longer limited to four per year. Significantly, the *Act* was officially entitled *An Act for better preventing the horrid Crime of Murder*, which “gave judges discretion in death sentences for murder, to substitute dissection for gibbeting in chains” (35-36). Dissection was an additional punishment upon the convicted murderer, above and beyond execution, and was a “further Terror and peculiar Mark of Infamy” (*Murder Act of 1752*). As a result, anatomists were considered to be agents of the law because they imposed the penalty of dissection upon the murderer, when the courts ordered such a penalty under the *Murder Act*. The alternative punishment of “gibbeting in chains” after execution, to rot on display in public was almost an equally dismal sentence as dissection (Richardson, “Potted” 935-936). The corruption of his body in public view was seen as a greater punitive measure upon the murderer than execution. The viewing of the body after death in autopsy was an additional punishment (Richardson, *Death* 36).

The anatomists’ interaction with the dead impacted upon the irrespectability of the anatomists. According to Karen Sanchez-Eppler, in some cases the anatomists’ work was seen as “the promiscuous mingling of the living and the dead” and “as inviting moral as well as physical infection” (416). The anatomists’ co-mingling of the living and the dead was, quite frankly, considered repulsive. An editorial comment made in the *Lancet* in 1832, for example, states that it “is disgusting to talk of anatomy as a science, whilst it is cultivated by means of practices which would disgrace a nation of cannibals” (quoted in Richardson, *Death* 131). Ruth Richardson states that the abhorrence towards anatomists was in part due to the fact that, “in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century popular belief, not only were the anatomists the agents of the law, but they could be the

agents of death” (76). Historically there had been revivals and resuscitations after incomplete hangings (*ibid*). Specifically, anatomists were agents of death because it was implicit that their interest in a hanging was in dissection, not revival as “Dissection was a very *final* process” (*ibid*). The anatomists’ role characterized them as murderers in the public eye (*ibid*). Because of the perception of anatomists as murderers, there was understandable opposition toward the anatomists’ work.

Within the context of public opposition, the obstacles the anatomists faced in pursuing their science intensified because of the increasing study of anatomy within the science of medicine. As Wendy Moore succinctly states, “anatomy classes grew ... [,] student numbers increased, [and the] demand for corpses escalated” (55). Moore concludes that for “the serious anatomists determined to procure a reliable supply of human bodies for dissection ... there was really only one viable source: the grave” (54). Due to the shortage of cadavers, and a limited legitimate source, “cadavers were retrieved from cemeteries or purchased on the sly” (Duffin 33). Moore and Duffin are referring to grave-robbery.

As resurrectionists were an integral component of the anatomists’ work, it is relevant to consider their history alongside the history of the anatomists, for the two vocations naturally associated with one another in this respect. While the anatomists struggled in their endeavours to secure legitimate, reliable, adequate and legal sources of bodies to dissect, they continued to obtain illegitimate corpses unabated. Moore details that in response to the need of the medical profession the “new occupation of ‘resurrection men’ emerged [that] satisfied the growing market for fresh bodies with the newly buried corpses of private citizens” (*ibid*). Resurrectionists have been described as

“unscrupulous undertakers, shifty gravediggers and ... gangs of professional body-snatchers” (Moore 7). They were known as men who would comb “London’s churchyards by night unearthing fresh bodies to deliver to dissecting rooms before dawn” (7). Moore explains that “the rival packs of ruthless men were nicknamed the ‘Resurrectionists,’ after their ability to raise vast numbers of dead from their graves.” The Resurrectionists “developed unique methods of unearthing corpses with speed, stealth and efficiency.” These resurrection men were “despised and universally feared” (55). While the resurrectionists were feared and portrayed as both ruthless and unfeeling, they were in fact the working-class facilitators of the anatomists’ work. The anatomists turned to the resurrectionists because an adequate and legitimate supply of cadavers did not otherwise exist (Bailey 98). The anatomists provided work for the grave-robbers, who in turn supplied the anatomists with the object of their gaze. The market was created by the demand, and the resurrectionists merely met that demand. They worked for monetary purposes alone. It was a working-class vocation fueled by the anatomists’ scientific ambition.

James Blake Bailey edited the *Diary of a Resurrectionist* in 1896, commenting upon the history of the resurrectionists, the relationship between physicians and resurrectionists, as well as the passing of *the Anatomy Act of 1832*. The *Diary* was written between 1811 and 1812, contemporaneous with the period in which Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*. Bailey, editor of the *Diary*, states that anatomists were not naïve about their source of bodies: they “knew well the sources from which the bodies were obtained” (*ibid*). Wendy Moore adds that Resurrectionists were “Concentrated mainly in London and Edinburgh, but were also working in provincial English towns,” particularly in and



around the anatomy schools (55). In 1896, sixty-four years following the enactment of the *Anatomy Act of 1832*, Bailey wrote that the relationship between anatomists and resurrectionists, the medical profession and the working class, was socially unacceptable, regardless of its necessity (58). Grave-robbery was risky business and depended upon the veil of darkness. The reputation of the anatomists was sullied through their association with the resurrectionists, and yet anatomists required human subjects in order to pursue their science legitimately. The lack of a sufficient source of bodies required an affiliation that was socially unbecoming to the profession. This covert and illegitimate relationship formed a fundamental element of medical history and of the pursuit of anatomical science.

Grave-robbery intensified public anger towards the anatomists, extending beyond the hangman's rope to include this illegitimate sourcing of dead bodies. Karen Sanchez-Eppler refers to this anger as "calls to protect the bodies of the dead" from the anatomists (415). These efforts became "common throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (*ibid*). While Sanchez-Eppler states that there was never an official coalition formed to protect the bodies of the dead, the angry voices nevertheless contributed to views on burial reform (416).

Despite public anger, anatomists continued to carry on business with resurrectionists, both supporting the black market and being subject to its costs. As Moore states, "Under the laws of the black market, rising demand meant rising prices" and the "the body-snatchers' nightly toil was a lucrative business" (57). Resurrectionists knew that "Well-built men were always in demand: with the skin stripped off they could be used to display the muscles to best advantage" (59). The economics of the resurrection

trade were expounded upon by an entry in the *Diary of a Resurrectionist* dated 1812 January: “*Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup>* Got paid £8 8 0 from Mr. Wilson 1 recd. 9 9 0 from Mr. Brookes, Came over to the borough, sold small for £1 10 0, Recd. £4 4 0 for adult”<sup>3</sup> (Bailey 147). This is an extraordinary amount of money. Moore comments upon the term ‘small’ as follows, “The bodies of children, known as ‘smalls’, were priced by the inch” (57). In addition to the foregoing, a body with “an unusual or rare medical condition could always command a premium” because it provided a unique opportunity to study the impact and path of disease within the human form, which in turn demonstrates the link between understanding medical disease and anatomy (*ibid*). The price of corpses rose in response to the demand, which further contributed to the anatomists’ appeal for a legitimate, regularized and cost effective source of bodies. The compulsion to study the human body was fulfilled by the resurrection trade and the anatomists were willing to pay the price.

It is at this time that anatomists became linked to criminal behaviour because “doctors who wanted to research and teach anatomy and pathology were in an invidious position: half executing the law, half contravening it” (Richardson, “Potted” 935-936). The resurrectionists were not legally or legitimately acquiring dead bodies. Thus, it is in obtaining bodies through grave-robbing that the resurrectionists and anatomists risked infringement of the law. At the same time, from a legal standpoint, judicial punishment was rare in the case of body-snatching. As Richardson states, “from the point of view of judicial punishment, exhuming the dead was for a very long period a relatively safe occupation” (*Death* 59). Nonetheless, the risk of criminal prosecution for body theft

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<sup>3</sup> The numerical values quoted above are separate by spaces and appear to refer firstly to pounds, secondly to shillings and thirdly to pence.

existed. In the 1788 decision in *Rex v. Lynn*, the accused had been charged with stealing a body from its grave for the purpose of dissection. The Court stated in this case that it was “only a felony to steal dead bodies for the purposes of witchcraft” (394). The Court added that “the act of carrying away a dead body was not criminal” (*ibid*). However, the Court further stated that the offence was “cognizable in a Criminal Court as being highly indecent, and contra bonos mores; at the bare idea alone of which nature revolted” (395). The Court thus fined the accused for the offence (*ibid*). Richardson comments upon additional instances of grave-robbers who were punished for body theft, but she adds that the legality of these sentences was vague (59).

In 1822 the legal decision in *Rex v. Cundick* clarified the law on this issue. The Court in its decision stated that the accused sold a convict’s body for the purpose of dissection, where dissection was not a part of the deceased’s judicial sentence. The anatomist who acquired the body was not called as a witness and the defence argued that the Crown had failed to establish the case on its evidence. The accused was nonetheless found guilty by the Jury, and the Judge determined that the offence was a misdemeanor under the law. Richardson adds that “Bodysnatchers were occasionally sent down with light sentences for the misdemeanor of an offence against public mores” (*Death* 59). Prosecutions for grave-robbery were creative as they often prosecuted the offences related to grave-robbery, as opposed to the theft of the body itself. While selling a body for the purpose of dissection was a misdemeanor and *contra bones mores* in British legal history, dead human bodies were not technically considered to be property and could not be owned. Possession of the body itself was not technically against the common law. Therefore, taking a body could not be legally construed as a theft. The felony was,

therefore, not specifically in the theft of the body. Nonetheless, the property on a person who has been buried is an issue of “legal possession” (Lock 302). Thus, the felony was to be found in stealing property associated with the deceased, because “only if clothing or other ‘property’ was removed from a grave was a felony believed to have been committed” (Richardson, *Death* 59). Body-snatchers were therefore careful not to steal any contents of the grave which did construe property. Consequently, upon retrieval of a body from the grave, the resurrectionists would swiftly strip “the corpse of its funeral shroud, working on the widely believed principle that ... taking clothes, a coffin or even a wedding ring could be punishable by hanging” (Moore 56). The risk of prosecution did exist in grave-robbery. While stealing a body may not have been a felony under the common law, the theft of the funeral shroud was a felony, the implications of which comprised a chilling warning that grave-robbery and the relationship between resurrectionists and anatomists was illicit.

Due to the issues of respectability, legitimacy and legality, the anatomists grew intolerant of their lack of control and resurrectionists’ power over them. The Anatomical Society attempted to control the prices of cadavers, and thereby regulate the anatomists’ relationship with resurrectionists. When it failed to do so, the anatomists advocated for a legitimate supply of cadavers to dissect. Thus, in 1823, a year following the decision of *R. v. Cundick*, Sir Astley Cooper “solicited from several fellow anatomists ideas about what could be done to break the power of the bodysnatchers” (Richardson, *Death* 163). Cooper, knowing the legal issues related to grave-robbery, stated that “the law ... does not prevent the exhumation” (63). Cooper incited fear within the middle to upper classes that anyone could fall victim to the resurrectionists and the anatomists. He emphasized

that “nobody is secured by the law” (*ibid*). The foregoing foreshadows the danger to the living public represented by the resurrection trade, for within the trade of human bodies, murderers abide.

There is a longstanding connection between murder and anatomical dissection. It is a previously established fact that murderers were legitimately sentenced to anatomical dissection following execution. However, the relationship between anatomical study and murder did not end there. Murder further infiltrated anatomical science as some industrious “resurrectionists” turned to murder in order to produce an anatomical subject for sale, rather than resurrecting a deceased from his final resting place. A significant case is that of William Burke, William Hare and their recipient Dr. Robert Knox. Between 1827 and 1829, Burke and Hare murdered and then sold the bodies of their victims to anatomists (Porter 317).

William Hare owned a boarding house and William Burke was a resident (*ibid*). Burke and Hare’s joint venture of murder for anatomy commenced when an elderly man died in Hare’s boarding house in 1827. At that time Burke and Hare sold the lodger’s body to the anatomists (*ibid*). They did not stop there, however, for “Spurred by success, they turned next to murder, luring victims in and suffocating them, so that the corpse betrayed no trace of violence” (*ibid*). It is believed that Burke and Hare murdered and sold sixteen of their victims between 1827 and 1829 for £7 each. When apprehended in 1829, Hare gave King’s evidence against Burke, and Burke was publicly executed and mutilated that same year. Fitting with his crimes, “Burke was hanged, his body being publicly anatomized and flayed, and his skin tanned and sold by the strip” (*ibid*). “Burke” is now a verb synonymous with murder, and burking is one and the same with murdering

by suffocation “or for the purpose of selling the victim’s body for dissection,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Despite the moral condemnation of Burke, and while it is not denied that Burke and Hare committed the actual murders, it was nevertheless anatomists, like Dr. Knox, who created the demand. Moreover, it is plausible that the anatomists turned a blind eye to the source of their bodies, for the fresher the specimen the better.

Knox stood accused of murdering to dissect because Burke and Hare’s last victim to be uncovered “had been discovered in Knox’s dissecting rooms” (*ibid*). This is a dark moment in the British history of anatomy. At the height of his career, Dr. Knox engrossed an average of five hundred students of anatomy in his classes. Dr. Knox’s large classes exemplified the need for a sufficient supply of cadavers. Due to the need for cadavers and the “lack of an adequate legal supply” of them to dissect, the resurrectionists, “who robbed new graves to sell their spoils to anatomists like Knox,” were guaranteed work (*ibid*). The relationship between resurrectionists and anatomists casts light upon an alarming flaw of the anatomy trade, which is epitomized in Dr. Knox. It is in response to this need for bodies that Burke and Hare circumvented the resurrection process and committed murder for the economic purpose of selling their victims to anatomists.

Despite the potential culpability of the anatomists, Burke wrote a letter while awaiting his execution, in which he stated that Dr. Knox did not contribute to the murder of his victims (MacGregor 93). Burke accepted full responsibility for the murder of his victims. It is noteworthy that Dr. Knox was not called as a witness at trial. Moreover, he remained silent throughout Burke’s trial and execution (Rae 93). It is in this light that

Knox's silence becomes doubly telling. While his silence left Burke to accept full responsibility, his silence also protected the anatomists (Lonsdale 81).

Separate from the murder trial, because Dr. Knox was in possession of Burke's victims, a Committee of Inquiry investigated Knox's involvement with Burke. On 13<sup>th</sup> March 1829, the Committee of Inquiry delivered its Report. The Report stated that Knox had long formed the belief that it was acceptable to purchase bodies for dissection (86-87). Thus, the Report stated that "whether mistaken or not, the Committee cannot consider Dr. Knox to have been culpable" (*ibid*). The Committee implies that the purchase of bodies for dissection is not in and of itself a criminal offence (*ibid*). While Dr. Knox escaped criminal consequences for his involvement, and the Committee determined that he was not to be held accountable or blameworthy for his association, Knox was condemned in the public domain. The commercial relationship between anatomists and murderers exacerbated the perception of anatomists as agents of death, feared in the public domain. In spite of Dr. Knox's "howls of innocence, [ ... an] incensed crowd burned down his house, and he fled to London with his career in tatters, eventually dying in obscurity" (Porter 317).

At the time of the first edition of *Frankenstein* in 1818, the trials of Burke and Hare and their association with Dr. Knox were still over a decade away. Nonetheless, the final edition of *Frankenstein* was published in 1831, two years following the trials. The differences between the first and last editions of *Frankenstein* are neither significant nor relevant within the context of the anatomy laws. What is significant is that the third and final edition of *Frankenstein* was republished at a time of heightened historical relevance to anatomy and the law. Moreover, tales of murdering to dissect had long been told in

urban legend and anatomists were so feared for this association that one anatomy school worked under police guard (Richardson, *Death* 194). The connection between anatomy and murdering to dissect within anatomy cannot be discounted, for Dr. Knox's method of acquiring bodies was not necessarily unique; it is simply that he was caught.

In 1832, three years after the case of Burke, Hare and Knox, the *Anatomy Act* was passed, granting a sufficient supply of bodies to dissect - the pauper corpse. The legislated source of bodies not only sought to provide an adequate supply of bodies, but also a legitimate source of bodies, which divorced anatomy from the resurrectionists and cases akin to that of Burke and Hare. The legal history of anatomy at the turn of the nineteenth century demonstrates the crises within the study of anatomy. The first was the medical study of anatomy itself, which depended upon the anatomists' need for a source of bodies to dissect. The history of Dr. Knox, Burke and Hare reveals the legally tenuous relationship between the body-snatchers and the anatomists. Anatomists employed means of questionable legality to fulfill their need for an adequate supply of bodies. Anatomical study thus bore a price. The second crisis is like unto the first: anatomists pioneered amidst death, grave-robbery and murder, while remaining silent and escaping criminal culpability.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* provides a window into the anatomists' Faustian bond with death. The anatomists' aspirations are mirrored by Dr. Frankenstein, as the anatomists' unrelenting ambition is echoed in Frankenstein's scientific endeavor to know the human form and fashion a living creature. Like both resurrectionists and Dr. Knox, Frankenstein ambitiously pursues his science to derive life out of death and disregards the law. Frankenstein perverts life in his relentless hunger for knowledge and lives are



sacrificed as a result of his anatomical quest. While Frankenstein escapes criminal castigation for his actions, like Dr. Knox, he does face consequences in the loss of his community, in his isolation. Moreover, Frankenstein pays the highest penalty in the sacrifice of his own life. And, yet, Frankenstein's death does not complete the cautionary tale, for, at the close of *Frankenstein*, the Creature he has formed disappears into the night, alive, embodying both the intellectual advancements and moral consequences of the anatomist's work with death.

## Chapter II: A Necessary Inhumanity

To know the anatomist, one must scrutinise his ambition, his relationship with his own science and his relationship with his anatomical subject. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* provides a window into this Faustian bond, which may be viewed as the anatomist's deal with the devil. Dr. Frankenstein offers an insight into the relationship between the anatomist and the cadaver. One must remember that the cadaver was first a corpse. The transformative journey that the corpse travels to the anatomist's table and the relationship the anatomist forms with the corpse are definitive to the corpse becoming a cadaver. Consequently, one must know his creator: the anatomist. Prior to the legitimate dissection of pauper bodies, the anatomist faced a dilemma: accept the shortage of available cadavers and halt the potential for medical progress, or affiliate with grave-robbing and "burking" in the name of medical progress. The latter choice and union with death compelled the anatomist to adopt a complex, but necessary, inhumanity created by pursuing his scientific ambition, disregarding the law and thereby defining the collective professional psyche with objectivity and detachment. The anatomist's aspirations are mirrored by Dr. Frankenstein. Frankenstein ambitiously pursues his science to derive life out of death, disregards the law (as both resurrectionists and Dr. Knox did), and ultimately unveils the frailty of the anatomist's humanity as he rejects and fears his Creation, his anatomical subject, as monstrous. Dr. Frankenstein demonstrates the anatomist's problematic relationship with corpses as well as his own challenging extrication from humanity.

Through Dr. Frankenstein's relationship to the Creature, *Frankenstein* enables the reader to consider the cause and effects of anatomical pursuit and its inevitable inhumanity. Dr. Frankenstein represents the complex detachment in the anatomist. Ruth Richardson states that Mary Shelley "warned in her book of the dangers of subordinating life to 'science'" (*Death* xvii). Significantly, the science in *Frankenstein* is not futuristic science, but rather the science of the present, for "Shelley was much more interested in the science of her own day than in looking ahead" (Clayton 84). With reference to the anatomist's inhumanity, Richardson adds that the "real monster of the book is the doctor scientist who loses touch with his own humanity" (xvii). The anatomist's unrelenting ambition is echoed in Dr. Frankenstein and his scientific endeavor to know the human form and to fashion a living Creature.

It is through anatomy that death acquired an instrumental status in the study of medicine (Foucault, *Clinic* 141). Through the anatomist's study, the cadaver offered the last communication between the living and the dead. This voice, however, is fixed in the anatomist's perspective. The voice of the cadaver is limited to what the anatomist sees and notes. Science writes the last words upon the human form, which grants the human body with immortality as it lives on in medicine's chronicles. Thus, despite the immortality offered by anatomical science, it is paradoxically the use of cadavers in this same science that reminds man of his mortality (198). Foucault suggests that modern human anatomy at the turn of the nineteenth century unveils a "philosophical destiny" for the human sciences (198). I posit that it is this philosophical yet tangible scientific providence that drives the anatomist's ambition, which is evidenced in *Frankenstein*.

To paraphrase Foucault on the study of anatomy, light is discovered in the dark. The significance of light, within the context of discovery, is suggested at the outset of *Frankenstein* when the explorer Walton states, “What may not be expected in a country of eternal light?” (16). The need to lead the way in the exploration of uncharted territory is an element of scientific ambition represented by Dr. Frankenstein. The foregoing quotation is representative of Frankenstein’s quest for anatomical knowledge. The wording is symbolic of the anatomist’s faith in the untainted good of his science and scientific aspirations. Through the imagery of light and the desire for knowledge, Frankenstein, the anatomist, presses the boundaries of the human sciences. This is mirrored by Foucault’s statement that, “That which hides and envelops, the curtain of night over truth, is, paradoxically, life; and death, on the contrary, opens up to the light of day the black coffer of the body” (166). Death illuminates the medical mysteries hidden within the living body. Foucault expands upon this medical paradox, which underpins the study of anatomy, poetically stating that “The living night is dissipated in the brightness of death” (146). Within the context of Foucault’s analysis of death and light, death is an opportunity for the anatomist. Death, through anatomical study, transforms medicine’s interaction with the human body and stimulates scientific ambition. Death is a beacon of light, an opportunity to see for oneself, to see the human body and to see the path of disease; it is an opportunity to see the answers hidden during life. Moreover, at this very early point in the novel, the anatomist’s scientific pursuit is represented in its innocence. Science, in its innocence and quest for light, is only beginning to grapple with the ethical and social consequences of its inquiries.

On the most unembellished level, morbid human anatomy offered the opportunity for scientific and medical advancement for the sake of medical bodily improvement. As Tierney observes, it is through the study of anatomy that death “became the point at which physicians would begin their pursuit of the truth” (6). The pursuit of truth validated the anatomist’s objective. Mary Shelley demonstrates that the foregoing is in part valid. *Frankenstein* reveals Dr. Frankenstein’s scientific dream and mirrors the anatomist’s thirst for both power and innovation, as he exclaims, “I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation” (48). The anatomist is driven by and even obsessed with his scientific passion for discovery. His desire is unaltered and unharnessed, pushing the limits of scientific knowledge and therefore scientific potential. The choice to pursue anatomy without regard for the consequences required the anatomist to assume a necessary inhumanity, which enabled him to justify his actions. Dr. Frankenstein demonstrates the anatomist’s problematic detachment from humanity as well as his problematic relationship with corpses. Dr. Frankenstein reveals the frailty of the anatomist’s humanity as he rejects and fears his Creation as grotesque. Human anatomy is his opportunity for innovation, regardless of the consequences.

Frankenstein identifies the necessary but paradoxical relationship between the study of life and the study of death. Frankenstein’s interest in anatomy is revealed as he states that he is fascinated by “the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endowed with life” (51). He further says, “Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed?” (51). Frankenstein goes on to add that he decided to focus his studies upon “those branches of natural philosophy which relate to physiology” (51). He views

himself as being possessed with mystic or “supernatural enthusiasm,” which is emblematic of the obsessive nature of his ambitious pursuit (51). Frankenstein’s anatomical study turns to an obsession with creating life. Frankenstein is a pioneer. Nonetheless, while scientifically ground-breaking, human anatomy is murky because it requires an interface with the dead. Frankenstein states, “To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death” (51). In order to study anatomy, he must not simply study the science, he must see for himself. As Frankenstein states, “I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body” (51). The study of life is necessarily linked to the study of the dead.

The relationship between the living and the dead is the ethically murky Faustian scheme within *Frankenstein*, and within the history of anatomy. Frankenstein depicts the relationship between life and death and the dependency of one upon the other. The anatomist is dependent upon death and death is the frontier from which he cannot return. It is essential for the anatomist, and for his fictional counterpart in Frankenstein, to know death before he can unveil the secrets to human life:

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 so completely as I should

deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections, I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption. (54)

Throughout this passage, Frankenstein refers to life and death. Frankenstein is enraptured to see that, in the study of anatomy, “death” is a “torrent of light” (54). In his pursuit of anatomical knowledge, Frankenstein, like the anatomist, is consumed by his study of life through death.

The anatomist’s use of the human corpse to improve life is paralleled in Frankenstein’s use of corpses and anatomy to create life. Frankenstein is not only referring to the study of anatomy. He has empowered himself with the discovery of a new “species.” He sees the creation of a new genus raised from the dead, and he sees himself as their god. His ambition is unrelenting, leading to his self-incarceration while he “pursued” his “undertaking with unremitting ardour” (54). His passion was such that while he failed, even though “on the very brink of certainty,” he nevertheless “clung to the hope which the next day or the next hour might realize” (54). As the anatomist paces forward in the name of human bodily improvement, Victor Frankenstein works to create a human being, to unveil the secrets to human life. First, however, Frankenstein, like the anatomist, must be sullied by his necessary relationship with the grave.

Dr. Frankenstein’s Creature is an assemblage of corpses robbed from graves. Frankenstein first makes the reader aware of the composition of his Creation when he describes his use of graveyards and his inhuman opinion that “a churchyard was ...

merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm” (52). Grave-robbery is thus one component leading up to his inhumanity. Indeed, Victor Frankenstein reveals the source of his supplies via grave-robbery. Like the resurrectionists, Frankenstein works under the cover of night and the light of the moon as he “dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave [and] ... collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame” (54-55). The grave enabled the anatomist to pursue his scientific relationship with the dead. Intermingled within Dr. Frankenstein are both the anatomist and the resurrectionist, for one naturally depended upon the other. Moreover, as Ludmilla Jordonova states, *Frankenstein* is not “a simple moralistic tale of masculinist, scientific overreaching, drawing on simple definitions of ‘science’, ‘medicine’ or ‘surgery’” (60). It is rather, a multifaceted analogy of the anatomist’s quest through Dr. Frankenstein, who struggles with the necessary disengagement from humanity to cope with his science.

Necessary inhumanity is a complex concept. Its roots in anatomy are found in a lecture, c. 1780, given by William Hunter in which he stated that “Anatomy is the Basis of Surgery ... it informs the Head, guides the hand, and familiarizes the heart to a kind of necessary inhumanity” (Richardson, *Death* 30-31 & 307). Akin to what we now refer to as clinical detachment, a necessary inhumanity “represents a defensive barrier, which permits the anatomist to execute tasks which would, in normal circumstances, be taboo or emotionally repugnant” (30-31). How can inhumanity be necessary? Moreover, why would one elect to set aside one’s humanity? Richardson explains that “the ability to regard the human corpse as an object of close physical study represents a cultural



detachment of no small dimension” (31). The anatomist’s self-imposed detachment in the pursuit of his science impacts upon his own humanity.

Dr. Frankenstein’s scientific pursuit is a fictional account of the anatomist’s journey towards this essential inhumanity. He states that he “had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body”. In order to achieve his goal, Frankenstein “deprived [ ... himself] of rest and health” (57). At this most elemental level, Frankenstein separates himself from humanity by failing to provide himself with the most basic human needs, the necessities of life. The result is a man who is consumed by “breathless horror and disgust. ... Unable to endure the aspect of the being ... [he] had created ... unable to compose ... [his] mind to sleep” (*ibid*). This fictional first-person account by Frankenstein provides insight into the torture endured by the anatomist, and the horror he experiences in the study of anatomy.

Frankenstein exemplifies the conflict between anatomical study and humanity within the anatomist, a conflict that plagues his dreams. He states, “I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. ... 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” (58). This nightmare mirrors a connection between grave-robbery and the law. Frankenstein’s conscience arguably sees the link between the property of the grave and the deceased, as he dreams of his own mother, in her grave, enveloped by her funeral shroud. Stealing a body may not have been a felony under the common law, but theft of the funeral shroud was a felony offence (Moore 56). In this nightmare, the funeral shroud is a chilling reminder that the relationship between the grave and the anatomist, the mingling of the dead and the living, was illicit and *contra bones mores*, as stated by the

court in 1788 in the case of *Rex v. Lynn* (395). Moreover, it is telling that Frankenstein envisions his mother's grave. Frankenstein is torn between his ambition and his connection to humanity. Regardless, Frankenstein pushed forward with his goal, despite the legal consequences to his actions and the risk to his humanity.

Frankenstein is terrorized by the conflict between his humanity and his ambition. Frankenstein says, "I started from my sleep with horror" (58). His physical response to his dreams are akin to the symptoms of illness: "a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed" (58). Frankenstein's terror is palpable. He has been driven by his scientific aspiration to pursue anatomy to the grave and so fashion a Creature. When confronted by his Creation, Frankenstein perceives the Creature as imposing itself into his domain, claiming that the Creature, "forced its way through the window shutters" (58). Frankenstein adds, "I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created" (58). This is a shift in control, a shift in responsibility. Frankenstein describes the Creature's eyes as "fixed on me" which implies a degree of control of the Creature over Frankenstein. Moreover, when the Creature reaches his hand out towards his creator, Frankenstein describes this motion as "seemingly to detain" him (58). It is not, however, the Creature who is capturing Frankenstein. Rather, it is Frankenstein's own ambition that has captivated him. Frankenstein created the Creature he regards as an atrocity, but minimizes his own responsibility. The monster who is terrorizing Dr. Frankenstein is himself.

It is in this encounter that Frankenstein exposes the conflict within the anatomist between his ambition and his own humanity. He is incapable of maintaining his connection to humanity while pursuing his objective. In this struggle Frankenstein rejects

the product of his work and scientific discovery, referring to it as “the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life” (58). Frankenstein does not see that it is his own humanity that is giving way. He transfers his own guilt upon the Creature. It is a complex dynamic. Dr. Frankenstein is infused with guilt, but, at the same time he cannot completely turn away from what he has already created. His rejection of the Creature as monstrous does not result in detachment. His passion and his dream have become a horrifying reality from which he cannot escape:

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. 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 become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete! (58-59)

Frankenstein’s ambition to create a new species reaches a climax at this early point in the novel. Frankenstein depicts the anxiety-ridden emotions of ambition and the utter disappointment when the ambition has been fulfilled. Frankenstein is no longer in control, as his Creature lives and breathes on his own. Dr. Frankenstein’s account of his experience grows to be hyperbolic; he is at a boiling point, unable to cope emotionally. The ambition that fulfilled Frankenstein’s creation of the Creature has been exhausted and yet Frankenstein remains consumed with his obsession, which is exacerbated when the Creature commits murder.

The connection between *Frankenstein* and murdering to dissect within anatomy cannot be discounted. There is a longstanding connection between murder and anatomical dissection. It is a well established fact that murderers were legitimately sentenced to anatomical dissection following execution (25 Geo. II c.37: *An Act for Better Preventing the Horrid Crime of Murder*, 1752). But some anatomists went beyond the legitimate supply of corpses provided under the *Murder Act* and beyond grave-robbery to obtain bodies via murder. Tales of murdering to dissect had long been told in urban legend and the anatomist was so feared for this association that one anatomy school worked under police guard (Richardson, *Death* 194). By the final edition of *Frankenstein* in 1831, urban legend had been validated as the case of Burke and Hare and the Inquiry into Dr. Knox for accusations of murdering to dissect had been uncovered and tried.

The association of the anatomist with murder is reflected in *Frankenstein*. When Victor Frankenstein's brother William is killed by Frankenstein's Creature, the single-mindedness of Frankenstein's ambition remains, reflecting the anatomist's inhumanity. Regardless of William's death and the false accusations against Justine, Frankenstein remains silent and adds, "No one can conceive the anguish I suffered" (77). Frankenstein is still consumed with himself. He no longer sees his science as unveiling the secrets to life. Rather he sees his science, embodied in the Creature, as causing death and torment. Frankenstein now states that his "imagination was busy in scenes of evil and despair" as he looks upon his Creation with vengeance (77). He is obsessed with the Creature and sees the results of his work as evil, for he had "endowed [the Creature] with the will and power to effect purposes of horror," which the Creature had fulfilled in murdering William (77). Frankenstein thus implicates himself in the Creature's crime and his work

is branded as being both all-powerful and criminal, reinforcing the link between anatomy and murder. Moreover, in seeing his work as the cause of William's murder, Frankenstein implies his own departure from humanity as he portrays himself as a monster, a "vampire ... let loose from the grave ... forced to destroy all that was dear to" him (77).

Frankenstein mingles the actions of his Creature with his own, envisioning himself as the living dead, akin to his Creature. In *Frankenstein*, the anatomist remains silent and protects his study of human life rather than actual human life. It is Frankenstein, as well as his family, his friends and strangers who are being destroyed. There are consequences to the anatomist's scientific pursuit, and one of those consequences is the destruction of the man behind the science.

As with Dr. Knox, it is not Frankenstein's direct actions, but rather his pursuit within anatomical science that links him to the murder. Frankenstein states, "I was firmly convinced in my own mind that Justine, and indeed every human being, was guiltless of this murder" (80). Frankenstein is so convinced of this that he does not believe Justine would be convicted. In this erroneous belief, Frankenstein remains silent, stating that his "tale was not one to announce publicly; its astounding horror would be looked upon as madness by the vulgar" (80). The foregoing statement by Frankenstein is unique to the 1831 edition of the novel, which is significant because Frankenstein's silence mirrors that of Dr. Knox in 1829. Frankenstein knows that his Creature has killed his brother, but he cannot disclose this knowledge without his anatomical work being exposed. This is the predicament for Frankenstein the anatomist, and like Dr. Knox, he chooses silence.

The silence of Dr. Knox and Frankenstein results in yet another death, not only of the victim of the murder, but also of the accused. Throughout Justine's trial Frankenstein

remains silent and he acknowledges, “During the whole of this wretched mockery of justice I suffered living torture” (81). Frankenstein acknowledges the lawlessness of his anatomical pursuit when he states: “It was to be decided, whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow-beings” (81). Frankenstein struggles with his ambition and its consequences, and perceives his work as being on trial. Frankenstein’s culpability is elevated because Justine is an innocent accused. Justine dies because Frankenstein remains silent with regard to his anatomical work and his own culpability. Frankenstein knows that Justine is innocent of the crime and that the Creature is guilty. Nonetheless, he fails to take responsibility for his Creature, just as Dr. Knox did not take responsibility for Burke and Hare’s victims. While Burke and Hare did actually commit murder, if it were not for the anatomist’s demand for bodies to dissect, Burke and Hare would not have had the ready market for their murderous trade in bodies (Porter 317).

Like Dr. Knox, Dr. Frankenstein plays a role in the murder that has been committed in the name of his science, or rather by his anatomical assemblage. Dr. Frankenstein observes Justine’s conviction, revealing nothing of his knowledge or involvement. Rather, he flees the courtroom thinking only of his own anguish and of his own ambitious pursuit: “The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom and would not forgo their hold” (85). Frankenstein is devastated, distraught and yet remains silent, internalizing his guilt: “I beheld those I loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and Justine, the first hapless victims to my unhallowed arts” (89). Contrary to Frankenstein’s thoughts, however, William and Justine were not the first victims of his

pursuit, for his labours commenced in the theft of graves. As in the case of Dr. Knox, innocents were sacrificed for the anatomist's objective. Despite Justine's death and Frankenstein's silent guilt, anatomical science survives unscathed. While anatomy progressed, the consequences continued. Lives have been sacrificed as a result of Frankenstein's anatomical and physiological quest.

Later in the novel when Frankenstein encounters his Creature, the anatomist shifts from emotions of culpability to feelings of anger and fury. Frankenstein's emotional turmoil reflects his attempt to separate himself from his science, his Creation. Frankenstein is developing detachment from his subject. Richardson comments upon the anatomist's "difficulties involved in acquiring clinical detachment" when facing his subject (*Death*, 31). Similarly, Frankenstein experiences difficulties with detachment when facing his subject, the Creature. At this point in the novel, the Creature is described as "the figure of a man ... advancing ... with superhuman speed" (98). It is ironic that during Frankenstein's conception of the Creature, he referred to himself as possessing "supernatural enthusiasm" (51). This formidable quality has now been assigned to his Creature. Frankenstein describes the Creature as physically superhuman as he "bounded over the crevices in the ice ... [and] his stature ... seemed to exceed that of man" (98). By contrast, Frankenstein describes himself as having "walked with caution" on the same ground (98). Frankenstein is "troubled" by this sight, but is calmed by his surroundings in nature, his attempted escape from humanity (98). However, when Frankenstein realizes that this figure is in fact his Creation, "the wretch whom ... [he] had created," he shudders "with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach and then close with him in mortal combat" (99). At the sight of his Creation, Frankenstein is consumed with "bitter

anguish ... disdain ... malignity ... rage ... hatred ... detestation and contempt” (99).

What is most fitting is that Frankenstein describes his Creation as possessing “unearthly ugliness ... almost too horrible for human eyes” (99). The Creature is too hideous for human eyes to see because it represents the ambition that has consumed its creator and the inhumanity that has been borne out of it within Frankenstein.

Frankenstein’s disdain for the Creature is emblematic of the conflict within the anatomist. This is depicted in Frankenstein’s verbal attack upon the Creature. He condemns the Creature he brought to life, referring to him as “Devil” (99). Moreover, Frankenstein takes a dominant stance in communicating with the Creature, demanding, “do you dare approach me” (99). Frankenstein threatens to “trample ... [his Creature] to dust!” (99). He wishes that the “extinction” of the Creature’s “existence” could “restore those victims ... [the Creature] so diabolically murdered!” (99). Frankenstein the anatomist nevertheless still envisions his work with cadavers revealing the secrets to life. In death, he sees the restoration of life. Frankenstein is in a state of conflict about his quest to unveil the secrets of life through death. While filled with rage, Frankenstein is unable to separate himself from his work with death.

Frankenstein is unable to separate himself from his anatomical subject, and his ensuing crisis demonstrates the need for detachment in anatomy. When Victor faces the results of his anatomical endeavors in the Creature, he is confronting himself, revealing his own guilt. Frankenstein describes his overwhelming anger during his confrontation with the Creature: “My rage was without bounds; I sprang on him, impelled by all the feelings which can arm one being against the existence of another” (99). It is in this moment that the two halves meet: the doctor and the fiend, the anatomist and the cadaver.



The Creature embodies Victor's actions, quests and the consequences, including murdering to dissect. Frankenstein's conflict with the Creature reflects the battle raging within the anatomist, within his Faustian relationship amid life, death and his own humanity.

Just as the anatomist needs to forge a clinical detachment, Frankenstein attempts to sever any connection between himself and his anatomical assemblage when he says to the Creature: "Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall" (100). Frankenstein cannot dissolve his ties to the Creature, however, for Frankenstein knows that, as his creator, he will always be linked to his Creation. Frankenstein rejects the Creature and wishes that he had never brought the Creature to life: "Why do you call to my remembrance," he demands of the Creature, "circumstances of which I shudder to reflect, that I have been the miserable origin and author?" (101). Frankenstein curses not only his Creation, but himself, while attempting to divorce himself from what he has created: "Cursed be the day, abhorred devil, in which you first saw light! Cursed (although I curse myself) be the hands that formed you!" (101). In facing the Creature, Frankenstein is facing what he has done, and what cannot be undone. He embodies the anatomist, but is unable emotionally to detach himself from his science, unable to cope with the consequences of his scientific advancement. Frankenstein's inability to cope is exhibited when he tells the Creature, "You have made me wretched beyond expression. You have left me no power to consider whether I am just to you or not. Begone! Relieve me from the sight of your detested form" (101). Frankenstein subordinated life to science, but in his Creation he has lost control. He is on the course of developing inhumanity, but

lacks the all-too-important detachment. The Creature and Frankenstein are not only inseparable, they are one. Dr. Frankenstein is the monster.

While Frankenstein holds the Creature responsible for all of the wrongs and horrors that have taken place, the Creature points out to Frankenstein, “On you it rests, whether I quit forever the neighbourhood of man and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow creatures and the author of your own speedy ruin” (101). Literally speaking, the Creature is asking to be heard, and is threatening devastation should he not receive what he wants. Ironically, the Creature’s autobiographical tale also reveals the consequences of Frankenstein, the anatomist’s, work. The Creature is not, however, exaggerating when he states that ruin would follow. As an anatomist, Frankenstein is at odds with the inhumanity required in pursuit of anatomical science. Bodies will be stolen. Lives may be taken to satisfy the demands of anatomical study. At the same time, anatomical science offers the opportunity for medical improvement and human health. Thus, the ruin the Creature refers to may also metaphorically represent disease. If the anatomist fails to pursue his scientific study, disease may continue to kill and bodily improvement may halt. What is clear is that knowledge bears a price. The challenge faced by the anatomist, as represented by Frankenstein, is in the contest between the thirst for knowledge and the cost of knowledge.

The Creature, as Frankenstein’s assemblage, understands how unrelenting the quest for knowledge is as he states, “what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to the mind when it has once seized on it like lichen on the rock” (120). Like his creator, he “wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling,” either to stop in his pursuit of knowledge or to develop inhumanity (120). Like Frankenstein, the Creature is engaged in

the quest for knowledge, for the secrets of life in death because he “learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death – a state which” he “feared yet did not understand” (120). Frankenstein is reflected within his Creation, since, like the anatomist, the Creature’s quest for knowledge is all-consuming.

The Creature also mirrors the lack of humanity in Frankenstein, the anatomist, because the Creature is unable to live a human life. Beyond the thirst for knowledge is the human need for companionship, to be a part of humanity, and that is the Creature’s prime desire. Frankenstein gives the Creature life, but in rejecting the Creature, Frankenstein denies him the experiences that include him in humanity. The Creature asks, “But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses” (121). The Creature also acknowledges his origins as an assemblage of corpses in saying that if he had had a mother or father in the past it “was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing” (121). The Creature seeks a connection to human life and to himself when he asks, “What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans” (121). The Creature knows that he is without a family or a community. It is ironic that Frankenstein has sacrificed his family, his friends, his community in his anatomical pursuit.

It is during Dr. Frankenstein’s attempts to fashion a second creature that his conscience is challenged more acutely. Frankenstein states that he did not foresee the consequences of his labours in the first instance, because, he claims, “During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment” (164). Due to this passionate and ambitious drive, he moans, “my mind was intently fixed on the consummation of my labour, and my eyes were shut to the horror of

my proceedings” (164). Now he is fully aware of the risk as he chillingly states, “I went to it in cold blood, and my heart often sickened at the work of my hands” (164). As he is sickened by his work, Frankenstein is failing to adopt the necessary inhumanity and detachment required by anatomy. Frankenstein relates that he feels terror as he says, “Every moment I feared to meet my persecutor” (164). Greater than his fear of his Creature, however, is his concern for what consequences may be met in making this second creature, because “she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness” (165). Frankenstein believes this creature could be more diabolical than the last because, in succeeding in forming and animating the first Creature, Frankenstein’s knowledge beyond mere anatomy has expanded. The pursuit of anatomical knowledge is dangerous. Frankenstein is now cognizant of the consequences of tampering with life and death.

The issue Frankenstein raises is whether or not he has the right to place his scientific quest and anatomical study ahead of humanity. Frankenstein asks, “Had I right, for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations?” (165). Frankenstein acknowledges that his intellectual aspiration drove him to his actions, but he now explains that his “selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace at the price, perhaps, of the existence of the whole human race” (166). While Frankenstein’s words may appear to be overconfident and overly dramatic, they are representative of the conflict within the anatomist during this time. As Jordanova states, “These conflicts ... surfaced at a time when the expectations and claims of men of science and of medicine were disproportionate to their actual status and power” (60). Frankenstein’s concerns parallel the selfishness of the anatomist in pursuing his scientific quest, despite the

desecration of graves and the murder victims bought and placed upon his dissecting table. Frankenstein, like the anatomist, is torn between knowledge and the cost of knowledge. In this allegorical history of anatomy, the cost is twofold: the impact upon the anatomist's human subjects and the impact upon the anatomist's humanity.

The conflict within the anatomist is not a straightforward and uncomplicated one, nor is the metaphorical account of the anatomist and anatomical science within *Frankenstein*. While Frankenstein does reject his Creature, he is unable to attain the essential objectivity to detach himself. Within the matrix of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is an allegory, which at least in part illuminates the history of anatomy. Frankenstein's dilemma, while in the realm of science fiction, is a real dilemma for the anatomist. Should Frankenstein continue and create another being? Or should he stop, and risk ruin? Anatomical pursuit may lead to bodily improvement, or in this case, metaphorically, the creation of life, but not without the anatomist subordinating his own humanity to the pursuit of anatomical science. Frankenstein states, "I determined to quit my island at the expiration of two days" (170). Frankenstein, in these words, has resolved to leave his solitude, which is a byproduct of his obsession with anatomy and creating life. Frankenstein has communicated his intention to reintegrate himself into his community and to regain his humanity. First, however, he must renounce his work. In returning to his laboratory, Frankenstein sees the "remains of the half-finished creature ... lay scattered on the floor" (170). When he looks upon the remains he says, "I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being" (170). Frankenstein struggles with what he has done and with what he has become, but his inhumanity is the result of the struggle. Frankenstein states, "I paused to collect myself and then ... determined to throw them

into the sea that very night” (170). And so Frankenstein disposes of his partial creation, lifting a weight off his conscience, continuing to detach himself from his humanity, considering no longer the consequences that will follow.

Due to Frankenstein’s decision to quit his work on the second cadaverous creation, death follows and his friend Henry Clerval is found murdered. Dr. Frankenstein finds that his friend Henry’s life has been taken when he enters a room and sees “the lifeless form of Henry Clerval” (176). Frankenstein describes his physical reaction to this discovery. He was “parched with horror” and “gasp[ed] for breath” (176). His memory of this moment is one of “shuddering and agony” (176). Frankenstein depicts his own disconnection from this experience, stating, it “passed like a dream from my memory” (176). However, while Frankenstein quit his work on the second creature to prevent evil consequences, he could not stop the ruin promised by the first Creature. This is the irony of Frankenstein’s Creation, his discovery of life has taken on a life of its own.

At this turning point, Dr. Frankenstein acknowledges within himself his personal culpability for murder. That is, his anatomical pursuit and search for the secret to life have caused unnatural death. Frankenstein acknowledges this revelation when he states, “Have my murderous machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life? Two I have already destroyed; other victims await their destiny” (176). Dr. Frankenstein and Dr. Knox both reveal the consequences of pursuing anatomical science and the consequences of remaining silent. The ambitious study of anatomy takes on a life of its own, beyond the anatomist’s control. The very humanity within the anatomist is forced to come secondary to the science. As Richardson suggests, *Frankenstein* considers the monstrosity and brutality that develops within the anatomist in the pursuit of his scientific ambition

(*Death* xvii). In the making of modern medicine, working with the dead endangers the living.

Frankenstein's discovery of Clerval's death may be compared to the anatomist entering a state of shock when the anatomical subject is revealed to be a friend.

Richardson identifies this as the anatomist's Achilles heel, noting that stories "of the bodysnatching era occasionally feature anatomists suffering shock and horror when the corpse they are about to dissect turns out to be that of a relative or friend" (31). These stories are parabolic on two levels. The one moral is that of imposing justice upon the anatomist (31). The other alludes to the anatomist's challenge in "acquiring the 'necessary Inhumanity' of clinical detachment through dissection of the human corpse" (31). In discovering Clerval's body, vengeance is being wreaked upon Frankenstein.

Death is essential to Frankenstein's scientific vocation, and yet it is his undoing as he is unable to adopt either the humanity or the crucial inhumanity required of the science:

The human frame could no longer support the agonies that I endured. ... Why did I not die? ... Death snatches away many blooming children, the only hopes of their dotting parents; how many brides and youthful lovers have been one day in the bloom of health and hope, and the next a prey for worms and the decay of the tomb! Of what materials was I made that I could thus resist so many shocks, which, like the turning of the wheel, continually renewed the torture? (176-177)

Frankenstein wishes death upon himself and agonizes as it is denied to him. It is particularly telling that his ambition has led him to discover the secret to creating life, and yet in this passage he torments himself as to the meaning of death. Frankenstein's journey for knowledge of life has come full circle from the graveyard to understanding.

Frankenstein, like the anatomist, studies life via death, in the name of life, for the sake of bodily improvement. But the altruistic side of medicine, when combined with the study of anatomy and the anatomist's pursuit for knowledge, has dire consequences.

Frankenstein's scientific ambition leads him down a ruinous course.

Frankenstein succeeded in drawing life out of death, but he is unable to control either life or death. As Maximillian E. Novak states, "We tend to think of the monster as the product of technology which has not sufficient controls to harness the destructive forces unleashed" (56). The assumption is that when one has the capacity to harness the powers of the living and the dead, one also has the ability to control life. Frankenstein does not have the ability to control life or death, which is evidenced as his Creation destroys Frankenstein's community. Frankenstein has lost his family and friends in his pursuit of anatomy's secrets. In his solitude, Frankenstein cries, "But I was doomed to live" (177). He lived to proclaim, "I am sorry that I am still alive to feel this misery and horror" (178). Frankenstein's misery is delimited when he says, "one by one, my friends were snatched away; I was left desolate. My own strength is exhausted" (198). He has lost his community, his connection to humanity.

In his isolation, Frankenstein becomes like his Creature, alone and with nothing to pursue but vengeance. Frankenstein describes his plan for retribution when he states, upon leaving Geneva, "my first labour was to gain some clue by which I might trace the



steps of my fiendish enemy” (201). Along this path to retaliation against his Creature, Frankenstein returns to the source of his anatomical assemblage: the graveyard.

Moreover, Frankenstein finds himself at the site not only of his scientific discovery, but also of his sacrifice, the graves of his beloved family and friends. On his journey, he remarks, “I found myself at the entrance of the cemetery where William, Elizabeth, and my father reposed. I entered it and approached the tomb which marked their graves”

(201-202). His science had robbed him of his connection to life, to love, to humanity.

Frankenstein’s loss extends beyond that of his connection to humanity to that of a loss of control over his science, his Creature.

Frankenstein’s intention to destroy his Creature is self-destructive. As he lay dying, Frankenstein calls Walton to his bedside. Frankenstein asks Walton to carry on his quest to stop the Creature: “Alas! The strength I relied on is gone; I feel that I shall soon die, and he, my enemy and persecutor, may still be in being” (216). Frankenstein is consumed with revenge and he tells Walton, “in the last moments of my existence I feel that burning hatred and ardent desire of revenge I once expressed; but I feel myself justified in desiring the death of my adversary” (216-217). Walton describes Frankenstein as having lost his health. Frankenstein is in a state of conflict between desire and fatigue, as “a feverish fire still glimmers in his eyes, but he is exhausted, and when suddenly roused to any exertion, he speedily sinks again into apparent lifelessness” (213). Passion and ambition are destroying Frankenstein; he does not exhibit the required detachment for the intellectual and close physical study of human anatomy. His life is being destroyed, just as Dr. Knox’s life was left in shambles.

Frankenstein's Creation exemplifies the destructive cost of unbridled power. As a result of his Creation, Frankenstein's community has been destroyed. Frankenstein tells Walton that the Creature is responsible for having "destroyed my friends" and adds, "he devoted to destruction beings who possessed exquisite sensations, happiness, and wisdom" (217). Frankenstein perceives the Creature as having "showed unparalleled malignity and selfishness in evil" (217). Frankenstein is filled with hatred and cannot see that he is responsible for the destruction of his friends, his family and his humanity. He can only see his current goal, which is the destruction of his Creation. Frankenstein does not "know where this thirst for vengeance may end" (217). He tells Walton that the Creature "ought to die," and adds: "The task of his destruction was mine, but I have failed" (217). Frankenstein's obsession has shifted from creating life to destroying life. Frankenstein is the cause of his own destruction.

In Frankenstein's anatomical pursuit, knowledge is dangerous. There is a key question about the anatomist and his science here: at what point does Frankenstein's scientific purpose endanger others, or himself? This is the Faustian relationship the anatomist has with his science. To avoid ambition would be far too extreme. And yet ambition is closely tied to the desire for power. There can be no greater power than that which grants and rescinds life. This power culminates in "scientific heroism," which was "enticing and seductive" and accessible during Shelley's time (Jordanova 60-61). The dangerous pursuit of knowledge is fueled by a pioneering spirit. Knowledge and danger exist in concert, especially in the arena of life and death.

Frankenstein, in his last breath, warns against the destructiveness of power and ambition. Dr. Frankenstein's purchase of scientific knowledge and advancement was

disastrous, especially to those whose lives were sacrificed for the sake of his anatomical study and obsession. Frankenstein knows that the consequences of his Creation will outlive him and this “disturbs” him (217). Walton’s ambition mirrors Frankenstein’s ambition. Where Frankenstein pursues the dangerous and unprecedented boundaries of life and death, Walton pursues the dangerous and uncharted territory of the Arctic Circle. While Frankenstein has previously asked Walton to pursue his objective where he has left off, he further comments, “I cannot ask you to renounce your country and friends to fulfil this task” (217). He does not want Walton to lose touch with humanity, as he did. Accordingly, he counsels Walton to “Seek happiness in tranquillity and avoid ambition” (217). Frankenstein warns Walton to beware of a pursuit that appears to be an “innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries” (217-218). Frankenstein knows that while he has destroyed himself and has “been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed” (218). Frankenstein pays the price for his destructive pursuit with his own life.

The history of anatomy at the turn of the nineteenth century, when read in concert with *Frankenstein*, demonstrates the danger within the study of anatomy. In the study of natural knowledge and human anatomy, ambition and passion can lead to a disproportionate sense of power. Frankenstein embodies the anatomist’s overwhelming and self-justifying arrogance. The control inflicted upon the dead by the anatomist, legal or illegal, was validated by the anatomist’s hauteur. The anatomist’s thirst for knowledge leads to a conflict in developing a necessary inhumanity. Scientific aspirations demand a detachment from humanity. The inhumanity needed to study the dead and penetrate the secrets of the natural world is epitomized by Frankenstein as he exemplifies the scientific potential of the anatomist’s pursuit and exposes the destructive cost of unbridled power in

the study of the human sciences: penetrating the secrets of life within the framework of death at whatever the cost. Frankenstein fails to develop the objectivity required of anatomical study and loses his life. He lacks the necessary indifference and detachment to coexist with his own Creation in life and goes to his grave, the playground of the anatomist and resurrectionist, and the source of anatomical inquiry.

### Chapter III: Punishment, Crime and Human Remains

*Frankenstein* is the fictional life story of a significant figure in the development of modern medicine: the cadaver. Frankenstein's Creature is a physical, living manifestation of the use of the corpses of paupers alongside those of murderers in the study of anatomy. The assemblage of murderers and paupers in one being, located in Frankenstein's Creation, demonstrates that poverty is tantamount to being a crime long before the legislation of the Poor Laws or the *Anatomy Act of 1832*. Ironically, the use of pauper bodies in the study of anatomy invested the burdensome poor with value for the middle class upon death: value in the study of anatomy. In a sense, it is in their criminalization that the paupers' utility lies. In their criminalization, the poor are made illegitimate and the use of their bodies is justified. The Creature embodies this version of the anatomical subject, which is deprived of self-determination and portrayed as problematic, ugly and taboo. In *Frankenstein*, the poor and the murderer are blended to make one body, one identity, one common community, one illegitimized and criminalized nature. Moreover, Frankenstein's Creature embodies the knowledge of the anatomist, who invests himself in the Creature. The Creature is a device for seeing the consequences of utilising the illegitimately obtained pauper corpse in anatomical study. In blending the identity of the poor with that of murderers, both the poor and murderers are deprived self-determination and their individual identities are merged.

The Creature is not identifiable as any one human being. While the reader is aware of the Creature's creation, the story of how he is created is not explicit in the novel and the Creature informs us of his indeterminate origins in his tale of self-discovery:

“And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant” (120). His identity is unclear, like the human cadaver which has been historically stripped of any identifiable characteristics. As Ruth Richardson explains, in order to maintain anonymity, “routine treatment for a newly delivered corpse was swift immersion in boiling water, and flaying, thereby preventing identification and retrieval by grieving relatives” (“Potted” 935-936). As the Creature does not know who he is, and has suffered rejection from mankind, he implores of his creator, “Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?” (120). The Creature does not know who he is or where he belongs. He exists within the world, but without any connection to it.

The Creature is born without any knowledge, or memory, of the world around him. Consequently, to learn who he is now, he must gain knowledge of his origins and his community, and start to remember what he has forgotten. As Satya P. Mohanty states in “The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity,” “such forgetting would not be simply a personal failure but rather a loss of community, of necessary social meaning” (55). Mohanty goes on to state that “identities can be both constructed ... and ‘real’ at the same time. Their ‘reality’ consists in their referring outward, to causally significant features of the social world” (*ibid*). Community, remembering, and knowledge are keys to identity.

Recent debates on identity theories suggest that identity can be an oppressive concept. As Linda Martin Alcoff explains, “many theorists express a worry that the very concept of identity involves domination because it presumes sameness, thus excluding difference” (318-319). Before the Creature can debate the merits of his sameness with one social group or another, he must first gain an identity by becoming “more aware of

the cultural sources of his own personhood” (Mohanty 59). The Creature is initially tortured by his unknown identity. Contemplating his anonymity and his stripped identity, he states, “I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge” (120). The Creature’s unveiling of his identity will be, in terms of identity theory, “facilitated by making buried explanations explicit” (Mohanty 56). Within the Creature there is an identity, a story to be told, but first he must remember.

In order to claim his identity, the Creature must become aware of his origins. In the search for identity, community is significant, because community “defines our cultural identity” and it “is constructed through a complex and ongoing process involving both emotional and cognitive effort” (54-55). Remembering and knowing both his origins and his community are essential to claiming his identity in freedom or oppression, whether real or constructed. The Creature knows that his past life, if he had one, is a mystery as he states, “all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing” (121). Nonetheless, the Creature asks, “What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans” (*ibid*). This is the Creature’s “ineliminable need for self-determination,” to know himself (Mohanty 47). The Creature remains focused upon knowing his identity through his origins.

In pursuit of self-knowledge, the Creature discovers he is an assemblage of corpses. While Frankenstein pursues forbidden knowledge in the study of human cadavers, the Creature similarly pursues forbidden knowledge to understand his own origins. Where Frankenstein studies human anatomy in order to form the Creature, the Creature similarly must study Frankenstein’s anatomical knowledge to know his history.

The Creature teaches himself to read, and discovers Frankenstein's journal. The journal covers the period of the four months leading up to his Creation (130). In reading Frankenstein's journal, the Creature discovers that he has been created out of death. He "learns to 'remember' with honesty and integrity" and is, consequently, aware that he is the hybrid of murderers and paupers (Mohanty 55). The Creature demonstrates that he has learned to remember with "honesty and integrity" when he confronts Frankenstein with the journal: "Everything is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin; the ... disgusting circumstances which ... painted your own horrors and rendered mine indelible" (130). The Creature's pursuit of forbidden knowledge reveals that his ghastly composition is revolting. For the first time, the Creature knows and acknowledges that he is an animated blend of corpses.

As a living cadaver, the Creature represents life borne out of death and embodies the consequences of forbidden knowledge. It is through the Creature's first memories that his origins in life and death are emotively mirrored in imagery of light and dark:

I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me and troubled me, but hardly had I felt this when, by opening my eyes, as I now suppose, the light poured in upon me again. I walked and, I believe, descended, but I presently found a great alteration in my sensations. Before, dark and opaque bodies had surrounded me, impervious to my touch or sight; but I now found that I could wander on at liberty, with no obstacles which I could not either



surmount or avoid. The light became more and more  
 oppressive to me, and the heat wearying me as I walked, I  
 sought a place where I could receive shade. (102)

In a state of emotional and intellectual “enthusiasm,” Frankenstein similarly uses imagery of light and dark in forming the Creature out of death. He states, “Life and death appeared” to him as “a torrent of light into our dark world,” and imagines he could “bestow animation upon lifeless matter” and “renew life where death has apparently devoted the body to corruption” (54). Within both the context of the Creature and the context of Frankenstein, light signifies life and darkness signifies death. The Creature embodies Foucault’s theory that at the turn of the nineteenth century, death is no longer “the night in which life disappeared” because of anatomical study (*Clinic* 144). Like Frankenstein, the Creature unveils the necessary but paradoxical relationship between life and death. Death unveils the mysteries of life. However, as the Creature embodies the forbidden knowledge of the anatomist, the Creature not only uses imagery of light and dark to symbolize life borne out of death, but also to communicate the painful, overwhelming and all-consuming power of knowledge. Light, as knowledge, is both liberating and “oppressive” (Shelley 102). The Creature simultaneously embodies death and life, dark and light, ignorance and knowledge. This hauntingly revealed paradox within the Creature exposes the fragmented identity of the cadaver. Frankenstein’s Creature permanently intertextualizes the body of the murderer and the body of the pauper in one being, re-animating the splintered voices that comprise the cadaver.

It has been assumed in popular culture that Frankenstein’s Creature is a composite of criminal remains. The Creature is thought to embody the criminal populous. That is a

somewhat erroneous assumption because Shelley's text does not specify the precise corpses used to make the Creature. Based upon what is known about the historic sources of bodies to dissect, detailed in the history of the autopsy, it is likely that the Creature is the composite of both murderer and pauper corpses. The Creature does not specifically belong to one of those communities because his unique existence is founded in his blended origins as a cadaver. "For Frankenstein," Sherwin notes, "putting together and dismembering are one," as he blends the poor with the murderer to make one body (896). The "churchyard" and the "dissecting room" are among the resources used by Frankenstein in forming the Creature (51, 55). Within the context of human anatomy, the churchyard is suggestive of grave-robbery. The graves of the poor were "vulnerable from the earliest days of grave-robbery" and practically speaking, poor graves were easier to rob because "Pit burial of the poor was common practice" (Richardson, *Death* 60). As Richardson states, the graves commonly robbed were those of the poor because poor graves "were probably the easiest and most obvious source of dead bodies for dissection after the gallows" (61). Moreover, the Creature identifies himself as a pauper when he states, "I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property" (120). The identity of the poor corpse was blended with that of a murderer because it would have been assumed that the body being dissected was that of a murderer, the legally obtained body. In the culture of anatomical study at the time, the "dissecting room" indicates a melange of murderer and pauper, the two most common sources of anatomical study.

The Creature is a physical, living manifestation of the use of pauper corpses alongside murderers in the study of anatomy. The Creature represents the cruelty in putting pauper bodies to use, for "*Frankenstein* is a proleptic allegory of the 1832

*Anatomy Act* as a specifically Malthusian reanimation and reinvestment of the dead body parts of the laboring poor onto middle-class bodily improvement” (Tuite 150-151). The use of the pauper corpse is illegitimate in the study of anatomy. However, the use of the poor is validated by theories that re-characterize them as other and criminal, which further characterizes the poor as illegitimate. Therefore, the identity of the legitimately obtained murderer’s corpse and the corpse illegitimately obtained through grave-robbery were intermingled as one in the same: the anatomical subject.

The poor, in part, comprise the identity of the cadaver at the turn of the nineteenth century. Thus, it is essential to set the stage for the identity of the poor, for theories on poverty influenced the official legislators. In 1760, during the industrial revolution, poverty moved to the forefront of social issues in England (Himmelfarb 18). It is during this period, prior to the enactment of the Poor Laws, that it became evident that being poor was tantamount to being criminal in the court of popular opinion (Boswell 383). Jeremy Bentham regarded the vast population of the poor as problematic. Thus he proposed the creation of the workhouse, or pauper prison: “Bentham’s pauper plan ... would have ‘undivided authority’ over the ‘whole body of the burdensome poor’” (Himmelfarb 79). While confined to the workhouse, the poor would be “under the constant supervision and ‘absolute’ authority of the governor” (*ibid*). This resembles the constant supervision of Michel Foucault’s Panopticon. Foucault states that “Bentham’s Panopticon is the architectural figure of this composition” of prison surveillance (*Discipline* 200). In the Panopticon of the prison, power is exercised through “surveillance” (196). The workhouse was one such manifestation of power, which resembles a prison, a “gaol without guilt,” and a punishment without a crime

(Himmelfarb 84). It amounts to the criminalization of the poor for being poor. Thomas Malthus theorized that the poor are responsible for their own condition. In *On Population*, Malthus stated that the poor are “active and able ministers of depopulation” (74). Himmelfarb states that “Malthus’s simple, momentous contribution was the ‘principle of population’” (101). Malthus demonstrates how the poor exhaust the resources of the community. The habits of the poor were an obstacle to their own fate, but the poor en masse also impeded the future success of society as a whole (*ibid*). The foregoing theories on poverty and the poor are emblematic of the cultural problematization of the poor and are indicative of the cultural attitudes that fostered the legislation of the *Anatomy Act of 1832*. While Malthus distinguished between the deserving and the undeserving poor, Bentham’s plan for workhouses or “poor prisons” categorized the poor as one onerous and taxing community that ought to be institutionalized for no crime other than being poor.

The *Anatomy Act* legitimized a previously dubious and illegitimate source of bodies for the anatomist: the unclaimed poor. Economic disparity left the poor vulnerable to the anatomist’s table after death, and the characterization of the poor as burdensome did little to curtail the anatomical use of their bodies for science. By 1832, the cultural views on poverty legislated the official legal use of pauper bodies for anatomical study. It is the development of these cultural biases and attitudes against the poor, the problematization of the poor, as well as the blended identity of cadavers as pauper and murderer that fosters the cultural criminalization of the poor prior to the *Anatomy Act of 1832*. Bentham was a proponent of the *Act*, arguing for the state’s right to acquire pauper bodies to supply the anatomist’s need for cadavers. Paupers were in a manner redeemed

and made useful after death, their lifeless corpses having newfound utility on the dissection table. Of importance to the *Act* was legitimacy – it legitimized a source of bodies - but the anatomical subjects' being used after the *Act's* passage did not represent a new source; they were, rather, re-made as an official source. The *Anatomy Act* itself was enacted a year following Mary Shelley's 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*. Pauper corpses had been used in anatomical research in the decades leading up to the *Anatomy Act of 1832*, for working-class corpses had been illegitimately desecrated for the benefit of middle-class progress long before it was legislated to do so. As the remains of a murderer and the remains of a pauper were mingled in the dissecting room, it is evident that being poor was indistinguishable from being a criminal. As Tim Marshall states, in *Frankenstein* “the Creature’s constitution as a mass of plebian bodies focuses a further official perception involving the general category of ‘the poor’ in the pre-1830s period” (169). *Frankenstein* put the pauper corpse to use in creating his Creature, which makes *Frankenstein* a paradigmatic text in the use of the cadaver.

Dissection of the dead poor became a punishment for poverty. Anatomical dissection of the poor is a component of what Ruth Richardson refers to as the “manifold injustices inflicted against working-class country folk by their ‘betters’” (*Death* 59). The foregoing position is further clarified by Tim Marshall, as he states that, “This ‘punishment of poverty’ is a significant formula. Regarded by the poor as unjust, the ‘punishment of poverty’ is the ideological antecedent of the ‘criminalisation of poverty’” (199). Marshall adds that the criminalization of poverty is the scheme that “promoted ... and found expression in the *Anatomy Act*” and Marshall concludes that it “is in the

context” of the criminalization of poverty “that the ‘monster’ in *Frankenstein* increases the political temperature” (*ibid*).

The corpse is mistreated in becoming a cadaver and being used to solve the mysteries of life without its consent. In the Creature’s life before death, the composite parts that make up his body would have suffered, either as a result of socio-economic status or the hangman’s rope. Dissection is a legal and legitimate sentence for committing murder. What is also evident is that dissection is an illegitimate punishment inflicted upon the poor for being poor, aligning the poor with murderers. They become indistinguishable on the dissecting table. Moreover, the Creature has been punished in having been used by the anatomist. This is evident when the Creature approaches Frankenstein and is threatened by him. Before the Creature has an opportunity to speak, Frankenstein states that he will “trample” the Creature “to dust” (99). The Creature questions Frankenstein and states: “You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life?” (*ibid*). In this question, the Creature comments upon the use and desecration of human corpses as well as the taboo on creation. Frankenstein first used the Creature to fulfil his obsession to study human anatomy, just as the anatomist uses human cadavers to study anatomy. The Creature asks Frankenstein, “Have I not suffered enough, that you seek to increase my misery?” (99-100). When the Creature speaks of misery and suffering, he is not only referring to the misery of his existence, and his rejection by all, including his creator, but also to the misery caused by his isolation from humankind.

In pursuit of happiness the Creature seeks a community, which results in his experiencing a series of rejections. He seeks a community because, for him, joy is synonymous with human kinship: “Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am

irrevocably excluded” (100). The Creature is, from the outset, alone, which forces him to exist in seclusion, outside of human love and companionship. The Creature does not understand who he is, why he exists and why he is alone. Immediately following his birth, the Creature is shunned by Frankenstein, which constitutes his first rejection. The Creature confronts Frankenstein on his solitary existence, stating, “Remember that I am thy creature ... I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed” (*ibid*). Unlike the Biblical Adam, however, the Creature is hated and cast aside by his creator. While the Creature has committed murder, he states that he has been rejected for “no misdeed.” The Creature is referring to Frankenstein’s first rejection of him, which predates the Creature having committed murder. The Creature experiences his second rejection when he is attacked by villagers. The villagers “attacked ... [and] grievously bruised” the Creature until he “escaped to the open country and fearfully took refuge” (106). While the Creature has been rejected by Frankenstein and by the villagers, he continues to search for a community.

The Creature determines to join a community in an attempt to legitimize himself. Therefore, he attempts to join the DeLacey family’s community, as he has been secretly living alongside them. When the Creature reveals himself to the DeLaceys, he is rejected for the third time. The Creature acknowledges the vehemence of his third rejection in his question, “Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me?” (135). The Creature’s attempt for legitimacy is thwarted, as “Felix [ ... darts] forward, and with supernatural force” wrenches the Creature away from M. DeLacey, and in a violent rage dashes the Creature “to the ground” and brutally clobbers him “with a stick” (*ibid*). The Creature is not only rejected, he is attacked by those he considered to be a part of his

community. The Creature further describes “the females ... flying” as well as “the enraged Felix” ripping him “from his father’s feet” (137). The Creature is depicting the DeLaceys as defending themselves against him and he describes himself as feared and thought of as criminal. Conversely, the Creature demonstrates that he is not the savage he is presumed to be, as he poignantly adds, “I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope” (135). The Creature realizes that he is “hated and despised” and he is devastated as he states, “my heart sank within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained” (*ibid*, 139). The Creature is vilified despite his pacifist behaviour, as he adds that he “saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and anguish” he “quitted the cottage” (135). When the Creature describes leaving the cottage in a state of agony, he is further rejected.

Despite experiencing rejection, the Creature continues in his attempts to be a part of human kind. While the Creature withdraws from humanity following his rejection by the DeLaceys, he re-emerges in order to save a drowning child. The Creature says, “I rushed from my hiding-place and with extreme labour ... saved her and dragged her to shore. She was senseless, and I endeavoured by every means in my power to restore animation” (141). Despite the Creature’s benevolent actions, he is once again rejected and attacked. The Creature says, a man “seeing me ... darted towards me ... tearing the girl from my arms” (*ibid*). The Creature further describes, “I followed speedily ... but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun ... at my body and fired. I sank to the ground, and my injurer, with increased swiftness, escaped into the wood” (*ibid*). In stating that the man who shot him also “escaped” him, the Creature is depicting himself as an offending party, and characterizing himself as a criminal.



The catalyst that ultimately transforms the Creature from an outcast into a criminal is his rejection by Victor Frankenstein's younger brother, William, which leads the Creature to commit murder and fulfil his criminalization. The Creature depicts this metamorphosis as he is verbally attacked by William: "he cried; 'monster! Ugly wretch! ..Hideous monster! Let me go. My papa is ... M. Frankenstein -- he will punish you'" (142). This is the Creature's breaking point, for the child is threatening to punish him for a crime he has not committed. Hearing the name Frankenstein, the Creature knows who the boy is, and exclaims, "'Frankenstein! you belong then to my enemy--to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim'" (*ibid*). The Creature, in response to this rejection, and in fulfillment of his characterization as a criminal, turns to murder. He "grasped [ ... William's] throat to silence him" and as his victim "lay dead at [ ... his] ... feet" the Creature merges jubilation with despair, embracing misery (143). The Creature has replaced his emotional quest for bliss and a community with that of solitary anguish and revenge, as he rejoices, "I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph" (*ibid*). The Creature cries out, "I too can create desolation; my enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him" (*ibid*). The Creature intends to inflict "desolation" upon Frankenstein in response to the ongoing rejections he experiences (*ibid*).

The Creature's social rejections are the cause of the Creature's criminality. In being rejected, beaten and shot at, the Creature is characterized as a criminal. Aija Ozolins states that "benevolence ... does indeed turn to hatred and violence when the creature suffers social rejection" (106). The Creature exists without a family, and without

love or a community, which drives him to his criminal behaviour. Formerly “benevolent and good” the Creature attests that “misery” triggered him to become “a fiend” (100). Ozolins states that it is this “series of rejections that causes this demonic transformation” in the Creature (106). There is a “causal connection between social acceptance and virtue, between social rejection and crime” (*ibid*). The series of rejections have served to criminalize the Creature. The Creature’s rejections are indicative of the Creature being illegitimized and marginalized. While it is assumed that the Creature is formed from the bodies of criminals, Hirsch notes that the Creature “comes into the world as a blank slate, not as morally evil ... [the Creature] represents what is taboo, on the margins of social discourse” (226). Having insight into his condition, the Creature informs Frankenstein, “I am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind?” (145). The Creature becomes a criminal because he is alone and miserable.

While the Creature’s uniqueness results in his criminality, it also causes the Creature to be unheard and denied rights under the law. Diana Reese asserts that “a contradiction emerges precisely because the Creature cannot be recognized by the law” (53). Reese further contends, “The record of his criminality aside, the monster is not a viable subject largely because of his peculiar relation to the disavowed ‘givenness’ of the existence of social groups” (58). The Creature represents a structurally excluded group, a group without rights. Arguing his case with the man who made him and renounced him, the Creature entreats Frankenstein to acknowledge him: “Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due” (100). The Creature is denied rights by all, including his creator. “I will not hear you ... You have left me no power to consider

whether I am just to you, or not. Begone!” Frankenstein declares (100-101). The Creature is denied human justice because he is unacknowledged as human. Nonetheless, the Creature argues to be heard, just as the guilty are heard prior to sentencing under the law. The Creature maintains his position and states, “The guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they are, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned” (101). The Creature is unacknowledged and “excluded from the *human in general* because of his relation to a group — a group that does not yet exist” (Reese 59). As an anatomical subject, and as an animated cadaver, the Creature is unacknowledged because he is illegitimate, unique and solitary.

The Creature remains solitary because Frankenstein denies him the right to a community. The Creature asks the question, “where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses” (121). As a result of the Creature’s unique identity, he does not belong anywhere. He exists in the margins. The Creature’s criminality associates him with criminals, and his poverty associates him with paupers, but outside of that, he is a unique and solitary being, existing in social isolation. The Creature knows that he is unique when he states, “I was dependent on none and related to none. ‘The path of my departure was free,’ and there was none to lament my annihilation” (128). Vlasopolos comments that, “the monster, with his unnatural origin and consequent detachment from existing societal structures, represents the dispossessed” (130). The Creature notes, “Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect ... I was wretched, helpless, and alone” (129). The Creature is “solitary and abhorred,” forlorn and cursed (130).

The Creature is forsaken by Frankenstein because he physically embodies the forbidden knowledge gained by the anatomist. Frankenstein's study of anatomy is both fulfilled and jeopardized when he is confronted with the physical manifestation of the Creature: "How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form?" (57). The Creature endangers the anatomist's secrets because "The only way to fathom the Creature's appearance ... is to comprehend how it was made" (Sherwin 896). When the Creature exposes himself, he is "exposing to view his radically uninscribed existence" (Gigante 567). The Creature exposes anatomy's essential and unsavory relationship to death, which as a living cadaver is inscribed on his body. The Creature "symbolizes ... the repressed ugliness at the heart of an elaborate symbolic network that is threatened the moment he bursts on the scene" (*ibid*). In the physical manifestation of the Creature, Frankenstein's secrets risk exposure.

Frankenstein's Creature physically threatens the anatomist's secrets because of his grotesqueness. Denise Gigante confirms, "Whatever else can-and has-been said about Victor Frankenstein's monster, one thing cannot be denied: the creature is exceedingly ugly" (565). Frankenstein's "horrid" depiction of the Creature confirms that the Creature's appearance is ugly:

His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more

horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

(57)

The Creature's ugliness embodies the anatomist's illicit work in death. He is hideous because he embodies death. Frankenstein describes the Creature as possessing, "unearthly ugliness ... almost too horrible for human eyes" (99). The Creature is too ugly to be seen, and is rejected by all, because he exposes death in plain view.

The Creature knows that he is rejected and alone because he is ugly.

Consequently, he confronts Frankenstein about his unsightliness: "Why did you form a monster so hideous that even YOU turned from me in disgust?" (130). That the Creature is ugly is relevant to the Creature being rejected and alone because "the ugly is universally offensive" (Gigante 567). The Creature insightfully states that he is "endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome" (120). He adds, "My person was hideous and my stature gigantic," which causes him to ask, "What did this mean?" (128). The "parts" Frankenstein "chooses are beautiful, but they are monstrous in conjunction" (Sherwin 896). The Creature knows that he embodies "unnatural hideousness" and describes himself as "a horror of deformity" which is the cause of his exile (132, 142). The Creature is not rejected for a crime that he has committed. Rather, as Anca Vlasopolos states, "the attempts on the monster's life and the desire to punish, expel, and kill him ... begin ... as a result of his appearance" (132). The Creature is outlawed, in part because he is ugly.

As the embodiment of the anatomist's work with cadavers, the Creature's ugliness represents the taboo because the taboo of the murderer, the pauper and death are represented in the Creature's appearance. As the legitimate source of cadavers were hanged murderers, the Creature's provenance is the gallows. Moreover, the Creature's origins in pauper corpses serve to further distance him from a community because the use of pauper remains is illegitimate. Given that the Creature was formed (at least in part) out of corpses robbed from graves, the Creature's origins are illicit. The taboo represented within the Creature is exacerbated not only by his social origins as a murderer and as a pauper, but also by his origins in death. The Creature states that he "was not even of the same nature as man" (120). The Creature is not the same nature as man because he embodies death. The mingling of the dead and the living is repugnant. The distasteful and hideous work of the anatomist is visible in the Creature. As a living cadaver, the Creature is socially rejected, taboo and illegitimate.

The Creature attempts to legitimize himself by demanding a community, in the form of a female companion, from Frankenstein. The Creature advises Frankenstein, "You must create a female for me with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being" (144). The Creature is demanding that Frankenstein create another creature, another of his kind. Reece states that "Shelley's daemon ... [is] making a demand for a community" (58). A community grants the Creature the "possibility of acceding to a social form of being" (59). Most significantly, the Creature supports his desire for a community, a social existence, when he states that with a companion he will "become linked to the chain of existence and events from which I am now excluded" (147). The Creature lacks a community, and consequently the rights

granted to a community. As a result of his isolation, the Creature comments upon his condition stating, “Evil thenceforth became my good” (219). The “evil” or, more subtly, the wrongdoings committed by the Creature throughout the novel, are in direct response to his rejections. The Creature adds, “my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being” (147). The Creature tells Frankenstein, “Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous” (100). The Creature is miserable because he exists outside of a community and does not belong to a social group. The Creature is dependent upon the company of a fellow being in order to belong and have a legitimate existence.

When the second creature is destroyed before it has been completed, the Creature’s potential for legitimacy is destroyed. While Frankenstein does commence work on creating a companion for the Creature, he ultimately denies the Creature a community by destroying the second creature before it is brought to life. Frankenstein, “with passion, tore to pieces the thing” that would have validated the Creature (166). The second creature is destroyed (in part) because she, like the first Creature, is illegitimate. Reece argues that the obliteration of the second creature represents “the disembodied human being that must be eradicated before existing,” for, it embodies the “rights-claims” that cannot be fulfilled when “put forward by members of structurally excluded groups” (63). The extermination of the second creature epitomizes the first Creature’s impasse in gaining legitimacy and rights. Frankenstein depicts that Creature’s response to the destruction of his female counterpart as he states, “The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness” (166). The Creature is devastated by her destruction, “and with a howl of devilish despair and revenge,

withdrew” (*ibid*). Joyce Carol Oates adds that the “cruellest act of all is performed by Frankenstein before the very eyes of his demon: this is the sudden destruction of the partly assembled ‘bride’” (553). The destruction of the female creature is cruel not simply because she would have been the Creature’s companion, but also because she would have granted him a community. The destruction of the second creature in turn destroys the Creature’s right to legitimacy, as she would have granted him legitimacy in belonging to a social group. Frankenstein not only destroys the potential for a living being, he perpetuates the Creature’s exile.

Doubling, the Creature’s relationship to Frankenstein, and their shared connection to forbidden knowledge are central in the novel. Within the Creature are not only the poor and the murderer, but also the anatomist. The Creature’s constitution is not merely what he is made of, but also who made him. The Creature’s origins are in cadavers, as well as upon the anatomist’s dissecting table. The Creature mirrors the anatomist who has created him, Frankenstein. The Creature and Frankenstein are inseparably tied to one another. Ozolins comments upon the Creature as the doppelganger in *Frankenstein*, stating, “Whatever we call it - shadow, objectified id, or double of the ego personality - this motif of a second self constitutes the chief source of the novel’s latent power” (103-104). Oates states that the Creature is, “in the end, a ‘modern’ species of shadow or Doppelganger - the nightmare that is deliberately created by man's ingenuity and not a mere supernatural being or fairy-tale remnant” (548). Oates further comments upon the relationship between the Creature and Frankenstein as follows:

Another aspect of *Frankenstein*’s uniqueness lies in the curious bond between Frankenstein and his created demon.



Where, by tradition, such beings as doubles, shadow-selves, “imps of the perverse,” and classic *Doppelgangers* ... spring full grown from supernatural origins-that is, from unacknowledged recesses of the human spirit-Frankenstein’s demon is *natural* in origin: a manufactured nemesis. He is an abstract idea made flesh. (550)

The Creature is unique as a doppelganger because he is made out of human flesh by his double. The Creature, as a living cadaver, embodies the anatomist and anatomical knowledge. He is a living manifestation of the anatomist’s work in death. Frankenstein invested himself, and his knowledge, in the Creature and they are forever bound to one another.

The Creature, like Frankenstein, pursues forbidden knowledge which in turn results in the sacrifice of his community. When the Creature demands a community from Frankenstein, the creation of a living being out of death, his demand for a companion created out of human remains like him is rooted in forbidden knowledge. Frankenstein himself lacks a community because he disengaged from his community in his all-consuming pursuit to form the Creature. Both the Creature and Frankenstein have consumed themselves with the plan to create a living being out of human remains. This costs the Creature his community, just as it cost Frankenstein his community through the death of his loved ones. Ozolins comments, “Mary [Shelley] is clearly endorsing the traditional taboo against seeking forbidden knowledge but with the important qualification that the search for knowledge is dangerous and unlawful only if it impairs the social affections” (108). Both Frankenstein’s forbidden pursuit of the secrets of life

and death, and the Creature's request for a companion formed out of death, are dangerous because they result in the sacrifice of social relationships.

There is further doubling between Frankenstein and the Creature with regard to the consequences of forbidden knowledge. Following the multiple rejections of the Creature and the Creature's subsequent murderous actions, the Creature acknowledges that he is a murderer as he states, "I have murdered the lovely and the helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept and grasped to death his throat who never injured me or any other living thing" (222). The Creature comments upon his characterization as a criminal, asking, "Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me?" (221). The Creature is noting that he is vilified as a criminal without any other regard for him, specifically with regard to how he has been illegitimized by those who rejected him. Reece comments upon the vilification of the Creature, stating, "The daemon's drama immediately emphasizes the fact that the laws that can only identify him as a perpetrator, but not as a victim, apply to ... the humanly embodied subject" (54). This is the case because the Creature is founded in forbidden knowledge, which serves to "debar the daemon's recognition before the law" (*ibid*). The Creature notes, "Even now my blood boils at the recollection of this injustice" (222). The consequences to Frankenstein for his pursuit of forbidden knowledge are the sacrifice of his community and his humanity. The consequences to the Creature are found in his exile and in his turn to murder, which mirrors the relationship between murder and anatomy. The Creature, because he is illegitimate, is denied the acknowledgement of his humanity and yet he is recognized as a criminal, which further demonstrates the correlation between anatomy and murder.

The Creature further reveals his relationship to Frankenstein as his emotions mirror those previously expressed by his creator. In the final scene of *Frankenstein*, the Creature and Frankenstein are linked through the Creature's anguish. This is demonstrated as the Creature's words and Frankenstein's words echo each other. When the Creature sees Frankenstein has died, he reviews his actions and states, "I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness" (221). This shift from "beauty" to "desolation" reflects Frankenstein's statement about the Creature: "I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! ... these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast ... no mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (57-58, 221). The Creature also states, "No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine" (220). This mirrors Frankenstein's earlier statement, "No one can conceive the anguish I suffered" (77). The Creature further notes, "even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone ... I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned" (221). Likewise, Frankenstein earlier states: "one by one, my friends were snatched away; I was left desolate. My own strength is exhausted" (198). Both Frankenstein and the Creature are tortured and alone. And yet, in mirroring one another, Frankenstein and the Creature demonstrate their connection to one another. The community the Creature belongs with is Frankenstein, the anatomist.

The Creature's voice is validated at the close of the novel when he is heard and acknowledged by Walton in the final scene. As Vlasopolos comments, "Mary Shelley, who pits the monster's words against his perceivers' accounts, gives the monster the last speech and the great final exit" (130). Oates states that "it is not by way of the ... young

scientist that Mary Shelley discovers the great power of her narrative but by way of the misshapen demon, with whom most readers identify” (545). The Creature’s soliloquy is launched when he finds Frankenstein, his creator, dead. The tale nears fulfillment as he cries, “That is also my victim!...In his murder my crimes are consummated” (219). Frankenstein’s death is in turn his own ending, for he says, “the miserable series of my being is wound to its close! Oh, Frankenstein! ... Alas! He is cold, he cannot answer me” (*ibid*). This is the Creature’s final time seeing Frankenstein. Despite the Creature existing in solitude, Frankenstein was fundamental to the Creature’s existence because he was the Creature’s connection to life. With Frankenstein’s death, the Creature is now truly alone. If contemporary readers learn nothing else from *Frankenstein*, they should take away this wisdom offered by the Creature: one cannot disregard or dismiss the undiscardable corpse.<sup>4</sup> The Creature is, by his very creation, deprived the right to self-determination. The composite of murderer and pauper bodies from which Frankenstein’s Creature is made have been deprived of liberty. The evidence of their use and subjugation is in the human remains and in the intertextuated body of the Creature. He has become undead and thereby been unwillingly entered into the body of medical knowledge as a composite of the anatomist and his anatomical subjects: criminal and pauper alike. The Creature must live on as the intertextuated flesh of the anatomical subject. As the Creature lives on in medical history, it is pertinent that Maximilian E. Novak asks, “Whatever does happen to the monster?” (66). The Creature vividly declares, “I shall die ... He is dead who called me into being ... I shall be no more ... I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade

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<sup>4</sup> The terminology of the undiscardable corpse is inspired by Karen Sanchez-Eppler’s examination of William Godwin’s work, as she refers to “Dismissing the indissmissible corpse.”

away” (222-223). While the Creature envisions his death as an inferno, he is, rather, more subtly, “borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance” (223). The Creature’s fate is left unknown, which sets an “important precedent for open-endedness” (Novak 66). Novak adds that “the monster cannot die” (67). The Creature embodies the forbidden knowledge gained by the anatomist as well as the anatomist’s experimentation upon the corpses of paupers and murderers. As a living representation of the anatomist’s work and the criminalization of the poor (the mingled flesh of murderer and pauper), the Creature exemplifies the connection between murder and the study of anatomy. In the Creature, Shelley foreshadows the *Anatomy Act of 1832*, which will further devote the bodies of the poor to anatomical dissection, forming “anatomy as a historically specific idiom of social identity” (Sappol 160). The blending of the poor with the hanged murderers is a horror that will not die away.

## Conclusion

FRANKENSTEIN

OR

THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

---

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay

To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee

From, Darkness to promote me? –

*Paradise Lost* [X. 743-5]

(Shelley 1)

In citing the voice of Adam in *Paradise Lost* on the title page of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley echoes the voice of the Creature. Like Adam, the Creature does not choose to be formed. Regardless of life and death, he cannot be negated or nullified. What has been done cannot be undone, for in the finale of *Frankenstein*, the Creature is “borne away. . . . and lost in darkness and distance” (223). While Frankenstein dies at the close of the novel, as any human being does, the Creature does not die, but lives on as the embodiment of the intellectual advancements and moral consequences of the anatomist’s work with death.

In 1831 Mary Shelley added an Introduction to the revised edition of *Frankenstein* which gestures to the bio-ethical consequences of human anatomical experimentation. In her Introduction, Shelley states that Frankenstein’s “success would terrify the artist” (9). She adds that Frankenstein “would hope that, left to itself, the slight

spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter” (*ibid*). Bioethics is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “dealing with ethical questions that arise as a result of advances in medicine and biology.” The Creature is the incarnation of these ethical questions. The Creature, and the work he embodies, cannot be returned to dead matter. Life is discovered in the study of death, and once raised it is impossible for “the silence of the grave [ ... to] quench for ever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which [ ... the anatomist has] awakened” (9). Frankenstein, the anatomist, “opens his eyes” in order to “behold the horrid thing [that] stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes” (*ibid*). The Creature with “speculative eyes” assumes the probing, exploratory and investigative work of the anatomist.

While the voice in medicine has been traditionally fixed as the voice of the anatomist, in *Frankenstein* Shelley awakens the reader to a new perspective: the voice of the Creature, the embodiment of the human cadaver. Within anatomy, anatomists extend their power over the corpse turned cadaver in dissecting it, as Frankenstein extends his power over the Creature in forming him. The oppression of the human corpse is fulfilled as the corpse graduates to become a cadaver. The work upon the body without prior consent contradicts “the commonly recognized right to control what happens in and to one’s body” (Wicclair 353-354). In forming the Creature, or in transforming a corpse into a cadaver, however, the cadaver in turn gains a voice and is written into the annals of medicine. For, at the heart of every obduction is the dead body, and “the body [has] to be ‘viewed’” (Burney 35). As the object of the anatomist’s gaze, the human form was not

only studied, but was also empowered with immortality in the trace it leaves behind in the medical record. The Creature, as the subject of the anatomist's gaze and as a configuration of cadavers, gives a voice to the human cadaver. It is the shift from the anatomist's perspective to the perspective of the Creature that provides an enduring quality to *Frankenstein* within the context of medicine, law and bio-ethics. Not only does the Creature give voice to the otherwise unheard anatomical subject, but the anatomists' work on the body lives on in the Creature.

As an anatomical assemblage, the Creature is nameless and has often been called a Monster due to what he can embody and represent. He has been referred to as the Creature throughout this thesis because of the powerfully pejorative nature of the word Monster. That he is often referred to as a Monster is, however, important to acknowledge within the context of medicine, law and bio-ethics, because in this context he has been exemplified both as a victim and as the worst materialization of humanity. As Jay Clayton observes, "*Frankenstein* has had an illustrious career; virtually every catastrophe of the last two centuries – revolution, rampant industrialism, epidemics, famines, World War I, Nazism, nuclear holocaust, clones, replicants, and robots – has been symbolized by Shelley's monster." Clayton goes on to ask if, "In an age of reproductive technology, cloning, artificial intelligence, and robotics, ... *Frankenstein's* futurity [has] come to pass" (84). While Shelley was writing about her own time and "did not think of her work as prophesying the future," we nevertheless hark back to her momentous work in our own time, as we engage in the bio-ethical debates of the present (*ibid*). It is manifest that "Frankenstein is emblematic of the fears of our day, as much as of his own" (Richardson, *Death* xvii). Medical technology continues testing the boundaries of the law, bio-ethics



and morality, raising issues of illegitimacy and crime analogous to Frankenstein and the Creature.

In response to the scurrilous reputation of the anatomists and the resurrectionists, the *Anatomy Act of 1832* was legislated, in part, to legitimize the study of anatomy and to regulate the legal use of cadavers. In 1870 Henry Lonsdale wrote *A Sketch of the Life and Writings of Robert Knox The Anatomist*, in which he remarked that the Anatomy Act of 1832 would prevent medicine from revisiting its unsavory relationship to crime and murder:

This painful history of the surroundings of the anatomist belongs entirely to the past, and that past can never be revived. The Anatomical Act ... passed in August 1832, annihilated all secret sources of supply to the anatomical rooms of Great Britain and Ireland. It cannot be too strongly set forth in this volume, possibly to be read by others than the medical fraternity, that the governmental regulations afford the most perfect safeguard against all bodysnatching. (106)

The controversy within the study of anatomy was not, however, curtailed in fact or in fiction. The resurrectionist continued to be featured in the fiction of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859 and in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Body Snatcher and other tales* in 1884. The mad scientist is seen in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886 with drug experimentation and the living dead is immortalized with an elegant voice in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in 1897. While the law granted provisions for the

legitimate study of anatomy, medical experimentation continued to push the threshold of nature, legitimacy and the law. As art imitates life, the literati, Shelley, Dickens, Stevenson and Stoker brought the issues out of the new formed concealment of daylight and used literature as a device to unveil and challenge contemporary medical research and experimentation.

As medical experimentation continues to push the threshold of legitimacy, law, ethics and public mores, the legacy of *Frankenstein* continues to endure both in fiction and legend. The Creature and Frankenstein are often interchangeably referred to as “Frankenstein” and are re-imagined on stage, in novels and in films. Productions include numerous stage, cinematic and television interpretations and re-imaginings of the story, including Boris Karloff’s portrayal of the Creature in the film *Frankenstein*, Kenneth Branagh’s retelling of the story in the film *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* and Joss Whedon’s Frankensteinian storylines in seasons two and four of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. *Frankenstein*, as a legend and myth, as the anatomist and the Creature, endures time precisely because the Creature’s fate is left open-ended.

*Frankenstein*’s legendary myth of the anatomist and the cadaver is not only seen in the medico-legal history and in popular culture, but also in modern anatomical demonstrations, which are compared to Dr. Frankenstein and his Creature. One cannot ignore the modern spectacle of human anatomy presented by Gunther Von Hagens in his traveling exhibits entitled “Body Worlds.” Historically, science writes the last words upon the mortal human form and the voice of the cadaver is limited to what the anatomist sees and notes. The bio-ethical and legal debate within the study of anatomy has moved from facilitating the anatomist’s study of the human form, to making human anatomy

available for the masses. Von Hagens moves anatomy from the anatomist's dissecting room to the public arena. Body Worlds allows lay people to see human cadavers for themselves and to penetrate the secrets of the natural world, for a price. Body Worlds, like the anatomists during Shelley's time, is controversial in its "morbid ... trade in cadavers" and its creator, Gunther Von Hagens, "has been dubbed 'Dr Frankenstein'" (Harris, Connolly no pag). While Von Hagens has not been prosecuted, his exhibits are controversial in Britain as some have questioned the legality of his work and have suggested that he has violated the *Anatomy Act*. Legal issues were raised when Von Hagens performed a public autopsy, which was the first public autopsy in Britain since 1830 (*ibid*; Beattie no pag). Moreover, legal issues continue to be raised due to the questionable consent of some body donors and because of the questionable origins of some of the bodies and body parts on display. While some bodies are donated, Von Hagens, like the anatomists of Shelley's time, also "bought specimens" and "took consignment of 56 corpses" from Russia that are alleged "to be from prisoners, homeless people and the mentally ill whose bodies were unclaimed after they died" (Harris, Connolly no pag). From *Frankenstein* to Body Worlds, the link between law and medicine and the controversial use of bodies persists.

This thesis has not only analysed the medico-legal issues in the study of anatomy, but has also demonstrated that death, through anatomical study, transforms medicine's interaction with the human body. In turn both the anatomist and the human body studied are transformed by human dissection. Foucault states that "from the integration of death into medical thought is born a medicine that is given as a science of the individual" (Foucault, *Clinic* 197). Von Hagens realizes Foucault's statement that "the experience of

individuality in modern culture is bound up with that of death” (*ibid*). While unidentifiable like the Creature, the subjects in Von Hagens’ exhibits echo Foucault’s theory and lend “to each individual the power of being heard forever; the individual owes to death a meaning that does not cease with him” (*ibid*). Despite the immortality offered to the voice of the cadaver by anatomical science, it is paradoxically the use of cadavers in this same science that reminds man of his mortality.

The Creature cannot die because he exists in between life and death, and because he represents anatomy’s scandalous past and present. He embodies the knowledge of the anatomists and has become a part of medical history, like the modern-day cadavers on display. One insight demonstrated by the Creature is that one cannot ignore anatomical dissection or its consequences. The medico-legal history of anatomy at the turn of the nineteenth century, when read in concert with *Frankenstein*, demonstrates the consequences of the study of anatomy, of medical experimentation, and of pursuing ambition, regardless of the law or public mores. While *contra bones mores*, then and now, human medical experimentation continues unabated, as the Creature lives on, embodying the advancements and consequences of the anatomist.

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