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Wasting Romanticism:
Melancholic Hunger and Maternal Remains in Mary Shelley, Thomas De Quincey, and Emily Brontë

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Melancholic Hunger and Maternal Remains in Mary Shelley, Thomas De Quincey, and Emily Brontë

By

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M.A, University of Sussex, 2011

Advisor: Deborah Elise White, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Wasting Romanticism:
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By Hannah Markley

This dissertation examines the works of three nineteenth-century authors for whom acts of eating not only fail to nourish the body, but systematically waste and destroy it. Thomas De Quincey's "opium-eating" is an exemplary case, but gustatory fixations also appear in the work of Mary Shelley and Emily Brontë. Characters in *Frankenstein, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,* and *Wuthering Heights* reject most actual foods reaching instead for drugs, alcohol, body parts, and inanimate objects. By reading theories of mourning alongside the peculiar consumption patterns of these texts, I join together literary interpretations of bodily experience, representations of eating and its privation, and psychoanalytic, as well as deconstructive accounts of mourning and melancholia. To this end, I explore the ways in which pathological dietary regimes in each of these three authors displace explicit representations of mourning, producing ruptures in language, memory, and perception. My project explicitly intervenes in Romantic literary studies by exposing how these three texts problematize eating as a symbolic and even literary act. That is, for these authors eating is not merely an index of cultural preference, class consciousness, political allegiance, or historical contingency. Rather, Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë redefine eating by linking oral consumption and digestive processes to melancholic repressions of reproductive sex and, more broadly, to the symbolic roles mothers play in these processes. Drawing from "Mourning and Melancholia," as well as psychoanalytic theory since Freud, in each chapter I show the ways that melancholic eating represses the loss of a mother and simultaneously materializes that loss by wasting the body. Deriving the contradictory actions of eating and wasting from the mother's early role as a food source, I read melancholic repressions of mothers in the proliferation of discourses of eating and hunger in the absence of *any* actual foods. Through tales of addiction, anorexia, and alcoholism, Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë negotiate these maternal substrates of mourning and melancholia and they do so over fifty years before the invention of psychoanalysis. However, I am less interested in reading psychoanalysis as one of Romanticism's legacies, than in how the works of Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë explore the entanglement of language, memory, perception, and reproduction in ways that at once illuminate – and can be illuminated by – psychoanalytic and deconstructive theories of eating, mourning, and survival.

Furthermore, I argue that the dynamics of melancholic eating and survival illuminate the peculiar historical moment these authors inhabit between the Romantic and Victorian periods. Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë survive Romanticism, living and writing well into the Victorian period. However, they are not exactly Victorian authors. Rather, they curate the major figures and themes of the Romantic period for the Victorian era in narratives of wasting and wasted consumption. Their significance for defining the Romantic period in relation to the next can be perceived in literary history's inability to classify these figures as strictly Victorian *or* Romantic. I call this uneasy situation their "wasted Romanticism."

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Table of Contents

Introduction

I. The Apple Core

> The Bees are busy – Wm has a rich bright day – It was hard frost in the night – the Robins are singing sweetly – Now for my walk. I *will* be busy, I *will* look well & be well when he comes back to me. *O the Darling!* Here is one of his bitten apples! I can hardly find in my heart to throw it into the fire. I must wash myself, then off – I walked round the two Lakes crossed and stepping stones at Rydale Foot. Sate down where we always sit I was full of thoughts about *my darling.* Blessings on him (74, emphasis original).
>
> Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere Journals*

On the fourth of March 1802 Dorothy Wordsworth picked up an apple core. In this well-known moment from her Grasmere journals, Wordsworth looks to the core as a token of her brother's having been there. Even as she attempts to stay busy in William's absence, the apple core interrupts her routine. This interruption is more typical of Dorothy's journals than not: the journal entry as a genre intentionally sets out to record the mundane procession of day-to-day life, yet what remains so remarkable about Wordsworth's journals is the combination of mundane details with intensely perceptive and affectively charged images.[1] In this sense, the apple core must be understood as a figure that interrupts the generic form of the diary and introduces a series of textual effects that call to be read. Indeed, the food waste prompts an apostrophe: "*O the Darling*."

The apple core supervenes on the observational procession of the first few lines and, as Magdalena Ozarska has suggested, "functions as a physical token of [William's] presence turned absence" (Ozarska 172). Yet the rhetorical function of apostrophe – to

[1] In *Women Writers and Poetic Identity,* Margaret Homans explores Dorothy Wordsworth's poetic works alongside her journals, tracking the ways that these journals record imagery that aspires to "absolutely transparency of perception" as well as how these images necessarily produce figures that seek a "reunion with William and with nature," read as a maternal figure (Homans 55-59). Yet even as Dorothy aspires to transparency of language, her ostensibly "transparent language" produces complex figures, such as the apple core, that problematize the reunion with William, nature, and the maternal.

recall to life and presence that which is absent -- makes a presence of this absence and names it "darling." Dorothy reiterates the present-absence a few sentences later when she writes, "I was full of thoughts about *my darling*." By reading the apple core as a conduit of apostrophe and, as such, a figure by which Dorothy is filled with thoughts about William, we can discern the ways in which waste mediates her relationship to her brother. She substitutes the "darling" she addresses for the food-stuff she beholds. The waste even functions as a token of her affection to which she must hold fast: "I can hardly find in my heart to throw it into the fire." Peculiarly, her affection for William is rendered figuratively as "my heart," displacing the darling that the apple core summons with an organ of her own body. While she is not literally referring to her cardiovascular system, she calls on these organs to stand in for the bond she cannot otherwise name. Moreover, the apostrophe "fills" her because the rhetoric of eating informs the "*darling*" the apple core produces. The abrupt announcement that "I must wash myself" seems at once connected to her inability to let go of the waste – to throw it into the fire – and her fierce desire to purge herself of it – to wash away the residue of saliva and oxidized fruit. It is as if she wants to divest herself of the material traces of William's bite, only to harbor it in another form – the underscored "*darling*." The "*darling*" that the apple core evokes stays with her as an immaterial trace of what in the food-waste could not be washed off, digested, nor excreted. The "thoughts about my darling" that fill Dorothy not only repeat the first apostrophe, but, in a sense, are the core of the apple – the rhetorical unit "darling" that can neither be fully assimilated nor thrown into the fire. Moreover, the waste is both a figure for this intersubjective transaction and a materialization of the dynamics of assimilation and excretion that arbitrate between William and Dorothy.

Many critics have argued that food and eating figure more general processes of internalization and externalization.[2] Eating not only establishes boundaries between the self and what is external to it, but also may produce borders that are national and colonial. Indeed, food studies often considers the ways in which culinary customs act as arbitrators of class, race, gender, and even sexuality.[3] This is partially because, as Timothy Morton argues, literary and historical depictions of eating in the nineteenth century often blur the lines between eating in a normal sense (mastication) and eating in a more figurative sense (assimilation) (261). For Morton, eating doubles as a figure for the ways that Romantic literature and philosophy produce the boundaries between inside and outside, self and other, national and alien. Yet Morton understands the relationship between Dorothy and William Wordsworth as one arbitrated not by assimilation or the boundaries it shapes, but by waste. Indeed, Morton reads "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," as a poetic effusion characterized by such waste:

> The poem's last movement (112-60) puts the poet into material relation with memories he has already digested. He embodies them in his sister Dorothy…This strange materializing of memory is the poem's equivalent of waste, the remainder of digestion unassimilable to the being it sustains.

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[2] Timothy Morton, Paul Youngquist, Tilottama Rajan, Denise Gigante, and David Clark explore the figurative processes of internalization and externalization in a variety of contexts, from Hegelian dialectics to the cultural distinctions produced by British colonialism. While each critic discusses these dynamics in relation to their particular specialty, their contributions to the collection *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism* provides an excellent overview of what Morton terms "diet studies" in Romanticism.

[3] Tilottama Rajan and others have considered eating in Hegel as a figure for dialectic internalization in the realm of philosophical ideas. Even as eating in Hegel has a robust critical tradition, from Derrida to Rajan and others, there is a tendency in literary historical criticism to read eating as a matter of political and cultural identity. That is, as Denise Gigante argues, taste and acts of eating reflect secular modes of class formation that follow the growth of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century (Morton xvi-xxi, 261-267, Gigante 8-28).

> Dorothy incarnates a materiality irreducible to the proper body and incommensurable with a private subject (251).

Morton alludes to critical approaches that yoke nineteenth-century medical history to the philosophical elaborations of Romantic imagination to read cognition as digestion.[4] Indeed, the affinities between cognition and digestion in the medical history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveal the ways that Morton's reading of Dorothy as the "waste" product of "Tintern Abbey" is more than metaphor, even if it is also in some senses a figure. The nineteenth-century surgeon and anatomist John Abernethy argued that the stomach and the brain were tied to one another, suggesting that "disorders of the brain affect the cylopoietic organs; and it is well known that this relationship is reciprocal" (Abernethy 49). That is, Abernethy suggests that the intestinal viscera and its fluids (namely, chyle) reciprocally register and affect the cognitive functions of the brain.[5] By such a logic, the memories that Wordsworth cannot assimilate in "Tintern Abbey" produce waste material in the poem that cannot be digested. While Wordsworth

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[4] Rajan, Youngquist, and Clark have explored these connections most explicitly in relation to Hegel, Kant, and De Quincey. Rajan's more philosophical concerns tend toward interpretation of indigestion as a figure in the operations of the dialectic in *The Philosophy of Nature* (Rajan 217-236). Youngquist writes more explicitly on physiologists and medical concepts of digestion in relation to the production of Romantic subjectivity (Youngquist 237-256). Clark explores Schelling's readings of Hegel reading philosophical engagement as a form of eating (Clark 115-140). Gavin Budge too has explored these connections in Coleridge, reading imagination through Romantic medical concepts and, specifically, indigestion (Budge 77-86).

[5] Contemporary scientific and theoretical accounts of the relationship between the gut and the brain as well as the very "mindedness" of the digestive organs uncannily echo these nineteenth-century ideas about the relationships between cognition and digestion. In her book *Gut Feminism,* Elizabeth Wilson argues that the gut and the digestive organs respond to psychic trauma and actually operate as organs of memory for such traumas. For Wilson, the viscera of the physical body is an emphatically minded substrate, which allows us to interpret its biological functions as unconscious expressions of mourning, anger, loss, and anxiety, to name only a few (Wilson 45-67). Wilson's contemporary interpretation of the relationship between the digestive organs and the brain allows one to read nineteenth-century medical concepts like Abernethy's through a nuanced and psychoanalytically informed understanding of the relationships among the brain, the digestive organs, and the emotions.

does not end the poem describing his acid reflux, Morton suggests that he materializes this "indigestion" in the person of Dorothy, tying Dorothy ineluctably to the figures, like the apple core, that remain undigested and, as Morton urges us to understand, indigestible. The repetition of the phrase "nor wilt thou then forget," like a hiccup, positions Dorothy as herself the memory of the poem and the repository for the sentiments that, in William's absence, she will commemorate. In this regard, it is not what is eaten that counts (William's bite from the apple or his childhood memories), but the waste-product and unassimilable residue that the bite leaves behind. In "Tintern Abbey," Morton argues: "Wordsworth commends to Dorothy the corpse of his material body, an indigestible remainder that memory can never assimilate" (272). Dorothy, for Morton, is "a woman of waste" who, in her very wastedness, takes the impression of what is otherwise "indigestible" to memory.

If Dorothy Wordsworth's waste can tell us something about "Romanticism" then, it concerns what is "irreducible to the proper body and incommensurable with the private subject" –what, in so many words, cannot be assimilated into historical narratives, biographies, or even journals. "Romantic waste" (the unassimilable) is not opposed to the Romantic eating (assimilation), but an inevitable byproduct of it. That is, Wordsworth cannot take a bite from an apple without leaving a core that, I suggest, writes, apostrophizes, and wastes in ways that might even exceed historical narratives of the poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. These figures of waste are not limited to the dynamic between William and Dorothy Wordsworth, even if the apple core provides a seed for the thought. Rather, Dorothy's apple core figures a larger issue: nineteenth-century discourses of eating and their historical contexts cannot be divorced from

discourses of waste and the ways that waste often exceeds historical narratives. Waste exists instead, in Morton's words, as "an indigestible remainder that memory" and history "will never assimilate." Wasteful, wasting, and wasted patterns of consumption and their peculiar objects of ingestion and indigestion, such as the apple core, reveal the ways in which depictions of eating will always leave behind indigestible remainders.

Mary Shelley, Thomas De Quincey, and Emily Brontë indirectly extend and complicate Dorothy Wordsworth's poetics of waste in ways that destabilize assumptions about what and how eating means for the nineteenth century. If Dorothy's apple core is a provincial figure for waste, Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë reinscribe the dynamic relation figured by the apple core through tales of addiction, anorexia, and alcoholism. It is not that these authors consciously return to Dorothy Wordsworth's journals for inspiration or that she was a primary interlocutor for them, although De Quincey was an intimate friend of the Wordsworth family for many years. Rather, these three authors, like Dorothy Wordsworth, explore the ways that acts of eating always produce indigestible remainders. By tracing idiosyncratic acts of eating in these three late Romantic authors, I argue that their preoccupation with the dynamics of waste helps to invent "Romanticism" as a category and as itself a kind of indigestible remainder for literary and cultural history.

Characters in *Frankenstein, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,* and *Wuthering Heights* often reject actual foods, reaching instead for drugs, alcohol, body parts, and inanimate objects. For these authors, eating is not only haunted by the waste it produces in the form of bodily excretion or garbage, but also by the possibility that their characters might waste away; that they might eat, drink, or starve themselves to death;

and that even the foods they take in harbor deadly parasites imperceptible to the aesthetic and sensory functions of taste.[6] In this way, Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë explore the contradictory actions of eating and wasting in ways that not only complicate the relationships between memory and history, assimilation and indigestion, but also extend these dynamics of assimilation and digestion to representations of life and death. Their discourses of wasting even complicate the relationship between what sustains life (food) and what erodes it from within (parasite). If living is a process of wasting, of leaving waste behind, excreting and moving forward, Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë, hold on to waste products that, like the apple core, signify critical absences at the heart of their narratives. In a turn of the screw, Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë allow us to revisit Dorothy's apple core and perceive in it a melancholia characteristic of the waste that helps define Romanticism: waste becomes a wish in cipher for those absences that cannot be recalled and those losses that will never be recouped.

While there are other eaters in the nineteenth century who waste away, Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë are key figures for unpacking the relationship between Romantic waste and melancholia. In *Frankenstein,* Victor wastes away in his laboratory while he labors over a monster who is born out of the mother's death that he cannot mourn; De Quincey is wasted on opium for most of his life, reliving and repressing the early deaths of his two sisters through his opium-dreams; and in *Wuthering Heights* Catherine, Heathcliff, Hindley, and Francis waste away from lack of food, an excess of alcohol, and

[6] Gigante's monograph *Taste: A Literary History* explores the ways in which the discursive and sensory functions of sense perception are put to various kinds of cultural and aesthetic work. While I depart from Gigante's argument about the significance of taste for aesthetic judgement, I am indebted to her careful emphasis on the literary historical centrality of food and patterns of consumption (Gigante 1-67).

a wasting disease (tuberculosis). While each figure embodies waste differently, they all recirculate the melancholic attachment to what is left over after loss. If in each case we can discern the bite that has been taken out of "the apple," then this study examines the significance of "the apple core" – what remains indigestible to memory and history. In this respect, I reconstruct the ways that loss deposits material and affective traces that inhabit multi-valent discourses of wasting.

II. The Waste of Mourning: Eating, or Psychoanalysis

Drawing from "Mourning and Melancholia," as well as psychoanalytic theory since Freud, in each chapter I explore the ways that melancholic eating represses death and paradoxically rematerializes it in images of wasted bodies. For my purposes, the term "waste" signals a series of interrelated possibilities that undergird the "eating disorders" I trace: to waste away; to produce waste; to be "wasted" or intoxicated; and to waste money, an opportunity, or even one's life. "Wasting Romanticism" contains and animates all of these possibilities. Bodies waste away, even as they produce waste in the form of bodily excretions. The substances that characters consume not only produce more excretions, but these excretions assume the form of a contaminating toxicity. Finally, all these forms of waste only beget more waste – of money, opportunity, and life. Rather than assuming that waste in this last sentence invokes a moral judgment, I argue that this waste of life becomes the condition of possibility for any life whatsoever. Life wastes. More to the point, life wastes itself. In this sense, waste, like Dorothy's apple core, is the byproduct of life and an inevitable remainder that may even survive death. Shelley, De

Quincey, and Brontë refigure mourning through pluralities of waste that become, like tombstones, remainders that are also inscriptions of survival.[7]

If "Wasting Romanticism" sets out to read eating as a metonymy for the activities of mourning it also represses, it draws on psychoanalytic theories of mourning since Freud to examine why these connections seem almost invariably to be repressed. By focusing on the language of consumption that animates this vein of psychoanalysis, I not only employ psychoanalytic theory, but I read it critically to examine the ways it is constituted by the boundaries between eating in a conventional sense (foods) and eating in a general sense (psychic assimilation). While, as Morton points out, this confusion is already at work in Romantic philosophy and poetry, psychoanalytic theories of mourning and melancholia allow us to unpack the ways in which eating in the general sense not only renegotiates boundaries between inside and outside, self and other, life and death, but also might deconstruct the very boundaries it seems to secure. In eating, nothing is ever purely inside nor purely outside. So too, in mourning, melancholia, and the psychoanalytic theories that describe them.

In "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) Freud establishes a distinction between healthy mourning, in which an individual works through the loss of a loved one in order to "become free and uninhibited once again," and melancholia, in which the individual is overtaken by a loss that has "withdrawn from consciousness" (Strachey 245). In melancholia, the individual "wants to incorporate the object into" himself and "wants to do so by devouring it" (Strachey 250). Freud figures the melancholic as a devourer who

[7] In "Living on/ Borderlines," Jacques Derrida explores survival through the last lines of Shelley's unfinished poem *The Triumph of Life*. I am indebted to Derrida's reading of Shelley and the ways in which he reads Shelley's survival through a poetic inscription that lives on after death (Derrida 77-87).

internalizes the dead by bolting down loss as if in one bite. While "devouring" here is a metaphor, it nonetheless figures the process of psychic assimilation as a mode of ravenous and compulsive eating. While the healthy mourner takes small "bites," assimilating death bit by bit, the melancholic gobbles death up and, in so doing, actually represses the loss. Just as eating too quickly might produce an overly full stomach, dyspeptic symptoms, or acid reflux, the melancholic consumption of loss will always repeat on the devourer.

In "Mourning *or* Melancholia: Introjection *versus* Incorporation" (1972) Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torokbuild on Freud's digestive figures, arguing that introjection and incorporation are the two different psychic mechanisms at work in mourning and melancholia. The differences between introjection and incorporation hinge on an individual's ability to use language. While introjection describes a process in which the subject assimilates loss over time through linguistic expression, incorporation entails a fantasy linked to Freud's sense that a melancholic "devours" (Abraham and Torok125). The melancholic substitutes a substance for the lost loved one and consumes the substitute as a way of miming the psychic assimilation she cannot actually perform. If incorporation is a fantasy in which a substance, food, or inanimate object replaces linguistic expression, then the melancholic is unable to describe loss because the act of eating (substitution) does not just replace words, it marks a rupture in representation.

> There can be no thought of speaking to someone else about our grief... The words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed -- everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved. Inexpressible mourning

> erects a secret tomb inside the subject. (Abraham and Torok130)

Abraham and Torokuse the term "swallowed" figuratively to echo Freud's use of the word "devoured." Yet part of what is so radical about incorporation as a concept is that in fact the terms "swallowed" and "devoured" are emphatically not figurative: they mark the in-between space of eating and psychic assimilation, of eating in the everyday sense and eating in a more capacious sense. To "swallow" and "devour" is to keep alive the memories, words, scenes, and affects associated with a lost loved one, harboring them as parasites that eat off the melancholic host. In *Crack Wars,* Avital Ronell theorizes this parasitical relationship and the metonymies of feeding to which it gives rise:

> Inhabited by this other, parasitized by its demand, the subject cannot let it pass. The other in its absence must somehow be kept alive and preserved; this requires certain metonymies of feeding. To retain the other, the subject, wanting to satisfy its depraved hunger, follows a foreign regime, filling an emptiness that somehow leaves the subject full. (*CW* 125)

The melancholic wastes away because she "feeds" her losses, allowing them to survive inside herself. These internalized losses produce breakdowns in signification because they cannot be recalled to conscious expression or articulate speech without forcing the melancholic to recognize and relive the trauma of separation and death. However, these secret memories, words, scenes, and affects manifest symptomatically in the literal activities of swallowing, mouthing, biting, and devouring. This is the only language in which melancholia speaks. Paradoxically, both loss and survival are written into the melancholic mouth as deprivations of language and disorders of eating, consumption, and even breathing. This is what it means to waste.

To read such peculiar patterns of consumption I bring together scenes of eating and starvation in nineteenth-century literature with these modern theoretical accounts of mourning and melancholia. "Wasting Romanticism" extends our understanding of melancholia in the Romantic period by exploring how pathological dietary regimes displace explicit representations of mourning, producing ruptures in language, memory, and perception. If characters in *Frankenstein, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,* and *Wuthering Heights* eat in unexpected ways (refusing food, eating inedible things, or consuming body parts in fantasy), these acts of wasting mark a psychic struggle to assimilate a loss that has been translated into digestive struggles to assimilate food. The displacement of psychic labor onto the gut does not merely transform emotional discomfort into physical illness; it leaves gaps in the psychic mechanism that write the words, memories, and perceptions associated with loss in desperate patterns of consumption. Mourning and survival only become legible through characters' relationships to the inanimate objects, drugs, and bodies they eat. For these authors eating is not merely an index of cultural preference, class consciousness, political allegiance, or historical contingency. Rather, Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë redefine eating by linking oral consumption and digestive processes to melancholic repressions of death that ultimately rewrite survival as an indigestible remainder, as waste.

III. True Sisters:
The Gender of Waste

If psychoanalytic theories of mourning and melancholia return to the quasi-figurative language of consumption as a way of depicting the melancholic struggle to assimilate the material and affective traumas of loss, they derive and explain this inarticulate struggle through the infant's relationship to its mother. The first separation between mother and

child provides a template for comprehending the inarticulate, or infant (etymologically from the Latin *infans* which means literally "without speech"), struggle perceived in melancholia. Abraham and Torokargue that healthy mourning resembles the process of introjection in which an infant, in the absence of the mother's breast, cries out for food and learns that the cry recalls the mother. Language expresses a desire that in turn produces the absent mother for whom the infant longed. In healthy mourning, the mourner expresses desire for the lost loved one and, the theory goes, the expression allows the mourner to recoup the libidinal investment in the lost loved one, effectively expanding her sense of self to include and replace the one she has lost. The healthy mourner assimilates his losses bit by bit, like figurative food, and, like the infant who cries out for his mother, learns how to survive separation. In contrast, the fantasy of incorporation stifles the cry and its power to assimilate loss and absence. In the case of incorporation, the infant's cry does not work and, instead of using words or sounds that articulate desire for the mother's return and the food she provides, the infant finds other food sources or objects to fill its mouth as a substitute for the mother she can neither consciously remember nor recall. Rather than assimilating the loss, the melancholic replaces it with other objects that fill her mouth in place of the words she cannot utter and the infant cry she cannot reproduce.

Significantly, the centrality of the mother for defining both introjection and incorporation implies that the activities of mourning, healthy or pathological, always bear the material and affective traces of the mother's body.[8] While in some senses "the

[8] In a later essay entitled "Dual Unity" Abraham and Torokgo so far as to suggest that the mother always infiltrates and undergirds the formation of a subject, transmitting to the infant words, affects, behaviors, and scenes that become the unconscious building blocks of that subject.

mother" in psychoanalysis will always refer to a biological or biographical mother recalled by a patient to her analyst, "the mother" also occupies a psychic space that exceeds biography, biology, and even discourse. She functions in this capacity as a fantasy and placeholder for an immemorial sense of connection, presence, vitality, and love that always will have been, in some ways, a paradise lost.[9] In psychoanalysis, the term "the mother," like a wound, stands in for this originary alienation. Yet these maternal traces are not, as many critics assume, only theoretical abstractions; they are viscerally built into both mourning and melancholia in the same manner the apple core is built into the life of Dorothy Wordsworth. That is, "the mother" is an indigestible material and affective remainder in psychoanalytic discourse that haunts both healthy and pathological mourning. In this respect, waste always passes through the mother because she structures the dynamics of psychic assimilation, as well as its refusal.

If Dorothy Wordsworth's apple core has helped me to introduce "Wasting Romanticism" then it is because waste, melancholia, and survival are emphatically gendered by the mother's absent-presence. If the apple core refers to William's absent-presence, it did so in a manner that cannot be divorced from the absent-presence of Dorothy and William's mother, Ann Cookson Wordsworth, who ties Dorothy to her "darling" through matrilineal lines of transmission.[10] The food, in the place of loss (of their mother, of one another), becomes a substitute for the activities of psychic

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[9] I am indebted to the work of Avital Ronell in the *Telephone Book* and Elissa Marder in *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* particularly as they address the psychoanalytic significance of the mother and maternal loss. Specifically, both texts address the ways in which "the Mother" exceeds biological and biographical coordinates, becoming instead a more generalized figure linked to pervasive cultural anxieties about origins, reproduction, technology, and loss.

[10] Ann Wordsworth died when William was eight years old. Dorothy was seven. They were separated for nine years after her death.

assimilation and digestion that cannot be accomplished, as well as those connections to an absent brother (and mother) that must be preserved. In Dorothy's journal entry, the relationship between brother and sister is mediated by an apple core that in effect replaces the body of the absent mother. The apple core, like the mother, is a paradisial figure who is always already lost. Like the forbidden fruit, the apple cannot be uneaten and, therefore, like Eve's apple, Dorothy cannot make it undo the absence that the bite represents. The apple core can never again become a brother or a mother even as it seems to figure (while disfiguring) the possibility of reconnecting to both.

In this sense, male and female authors figure their waste in relation to the bodies of women, who, if they are not their mothers, refer indirectly to lost maternal bodies that cannot be recovered. As is the case for the Wordsworths, the relationship between brother and sister plays a particularly charged role in bearing the weight of this figuration.[11] In *Frankenstein,* Elizabeth, Victor's "more than sister," takes the place of his dead mother and becomes his fiancée. Victor's refusal to accept his mother's death is played out not only in the creation of an undead infant, but also in his attitude toward Elizabeth and his inability to acknowledge, marry, or accept her. It is significant that his creature, the material concatenation of his inability to mourn for his mother, kills

[11] Alan Richardson writes on incest as a figure in Wordsworth's poetry in "The Dangers of Sympathy: Sibling Incest in English Romantic Poetry." He argues (along more figurative lines than my own) that the importance of the brother-sister relationship is "based on shared memories." He suggests that "even when the pair has been separated and reunited, the power of their reunion lies in the early memories they evoke for one another," giving "birth to a sympathetic love more intense and complete than either sibling could feel for anyone else" (739). While the language of birth is figurative for Richardson, I suggest that birth is precisely what is at stake in the "sympathetic love" between brother and sister. For more on the Wordsworths and the specter of incest see Barry Milligan " 'To Gorge Upon a Sister': Byron, Wordsworth, Castlereagh, and Tyrannical Assimilation" and Margaret Homans "Eliot, Wordsworth, and Scenes of Sisters' Instruction."

Elizabeth on his wedding night. Similarly, critics have long recognized that De Quincey was obsessed with his sister, another Elizabeth, and they have offered a range of ways to read her as well as the prostitute Ann and the other more amorphous sisters of his opium dreams.[12] John Barrel refers to De Quincey's sister mania as "nympholepsy." I argue that De Quincey's relation to his sisters (Jane as well as Elizabeth), like Wordsworth's evocation of Dorothy at the end of "Tintern Abbey," allows him to embody and perceive the waste of his own life, namely opium. Yet his depiction of opium hinges perhaps still more on his representation of his mother who becomes a central, if sometimes occluded, figure in De Quincey's theories of mind and dreaming. For Brontë, sisterhood and the boundaries of legitimacy and illegitimacy between siblings are at the center of *Wuthering Heights*. There are two Heathcliffs in *Wuthering Heights.* The first Heathcliff dies as a child before the novel begins. The second Heathcliff figuratively preserves the life of the first. Unlike the first Heathcliff, the second is not born of Mrs. Earnshaw but adopted. This act of artificial reproduction usurps the mother's role and throws the legitimacy of the Earnshaw line into question. Catherine, the novel's most formidable sister, survives them all, even if she dies first. Her ghost, who haunts the novel's opening scenes and ultimately kills the second Heathcliff, is the material and affective trace – the waste – of the Earnshaw family's secret history.

While literary critics have considered the specter of incest in all of these works, I am less interested in incest than in the ways that the relationships between brothers and sisters are linked ineluctably to the mother's body. In this sense, sister and brother –

[12] Joseph Crawford argues that events like Elizabeth's death are so foundational for De Quincey's dreams that they haunt him in ways that blur the distinction between dreaming and conscious perception.

perhaps sibling relationships in general – name processes of mourning and survival as much as they name lateral relationships. To recognize a sibling is to commemorate the shared space of the womb that was never really shared and, in so doing, to participate in the work of mourning that originary separation from the mother's body called birth. To survive birth – which was by no means to be taken for granted in the nineteenth century for babies or their mothers – is to begin life by recalling a time when separation seemed impossible. In this respect, sibling relationships participate in a bittersweet and profoundly melancholic commemoration of a time they cannot share, remember, or assimilate. Indeed, at the end of "Tintern Abbey," if William makes Dorothy the marker of what is indigestible to memory, he also in some senses makes her a repository for the memory of his own birth that he will never recall.

The sister operates as a cipher for those events, like birth and death, which cannot be commemorated, "lived," or assimilated into memory or narrative history. Therefore, sisters become screens for life's waste – those memories, words, affects, and past-lives that cannot be written otherwise. These sisters, women of waste, like Dorothy Wordsworth, allow us to perceive and access the material and affective traces of loss because they figure, point toward, and commemorate the originary separation and as such inscribe melancholic survival into the very activities of life itself. In this context, there can be no such thing as a "true sister," even if I have chosen the phrase, in allusion to *Antigone,* for the title of this section.[13] Truth, from the Greek *aletheia,* unconcealing,

[13] There is more to say about *Antigone* in relation to waste, sisters, and death. However, such an endeavor seems like another project. Suffice it to say that each author in this text, in their own way, refers to Antigone and De Quincey goes so far as to praise her explicitly in a review of a production, "The Antigone of Sophocles, as represented on the Edinburgh Stage in December 1845" (Lindop *Vol. XV* 311-333).

promises to reveal and make clear that which has been hidden: to unveil secrets and bring them, spectacularly, to the light. But sisters have nothing to do with light or truth. Rather, for Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë, sisters are figures of darkness, spectrality, and dreaming, who mark the histories that remain mysterious and unassimilable to direct narrative forms. If wasting is connected to a sister or emitted from a sister, it is because the waste of life and the ways in which life wastes itself remain inaccessible to language. It is in the rhetoric of sisters – what they do to language, how they form and deform discourse – that waste writes itself.

IV. Figures of Waste, or Surviving Romanticism

By reading the variety of ways in which *Frankenstein, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,* and *Wuthering Heights* mime loss and write it through mothers and sisters who mark and produce ruptures in language, memory, and perception, I link these late Romantic texts to one another through crises in representation precipitated by the impossible task of putting birth and death into words. That crisis is redoubled in the twentieth-century representation *of* Romanticism as a literary movement, and what may be the impossible task of putting *its* birth and death into words. While I have emphasized the theoretical and largely psychoanalytic registers of wasting, wasting also necessarily describes the ways that "Romanticism" is itself an indigestible remainder. Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë survive "Romanticism," living and writing well into the Victorian period. However, with the equivocal exception of Brontë, they are not exactly what we think of as Victorian authors. Rather, they help to canonize the idea of the Lake Poets and the Romantic movement for the Victorians and, indeed, the twentieth century, through their melancholic relation to "Romantic" texts and figures from the early nineteenth

century. When Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë write the impossibility of mourning into literary form as disordered eating, their waste takes the form of "Romantic melancholia" that inscribes the losses of Romanticism, which is also the loss *of* Romanticism, into the texts. In this sense, Romanticism, as a literary historical category, is produced by Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë's melancholic attempts to assimilate it after it has "gone." The impossibility of mourning *in* Romanticism is also the impossibility of mourning *for* Romanticism.

In this sense, wasting marks an "anxiety of influence" and the struggle to internalize the loss of the philosophical, political, and literary ideals of the Romantic period. While I do not focus on these historical contexts in "Wasting Romanticism," it is helpful to sketch out the ways that the liminal situation of these authors conditions their texts in which they explicitly elegize major Romantic figures. In turn, these later texts that explicitly mourn for Romanticism inform the ways that I read their canonical literary works. Barbara Johnson had this effect in mind when she referred to Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* as "torn between deconstruction and mourning" (Johnson 12). It is not so much Shelley's plague novel that interests Johnson, but the figure of Mary Shelley and the ways in which the publication of *The Last Man* dramatizes the end of Romanticism from the perspective of its last woman. By the time Shelley wrote *The Last Man* in 1826, "three of her four children had died, her husband Percy Shelley had drowned in a shipwreck, and Byron had just died in Greece. At the age of twenty-six, she considered herself the last relic of an extinct race" (Johnson 9). Johnson argues "Mary Shelley does more than give a universal vision of her mourning; she mourns for a certain type of universal vision" – she mourns for Romanticism (Johnson 9). Even though

Shelley is far from Romanticism's *last* woman (though she may have seemed so to herself), Johnson portrays her as mourning for the political aspirations of her parents, the French Revolution, as well as the literary aspirations of her husband, Byron, and Romantics more generally.

Shelley collected and edited her husband's poetical works after his death, and in this sense, she curates Percy Shelley for posterity. Yet this public act of mourning (editing and compiling her husband's work) is haunted by a more private melancholic act of wasting. Percy Shelley died at sea and his body was cremated on the beach where it washed up. However, after the cremation, his heart remained, charred but not consumed. Byron writes of Shelley's funeral: "All of Shelley was consumed, except his *heart,* which would not take the flame, and is now preserved in spirits of wine" (Byron *Letters*). The organ became a material and affective remainder that was given to Mary as a relic.[14] She kept the heart until her death in 1851. Her son, Percy Florence Shelley, discovered the remains in her desk, wrapped in a copy of one of Shelley's last poems, *Adonais* (Johnson 104, 167). Shelley's heart is perhaps the ultimate emblem of Romantic waste: not only does it survive the death of both husband and wife, it marks the ways in which waste endures as the material and affective by-product of a cremation that ought to have consumed it. Moreover, *Adonais*, which Shelley wrote as an elegy for Keats, enshrouds the relic in a way that complicates the poem's status: it is part and parcel of the Romantic melancholia that announces itself in the Victorian period through figures of waste and wastedness. It is not for nothing that Shelley's heart was preserved in wine.

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[14] Mary Shelley herself is also a relic. Etymologically, "relict," linked to the more religious sense of "relic" or "reliquary," refers to a widow who survives the death of her husband. "Relict" often appears as a designation on tombstones.

Mary Shelley's status as a survivor, figured by her treasuring of her husband's Romantic waste, is representative, but not exceptional. Even if, as Johnson explains, she survives in ways that constitute her as "the last relic of an extinct race," – a phrase that calls to mind the relic of Percy which she keeps – De Quincey and Brontë, too, survive losses that also position them as survivors of the literary historical moments to which they have been attached. De Quincey parodies, elegizes, and canonizes Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey for a Victorian readership in the posthumous collection *Recollections of the Lake Poets* (1862), which was first published as a series of separate biographical essays in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* between 1834-1840.[15] These essays first began to appear in the wake of Coleridge's death and created a sensation because they exposed the private lives of the Lake Poets for public scrutiny. Still De Quincey continued to write on Coleridge's life. In 1845, in a review of James Gilman's *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, he decries and corrects Gilman's treatment of Coleridge's life and philosophy by elaborating on the poet's opium-eating. In the first sentences of the text De Quincey asks "What is the deadest of things earthly? It is, says the world, ever forward and rash – 'a doornail!' But the world is wrong. There is a thing deader than a doornail. Gillman's Coleridge, Vol. I. Dead, more dead, most dead, is Gilman's Coleridge" (104). The biography, like Coleridge, is dead. De Quincey rejects this mode and opts instead to revivify Coleridge in his essay by reconstructing Coleridge's "life" from the ways in which he (and De Quincey) wasted it: opium-eating. In this sense, De Quincey's waste – his compulsive, life-long opium addiction, not only conceals and reveals the autobiographical losses he suffered (as critics have argued), but becomes the

[15] These essays also appeared in the first editions of De Quincey's complete works, *Selections Grave and Gay* in 1854.

figure through which he reanimates the Lake Poets for Victorian readers.

If De Quincey existed on the margins of a coterie that he sensationalizes for a Victorian readership, Emily Brontë was born into a coterie that defined early Victorian women's writing through the terms of sisterhood. The Brontë sisters survived the death of their mother when they were just three years old and subsequently the early deaths of their elder sisters, Maria and Elizabeth. They grew up in a Parsonage that overlooked the gravestones of these family members. The Brontë sisters, like little girl in Wordsworth's melancholic poem "We are seven," stared on their sibling's gravestones, perhaps thinking to themselves, "we are five." The very moniker "the Brontë sisters" refers to the writers Charlotte, Emily, and Anne who published under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Yet "the Brontë sisters" also might refer to the other two sisters whose only "publications" were the inscriptions on their gravestones. Like the core of Dorothy's apple, "the Brontë sisters" name a remainder that in some ways is always marked by the loss of those two other sisters to whom the moniker never and always refers.

These well-known personal losses inflect the ways in which Emily Brontë's death – followed a few months later by Anne's death – redoubled the tragedy of sisterhood for Charlotte. In the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte edits and arranges Emily's and Anne's "literary remains" – a number of their unpublished poems – alongside edited versions of both novels –*Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. In the preface to this edition, Charlotte even reveals the Christian names of Ellis and Acton Bell in order "to wipe the dust off [her sisters'] gravestone, and leave their dear names free from soil" (312). The act of publishing these "literary remains," some of which were written as early as 1838, then, is not only an act of mourning, but one of intentional

revision and reinscription. Brontë's poems, like her gravestone, are waste products that Charlotte reconstructs in an effort to mourn for her sister and to produce her for a Victorian audience as an author under her own "dear name." As Janet Gezari argues, among others, Charlotte controls and shapes the Victorian reception of Emily. Yet Charlotte's version of Emily, produced out of her heavily revised remains, is often at odds with the poems contained in Emily's notebooks. Gezari emphasizes these differences in an effort to highlight the Romantic philosophy that undergirds Emily Brontë's poetry and the peculiar manner in which she reworks the philosophical stakes of Romantic imagination (Gezari 131). In this sense, Charlotte revises her sisters, eliding the Romantic waste that Emily left behind in an effort to make her remains digestible for Victorian readers. Ultimately, however, if Charlotte attempts to restrain her sister's "wild" temperament through her editorial interventions, as almost all Brontë critics insist, the original drafts of Emily Brontë's poems remain and stand in stark contrast to the Victorian woman her sister produced. Indeed, Emily Brontë's poetry produces heretical visions of afterlife anathema to the Christian tradition and Victorian mores.

These melancholic episodes provide touchstones for understanding the claim that Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë survive Romanticism, but they are not exhaustive and only begin to illuminate the ways that their survival structures interpretations of their better-known works that I explore in this project. Moreover, these textual histories of waste illuminate the ways that, if they are not exactly Romantic authors, nor are they exactly Victorians. Their literary historical situation ties them ineluctably to the major Romantics and also necessarily positions them as editors, biographers, and literary executors of these same figures. That is, they give birth to the "Romanticism" they mourn

from a "Victorian" era partly constituted by that very act of mourning. I call this uneasy situation their "wasted Romanticism." They have produced Romanticism as they mourn for it and struggle to verbalize how it has inevitably survived in the accumulation of material and affective waste products, which are, like Dorothy's apple core, Shelley's charred heart, De Quincey's opium, and Brontë's poetry, literary remains.

V. Wasting the Twenty-First Century

By way of conclusion, my final chapter investigates the manner in which the waste I read in Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë persists and even inflects contemporary crises in consumption. I argue that Romantic figures of waste have been adapted and reorganized in relation to technological innovation. Indeed, even as *Frankenstein* has yielded endless filmic adaptations, likewise Mary Shelley's monster has become synonymous with scientific experimentation, genetic engineering, and the bio-ethical dilemmas posed by technological manipulation of life. My final chapter takes the insight that Shelley's monster has at least as much to say about the contemporary debates around genetic manipulation and suggests that it is not only Shelley's waste (her undead monster) that survives. Indeed, De Quincey and Brontë too inflect and are reflected by contemporary crises in consumption. By tracking the genetic manipulation of food, the synthesis of pharmaceutical drugs, and the development of ecologically sustainable burial practices, I show how the affective and material remainders – the waste – of Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë influences the technological experiments in consumption in our own time.

Chapter 1

Remorse: *Frankenstein*'s Eating Disorders

I want to begin with one of *Frankenstein*'s most insistent leitmotifs: remorse. In the novel's final scene, Walton discovers the monster crouched over the body of his dead creator. The creature expresses his remorse to Walton, articulating it as a death wish:

> He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish. I shall no longer see the sun or stars, or feel the winds play on my cheeks. Light, feeling, and sense will pass away and in this condition must I find my happiness…Polluted by crimes and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death? (Shelley 189)

Elissa Marder suggests that this entire episode is impossible because the creature learned to speak and read only in French. The creature watches the De Lacey family teach Safie French and he reads *Paradise Lost*, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and *Plutarch's Lives* translated into the same language. These French translations and Safie's instruction enable the monster's speech. Victor tells his story in English only because Walton cannot speak French. When the creature speaks to Walton in the novel's last moments we are bearing witness to an impossible translation that also, I argue, underscores the impossibility of mourning in the novel.[16]

Specifically, the language in which the creature describes his life and death

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[16] Marder makes this translation argument in an essay entitled "Mother Tongue in *Phèdre* and *Frankenstein*" in which the mother's language, which is unspeakable and untranslatable, governs elisions of desire in both texts.

provides clues for how remorse translates psychic afflictions into physical expressions. In the creature's final moments, the "light, feeling and sense" of his earliest memories can no longer be enjoyed or even understood because he is "torn by the bitterest remorse." Remorse tears, emphasizing the degree to which it names a wound that perforates the very basis of sensing. Indeed, sense and feeling are actually worked over by its bitter taste. Remorse is only animated in relation to empirical measures — "light, feeling and sense" — and especially in the ways it potentially disrupts them. The bitterness of remorse then marks taste as something other than an ordinary sense experience. By following this language of remorse and its relation to taste, hunger, food, and eating in the novel, one discovers a subterranean language of digestion. Remorse and its digestion connotations translate a wound left in the wake of the novel's struggle to depict scenes of mourning.

Remorse is on the surface a legible affect that might lead to certain interpretive assumptions about the novel's themes. However, while remorse appears to convey feelings of guilt or compunction for having done something morally wrong, the use of the word in the novel draws on its etymological roots in ways that complicate the assumption that it is only an expression of guilt.[17] Over the course of the novel, remorse is a word that eats, consumes, and tears at Victor, as well as his creature: "the fangs of remorse tore my bosom and would not forego their hold," (82) "my soul was torn by remorse," (85) "remorse pressed on my heart," "I was seized by remorse… which hurried me away to a hell of intense tortures such as no language can describe," (86) "I should have been the

[17] The topic of guilt in *Frankenstein* has a long critical history. Certainly, psychoanalytic critics such as Colleen Hobbs have explored "guilt" as a form of repression. I am not interested in the repressive aspects of guilt per se, but rather in thinking about how Victor's remorse, even if it is also an expression of guilt, relies on a language of digestion.

first to hide my grief and console my friends if remorse had not mingled its bitterness with my other sensations," (87) "the agonies of remorse poison the luxury of grief" (164) and so on. This litany of remorse highlights the ways that it is figured consistently as something that eats, tears, tortures, and poisons in visceral ways. Again, this is not just because the novel is interested in remorse as a moral theme. Rather, remorse eats at and interrupts the operations of "other sensations." It "poisons," "tears," and "presses," complicating the affective digestive tracts that might allow Victor "the luxury of grief." After all the bitterness that he attributes to remorse carries with it bilious connotations, as if this remorseful poison was in part performing emetic functions.

In order to hear how mourning features in the language of remorse, we have to understand what remorse means beyond the context of guilt. Just as the creature's words are impossibly translated into English, remorse impossibly translates mourning words in the novel that otherwise remain secret. Victor, who is a native French speaker, translates his story into English. In a manner of speaking, even though Victor is anglicized, his English remains ghosted by the "foreign accent" that his translation retains. In other words, we must pay attention to how French as a language parasitizes the English words of the story, complicating the meaning of the narrative we thought we had read. According to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Török, a "magic" word protects various phrases, actions, scenes, and affects associated with a loss, although it is never spoken; however, even as magic words seal off lost expressions from articulate speech, the loss they protect can be unlocked through various techniques of translation. Importantly, a magic word's translation is not limited to the transposition of a word in French to its closest meaning in English. Translation, for Abraham and Török, requires one to follow

the proliferation of homophones and the transposition of an unspeakable desire into an action governed by the magic word's polysemia. In an effort to read the secret of the creature's remorse, then, it is necessary to listen to its possible translations and unpack the proliferation of these translations in the novel's representations of mourning. The French *remords* and English remorse share a related etymology, but the underlying figures and homonyms operate differently in French. As Marder points out in a discussion of Derrida and Cixous, *remords* shares a root *mors* (bit) in common with words such as *mordre* (to bite) and *morceau* (morsel). Drawing from Marder's translation, I want to point out that Victor's repeated use of the word remorse carries with it biting connotations. Perhaps even more telling, however, is how the word *remords* is *heard* in French; there is no audible distinction between *mors* (bit)*, mords* (bite!), *la mort* (death), *le mort* (one who is dead).[18] The creature's remorse bears within it a magic word: *mords.* As such, remorse weaves together biting and death. This interrelation is redoubled when the creature insists that remorse has a bitter taste. Indeed, the word "bitter" homophonically calls out to the bite embedded in remorse. These multiple and overlapping translations of remorse shed light on representations of death and mourning in the novel, revealing how *any* language of mourning for Victor and his creature is bound up in the question of who is eating what and when.

In an effort to get to the bottom of the creature's final words in which his sensations have been "torn" by remorse and the ravenous translations that haunt it, this chapter investigates the relationship between language, eating, and mourning. For Abraham and Török, magic words, like *mords*, follow from an act of melancholic

[18] I am indebted here to Marder's reading of the word "bit" in the works of Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous in the essay "Bit: Mourning Remains in Derrida and Cixous."

incorporation in which scenes of loss are not only erased from direct representation, but are translated into actions that mime the magic word that cannot be uttered. In *Frankenstein,* no character ever pronounces *mords;* nonetheless, it reverberates throughout the text, telling its secrets in images of biting, ruminations on bitterness, and in the characters' struggles to eat. Drawing from the work of Abraham and Török, I elaborate on *Frankenstein*'s language of remorse in ways that allow us to discern how the leitmotif not only motivates Victor's mad science, but is also structured by the omission of certain scenes of mourning from the text. By reading scenes of mourning for the linguistic gaps they leave and the remorseful disguises that they wear, I track Victor's hunger from his maternal grandfather's deathbed, to his mother's grave, his creature's cradle, and finally, the destruction of the monsteress. Along the way, my reading of this undead family tree winds itself around the figure of the sister as an organizing trope for the novel's depiction and obfuscation of mourning and its rites. She is, after all, the epistolary addressee of the entire text. The novel begins, "*To Mrs. Saville,"* Captain Walton's absent and much beloved sister.

I. The Silken Cord:
Desire, Language, and Food

Victor's narrative begins with his mother's death, which occurs just before he leaves for university. There is a wealth of commentary on the mother in *Frankenstein* from such critics as Ellen Moers, Barbara Johnson, Marc Rubinstein, David Marshall, David Collings, Mary Poovey, Mary Jacobus, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Elissa Marder, and Margaret Homans to name only a few.[19] Although I remain indebted to and will draw

[19] I am thinking with critics like Barbara Johnson, David Collings, and Elissa Marder here concerning the importance of the mother as a figure, perhaps especially as a touchstone for the novel's autobiographical elements. Critics like David Marshall and Marc Rubenstein offer a

from these readings, especially for the ways they develop psychoanalytically informed feminist readings of the text, I want to circumscribe my engagement with the mother in the text by setting it apart from this field in two ways: first, I am not attempting to read *Frankenstein* autobiographically as a way of discussing Mary Shelley's work as a woman writer or her relationship to Mary Wollstonecraft. While a number of critics I have mentioned, Johnson most famously, have produced excellent and indispensable work on this topic, the relationship between *Frankenstein* the novel and Mary Shelley the author is not my express concern. Other psychoanalytic accounts turn away from the author to consider the text's representation of the mother and the sister in relationship to hysteria, incest, and their symbolic substitutions.[20] While these readings inform my own, in order to understand the novel's discourse of mourning in relation to the mother and the sister, we must first excavate how and why eating, biting, and tearing have been embedded in the language of remorse.

Abraham and Torokdistinguish themselves from other psychoanalytic thinkers, by rigorously redefining the terms incorporation and introjection, which are at the heart of their elaboration of mourning and melancholia and, indeed, the concept of the "magic word."[21] Their definitions of incorporation and introjection allow me to take a step back

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more vertiginous Oedipal reading of the autobiographical elements by exploring the ways in which the monster, Frankenstein, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft are all imbricated in one another. For more in depth conversation about feminist readings of *Frankenstein* and their theoretical background, I turn to the excellent critical survey by Diane Hoeveler that lays out this field in revealing and comprehensive ways.

[20] I refer here to the indispensable psychoanalytic work on *Frankenstein* from critics like Colleen Hobbs, Paul Youngquist, Anne Mellor, Jean Hall, Margaret Homans, and David Collings to name only a few.

[21] A few critics do indeed, read *Frankenstein* through their concept of "preservative repression." Boyd Petersen writes about phantoms in "Double or Phantom: Transgenerational Haunting in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,"* arguing that the creature is the product of a phantom. Mark

from Oedipal readings of the text in order to focus on how *Frankenstein* disguises the forgotten body of the mother as eating, language, and desire.[22] Introjection does not refer to taking the other inside the psyche, as it is frequently taken to mean. Instead introjection refers to the act of expanding one's own autoerotic attachments to include the other as part of oneself. Importantly, it is not just any other who gets introjected, but the other who has the standing of a love object. Indeed, as I emphasize in the introductory chapter, the model for introjection is the mother child relationship. The Ur scene for these processes occurs when the mother removes her breast from the infant's mouth and, in her absence, the infant produces words that express a desire for her. Language develops when the infant's mouth is empty and calls for his mother's body to fulfill his desire for food. The successful introjection takes place when language fulfills this hunger and words correspond to a coherently expressed desire.[23]

Incorporation describes the process by which the healthy introjection of a desire

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Boren and Katherine Montwieler briefly consider Abraham and Torokin their reading of *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda* as cures for the melancholic Romantic subject.

[22] Abraham and Torokare atypical psychoanalytic theorists. Their earliest writings on mourning, published by Torokin 1968, begin with a critique of contemporary psychoanalysis in which she calls into question the use of the term "introjection." Torokargues that the term "introjection" has largely been misunderstood and taken to mean its exact opposite. She revitalizes Sandor Ferenzci's original definition of the term from 1909 in order to clear up this difficulty. One could summarize Abraham and Török's difference from other psychoanalytic theorists through this example. They consistently call into question the stability of psychoanalytic terms, fantasies, and myths, not because they do not "believe" in them, but because they resist the ossification of psychoanalytic terms into a "descriptive structuralism." Instead, Abraham and Torokread the tensions, gaps, and disguises of the Unconscious "*anasemically"* for what they do not say or for how they "designifiy" in a linguistic field mediated by introjection and incorporation as psychic mechanisms (Abraham and Torok84-89). The terms "anasemia" and "designify" are introduced by Abraham specifically to account for his method, which Derrida explores at greater length in "Me—Psychoanalysis."

[23] It is worth nothing that Abraham and Torokderive an entire theory of the maternal subject based on this theory of introjection. In their essay entitled "Dual Unity" they argue that the infant, having been introduced into language through this maternal process of introjection, always carries within him or herself the traces of the mother's unconscious, her linguistic predicates, and her body.

for an object (maternal or otherwise) is blocked. In the case of incorporation, there are no words that can call forth or reproduce a coherent desire. The mouth, now emptied of language, returns to an earlier stage of development when there were no words that corresponded to its hunger. Eating fuels an incorporation fantasy by acting as a substitute for the activity of introjection. It mimics introjection processes by allowing one to mime the assimilation of desire through the assimilation of food (Abraham and Torok113-155). For our purposes, the fantasy of incorporation is governed by a relationship to consumption where food, real or imagined, secretly refers to a desire for a body that has been lost. In the case of mourning, the body is dead and, after burial, is literally absent. Consumption, unbeknownst to the consumer, masks and simultaneously simulates the desire to internalize her, blocking the healthy introjection processes all the while. The term that Abraham and Torokgive to the gaps in language left by the incorporation of a lost object is a "crypt." In turn, the crypt deforms language and this deformation takes place around a magic word. They describe the crypt as a kind of "artificial unconscious," produced by the tensions between introjection and incorporation of a lost object, including tensions between what is available to expression and what must be swallowed, unsaid, and "designified." What perhaps remains latent in any incorporation fantasy is that the regression to an oral stage, where swallowing, feeding, and mouthing take the place of linguistic expression, is ghosted by the only body that was ever actually food.[24] To eat in place of the mourning words that have been lost, is to eat of the mother in

[24] While the distinction between incorporation and introjection here seems tidy, it is worth noting, as Jacques Derrida suggests, that before the distinction between incorporation and introjection can be made "the otherness of the other" or even the mother, would seem to preclude any successful, total, or complete introjection. In a way, these desire words for and from the mother are always doomed to a certain failure, a certain incorporation, and an ineffable, indefatigable hunger (Derrida *Fors* xxii).

secret.

The loss of the mother in *Frankenstein,* then, is not just any loss, but loss par excellence in which the introjective processes and linguistic order that her body ought to have guaranteed are in jeopardy. The incorporation that takes place produces a regime of eating that not only appears to reject most actual foods, but takes its nourishment from a fantasy of eating and being eaten by what is dead. Victor's story is not just a parable about constitutive maternal lack, but one about the impossibility of ever mourning for any mother and, as such, the inevitability of the most bitter, remorseful substitutions that come to bear the name, as we will see, sister.

The acrobatics of remorse and the forms of eating to which it gives rise in *Frankenstein* begin with Victor's mother and the circumstances surrounding her death. His reaction to her death is bizarrely understated and this lacuna can only be understood if we first read the constellation of desire, mourning, and motherhood that Victor describes even earlier in his story. Indeed, Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein first appears in the narrative as a mourner at the bedside of her dying father. Alphonse, Victor's father, and Beaufort were friends until Beaufort lost his fortune and was consigned to poverty. Caroline, who is Beaufort's only relative, takes care of her ailing father until his death. Victor subsequently imagines the scene of Caroline's seduction by his father as one that takes place over Beaufort's body. In this respect, the parental union is constituted on the basis of death, starvation, and a scene of mourning.

Victor narrates an image of his mother from this very scene. He repeats the image of her later in the text, when he describes a portrait of her that hangs over the Frankenstein family fireplace. The image that Victor describes is a mourning tableau of

Caroline's grief stricken frame: "she knelt by Beaufort's coffin, weeping bitterly, when my father entered the chamber" (41). The portrait that repeats this scene appears upon Victor's return to Geneva after William's death: "I gazed on the picture of my mother, which stood over the mantel piece. It was a historical subject, painted at my father's desire, and represented Caroline Beaufort in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father" (76-77). Marie-Hélène Huet observes that the portrait is "emblematic of all past and future deaths" in the novel and is "reproduced several other times over the course of the novel, replayed by different characters arrested in the same position of distress and mourning" (Huet 140-141). Scott Jungel, following Huet, argues that from the deaths of Elizabeth to Clerval, and even to the monster's final words, this portrait is repeated as just such a moving image of "corruption and death" (Jungel 370). I want to complicate these arguments by suggesting that Victor's narrative about his mother takes its details from this portrait, rather than the other way around. As much as it is a portrait about mourning and a moving image of death, it is a portrait that ultimately subverts the explicit representation of Caroline's own deathbed. Moreover, Victor emphasizes that it was "painted at my father's desire," which not only indicates that it was something his father wanted, but also that it is less an image of Caroline Beaufort than an image of Alphonse's desire for her. Victor associates mourning postures with desire, as if the image of his mother poised over his grandfather's body were a reproduction of a sexual fantasy.[25] Even though Alphonse marries Caroline two years after Beaufort's death, Victor's narrative suggests that Alphonse's desire for Caroline coincides with and repeats

[25] I am indebted here to Elisabeth Bronfen's reading of the portrait in *Frankenstein,* especially for the ways it unfolds the novel's relationship to femininity and death more generally.

itself as a scene of mourning.[26]

However, Victor's narrative about his mother and father is not about how they desired one another or even their own relationship. Rather, Victor's descriptions of his parents bear the traces of desires that he cannot make explicit. Caroline's portrait as an image of desire has less to do with the death of his grandfather, and more to do with the ways in which desire, mourning, and food, or lack thereof, are connected in his narrative. Part of what we are bearing witness to in Victor's story is a description of how his father's desire for his mother erupts out of mourning, leaving the portrait as its material and affective remainder. However, this image is not about his mother or his father. Rather, their story and this portrait give Victor an opportunity to tell another secret story about the nature of his own desire as it concerns a different scene of mourning that is omitted entirely from the text.

In an effort to track down Victor's pleasure and the scene of mourning to which it is attached, it is necessary to follow the ways in which Caroline is characterized as a mother, keeping in mind the ways this portrait of her functions as an image that records the intersections of desire, mourning, and hunger. Caroline becomes a mother on a trip to Italy that Alphonse organizes in order to "restore" her and "recompense" her for her "sorrows." Caroline's mourning is exchanged for her husband's desire in an economy of sexual reproduction that finds its condition of possibility in her grief. Indeed, his descriptions of his parents, his mother in particular, seem to transform grief to love. In

[26] Marder makes much of another portrait of Caroline and specifically the ways in which it secretes the creature's sexual desire for the maternal body; the miniature that the creature takes from William's dead body and subsequently uses to frame Justine. In this way, we can think about how all portraits of the mother are depicting desire and the knowledge of sexual desire for which the creature longs and from which it is excluded.

this fantasy of origins, Victor describes parental love through Caroline's body directly and its proximity to his own.

> Much as they were attached to each other, they seemed to draw inexhaustible stores of affection from a very mine of love to bestow them upon me. My mother's tender caresses, and my father's smile of benevolent pleasure while regarding me, are my first recollections. I was their plaything and their idol, and something better — their child, the innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by Heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery, according as they fulfilled their duties towards me. With this deep consciousness of what they owed to the being to which they had given life, added to the active spirit of tenderness that animated both, it may be imagined that while during every hour of my infant life I received a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control, I was so guided by a silken cord, that all seemed but one train of enjoyment to me. (42)

Victor's parents have "inexhaustible stores of affection" for him, drawn from a "mine of love." The metaphor equates love to precious metals or natural resources without end; it is an economy with no limits. Yet the affective excess of parental affection hinges on the vehicle of the metaphor "mine" in which love is something to be excavated, extracted, (in this day and age) possibly even fracked. Moreover, Victor uses the phrase "a very mine of love" to describe what is "bestowed upon me." The pronoun me calls out to the mine and marks these parental affections with a possessiveness that excludes all other parties

from the economy of love. In this respect, Victor imagines love as a natural resource that is entirely his own and which cannot be exhausted. In a further turn of the screw, Victor gives the inexhaustible resource "love" more concrete coordinates: his mother's body.

Indeed, Victor's relation to his mother is one guaranteed by touch and the "tender caresses" that form his first recollections. The language of touch implies an intimate connection to her body as the language of life and, by extension, of its vital feeding regimes. Indeed, a mother not only touches an infant to caress or hold him, but touches to feed him, entangling the experience of maternal touch with orality in general; the breast is one of the first things to touch, part, and feed an infant's lips. While Victor claims that it is both his parents who might "direct [him] towards happiness or misery," the language in which he renders this direction belongs to the mine of love and the tender caresses of his mother's body. While the father is no doubt active in giving life and supplying love, the mother not only gives birth to life in an ineluctably physical way, she sustains it by feeding the infant from her own body. The breast becomes a symbol for "the mine of love," with its seemingly inexhaustible nourishment that Victor as a hungry child extracts. The language of maternal touch as a concretization of "the mine of love" produces her body as a form of edible (Oedipal) life support.

Moreover, all of the lessons that Victor attributes to his parents are described like an umbilicus, as "a silken cord" that feeds him "enjoyment" figuratively after his literal umbilical cord has been cut. The emphasis on the enjoyment that the umbilical figure facilitates suggests that not only is Victor's mother giving him pleasure, but that pleasure is "fed" to him through a figure, like the "mine of love," that wavers between the metaphorical sense of "food for thought" and the mother's literal production of food. Is

he taking pleasure in eating his mother? Or does he simply imagine the activities of introjection through figures of eating? The "silken cord," a soft-to-touch figurative umbilical cord and "the mine of love," a breast rewritten as a mountain, are not only metaphors. Indeed, incorporation fantasies entail a failure of metaphorical language, which means Victor cannot use figures. Rather, when he seems to deploy a metaphor the distinction between food and figure collapses into a pleasurable fantasy of eating, touching, and absorbing all that the mother has to offer. While the silken cord itself is a figure for the acquisitive activities of learning and education, its valances nonetheless literalize the manner in which Victor's mother generates desires — sexual, intellectual, and otherwise — that find their expression as food in Victor's idiom.

If the "silken cord" and the "mine of love" obliquely figure these desires and the fantasy of absorbing them through his mother, the discovery and adoption of Elizabeth Lavenza complicates Victor's maternal fantasy, the mine of love, and the feeding regimes they produce. In the 1818 version of the text, Elizabeth is the daughter of Alphonse Frankenstein's sister, who had married an Italian gentleman and moved to his native country.[27] From this point on in the novel, "sister" becomes a difficult word not only for the ways it marks the death of Victor's aunt, but also for how this death helps to construe Elizabeth as desirable. Equally important for this insight is the way that it is not Victor who defines Elizabeth as a desirable object, but his mother:

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[27] Following in a tradition of psychoanalytic and feminist critics, I draw primary from the 1831 edition of the novel. However, I refer here to the 1818 edition in an effort to highlight the most pronounced difference between the two. In 1818 Elizabeth is an entirely different person. She has brown hair and hazel eyes, while in 1831 she is blond and blue eyed. Although, in 1831 Elizabeth refers to Alphonse as "uncle" perhaps preserving the memory of her counterpart from 1818. For the purposes of examining Elizabeth, I make reference to some of the language from 1818.

> I have often heard my mother say, that she was at the time the most beautiful child she had ever seen, and shewed signs even then of a gentle and affectionate disposition. These indications, and a desire to bind as closely as possible the ties of domestic love, determined my mother to consider Elizabeth as my future wife; a design which she never found reason to repent. (20)

The tense of this particular expression is bizarre; Victor situates what his mother *had said* before the time of her death, in a language that makes her sound as if she might be alive. "I have often heard my mother say…" sounds as if these descriptions of Elizabeth's childhood beauty were an ongoing action; a statement uttered in the imperfect tense that has not yet stopped happening at the time of Victor's narration — as if Caroline, from beyond the grave, were whispering her desire into Victor's ear. This is also one of the only moments in the text in which Caroline expresses *her* desire. Marder suggests the unspeakable character of the mother's desire infiltrates the text, even as the text omits "an explicit discourse of [it]" (Marder 211). Building upon the strange status of maternal desire that Marder explores, I want to think about how it is "fed" to Victor along the transmission lines of a not-quite-figurative "silken cord." However, Caroline's desire here is not about food; she wants her son and adopted daughter to marry. This quasi-incestuous desire tests the limits of the family itself in ways that congeal around the word "sister." Elizabeth is the daughter of Alphonse's sister and Caroline makes desire out of an adopted sister, who must never be called by this name — not only to avoid the incestuous connotations, but for the manner in which the relative term "sister" lays bare a repetition of Caroline's own seduction. Again, desire emerges out of mourning.

Elizabeth, an all but orphaned creature, becomes an object of desire by virtue of her relation to a scene of mourning for her own mother, Alphonse's "sister." The "ties of domestic love" are not only bound closely together by joining the two children to one another, but for the ways they structurally repeat the portrait of desire that Victor describes. The word "sister" threatens to announce this repetition and translate the coincidence of mourning and desire that the portrait depicts. In 1818, sister is a death-marked desiring word directed by the mother's compulsion to repeat.

By 1831 the details of Elizabeth's adoption and the ways in which it might be said to repeat elements of the portrait have changed. However, despite these differences, the 1831 version actually enhances the language of Caroline's desire and especially the ways that it appears to dismiss Victor: "My mother had much *desired* to have a daughter, but I continued their only offspring" (42, emphasis mine). In this version, Caroline's desire is for a female child of her own and a true sister for Victor. Her inability to produce a daughter leaves the word sister marked by Caroline's maternal disappointment. In a sense, Victor is not enough. Elizabeth is no blood relative, but is found by Caroline in the home of an Italian peasant, appearing as the perfect substitute for Caroline's disappointed wish. If in the first version, Caroline desired her son to marry his cousin for the ways Elizabeth repeated Caroline's own scene of mourning and seduction, in the second version her desire is revised; she wants a daughter.

By 1831, Elizabeth is the daughter of a Milanese nobleman and her mother, who was perhaps not the nobleman's wife, a German woman who died in childbirth. Caroline adopts Elizabeth in an effort to fulfill her desire for a girl child with this motherless and paternally disavowed substitute. A sense of bastardy lurks about Elizabeth, but through

the engines of Caroline's maternal desire for her the threat of namelessness is allayed. Caroline presents her new daughter to Victor as a gift, remarking "playfully" "I have a pretty present for my Victor — tomorrow he shall have it" (44). While on one level, Caroline saves Elizabeth from poverty and infamy, she accomplishes it only by giving Elizabeth away to Victor as a "thing." The language of the pretty present echoes the conditions for the "mine of love" that Victor's parents supplied for him: he was there "plaything" and their "idol." Caroline produces Elizabeth's value by making her an object, putting her into an economy of love in which Elizabeth's parentage and the ways she mourns it are erased. Before Victor ever gives life to a creature, his mother has been making "creatures" out of her desire all along: "pretty presents," "idols," "playthings," and sisters. The adoption then does not take place merely because Caroline is "attracted" to the girl, but because Caroline produces a value for her by engaging Elizabeth to her son's infantile desires: "a pretty present" after all sounds like "it" might be new toy. Moreover, this pretty present helps Caroline to make explicit her possessive affection for Victor, to whom she refers as "my Victor." In this sense, the introduction of Elizabeth into the family becomes a way for Caroline not only to gratify her desire for a girl child, but to find an avenue and an object that reifies her affections for her son, repeating the possessiveness of such affections coded in the phrase "the very mine of love."

Victor "with childish seriousness" interprets "her words literally," remarking "I looked upon Elizabeth as mine — mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her, I received as made to a possession of my own (44). Victor's libidinal acquisitiveness echoes the parental love affair that had constructed him as a "creature." The possessiveness of love, however, is not merely about turning a person into an object;

it actually insinuates confusion between who is in love with whom and even who is who. Is Victor himself, his mother, or Elizabeth? How has the mother's desire for a daughter crossed these wires between man and woman, mother and child, sibling and self? Victor's overly literal understanding suggests not only that Caroline's metaphors have failed, but that the failure of the figures that describe Elizabeth produces an inability on Victor's part to swallow precisely what it is that Caroline has fed him. In the attempt to introduce her adopted child to her son, Caroline has produced an excess of desire in which Victor wants both his present and the maternal affection that the present comes to represent: he wants "the mine." In the act of receiving Elizabeth as a gift, Victor is "playfully" given a form of maternal affection that amounts to a seduction by proxy. He is not seduced by his mother in an Oedipal manner, he is seduced and seduces through his mother as a giver of desire understood as food. While Victor and Elizabeth "called each other familiarly by the name of cousin," this word ultimately collapses under the burden of more forceful desires. "No word, no expression could body forth the kind of relation in which she stood to me — my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only" (44). Beneath the language of "cousin" than lurks another word and a subterranean message. Victor cannot use words to describe his relation to Elizabeth because his mother has inserted her body where his words should have been: "mine only." The phrase "my more than sister" secretes the maternal desire that has directed Victor toward Elizabeth as a love object. The word sister falls short, echoing, even as it displaces the 1818 version in which Elizabeth was the offspring of this same word. The term sister is uttered here as a marker of language's failure "to body forth" or give birth to a proper meaning. In this sense, Elizabeth is a product of Caroline's maternal body, without

having ever come from it as a natural sister. Instead the mode of maternal reproduction that gives Elizabeth away, does away with the relation "sister," replacing it with a form of desire that can only be expressed as a failure of the mother tongue's reproductive abilities; it no longer "bodies forth" the significance of this desire and Elizabeth becomes nothing less than another bit of food. The "more than sister" emerges where introjective speech should have been and, along with it, a homophonic echo of *mords*. She is a part of the fantasy of maternal touching, feeding, and absorbing and as such, like mother's milk, Elizabeth must be swallowed and become, as Victor insists, "mine only."

II. The Sister, the Mother, and Victor's Secret Pleasures

If the portrait of Caroline Frankenstein is an image of desire that emerges out of a scene of mourning, it not only organizes Victor's narrative about his parents and Elizabeth's adoption, it also provides a way of reading the conspicuous absence of a mourning scene over Caroline's body. The portrait of desire lurks behind the mother's death and Victor entertains an illicit pleasure that allows him to maintin the fantasy of touching, eating, and absorbing her. However, before this fantasy and its illicit desires can be unpacked, it is necessary to examine the ways in which Caroline's death transforms Victor's relationship to Elizabeth and, in many ways, leaves his love for his "pretty present" stranded.

Just as Caroline fed Victor his desire for Elizabeth, this desire is ultimately what kills the mother. Elizabeth is literally the agent of Caroline's death, killing her through the transmission of disease, scarlet fever. In an act that saves her adopted daughter, Caroline tends Elizabeth and contracts the disease. The episode demonstrates her love for her adopted daughter, sacrificing her body in the ultimate act of surrogate motherhood.

Even though Caroline's body did not give birth to Elizabeth, it manages to save her from death. Scarlet fever causes symptoms that include a characteristic red rash and sore throat. These symptoms are not incidental, but relate directly to the corruption of the maternal body; the infectious disease that kills the mother spreads to the two aspects of Caroline that defined her maternal qualities: her ability to touch and feed, as well as the way these forms of proximity managed language. The "more [*mords*] than sister" transmits these corruptions to the mother and disrupts the bonds between mother and son, as well as the systems of language, signification, and desire that this bond had mediated. The failure of language that the phrase "more than sister" instituted spreads with the ferocity of fever, killing the mother with the force of Elizabeth's "more than birth." It is this exchange of mother for sister that allows Caroline to take her desire for a girl child to its logical conclusion; the daughter kills the mother and the daughter, at least perhaps for Mary Shelley, is born out of this murderous conclusion. The end of maternal desire, which is both the end it seeks (a daughter) and its finitude (Caroline's death), produces a guilty pleasure at the moment of her death from which the language of remorse emerges. The guilty pleasure emanates from the sister who was born out of the mother's death.

However, before we can track these remorseful effects and the pleasure from which they emerge, it is necessary to understand how grief, along with desire, are conspicuously absent from the narrative of Caroline's death. Victor writes of her death that it was "the first misfortune of my life — an omen, as it were, of my future misery" (43).[28] Given the prophetic status he gives to his mother's death, one would expect it to

[28]As David Marshall points out this is a near direct translation from Rousseau. Much of Shelley's writing, especially when the creature is born comes from Rousseau. The relationship between Victor's and his creature's ventriloquism of Rousseau is wrapped up in the mourning scene to which they are both attached.

elicit an emotional response, a "eulogy" in keeping with the affective pitch, for instance, of the "eulogy and dirge" that marks William's death in the form of the lightning storm. However, Victor expresses little beyond the bare details of her death.

> She died calmly; and her countenance expressed affection even in death. I need not describe the feeling of those whose dearest ties are rent by the most irreparable evil; the void that presents itself to the soul; and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. It is so long before the mind can persuade itself that she, whom we saw every day, and whose very existence appeared a part of our own, can have departed for ever — that the brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished, and the sound of a voice so familiar, and dear to the ear, can be hushed, never more heard. These are the reflections of the first days; but when the lapse of time proves the reality of the evil, then the actual bitterness of grief commences. Yet from whom has not that rude hand rent away some dear connection? And why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt and must feel? The time at length arrives, when grief is rather an indulgence than a necessity; and the smile that plays upon the lips, although it may be deemed a sacrilege, is not banished. My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to perform; we must continue our course with the rest, and learn to think ourselves fortunate, whilst one remains whom the spoiler has not seized. (50)

I quote at length here to emphasize how peculiar this passage actually is; it arrests the narrative in order to suggest that while grief is part of life, life must go on. While this

might seem like healthy mourning in the Freudian sense, in which the loss is acknowledged and the ego recovers to "think [itself] fortunate," this scene of mourning is so radically different from every other scene in the novel that it bears reading very closely. The first description we get is of a peaceful death, in which the maternal countenance is preserved in "affection." Her face, arrested as it is in "affection," suggests that after the moment of her death Victor still derives pleasure from her appearance. That is, he still considers her the "very mine of love." Unlike the portrait that depicts her "grief stricken frame" over her father's corpse, Victor continues to take pleasure and comfort from her dead visage.

The death itself is not violent and comes fast on the heels of a motherly benediction for Victor and Elizabeth from the death bed:

> My children… my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. . . Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place to my younger children. Alas! I regret that I am taken from you; and, happy and beloved as I have been, is it not hard to quit you all? (50)

Caroline Beaufort's last words are directed toward securing the desire between Elizabeth and Victor that she has mediated, sealing their union with the force of her last expression. This benediction then also has a performative dimension in which the mother's desire not only secures Elizabeth as Victor's wife, but appoints Elizabeth as the direct object of Caroline's "love" (she calls her "my love"). However, as the direct object of Caroline's love, Elizabeth is not just its recipient, but its transmission device; she becomes a substitute mother for the Frankenstein children. Where Elizabeth had transmitted a disease to Caroline, Caroline transmits duties to Elizabeth. Caroline attempts to use

Elizabeth as an object that can now take her place, providing for her survivors all of the vital sustenance, language, and feeding regimes she had maintained in life. In this respect, the *mords* than sister is something to be consumed.

While this substitution *seems* to work by all accounts and Victor *seems* to recover as best he can from the loss of his mother in order to "perform [his] duties," this substitution is devastating. The maternal regime that had fed Victor "enjoyment" through a "silken cord" is permanently cut off because with his mother gone the desire he had for Elizabeth no longer has a mediator. The libidinal ties between Victor and Elizabeth, midwifed by his mother, are cut. The portrait of desire born out of mourning, in which his mother is seduced over her father's corpse, provides the only model for managing the blow of his mother's loss, as well as how loss might beget a desire for his future wife. The mother's last words attempt to secure this transition from mourning to desire by repeating the portrait. However, the portrait, the image, and the scene are precisely what remain unavailable to Victor; he cannot produce an image that might record his desire except the image of his mother's countenance. Victor is unable to shift the desire captured by the portrait from his mother to Elizabeth. The only desire that can be born out of mourning is a desire for the mother who is now dead. This desire, its pleasures and its subterfuges, play themselves out in this scene through a conspicuous loss of words and images.

On the level of description Victor is starved for words, announcing, "I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that irreparable evil." Not only does Victor refuse to tell us how he feels, perhaps the only time he *ever refrains* from this exercise in the entire novel, he does not make himself the subject of the loss. In

fact, the subject of the loss is completely generic, "those whose dearest ties are rent." The verb "rent" refers to a tear in fabric or textile, suggesting that the mother is torn out of the text and the very fabric of Victor's life. The language of this description not only leaves unstated the exact nature of the loss he feels, it deliberately frames the loss as a textual excision. She is not explicitly described and he cannot even bring himself to call her mother in this paragraph: "*She* died calmly" (emphasis mine). In fact, the only intimation we might have from this description that it is his mother who dies, apart from its immediate contextual position in the narrative, occurs on the level of an umbilical reference, in which he describes the loss as "dearest ties" that have been "rent." The rending of these ties produces a "void in the soul" that "is exhibited on the countenance." While it might be tempting to suggest that he is painting an image of how grief produces an affect that is discernible and accessible for any reader, he is in fact failing to describe *anything* about his grief apart from how it produces a failure in his own descriptive capacities. He refrains from describing what he has lost and how it made him feel; the feeling is only figured as a "void." Yet the void not only indicates an emotional lack or descriptive failure; it also describes the emergence of a constitutive hunger in the absence of the maternal body.

The loss of the mother has ruptured the "silken cord" that had fed him enjoyment and managed language, signification, and even the appearance of the phenomenal world from his "first impressions." Indeed, the language of Victor's first impressions is repeated in a way that ties the maternal death to the disruption of these memories:

> It is so long before the mind can persuade itself that she, whom we saw every day, and whose very existence appeared a part of our own, can have

> departed for ever — that brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished, and the sound of a voice so familiarly, and dear to the ear can be hushed. (50)

He repeats his first impressions to emphasize the alienation of maternal touch: "The brightness of a beloved eye extinguished" and the "sound of a voice so familiar hushed" render the emanations of the maternal body distant; she is commemorated by what has been seen and heard, rather than what can be touched or consumed. She is not only more perceptually distant, but these spectral impressions are stranded by Victor's disbelief; he cannot believe they are gone. The passage of Caroline from a figure of maternal touch, a feeling which made her "very existence appear a part of our own," to a play of light that stimulates an eye and of a voice that rings in the ear, reinforces the severing of the umbilicus, leaving only the hazy apparitions that are the luminous and sonorous traces of her loved body. However, these traces also create a strange series of sensuous analogies. "The brightness of the eye" not only links the eye as an organ to the light that activates it, but reflexively demonstrates how the mother provided the light source for Victor's own eye — as if her eyes, like the sun, were also the source of the element through which they might be perceived. In the language of eyes, the mother does not perceive so much as she produces the light that constitutes the very appearance of the field of perception. Just as she fed Victor desire, language, and enjoyment, here her eyes grant access and secure the meaning of visual perception. Likewise, "the sound of the voice so familiar" to the ear gives over the organ of sound to the mother herself. As if her voice lived in the ear before any other words could be heard or deciphered.

Victor's grief not only takes on a character of disbelief in which these constitutive

emanations from the maternal body haunt him, but the scene of mourning, including its affects, its emotions, and its descriptive images, is deleted. It is as if her death has instituted a crisis in language that extends to the visual and auditory realms. There are no words, no sighs, no moans, no images nor any scenes that figure the mother's funeral or that might be comparable to the portrait of her posed over her father's coffin. Victor omits these details because if he were to repeat them he would be repeating a scene of desire, an eroticized display of mourning that would not alleviate the symptoms of loss, but regenerate the desire for and fantasy of her touch and food. While he admits that the first days of grief are felt acutely, he refrains from *any* description of "the actual bitterness of grief." In fact, the word "bitterness" is the only qualitative description he gives, lodging this inedible and barely palatable taste of remorse in his mouth where the words ought to have been. The word for bitter, in French, is *amer* and carries within it a homophone of *mère*—the word for mother.

Victor cannot stomach the loss. Instead rhetorically he asks, "Yet from whom has not that rude hand rent away some dear connection? And why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt, and must feel?" The defensive nature of his refusal to describe grief might he understood as a way of fostering a connection with Captain Walton who eagerly transcribes his loss, but it seems that this lament is not addressed to Walton alone. This particular moment seems to exit the narrative frame of the transcription. To whom is this claim addressed and who is addressing it? By not describing his feeling, Victor makes the reader complicit in his starvation and estrangement from the maternal body, from the visual, auditory, and linguistic significations it secured, and even the words that might mourn for her. He seems to say, we all have or will know the loss of our mother; there

will never be words for it.[29]

The absence of any scene of mourning for Caroline covers over the ways her death secured multiple unions between Victor and Elizabeth. However, Caroline does not just make this her death wish, she accidentally insinuates herself into the union by transmitting to Caroline "my love." If love is read here as neither an affect nor a noun, part of what Caroline transmits to Elizabeth is her role as a mother, and she becomes a carrier of Caroline's maternal qualities. The lines of desire get crossed in Elizabeth as a figure who acts to Victor simultaneously as future wife, more than sister, cousin, and, perhaps silently, mother.

However, for Victor, Elizabeth will never work as a substitute because he can retain his attachment to her only by routing what is desirable about her through the memories of his mother. Victor, in order to preserve his love for Elizabeth, must preserve Caroline, the "brightness of her eyes," the sound of her voice, the tender caresses, her words, and her desires – "the very mine of love." It is this secret maternal language and its impressions that Victor can neither relinquish nor consciously remember. He cannot introject them because Caroline oversaw all introjection processes. Instead, he incorporates them, magically and fantastically preserving his mother in a tomb that marks and conditions whatever love he might express for his "more than sister." The portrait of desire, depicting his mother's agony over her father's corpse, conditions his desire for Elizabeth and, in fantasy, it is his mother and this image of her for whom he continues to

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[29] Peter Brooks writes brilliantly on the effect of the frame narrative which he sees as the driving force behind the novel. "The interlocutionary relation [of the multiple frames], like the transferential relation in psychoanalysis, could be dissolved only by the production of that which would answer the Monster's lack. Because this is impossible, lack is passed on through the narrative frames -- which is indeed what the framing structure of the novel is all about" (213).

hunger.

III. The Worm Man: Absorbing the Mother

If Victor gets hungry after the death of his mother because he lacks the language to understand or introject this loss, his eating habits become very strange indeed. From this loss, Victor develops an eating disorder, which is not merely a form of anorexia that results from the obsessive work habits of his mad science. If we read *Frankenstein* for its eating habits after Caroline has died, we can begin to discover the ways that Victor, wrecked and haunted by desires, words, and sensations associated with her, replaces his mother with another form of knowledge production in an attempt to supplement the modes of signification he has lost. In place of a clear figure *for* desire or the maternal body, Victor inserts scientific modes of thought that he literally describes as a form of food. He writes about his scientific pursuits: "None but those who have experienced them can conceive of the *enticements* of science. In other studies, you go as far as others have gone before you, and there is nothing more to know; but in scientific pursuit there is continual *food* for discovery and wonder" (55 emphasis mine). The relationship between "enticement" and "food" as descriptions of scientific thought reveal the ways in which it is a discourse invested with a libidinal desire. The question is, are these terms metaphors? While "food" is, by all accounts a figure that helps to describe the precise nature of this "enticement" or desire, the logic of the crypt entails a failure of metaphor; even if figurative speech is deployed, the significance of the figure might still be understood by the speaker as literal. I want to suggest that Victor believes himself to be eating literally and his obsession with discovery becomes a substitute for regular eating patterns. In the place of introjective speech, he feeds himself on new knowledge, new "chemical

instruments," and new discoveries.[30] These prostheses become the "food" through which he attempts to assimilate the loss of his mother.

If science becomes food for Victor and allows us to track these secret incorporation fantasies, then the language of life and death, as well as his fascination with corpses, dissection, and reanimation, are not incidental fascinations; they are the literalization of his scientific incorporation fantasy.[31] By following these elements of Victor's narrative and scientific method, we not only begin to discern how his mother's absence might motivate his hunger for experimentation, but we can also expose how this desire for the absent mother is routed through a form of eating. Specifically, Victor's scientific method allows him to engage in an incorporation fantasy that helps him to assimilate death, the dead, and above all his dead mother.

As Janelle Schwarz argues in her excellent chapter on *Frankenstein* in *Worm Work,* many critics have suggested that his mother's "untimely death" can be read as the impetus for Victor's desire to discover "the principle of life" as well as his escalating obsession with things that are dead. Critics from Homans to Johnson explicitly link Victor's life experiments with experiments in motherhood. As Johnson puts it,

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[30] I build upon Homans' and Collings' reading of science as "a symbolic representation" of the mother "in language," by emphasizing that Victor refers to "science" as a kind of food; I want to link what appears to be figurative in this statement to the effects of what Homans calls "literalization" (103). It is not just food for thought, but a form of sustenance through which he supplements the maternal body, insofar as he both enhances and supplants her form.

[31] Homans argues similarly that the son, giving up the body of the physical mother, creates a representative of her in the realm of language; he attempts to resurrect his mother in scientific experimentation and, thus, in the realm of language (Homans 101-107). I build on Homans observations here in order to examine the relationship between scientific experimentation, language, and food, paying special attention to the ways food marks the failure of language's acquisitive properties.

Frankenstein is "a tale of catastrophic male womb envy" (Johnson 23).[32] However, Schwartz deftly argues that Victor's obsessions with the source of life and secrets of death are not merely the mad science of human observation, or even a horror story about historical dissection practices.[33] Rather, Victor's scientific method depends on and draws from a relationship to worms: the creatures who not only contribute to decay, but are a form of life that *eats* of decay, ushers along decomposition, and digests dead bodies in an effort to expel them as a fertilizer for "new ideas." While Schwartz argues that worms "provide decay with a means of renewal," furnishing the ground for "the productive dissolution and reconstitution of both matter and ideas" in a discourse of Romantic science, she does not explicitly draw out the significance of eating, digestion, and excrement for these processes (Schwartz 169). I argue, that the worm functions not only as a "signifying motif" for Victor's scientific method, but also that the scientific method figured by the worm is a literal corollary for Victor's fantasy that science is itself a "food." Building upon Schwartz's worm work, one can see how the worm exposes Victor's hunger for his mother's corpse and his attempts to assimilate it as well as the ways these attempts produce complications in his language, his desires, and his sensory perception. After all, the incorporation fantasy in which he attempts to absorb all or part of his dead mother only works in "phantasmatic, unmediated, instantaneous, magical [and] sometimes hallucinatory flashes," as Avital Ronell has described the pathology of

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[32] Johnson charmingly puts it that all of *Frankenstein* could be understood as avoiding the question: "Where do babies come from?" (23).

[33] Janis Caldwell argues that the historical emergence of the post mortem exam contributed to a paradigm shift in the ways the body was perceived and how it could be represented. She writes, "Death permits the pathological anatomist to read the disease process backward in time, granting him the power of seeing and knowing the previously invisible and inviable." A process which, Schwartz argues, is related to Victor's modes of reading life in death.

mourning (341).[34] Incorporation in this sense never works; it only appears through its workings as a fantasy in the bizarre partial return of all that had been curtailed by the loss of the mother: desire, language, and certain luminous and sonorous sensory perceptions.

In Schwartz's words, Victor's behavior resembles "a more simple and reviled organism: a worm" (168). These behaviors have everything to do with a desire to eat the dead in fantasy. Victor's search for life results in the accumulation of dead things because dissection allows him to get closer to the lost maternal corpse both literally and figuratively. He claims that the "science of anatomy" is not sufficient for his studies of the "structure of the human frame," which suggests that the graphical representations produced by others who have dissected are not enough. Instead, he insists that he "must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body" in order to digest fully its structure and understand its processes (56). Victor is not interested in understanding how bodies are put together, he wants to see how they decompose. The work he does is "examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life" (56). By sequencing data in a causal chain, Victor is attempting to discover predictable and repeatable patterns that are not so much concerned with the anatomy of a body per se, but with its deterioration.

What he is looking at is far from normal, even as he seems to be describing a methodical practice. He claims he is watching "corruption and decay," but then goes on

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[34] Ronell describes the incorporation of the mother explicitly in relation to the invention of the telephone in her *Telephone Book,* arguing that we can ask the same questions of the Frankenstein monster that we do of the telephone: they are both inventions that "elaborate works of mourning, memoralizing that which is missing in a certain way trying to make grow the technological flower from an impossible grave site" (194). Elsewhere in the book she suggests, "the monster responds on automatic to the call of the dead mother" (146). Dr. Frankenstein remains a touchstone for Ronell's elaboration of the relationship between technology, experimentation, mourning, and the dead mother.

to assert that he is actually watching "the change from life to death, death to life." Victor admits that it is not so much decay he watches, but people or animals dying. The chiasmus signals a moment of confusion in which all of a sudden the passage from life to death is no longer unidirectional, but can result in an alchemical transformation. What is significant here, is not simply that the language has changed the causal direction of life and death, but that Victor has produced this linguistic change by observing dead bodies, drawing himself closer to decay, in a way that expresses a desire to eat them; the bodies are food for his discovery.

Victor repeats again and again a scene of death that, up until this point, has been figured in the text by two individuals only — Caroline and her father. What are *we* looking at then in this passage? What is Victor *actually* studying? To what degree has the scientific method induced an uncanny, mechanical repetition compulsion in which Victor is addicted to watching things die, decompose, and waste precisely for the ways in which they hold out the possibility of recapturing the image of desire figured by his mother's portrait? The point is that he is reproducing, under the guise of scientific rigor, a desire for maternal touch, for the mother's wasted body and decaying corpse, and especially for the scene of her death that simultaneously severed the "dearest ties" of the maternal cord and made possible a scene of mourning through which he and Elizabeth might repeat and relive the portrait of desire. Moreover, the desire that his mother directed appears to have been reinvested in the movement of life and death, allowing him to relive and repeat the pleasure of his shameful secret: the collusion of sexuality and death. In an almost masturbatory practice, Victor repeats the moment of death because it is ineluctably tied to his banished libidinal pleasures. The waste of death is also the only

possible source of sexual pleasure.

However, Victor appears almost wholly unaffected by his experiments. It is as if the morbidity of his actions were invisible. Victor's impervious attitude has less to do with his clinical remove and quite a lot more to do with the crypt that structures his studies. Because his repetitions of death and decay are attempts to reunite with his mother and resurrect the language and desire she authorized, the cryptographic logic that governs her as a figure produces a lack of affect, memory, and words where her wasted body is imagined to be. It is as if, because the word mother has been taken out of Victor's mouth, all the ways in which we might expect him to react to a dead body have been erased from what he could possibly utter and instead are swallowed by his scientific consumption habits. As a result, Victor is left impassive when confronted with death. Tellingly, he justifies this impassivity by linking it to the ways his father educated him, cutting his mother out entirely:

> In my education, my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be *impressed* with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition, or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. (56 emphasis mine)

He claims that because his father kept him from "supernatural horrors," they formed no part of his early impressions. Significantly, he uses the verb "impressed" here, which does not directly repeat the "first impressions" that he attributes to maternal touch, but

draws upon the same language. The father governs education in a way that not only excludes the mother, but suggests that these "supernatural horrors" and "tales of superstition," which might have taught him to "tremble" before a corpse, are somehow linked to the very corpse he is attempting to consume and resurrect. He does not say that he *knows* he never heard a supernatural story, but rather that "I do not remember," that these stories were not "impressed" in his mind. Their absence from the structure of his repetition compulsion does not mean they were never there, but rather that they, like the mother herself, are not available to representation or memory. He describes his ability to work in the "graveyard" and "charnel houses" as "animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm." He foreswears supernatural horror with this "supernatural enthusiasm," trading revulsion for an obsession that consumes him with a supernatural power; a supernatural desire to eat and produce waste as if he had become a worm. This enthusiasm, as well as the potential for horror, is motivated by decay and decomposition; Victor is not obsessed with the principle of life as such, but with the way it allows him to delve into decay and feed his obsession with dead bodies. It is not the actual passage from life to death that requires or elicits "supernatural" effects, but the proximity to things already dead. Indeed, Victor shores up the impermeability of his scientific mind to fancy by describing the "graveyard" as "merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm." The worm is an agent of these dissections and in fact indispensable to his studies. The worm eats dead bodies, facilitates decay, and infests death with a putrid and cannibalistic form of life. The worm lays waste and, simultaneously, disposes of waste, producing excrement (another form of waste) that all but eradicates the bodies it consumed.

In this way, Victor worms his way through bodies, examining "the cause and progress of this decay," spending "days and nights in vaults and charnel houses." He almost becomes something other than human:

> My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of *the human feelings.* I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. (56)

Victor as a worm man not only pursues the principle of life in order to reconnect to his mother, he looks at her without seeing her. That is, he attempts to find a form of vision that would let him see his mother's decaying corpse, a worm vision, stripped of "human emotions," and compulsively eating of the wasted body in order to absorb and expel it. The worm that Victor simultaneously watches and becomes "inherited the wonders of the eye and brain." It is no small thing that the word "inherit" describes the way the worm eats; to inherit the "eye" and "brain" is a wish in cipher for his mother. When she died, he asked in disbelief whether "the brightness of that beloved eye can have been extinguished?" He now attempts to inherit this "eye," to assimilate the constitutive trace his mother's eye left in his visual field, as if he could erase her by eating and expelling the halo of "brightness" that remains in the description as a waste product, even after she has gone.

It is this worming and worm food that directly precedes Victor's discovery:

> I paused, examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death and death to life, until from

the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me. (56)

The worm causes the breakthrough and the act of eating the what remains of the maternal eye precedes the miraculous chiasmus: "from life to death and death to life." Significantly, the "eye" that the worm eats directly bears on how Victor perceives the breakthrough. The "sudden light," "so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple," strikes him not merely as invention, but as the force of the dead maternal eye, its brightness, and its constitutive relationship to his own faculties. In a hallucinatory flash, Victor absorbs this maternal remainder through his worm fantasy. The "sudden light" as just such a hallucinatory flash pursues him throughout the novel as the uncanny repetition of this fantasy. The eating disorder expressed through the worm attempts to absorb the mother not as *the* mother per se, but as a mechanism that grounds all modes of signification — from language, to desire, and even vision. Victor, emaciated and gaunt, never manages to eat in his laboratory because the "diet of worms," as Schwartz puts it, is a wasteful fantasy and a form of sustenance that ultimately wastes his body.

So, it is not just that the worm guides Victor's scientific discovery or even that, as Schwartz suggests, "the creature seems to arise, through the action of worms, from the very corpse of his mother" (Schwartz 175). The worm, as an agent of Victor's wasting fantasy and his morphological double, produces even stranger effects. Specifically, as Abraham and Torokdescribe it, such incorporation fantasies often result in a fundamental confusion between who is alive and who is dead; in the desire to absorb the one who has been lost, incorporation can result in a reversal in which one exchanges "his own identity for a fantastic identification with the 'life' — beyond the grave — of an object of love," who is lost. The inclusion of this object as a crypt "attests to a painful reality, forever

denied: the gaping wound" in the psyche precipitated by the loss. The remains of the mother, then, her waste, as it were, are included in Victor's psyche even as they seem to have been excised from language and representation: "a gaping wound." As a result, the melancholic's "complaints translate a fantasy [of] the imaginary sufferings of the [lost] object" in order "to mask the real suffering, this one disavowed, [which] was caused by the wound [of loss] that the subject does not know how to heal" (Abraham and Torok142). Incorporation entails not only a consumption fantasy, but a mode of identification that is both covert and disavowed, which is, simultaneously, superimposed on the deranged regimes of consumption — a mode of identification in which the subject performs the suffering his lost object feels for having had to give him up. What this means for Victor is that his ravenous worm fantasy not only attempts to absorb his what remains of his mother, but also, and simultaneously, performs his mother's grief over her loss of him. The portrait of desire in which Caroline mourned her father now becomes an image of the ways in which his undead mother, from within his own psyche, mourns for the loss of him, over his starving, wasted body. The crypt effectively splits Victor into two people and the eating disorder acted out through the worm reflects the psychic confusion between the remains of the mother who must be eaten and the mother who wastes Victor from within by eating him.[35]

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[35] This paradox is played out in the 1831 introduction when Shelley describes a conversation she overhears between Byron and her husband about Erasmus Darwin's experiments in Galvinism: "They talked of experiments of Dr. Darwin who preserved a piece of *vermicelli* in a glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion" (*F* 23). There is much debate as to the origin of this piece of "vermicelli." Leonard Wolf [sic] in his annotated *Frankenstein*, corresponds with Darwin scholar Desmond King-Hele in an effort to track down the origin of Mary Shelley's pasta (Wolf 4 n2). King-Hele writes: "Mary Shelley's remarks can …be regarded as recording a mixed-up remembrance by Byron and Shelley of what Darwin wrote in the *Temple of Nature.*" Many critics have tracked down this mix up, pointing to "*Convera fontinalis*," a species of self-regenerating algae Darwin discusses in *The Temple of*

When Victor eats his dead mother, he internalizes her and splits his own identity, harboring his mother inside his own psyche. His internalized mother allows him to cover the "painful reality" of her loss by keeping her alive in secret. When Victor absorbs the maternal eye, he also activates this covert identification. While on the surface he performs his desire to eat and expel her, he also resurrects her and farms out his own body to her undead operations; he then proceeds to "translate [her] imaginary sufferings" through the language of his own body, its sensations, and its aporias.[36] There is no place where this process of bodily translations becomes more apparent than when Victor is constructing his creature.

The creature allows Victor to act out a maternal desire to create life, which is not a desire I am attempting to naturalize, but is one that Caroline explicitly claims as her own: "she desired a female child." The scientific food that Victor eats allows him to cover over this explicitly maternal desire which is not so much his own, but a desire issued from an incorporated mother who, deprived of her reproductive body, can no longer beget children. We can detect the ways that the creature translates maternal desire by paying attention to the way he is built and the language in which he is first conceived.

Nature (Vasbinder 116-117). Still other critics have suggested that it might in fact be "vortcella whirls," a type of freshwater organism, or *Vermas tenia,* a tape worm (King-Hele 53 and Selgio 78-80)*,* Schwartz pushes back against the critical tendency to correct Shelley and instead asks what it would mean to translate the word literally and read it as "little worms." It is not incidental that these little worms are also literally describing food. The word can name worms that eat and are eaten. They are food for revivification that simultaneously break down the distinction between who and what is eating whom; a parasite that can neither be digested nor expelled.

[36] Abraham and Torokelsewhere describe this as "internal conversion" in which unlike hysterical conversion, "The melancholic crypt is pushed to the periphery of the psychic apparatus: the body. The [psychosomatic] illness replaces the words of the deceased: 'I grieve; I am sick with sorrow; I no longer eat…' Internal conversion that is the self to self-affliction does not aim at the production of symptoms that might be visible on the outside or might indicate the need to exorcise a state of being; the illness functions as the subject's own internal substitute for the impossible endocyrptic fantasy of empathy with the love object" (Abraham and Torok164).

Victor describes the materials for the construction of his monster, highlighting the difficulty of such a process:

> Although I possessed the capacity for bestowing animation, yet to prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibers muscles, and veins, still remains a work of inconceivable difficulty and labor… my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man. The materials at present within my command hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an undertaking. I prepared myself for a multitude of reverses; my operations might be incessantly baffled, and at last my work imperfect. (32-33)

Victor is no longer dabbling in a theory of life and death. He is constructing a body to which he can communicate life. While critics have long since noted Victor's God complex, this is also a maternal desire. The prospect of building the creature is at first difficult, but he couches this difficulty in terms of construction materials. It is not difficult emotionally or physically, but as a matter of nuts and bolts; in order to transmit life to a body, he must first build "a frame for the reception of" such a transmission. The frame itself must be made of "fibers, muscles, and veins" in order to be able to receive the life. It is as if the frame is a transducer and its component parts are enervating tissues that form a network that not only connects the body to itself, but propagates a desirous transmission across these fibers. For Victor, this transmission is most assuredly "life," but the vital transmission that he sends across the creature's body carries with it another message entirely, an alternative transmission.

The fact that the parts he lists are "fibers, muscles, and veins" seems at first just a matter of common sense; these are component parts of a body. However, they are also tissues that are cord-like. The body's parts are connective tissues that reiterate the "silken cord" Victor first associates with his mother. The umbilical valences, while they are not explicit, are reworked as the very materials that prepare the body for the transmission of Victor's message: "life to death, death to life." Victor counteracts his doubts about the difficulty of such a construction with the memory of his "first success." But what is he talking about exactly? He writes that "my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man." Again, his first success is in fact the endocryptic resurrection of his mother "buried alive" within his own psyche.[37] This secret memory too, is part of Victor's vital transmission. He not only bestows life on a human frame of his own design, he transmits the maternal crypt that structured this desire through a cord-like network of tissues that simultaneously recall and displace her.[38]

The construction of the creature bears out the labor of such a translation as a form of labor pains. Victor works over the frame, but starves himself that he might feed the

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[37] He in fact describes this quality of being "buried alive" in relationship to discovery: "I was like the Arabian who had been buried with the dead, and found passage to life, aided only by one glimmering and seemingly ineffectual light" (57). If indeed Victor identifies with his undead mother, these are in fact her words. She speaks through him and his science. Marder even highlights the relationship between Safi, the foreigner whose mother is dead, and this reference to the Arabian buried alive. For Marder, Safi marks the untranslatable condition of maternal loss, speaking no English from the text's most internal frame: the creature's story.

[38] Many critics of *Frankenstein* makes claims about what the creature is and what he means. Psychoanalytic critics such as Collings and Mladen Dolar read the creature through Lacan's account of the mirror phase, in which the creature reflects the ways in which the subject is constituted based on a lack; the mother, figuring this lack and incompleteness, then allows the subject to "make demands on the world and to desire" (Dolar 13). Collings reads the creature's first moments as if "Victor looks in the mirror *and sees the image begin to have a life of its own*" (Collings 285).

body. He feeds it by working on its cord-like tissues, as if he could materialize the "silken cord" that had attached him to his mother in life by rebuilding them in and through his creature. These cords, however, also recall and repeat the shape of the worm, feeding off of the very fibers that ought to deliver food. However, he is simultaneously driven by the desire he attributes to his mother to reissue these connection cords as a form of food for himself. Moreover, he reproduces these cords as a way of feeding his mother from beyond the grave. That is, he feeds her desire so that she might feed him again. As a result, he starves: "My cheek had grown pale with study, as my person and become emaciated with confinement" (58).

In the process of worming his way through his mother's corpse, Victor, inadvertently, has made himself food for his undead mother who resides within him. Schwartz is right in this respect to observe that "Just as Victor was literally born from his mother in life, the creature can be figuratively read as a production from the same mother in death" (175). However, it is not so much that the creature is a "figurative production from the same mother," but a literal reproduction in which Victor fantastically reproduces his mother as himself and carrying her within him, is compelled by her maternal desire to reproduce. In this sense, the creature is born out of the crypt as the only available material for acting out Victor's mother's "imaginary sufferings;" moreover, it is not implausible that the first desire Victor attributes to his mother is precisely the desire to be a mother. It is this maternal desire that Victor endues with life. The creature translates a fugitive desire, escaped from the crypt, who threatens the secret it preserves. The story of Victor's remorse follows this fugitive desire, entangling a fundamental confusion over food, language, and sensory perception with the hunger of this undead newborn.

IV. Swallowed:
Maternal Hunger and the Birth of Monsters

If the creature is born out of Victor's crypt and its fugitive maternal desires, Victor describes the ways that it distracts him from his family and Elizabeth in peculiar, if now familiar, language: "I wished, as it were to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which *swallowed* up every habit of my nature, should be completed" (59 emphasis mine). The unnamable desires escaped from the maternal crypt not only produce a hunger in Victor, but this hunger comes back to bite, swallow, and take over his "habits." However, in order to think about how this maternal desire eats, as opposed to how Victor attempts to eat and absorb the loss of his mother, it is necessary to track Victor's reactions to the creature's birth, the creature's own narrative of it, and the aborted monsteress who is never born at all. My contention is that maternal desire reappears at the intersection of these narratives in ways that allow us to decode the language of remorse as one that expresses the confusions between Victor's hunger and the maternal hunger he ambivalently harbors. Along the way, I want to point out the ways that the creature reproduces the maternal desires that are articulated in Victor's childhood recollections. Most significantly, the maternal desire to see Elizabeth and Victor wed bleeds into and shapes the creature's desire for a mate — a mate who would be nothing less than a sister, perhaps even, more than a sister.

When critics consider the relationships among the mother, Elizabeth, and the creature they turn to Victor's dream.[39] Immediately, after he brings the creature to life,

[39] Paul Youngquist writes well on the relationships among the mother, the daughter, and the monster. The inherent sexuality of the family is repressed in a form that only comes to be figured by the monster. My reading, indebted as it is to Youngquist, differs insofar as I am reading this triangulation through the illness of mourning and its absorption fantasies (Youngquist 348-349).

he locks himself in his chamber and proceeds to fall into a sleep "disturbed by the wildest dreams." Collings reads the dream as evidence that "all women are for him the dead mother," including Elizabeth who can only appear "in the realm of the symbolic" as dead because "female sexuality can never be separated from the mother he has lost" (Collings 281-282). Schwartz suggests that the dream is evidence of how the creature figuratively emerges from the corpse of the dead mother, shrouded and worm ridden. Building on these readings of the dream, I want to suggest that it not only registers an unresolved Oedipal desire for the mother that begets his unresolved desire for Elizabeth, but that we can begin to tell that these desires have been resolved in secret; they only appear unresolved because they have been incorporated in an act of eating. Moreover, the incorporation fantasy appears again *literally* through the worm:

> I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (61)

The dream seems to be a straightforward depiction of the relationship between Victor's desire for Elizabeth and his desire for his dead mother. As I have argued, Caroline fed Victor his desire for Elizabeth by procuring her as his "pretty present." However, the dream also depicts the ways in which the very possibility of sexual desire has been incorporated along with the mother; Victor cannot access it consciously. Instead sexual

desire is refracted through corpses, decay, and death. Death is sex. This argument builds upon Lacanian readings by Collings and Homans. Still, I contend it is not just that sexuality cannot be separated from the dead mother, but that sexuality, desire, and the language that might speak it have been erased along with her corpse. As Marder argues, "the effacement of the mother is accompanied by the omission of a discourse of desire" (211). The desire is omitted, encrypted, and buried in the language of remorse, food, and consumption as Victor attempts to absorb it, take pleasure in it, and secretly protect it from view.

The kiss transforms Elizabeth, the alleged object of his sexual affections, into his dead mother, not merely transforming her into a substitute for the dead mother, but locating desire as itself as a form of death: *la mort.* The dream records the ways that the mother was never fully introjected, producing a concomitant incorporation of those maternal elements that could not be put into language, such as sexuality and even reproduction. The incorporated elements are not just banished, but leave their residue on all subsequent interactions with objects of desire, like Elizabeth. The mother interposes herself and her dead body where introjective speech should have been. Indeed, it is not even the mother, Caroline, who appears; it is a figure covered in a shroud and banished from an explicit representation. The fabric that veils her not only does away with the specificity of her features, but substitutes these features with a textile pattern that propagates and displaces the banished features, including her voice, eyes, and touch, across Victor's text. What's more all that he *can* see are the grave worms; the agents of decay that led Victor to his discovery and helped him to absorb her corpse in fantasy. These grave worms eating through the textile that covers over the mother can be read as

figuring precisely the relationship of remorse to the text of *Frankenstein.* Remorse, which harbors and calls to the homophones *mors*, *la mort,* and more, is the language of these grave worms and the shrouded mother that they consume for Victor as morphological doubles that keep her secret.

However, this dream is not just about how the dead mother parasitizes a discourse of desire. Elizabeth too is beset by the worm fantasy. She is swallowed by the mother's secret discourse with her son. Elizabeth, Victor's "more than sister," is bitten in more ways than one. Kissing becomes a horrifying mode of cannibalism in which Victor contaminates Elizabeth with his bite, transforming her into a dream image that condenses and displaces Victor's eating fantasy. The mother's corpse, which he cannot see or describe, is decaying and being eaten by the worm he has secretly become. Specifically, when his lips touch hers, she is transformed into a (Maternal) thing that must be consumed in the worm fantasy. This transformation would not be possible if the act of kissing were not already opening onto a discourse of eating and a fantasy of absorption. The kiss makes good on the mother's last words in which she expressed her desire that Victor and Elizabeth be wed. By fulfilling these last words, Victor repeats the scene of the mother's loss through an oral transaction with his more than sister, which also reiterates the portrait of desire that depicted his mother over her father's corpse. The kiss is yet another substitution for the mourning words Victor never learned to say, figuring the ways in which desire for Elizabeth can only be rendered in relation to an incorporation of the desire his mother figured in the unforgettable portrait that brought sexuality and mourning together.

The psychic value of the kiss as bite announces itself in the dream and wakes

Victor up. Upon waking, in a perverse twist on midnight feeding, Victor is confronted by his progeny. Significantly, the dream seeps over into this first exchange between Victor and his creature, and the bites that structure the impossibility of mourning Caroline become an inarticulate principle of connection between them. Speech is banished and in its place a scene of empty mouthing and "inarticulate sounds" transpires:

> I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch — the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I didn't hear. (61)

Victor's "teeth chattered" as if, unable to articulate the words that could interpret his dream, he, like the worms, bites into the now vanished dream images, which have nonetheless left him sweating, convulsing, and mouthing. The creature comes to Victor and his inarticulate sounds are met by a "parent" who also cannot make words. They are biting at one another in ways that figure and disfigure the maternal void out of which both of them are born. Even if the dead mother is not there, she exists between them as an absence of language and the source of inarticulate hunger.

Victor first sees the creature by the "dim yellow light of the moon," which not only provides the light for the ghastly vision, but reflects the coloring of the creature's "dull yellow eye." It is as if Victor were now seeing light filter in through his own creation's

undead eyes. The maternal eye that once emanated the "brightness" that animated his vision is now displaced by these "dull yellow eyes," which first appeared by "a half-extinguished light" in Victor's laboratory (60).[40] The language of this description recalls the maternal eye and the manner in which Victor expressed disbelief that its "brightness" could have been "extinguished." If Caroline's eyes projected the element light that allows the eye to see, providing the light through which a visual image might be produced, here the creature's eye is invested with this power, infusing the "dim yellow light of the moon" with the "dull yellow" of his own eye. Victor's disbelief over these eyes "if eyes they may be called" concerns precisely the horror of this constitutive substitution. The creature's eyes supervene on the maternal eye, mimicking the mother's constitutive role as a light source, even as he replaces and yellows its brilliance.

In this way, the creature's first impressions are not only relayed through a narrative bereft of language and food. The narrative articulates these hungers in instructive ways and allows us to discern how his sensory impressions, in the absence of a mother, might nonetheless tell us something about her function. If the creature can be read as born of the maternal crypt, a material instantiation of the desires that Victor attempted to keep under lock and key, the creature's memories of his impressions, as the negative image of Victor's own, allow us to discern the effects of the crypt on the organizing rhetorical functions of maternal touch.

> It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A

[40] David Marshall discusses these "dull yellow eyes" which are so like the "light peeping through the shutters" in order to relate this moment to the primal fantasy of the novel's origin that Shelley describes in her 1831 introduction (212). He does not speculate on the relationship between the mother's and the monster's eyes.

> strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time; and it was indeed a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. (95)

The creature lays out the impossible problematic of his narrative: he is giving an account of memory from a time before organized meaning can be codified or understood. The events of this time are "confused and indistinct," suggesting that memories have not yet been given an order and that the boundaries between basic impressions are not yet significant. Just so the "strange multiplicity of sensations" that assaults the creature are not yet sequenced into a meaningful hierarchy that would allow the creature to say for instance "I saw, felt, heard, and smelt at the same time." He is in fact describing a paradox in which the sensations that he had are retrospectively reconfigured to fit the appropriate linguistic distinctions.

This paradox at work in the creature's narrative has more to tell us about the operation of the senses than the fact that the creature has learned to organize them. What the creature's paradoxical description makes clear is that even in the absence of a maternal figure who can organize such a pedagogy, touch operates as a foundational figure for how the senses work: "a multiplicity of sensations *seized* me." This is certainly not of a piece with Caroline Frankenstein's "tender caresses," but it highlights the stakes of such a tender caress as it initiates and mediates the assimilation of sensuous distinctions; touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing, even hunger. The violence of the phrase "seized" in contradistinction to the "tender caresses" suggests that, in the absence of the maternal touch, the material world invades, takes hold, and will not let go of the body. Its orifices — ears, eyes, and nose — are open to the outside and the skin, the contact

zone of the body with the world, is, as Victor describes it, "yellowed," scarcely "covering the work of muscles and arteries beneath" — as if the creature's skin is ready to burst open and expose the interior organs to the outside at any moment. Touch in this sense operates on two distinct, and yet related levels: it is a sense unto itself and it simultaneously is a figure that can describe either the assault or pedagogical mediation of all the senses. Not only is the work of the senses something that is learned, as it is with Victor under the guidance of his mother, it is something which takes time. Indeed, the creature readily admits that "it was a very long time before I *learned* to distinguish between my senses." Acquiring the ability to distinguish between the senses is not a natural progression — it is an acquired skill which is not only *like* language, but is actually how language itself works. Mother is the word and the mechanism for this language work.

The creature appears to be in a state of nature, moving through stages of sensuous development. However, he is in fact learning to read his own perceptions. The first scene of reading for the creature is not over Milton, but in this space of sensuous differences that come to be organized, as I want to suggest, by an almost hallucinatory flash of light that finds its source in Caroline Frankenstein. The creature describes his first distinct sense impression as a blink of the eye:

> By degrees, 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. (95)

A "stronger light" pressing "upon" his nerves is the creature's first record of a particular

sense impression, as opposed to an onslaught, and it is described in relative terms: "stronger." The creature is affected by this light so forcefully that it produces a need to blink — to shut his eyes against the external stimuli. The darkness then too becomes oppressive, severing what has now been deemed a valuable meaningful perception, and he opens his eyes again to let the light back in. The amplification of light, a change in its frequency and intensity, and the differential effects of its absence produce the memory.

This very small sequence is not just a description of seeing or blinking for the first time. It is a momentous first memory that is not about seeing anything in particular, but the mechanical operations of the eyes themselves, which are working in relation to external stimuli and its interruption. Light and dark. However, this mechanical process is not merely about transparent perceptions of what is light and dark, it is about how the operations of perception function as an interruptive force that mediates external stimuli in the service of memory. Importantly, the interruptive force dissociates itself from a binary structure of light and dark, emphasizing the "degrees" and gradual amplification of stimuli in the language of difference and intensity. The pedagogical scene that is allegedly autodidactic is itself a repetition of a maternal body, which is written into and is a cryptic author of the creature's experience. While Caroline is not a part of the description in any way, the eyes are nonetheless the features that have been most explicitly associated with the mother's appearance: her "extinguished eyes," as well as "her lovely dark eyes," are the features in life and death that are *most* representable. Where maternal touch held out the promise of a uterine fantasy and an unbreakable umbilical relation, her eyes are the interruption of this fantasy, exposing the mother's pure tactile presence to the blink of an eye. The mother appears in the creature's story as

this *augenblick*.[41] The maternal eye, which has been infiltrating and doubling Victor's construction of the monster, his dull yellow eyes and the light they give off, are part and parcel of who and what blinks when the creature blinks. The mother oversees the creature's pedagogical scene as a constitutive absence that forces her way into the frequencies and flashes of "stronger light" and "darkness," repeating the play of light across eyes that describes Caroline at the moment of her death: the "brightness of her eye is extinguished."

In this respect, the creature's story allows us to read the ways in which the maternal crypt disrupts the discourse of desire and complicates the ways that Victor eats, uses language, and even how he sees. The creature, born out of a fugitive maternal desire, uncannily repeats these maternal functions because his birth begets a discourse of fugitive desire that knows no maternal object or proper language.[42] In the scene described earlier in which the creature comes to Victor attempting to make words, his inarticulate expression of desire is met by a "parent" who also cannot make words or express desire. The two of them, staring at one another, are not doubles in any straightforward sense; they are both outcast from language, uttering preverbal silences that cannot be heard and desires that cannot be registered.

However, later in the novel the creature does put words to the meaning of his "open jaws" and "inarticulate grin" when he recalls lying in the forest near Ingolstadt until he is "tormented by hunger and thirst" (96). The creature, in the absence of a mother or

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[41] I refer here to the famous *augenblick* detailed by Edmund Husserl and explored by Jacques Derrida at length in *Voice and Phenomenon.* This is not the first time that the creature's first impressions have been related to phenomenological literature. Burton Pollen argues that they may be read through the work of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac and his *Trait du Sensations*.
[42]Homans argues that Victor creates the creature as a figurative substitute for his mother in the realm of language (9-10).

caregiver, resorts to veganism, foraging his food and connecting the torments of hunger and thirst to abandonment and loss. While these are not the creature's first impressions, they are among the first bodily sensations he interprets. His open jaws and inarticulate grin as he looks down on his creator precede his capacity to understand hunger, even as they inscribe a maternal void on to the creature's face. he creature that Victor thought might fill the void and return his mother to him redoubles the chattering of his own empty mouth. In this sense, the creature and Victor are mutually bereft of a mother's discourse: her words, her food, and the desires, bodily and erotic, that she comes to mediate. These two creatures become connected by a psychic cord constituted in the shared matrix of maternal loss. The narrative joins them in ways that might seem familiar—as doubles, reflections, or foils—yet it also connects them on a far stranger level by producing similar gaps and omissions in their discourse. They share analogous problems with desire, language, food, and perception in ways that will leave each them swallowed by remorse.

This relationship is nowhere more symptomatically played out than in the creature's desire for a mate and Victor's destruction of her body. The dispute over her becomes a dispute about whether or not she can be rendered as a physical presence, as feminist critics from Jacobus to Johnson have argued. However, I want to suggest that she cannot be figured because the monsteress performs the mother's fugitive desires by becoming the girl child Caroline never truly had. Like Victor, the creature locates desire in the shape of a sister; he asks his creator to make another like him and, in so doing, inadvertently asks Victor, like Caroline before him, to give him a "pretty present."

Victor cannot bring himself to "body forth" yet another "more than sister."[43]

Indeed, there is never any proper figure for the monsteress. There is only waste: body parts, severed limbs, and traces of a female form where she could ultimately not be stomached. Victor, "laboring" over the body of the monsteress, contemplates this new creature:

> As I sat, a train of reflection occurred to me, which led me to consider the effects of what I was now doing. Three years before I was engaged in the same manner, and had created a fiend whose unparalleled barbarity had desolated my heart and filled it forever with the bitterest *remorse.* (144 emphasis mine)

We hear the refrains of remorse and its maternal secrets as Victor reflects on his labors in a language that first came from his mother. Her "long train of enjoyment" is now transformed into "a train of reflection" that conjures up the remorse he associates with his first creature. He goes on to speculate that, even if he does create this second mate the two monsters may be repulsed by one another; or even worse, they may procreate. The danger he associates with the monsteress is not only sexual reproduction, but with the manner in which a sister-creature might become a mother-creature. This sister over whom Victor deliberates threatens to fulfill and repeat the structure of his own desire; the sister is a body that would not only resemble his mother's gift of Elizabeth, but also literalizes the fantasies now associated with such a gift.

Victor's "train of reflection" is interrupted by the face of the creature yet again, voiceless and with his mouth posed in a "ghastly grin." The reflections and associations

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[43] Marshall also makes the point that the monsteress would be a sister, emphasizing the "shadow of incest" that casts itself over the novel (211).

that Victor is fed by the maternal "train" are disturbed by the creature's open mouth; Victor's feeding is over and with it the traces of desire that the "more that sister" might figure. Victor reacts to the creature's open mouth and its desire to be fed by "trembling with passion," and tearing "to pieces the thing on which I was engaged" (145). While this seems like a logical reaction to his "train" of thought, his passion emerges not from the "train of reflection," but from the interruption of the enjoyment it furnishes. It is as if his private discourse with those introjected elements of his mother, including the very reproductivity he associates with her and his unfinished monsteress, has been interrupted and looking on the creature's empty, open mouth, Victor is reminded of his loss and his own insatiable hunger.

The creature, deprived of the sister he desires, responds to Victor's "trembling passion" with his infamous promise, "I will be with you on your wedding night." The creature fills his empty mouth with a promise to destroy Victor's desire and to deprive him in a reciprocal fashion, linking Elizabeth to the monsteress in the exchange. However, Victor misinterprets the threat as a threat on his own life, as if the destruction of desire were not about depriving Victor of his mate, but about destroying the crypt in which his desire for Elizabeth is entombed along with the corpse of his mother. The creature's threat does not merely seek to deprive Victor of what is his own, but becomes in the creature's own discourse a substitution for food and light, the maternal elements of the novel par excellence. "You can blast my other passions; but revenge remains and revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food!" (146). Revenge replaces the maternal elements that the creature had misplaced in the desolated body of the monsteress, and revenge, as a species of remorse, ties the creature to his creator in the place of the

maternal body.

Indeed, when the creature leaves, Victor repeats the threat in his mind, considering himself the next victim of his creature's "insatiate revenge." Victor, affected by his creature's newest insatiable desire, becomes "ravenous with hunger" and eats "an oaten cake." The creature's desire for a mate, now transformed into "insatiate revenge" produces a similar insatiable appetite within Victor. Victor eats in attempt to swallow the exchange with the creature, the destruction of the monsteress, and the desire that this scene covered over. Between the two of them, their hunger for food and revenge, registers the displacement of the maternal desires that the monsteress's body threatened to reveal in which Elizabeth and the monsteress are not only tied to one another, but take their edible (Oedipal) significance from the mother. The monsteress and her sisterly counterpart Elizabeth become maternal waste products: "more than sisters" who are the affective and material remainder of the mother after she is gone. In tearing the monsteress to pieces, Victor is not only tearing apart his own creation or the creature's sister-wife, he is tearing apart the undead maternal desire written into the scene: the desire to see brother and sister wed over a corpse. The act of eating the oaten cake registers Victor's attempts to swallow this fugitive desire that the creature let lose.

Before Victor can leave the Scottish island that has been the setting of these transactions, he must first dispose of the remains. The monsteress's body functions as an allegorical form of waste that materializes the dynamics of waste that have undergirded Victor's fantasies of maternal resurrection. In this act of disposal, Victor not only relieves himself of the hideous female form, but externalizes the operations of his maternal crypt. While I have read the maternal as a foreign body that parasitizes Victor's desires, in this

scene, Victor gathers up a sister's body parts that have been a locus for expectant sexual desires and disposes of these wasted parts in the sea. The monsteress's remains are waste in more than one sense: on the one hand, quite literally, they are scientific garbage that, like a biohazard, must be contained, flushed, and disposed. On the other, as I suggest above, the monsteress's remains are the material and affective traces of the desires and losses Victor cannot acknowledge. In a turn of a screw, the image of the monsteress torn asunder joins together these two valances of waste in ways that can help us discern what has become of Victor's desire for Elizabeth and how the maternal crypt can be said to have swallowed it.

> The next morning, at daybreak, I summoned sufficient courage, and unlocked the door of my laboratory. The remains of the half-finished creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being… with trembling hand I conveyed the instruments out of the room; but I reflected that I ought not to leave the relics of my work to excite the horror and suspicion of the peasants; and I accordingly put them into a basket, with a great quantity of stones, and, laying them up, determined to throw them into the sea that very night. In the meantime, I sat upon the beach, employed in cleaning and arranging my chemical instruments. (148)

On the same shore that he ate the oaten cake, Victor assembles and cleans his instruments next to a basket full of body parts — a macabre picnic indeed. Her body has been torn to

pieces in order to become a form of food that is also waste.[44] Because Victor could not allow the creature's desire for her body to be figured, the monsteress has been reinscribed as food waste that must be fed to the sea. Indeed, Victor loads his materials onto a "little skiff" and sails out four miles into the middle of the sea before "casting my basket into the sea: I listened to the gurgling sound as it sunk then sailed away… I heard only the sound of the boat, as its keel cut through the waves; the murmur lulled me, and in a short time I slept soundly" (149). In attempt to banish the desire that the monstress might refigure and the secret that she might be able to tell about Victor's pleasure, he casts this food basket and its aborted contents into the sea. In French, the sea is, *la mer* a feminine noun that is a homophone for the word *la mère,* mother.

Victor repackages the feminine body parts as foodstuff and throws this feminine-desire-food-waste back into the mother. The basket sinks into the sea, "gurgling" like a baby. The sounds of this mother-sea "murmur" like a voice long forgotten, "lulling" him to sleep, a baby himself once more. He wakes up from this final eating fantasy in a panic. Farther from shore than he intended and stranded on the mother-sea, Victor fears that "I might be driven into the wide Atlantic, and feel all the tortures of *starvation*, or be *swallowed* up in the immeasurable waters that roared and buffeted around me" (149 emphasis mine). Victor is no longer being fed and he has not satisfied the maternal hunger. It pursues him relentlessly, starving him, eating at him, and threatening at every moment to waste him. It is not enough to feed her the desire that escaped from her because the mother's hunger cannot be satisfied. As a crypt within Victor that demands

[44] The monsteress's body parts rewritten as food waste harkens back to Dorothy Wordsworth's apple core and reveals the ways that the sister as a figure is imbricated with the language of leftovers and the problem of waste.

substitutions for her loss (of him and her own life) she exercises an imperious control over his mind and body that, like the creature's revenge, cannot be sated. After all, her hunger is only ever Victor's own inability to figure her, to repeat her desires, or give language to what he has lost; she only appears as the mad fluctuations of his appetites, visions, and language. This hungry mother is written in the spaces between the discourse of remorse, as the creature's last remorseful words seem to attest, when he like his monsteress is "torn" and consumed "by the bitterest [*amer*] remorse [*remors*]." The death of his creator leaves the creature with "feelings unsatisfied, and unquenched" and he goes to the grave starving. This internal hunger, "burning with miseries," consumes him until his "ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds" (189). The mother's absence there in between the words announces itself in his hunger pains, swallowing the creature, Victor, and this final desire, in flames even in the icy throes of death on a frozen sea [*mer*].

The creature's final words have from the beginning helped us to follow a hidden trajectory through the novel that ties together impossible mourning, hunger, desire, the function of language and the senses as well as how all of these elements are shaped by the maternal absence that hovers over it. However, the absence of the mother is no absence at all, but a discursive transformation of the descriptive elements that her made up, such that she becomes the very text out of which sensuous description, feeling, and desire are wrought: a matrix and an engine for the creation of Shelley's monsters. In this way, the sister is not just a sister, Elizabeth, or the monsteress. Sister is the name for the process by which the language that described the mother is torn, reworked, and redistributed throughout the text and its multiple overlapping frames as waste – that is, as partial remainders, bits of words and phrases, that echo the loss with which the story

begins. Indeed, the story's vertiginous frames and multiple narrators are held together by the conceit of a sister who is its recipient. Mrs. Saville, Walton's sister, is after all the addressee of the epistolary novel, though she has perhaps never yet read it. As Peter Brooks argues, "Mrs. Saville has no more existence than a postal address, or even a dead-letter office— a place where messages end up when they have nowhere else to go" (214). In this sense, Brooks would encourage us to understand the sister as the dead letter office for the text's desire, sign and symptom of its constitutive lack. The sister, like a dead letter office, is a repository for the words and utterances that have been, in some senses, wasted. However, the sister, as the postal principle of the text entire and a figure for its wasted words, makes the novel's transmission possible and resounds the remorseful tones of impossible mourning from within a discourse that would seem to have foreclosed that possibility.

Chapter 2

"Sister, sister, sister!" Sudden Death, Opium Dreams, and Reproduction in Thomas De Quincey's Confessional Writings

Part II of Thomas De Quincey's 1849 essay *The English Mail-Coach*, entitled "The Vision of Sudden Death," describes the near-fatal collision of the eponymous coach with another carriage, "in which were seated a young man, and by his side a young lady." Curiously, De Quincey brings this episode to a close by retelling the scene he has only just narrated from the perspective of the lady in the other carriage:

> But the lady —! Oh heavens! Will that spectacle ever depart from my dreams, as she rose and sank upon her seat, sank and rose, threw up her arms wild to heaven, clutched at some visionary object in the air, fainting, praying raving, despairing! Figure to yourself, reader, the elements of the case; suffer me to recall before your mind the circumstances of the unparalleled situation. From the silence and deep peace of this saintly summer night, from the pathetic bending of this sweet moonlight, dawnlight, dream light, — from the manly tenderness of this flattering, whispering, murmuring, love— *suddenly* as from the woods and fields, — *suddenly* as from the chambers of the air opening in revelation, — *suddenly* as from the ground yawning at her feet, leaped upon her, with the flashing of cataracts, Death the crowned phantom, with all the equipage of his terrors, and the tiger roar of his voice. (442 *The Works of Thomas De Quincey Vol. XIV* emphasis mine)

While the first sentences of the passage come from De Quincey's perspective, looking back at the woman, the descriptions following the imperative phrase "Figure to yourself reader," shift perspective. In a moment of free indirect discourse, De Quincey speaks from the woman's perspective, even as he maintains his use of the pronoun "her." The repetition of the word "suddenly" escalates the suspenseful quality of the narrative: each repetition interposes itself against the sensory descriptions that De Quincey has attributed to her. The suddenness of sudden death can only be registered through the lady's experience of it.

The "manly tenderness of flattering, whispering, murmuring love" is both an affective and auditory cue that could *only* belong to the lady because the "love" is destined for her ears alone. By describing the sounds of these barely audible whispers, De Quincey appropriates the ear that receives the love in order to narrate the ways in which the threat of death interrupts and transforms its dimensions. The interception and interruption of love – as sound, sense, and affect –becomes the mechanism through which death is made to appear. Death, written allegorically as "Death's crowned phantom" with its "tiger's roar," drowns out whispering, murmuring love. Moreover, the carnivorous tiger as a figure for this quasi-auditory effect (after all it is unclear that death has a straightforward sound) threatens to gobble up the descriptions that precede it. In this sense, the sound of death, lodged as it is in the tiger's maw, is all-consuming. Similarly, the "sweet moonlight, dawnlight, dream light" that surrounds the lady gives way to a figure: "flashing of cataracts." Of course, these cataracts are not themselves present, but a figure that capture death's influence on the frequency and intensity of light. Light, refracted and reflected off of a tumultuous waterfall, operates as analogy for death's

influence.

The quality of light, like the love, belongs to the lady, and the transformation of its qualities – from moonlight to the figure of flashing cataracts – constructs her image in the text. De Quincey says he "read and interpreted" "the *shadows* of [the lady's] averted signs," implying that a light source strikes her and casts a shadow writing through which he then writes the vision of sudden death (443 *The Works XVI* emphasis mine). It is not so much the threat of death that De Quincey describes through the lady's shadow writing, but the quality, intensity, and frequency of the shocks that death produces. These aftershocks only become legible as "averted signs," interrupted affects, and shadow writing that emanate from the lady's experience of them. In this sense, she registers and disseminates death's interruptive force. Indeed, it is her crying and raving image that is "swept into [De Quincey's] dreams forever," reappearing there "thousands and thousands" of times under the name of "a sister unknown" (443, 449 *The Works XVI*).

"The Vision of Sudden Death" describes a missed encounter with death. Likewise, the multiplication of the "sister unknown" in De Quincey's dreams occurs because the missed encounter with death is figured by a missed encounter with a woman: "I read the course and changes of the lady's agony in the succession of her involuntary gestures…I read all of this from the rear, never once catching the lady's full face" (441). The lady's face becomes a blank in his memory that can never be filled in. However, the shadows she casts repeat themselves endlessly as the faceless feminine record of De Quincey's sudden near-death experience. He writes:

> A thousand times, amongst the phantoms of sleep, has [God] shown thee to me… with armies of the grave behind thee; shown thee to me, sinking,

> rising, fluttering, waiting, but then suddenly reconciled, adoring; a thousand times has he followed thee in the worlds of sleep — through storms; through desert seas; through the darkness of quicksands; through fugues and the persecution of fugues; through dreams, and the dreadful resurrections that are in dreams — only that at the last, with one motion of his victorious arm, he might record and emblazon the endless resurrections of his love! (449)

This "sister unknown" does not just repeat the scene from the mail-coach De Quincey describes. She becomes almost infinitely reproducible, moving "amongst the phantoms of sleep," "dreams," and "fugues" to repeat in each context the "sinking, rising, fluttering" gestures De Quincey "reads" from the mail-coach. Each repetition brings with it the "dreadful resurrection" of the moment, including the vision of "Death's crowned phantom," only at the "last to record and emblazon" God's love. De Quincey insists that the encounter, written in light, shadows, sounds, and affects reflects and grants access to theological visions of life beyond death. Moreover, the "sister unknown" mediates between sudden near-death and its oneiric reproduction in ways that reflect how sisters function as figures of life after death in his confessional writings.

Indeed, critics have long recognized that De Quincey was obsessed with his sister, Elizabeth, and they have offered a range of ways to read her, the prostitute Ann, as well as the more amorphous sisters of his opium dreams like the "sister unknown."[45] John

[45] Joseph Crawford argues that events like Elizabeth's death are so foundational for De Quincey's dreams that they haunt him in ways that blur the distinction between dreaming and conscious perception See also Elizabeth Fay, "Hallucinogenesis: Thomas De Quincey's Mind Trips."

Barrel even refers to De Quincey's sister mania as "nympholepsy."[46] While I am indebted to his account among others, I want to reread sisters in De Quincey's texts by considering his treatment of the mother. De Quincey refers to his mother explicitly only once in the 1821 *Confessions*, although she appears obliquely later in the text and again in the 1845 sequel, *Suspiria de Profundis.*[47] De Quincey's passing references to his mother can help us to reread his sisters: because "sister" is a relational term, there can be no relation to a sister without a mother. While communities of brothers may be related to one another through murderous conspiracies perpetrated against a father, as Freud suggests, the relation between brothers and sisters seems different (Stratchey 180-82). If Freud's fraternal myth foregrounds homosocial relations, the proliferation of sisters throughout De Quincey's works insists on the gender differences that undergird his lateral relations.[48] This insistence displaces the primacy of the father as a mediator of sibling relationships, and implies instead that the relation of brother and sister is nurtured in a womb. In this respect, a mother-figure mediates between brother and sister as a point of uncanny connection that can neither be accessed nor straightforwardly represented. In one sense, Sister-Elizabeth Quincey is literally a product of Mother-Elizabeth (*née* Penson) Quincey's reproductive capacity, and their relationship is underscored by the

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[46]For more readings of Elizabeth and the sister in De Quincey's texts see also Rei Terada, *"*Living a ruined life: De Quincey Beyond the Worst"; Robert Morrison's *A Biography of Thomas De Quincey, the English Opium-Eater;* E. S. Burt, *Regard for the Other: Autothanatography in Rousseau, De Quincey, Baudelaire, and Wilde*; and Sarah Dillon, "Reinscribing De Quincey's palimpsest: the significance of the palimpsest in contemporary literary and cultural studies."

[47]De Quincey refers to his mother two more times in his revised *Confessions* in 1861.

[48] The resonances between De Quincey and Freud are frequently referenced in the criticism, prompting critics to adopt psychoanalytic frameworks to explicate the text. See Joel Faflak, and Alina Clej for excellent readings of De Quincey's dream work in relation to Freud's. See also Robert Maniquis, "De Quincey, Varieties of the Palimpsest, and the Unconscious."

Christian name they share. However, in a more complex sense, when De Quincey mentions Ann or the sisters of his dreams, they are routed through a rhetoric of maternity. The word "sister" therefore silently invokes a maternal relationship that extends beyond the literal family unit. While this maternal function in De Quincey's text is in some senses figured by De Quincey's mother, he invests her maternity and reproductive capacities with a textual function that takes on an imaginative life of their own.[49]

In an effort to reread sisterhood and the ways that De Quincey's sisters become figures for sudden near-death if not life beyond death, this chapter investigates the figurative and textual effects of De Quincey's mother on the rhetoric of sisters. By emphasizing the integral role of maternal narratives and figures for his claim that the brain is "one great palimpsest," I argue that De Quincey invests the palimpsest and its imaginative capacities with reproductive functions that gives "birth" to a figure of the sister. In this respect, my rereading of the brother-sister dyad through his maternal figures has broader implications for both De Quincey's work and an understanding of how the coterie culture, so important to Romantic literature, depended not only on fraternity and friendship, but also on sisters like Dorothy Wordsworth. By asserting the primacy of the mother as mediating figure between brothers and sisters in De Quincey's texts, I not only bring the reproductive fantasies of Romanticism to the fore, as I do in the previous chapter, "Remorse: *Frankenstein*'s Eating Disorders," but also insist that part of what is reproduced in De Quincey's text, beyond the representation of particular

[49] I am indebted to Elissa Marder who argues that the mother produces an "anxiety that appears to stem from the unacknowledged, uncomfortable proximity between childbearing and *principles of reproducibility* more generally." Marder names this dual anxiety suspended between live birth and the machine, the "maternal function" (3-11).

biographical sisters, is an imaginative remainder or waste product that is unassimilable to memory or experience. De Quincey calls this remainder "sister."[50]

I. Mother and the Opium Dream

In *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* De Quincey mentions his childhood in passing and gives a very brief history of his parentage, citing his late-father's patrimony ("30,000l among seven different claimants") and his mother's literary gifts. Still, he is careful to distinguish between patrilineal and matrilineal forms of inheritance. His dead father bequeaths money that will never be enough, while his mother confers qualitatively different "honours of descent":

> My mother I may mention with honour, as still more highly gifted. For, though unpretending to the name and honours of a literary woman, I shall presume to call her (what many literary women are not) an *intellectual* woman: and I believe that if ever her letters should be collected and published, they would be thought generally to exhibit as much strong and

[50] Indeed, De Quincey's reverence for sisters extends beyond his autobiographical projects and shapes the ways in which he transmits the Lake Poets and Dorothy Wordsworth, in particular, to posterity. He wrote of her: "Properly, and in a spirit of prophecy, was she named Dorothy; in its Greek meaning, *gift of God*, well did this name prefigure the relation in which she stood to Wordsworth." The nature of the sister as a divine gift, however, cannot be understood without reference to De Quincey's remarks about Dorothy's journals, which like her apple core from the Grasmere journals, are, at the time of De Quincey's writing, unpublished manuscripts – the waste product and the leftovers of the early Romantic period. Specifically, De Quincey highlights her journal of a tour in Scotland from 1802; the same year Dorothy picks up the apple core. Although, De Quincey claims, her journal would never be very popular for "the minuteness of its details and luxuriations of its descriptions," he nonetheless declares that this unpublished work is "a monument to [Dorothy's] power of catching and expressing all the hidden beauties of natural scenery," an authorial power De Quincey links to the "bewitching" effects of her "sudden remark[s], extorted by something or other that struck her eye, in the clouds, or in colouring, or in accidents of light and shade" (106-107). In this respect, Dorothy's waste is also her divine gift: an ability to record, in her "sudden remarks," "bewitching effects," "accidents of light and shade" that are the very sisterly mediums through which De Quincey records death. Yet it is not just Dorothy who is a divine gift to her brother; sisters, for De Quincey, like the "sister unknown" of *The English Mail-Coach,* are all so many Dorotheas.

> masculine sense, delivered in as pure 'mother English,' as any in our language. (*The Works Vol. II,* 33)

De Quincey identifies his mother as "more highly gifted" than his father in ways that code his literary talents as maternal gifts. That is, his intellect is not only a mark of descent from his mother, but she bequeaths it as a "gift." He establishes the value of this gift by drawing a further distinction between a "literary woman" and an "intellectual woman;" his mother is not a silly woman novelist, but an intellectual whose letters, "exhibit [a]… *strong* and *masculine* sense." These adjectives describe the ways that De Quincey's mother performs and bequeaths "intellect" *in* language. Her letters manipulate "pure mother English" so that her writing not only sets a standard for a masculinized erudition, but also transmits this erudition and masculinity to De Quincey. "Strong and masculine sense" is in the gift of the mother, not the father, and, therefore, operates along maternal lines of transmission.

Yet in this passage, De Quincey uses the word "mother" twice. If in its first iteration he refers to the gifts of his biological mother, the second "mother" refers to a distinct set of reproductive relationships. His mother's "strong and masculine sense" is reproduced and "mothered" by language's generative capacity. De Quincey's masculine identity as a writer depends not only on the matrilineal transmission of intellectual gifts from mother to son, but also on the reproductive functions of language. Mother English is the condition of possibility for the maternal gifts from which De Quincey claims the "honours of his descent." His biological mother and mother English are therefore entangled in this passage in ways that tie the rhetoric of motherhood to language, representation, and their reproductive potential. While De Quincey's mother was a person

in her own right, the matrilineal transmission of intellectual power, "strong masculine sense," and even the rhetoric of "the gift" cannot be torn from the allegory of "mother English." De Quincey invokes his mother not only as the figure from whom he inherits such intellectual powers, but also as an allegory for the reproductive potential of intellect and imagination.

While De Quincey does not explicitly write another word on his mother in the 1821 *Confessions,* he recalls an anecdote in which "a near relative" almost drowns. The near relative is his mother. Unlike the earlier reference, the anecdote is not marginal to his central narrative about the pleasures and pains of opium. Rather it is incorporated into a longer description of the intense and hallucinatory effects of opium dreams. Specifically, De Quincey uses the story of his mother's near-death to illustrate, by way of analogy, the power of opium dreams to revive "the minutest incidents from childhood or forgotten scenes of later years" (67). By 1856, in his revised *Confessions,* he intimates in a footnote that this near relative is his mother, but he never uses the word to describe her (257).[51] If the narrative drowns out the word "mother," displacing the reproductive ties between mother and son, it nonetheless still insists, like the allegory mother English, on maternal lines of transmission. That is, even though he does not name the relative "mother," the fact that it is his mother is symbolically significant; when the word "mother" is excised from the text, the reproductive functions of representation and

[51] In the 1856 *Confessions*, De Quincey appends a note to his original text memorializing his mother: "Not less than ninety years did she survive this memorable escape; and I may describe her as in all respects a woman of remarkable and interesting qualities. She enjoyed throughout her long life, as the reader will readily infer, serene and cloudless health; had a masculine understanding; reverenced truth not less than did the Evangelists." Lindop identifies her as De Quincey's mother in his note to the 1822 and 1856 texts. *The Works of Thomas De Quincey,* Vol. 2, 257, 337 n105, 326 n522.

language invoked by her persist. In this sense, the narrative is maternal not because it tells a story about De Quincey's mother, but because, like mother English, it is a substrate that gives birth to opium dreams as a form of representation:

> I was once told by a near relative of mine, that having in her childhood fallen into a river, and being on the very verge of death but for the critical assistance which reached her, she saw in a moment her whole life, in its minutest incidents, arrayed before her simultaneously in a mirror; and she had a faculty developed as suddenly for comprehending the whole and every part. (*Vol II,* 67)

Like the story of the Mail-Coach, sudden near-death transforms the quality and intensity of light and, therefore, vision through the optical figure of the mirror. When the unnamed mother "suddenly" "comprehends the whole and every part," time no longer flows sequentially. Instead, her vision takes on the qualities of a mirror and rewrites them as a trans-temporal vision. The mirror does not show her face mimetically, but reflects her mind and its memories simultaneously; it is a *kairotic* mirror that writes "the fullness of time" into space.[52] Importantly, the mirror is not merely a figure through which De Quincey reflects on deformations of time and space at work in the opium dream. Rather, like mother English, it becomes a reproductive allegorical figure. The mother's near-death and her vision are only the vehicle of De Quincey's extended analogy. If the mother's near-death writes time into space, De Quincey builds his theory of opium

[52] I am indebted to Charles Rzepka analysis of De Quincey's opium dreams as "apocalyptic revelations," in which he explores De Quincey's reinscription of Christian theology. I build on Rzepka's work to examine the connections between revelation and reproduction in De Quincey's texts (77-87). The messianic work of *kairos* is described at length by Agamben in *The Time that Remains,* where *kairos* supersedes and unifies the successive progression of *chronos* (69).

dreams on the temporal order born out of this maternal vision. Like "strong masculine sense," De Quincey inherits the maternal narrative as a "gift" that he subsequently redeploys as a reproductive figure that gives "birth" to the spatial and temporal rhetoric of opium dreams. In this respect, the mother's near-death functions as a foundational figure that acts as a repository for the language in which De Quincey renders opium's qualities and its effects on the mind.

II. The Machinery of Dreaming and the Palimpsest in *Suspiria de Profundis*

If De Quincey deploys reproductive maternal figures in the *Confessions* that can be perceived in the commingling of his mother's near-death with the allegorical functions of mother English, then *Suspiria de Profundis,* the sequel to his *Confessions*, relies on even more elaborate displacements of the mother that nonetheless inscribe maternity in acts of linguistic and imaginative reproduction. *Suspiria* builds on the *Confessions,* elaborating on De Quincey's 1821 theory of dreaming by proposing a compound figure: the "machinery of dreaming." The machinery of dreaming appears twenty-four years after the mother's story in the *Confessions,* and yet is conditioned by her narrative. If De Quincey deploys the machine figure to explain physiologically the psychic effects he documents in the *Confessions*, then the maternal narrative too is built into the machine. Just as the word "mother" works allegorically in the *Confessions* to lend her reproductive capacity to the rhetoric of opium dreams, the machinery of dreaming operates by way of a reproductive allegory that has its roots in De Quincey's maternal language.

> The machinery of dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing. That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy. And

> the dreaming organ, in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind. (*Vol. XV,* 130)

The machinery of dreaming implies both prosthetic and organic reproductive processes. The language of planting recalls organic reproduction, as if dreams were almost vegetal, while the insistence on "tubes," "chambers," and "mirrors" implies the possibility that the brain also might be some strange *camera obscura.*[53] The double gesture in which dreams are simultaneously mechanical and organic reflects the entanglement of maternity with the reproductive functions of the text as well as the mechanical reproduction of the text that supports the mass distribution of De Quincey's writing.[54] The dream machinery, like the maternal mirror in the *Confessions*, alludes to optical devices, like a mirror or *camera obscura,* that reproduce images through displacements, refractions, and reflections of light. Optical reproduction is not only enmeshed with the reproductive potential of the mother's narrative, but also the effects of sudden near-death on the frequency and intensity of light.[55] Only recall how the "flashing cataracts" swept the image of the "sister unknown" into De Quincey's dreams." However, in *Suspiria*'s extended

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[53]For an excellent account of the *camera obscura* and De Quincey's dreams, see Onita Vaz-Hooper, "Dream Technology: The Mechanization of the De Quinceyan Imagination," I depart from Vaz-Hooper's argument by emphasizing the role of maternal allegory in the mechanization of De Quincey's mind.

[54] Margaret Ellen Russet explores the effects and influences of nineteenth-century print culture on De Quincey's authorial status in her book, *De Quincey's Romanticism: Canonical Minority and the Forms of Transmission.*

[55] My readings of optical devices and reproduction in De Quincey have been inspired by Marder's writings on photography and reproduction in her chapter "Darkroom Readings: Scenes of Maternal Photography" that explores the camera and its photograph in relation to traumatic figurations of birth in the work of Roland Barthes (163-194).

analogies these reproductive displacements of light and image figure another kind of reproductive displacement – one that is explicitly temporal. Like the mother's near-death, the "machinery of dreaming" gives access to otherwise inaccessible moments in time, expressed as the "eternities below all life." As significantly, the "mirrors of the sleeping mind" recall the maternal mirror that figured the spatial and temporal dilations of the opium dream. The mirror in this description acts as a projector for similar distortions because they register time and memories that are otherwise inaccessible – like forgotten incidents of childhood. The "magnificent apparatus," however, is not the mother herself, but the inclusion of the maternal mirror in the very structure and activity of mind.

While the maternal mirror reappears in the machinery of dreaming in ways that reveal how the mother continues to condition the language of mind and imagination, the dreaming apparatus rewrites the maternal narrative from the *Confessions* as a machine in more ways than one. When De Quincey describes dreaming as "the one great tube" that "forces the infinite into the chambers of the human brain," the maternal mirror from the *Confessions* is supplemented further. In the earlier instance his mother's near-death figured how the "infinite" might invade the imagination at moments of extreme peril; in *Suspiria de Profundis* the "tube" takes the place of her harrowing story and is grafted into the body's sensory organs. The "tube" is hardly an incidental term. It figures the ways in which matrilineal transmission for De Quincey is simultaneously biological and rhetorical, organic and mechanical. Like an artificial umbilicus, the tube implies that dreams are sent along maternal lines to nourish the revelation that "dark reflections from eternities below all life" somehow haunt the waking world. Given this arrangement of organs and prosthesis perhaps the "dreaming organ" to which De Quincey refers is not

the mind at all, but a stomach that is nourished by maternal figures: mother English, the maternal mirror, and the tube. In De Quincey's writing, cognition not only becomes a process of digestion, as Paul Youngquist has suggested; the activities of mind and imagination appear to be "fed" by maternal figures (261-287).[56] Like Victor Frankenstein, De Quincey harbors umbilical fantasies of feeding that are never registered by the fullness of his stomach (De Quincey suffers from indigestion for nearly his entire life), but by maternal remainders that form the basis of cognition.

If these matrilineal transmissions structure descriptions of dreaming as, at once, organic and prosthetic, De Quincey's theory of the mind reinforces the notion that these maternal prostheses feed his mind and imagination as if they were a stomach. In her the chapter "Digesting Wordsworth," from her book *Taste: A Literary History,* Denise Gigante explores the figure of the "feeding mind" from Book XIII of *The Prelude* in which the speaker, at the top of Mount Snowdon perceives "The perfect image of a mighty mind, / Of one that feeds upon infinity" (1805 13.69-70). Gigante reads the figure through Hegel and Schelling in an effort to situate "feeding" as a quasi-transcendental figure of mind that simultaneously succeeds and fails to sublate the gross activities of digestion. De Quincey, a life-long reader of Wordsworth, no doubt had Wordsworth, Hegel, Schelling, and Kant in mind when he figures his own mind as a kind of digestive organ. Yet De Quincey, unlike other Romantic philosophers of mind, insists on the imbrication of mechanical and organic figures in ways that not only can be traced back to the mother, but harbor a fascination with waste products that digestion produces. That is, De Quincey emphasizes his indigestion, his mind's disorganization, and his own

[56] Paul Youngquist offers an excellent reading of De Quincey's stomach and its effects on his confessional writings in "De Quincey's Crazy Body."

failures to digest or "feed upon infinity." Rather, De Quincey favors dyspeptic digressions as figures for the imperfect assimilation of memory and experience: waste.

Indeed, for De Quincey, the brain, its systems of memory, and its psychic configurations operate like a "one great palimpsest." Palimpsest, from the Greek, is a writing surface or manuscript made from vellum or membrane roll. The dried animal skin receives impressions that can be erased, washed, or scraped off, preparing the surface for new impressions, even as ghostly traces of the old script remain. The erased impressions can be revived through the application of a chemical supplement. De Quincey uses the analogy, like the narrative of his mother's near-death in *Confessions,* to suggest again that opium can resurrect biochemically "scripts" of memory – "forgotten incidents from childhood" – that have been overwritten. In this respect, the mind is more indigestive than digestive in its processes. What is perhaps more striking about this figure is that the palimpsest repurposes skin, a dead sensory organ, for an inscription. Like the maternal mirror from the *Confessions*, the palimpsest receives and resurrects impressions through the ways that it has repurposed death. If De Quincey uses his mother's near-death experience in the *Confessions* to describe his opium dreams, the palimpsest becomes another name for this kind of reproductive displacement.

Yet the palimpsest, unlike the maternal mirror or the machinery of dreaming, represents inaccessible memory in terms of very different mechanisms because it is not an optical device. Rather than invoking displacements of light or image, as we saw in the previous episodes and, indeed, "The Vision of Sudden Death," De Quincey figures the palimpsest's textuality in terms of planting and plumbing:

> The same roll has served as a conservatory for three separate generations of flowers and fruits, all perfectly different, and yet all specially adapted to the wants of the successive possessors…One harvest after another has been gathered into the garners of man through ages far apart. And the same *hydraulic machinery* has distributed, through the same marble fountains, water, milk, or wine, according to the habits and training of the generations that came to quench their thirst. (*Vol. XV,* 175)

In this description, De Quincey combines two sets of incompatible figures: planting and plumbing. Like the machinery of dreaming, the ways in which the palimpsest reproduces or "resurrects" depends on both mechanical and organic figures. The text of the palimpsest, figured as "fruits and flowers," implies again an organic mode of reproduction. Yet his descriptions of the palimpsest as "hydraulic machinery" links it to the maternal "tube" that was a component of the dream machinery and, indeed, the "chambers of the human brain" that are the tube's repository. The hydraulic displacements, like displacements of light and image, figure the ways that forgotten memories are "pumped" here and there as various fluids. The writing on the palimpsest is not etching or ink, but is "water, milk, or wine." The three layers of "sympathetic ink" even correspond to different substances that the writer might actually consume. The very material of memory in this figure is a stiff drink.

The palimpsest remembers when De Quincey combines a chemical (opium) with these fluids; the combination then produces the most elaborate forms of physical and psychic indigestion. Significantly, these fluids all emanate from the mother. It is not only milk that can be traced back to a maternal body; water is the fluid of the mother's near-

death experience. It took place underwater. De Quincey was addicted to wine his entire life and it caused him severe stomach pain in proportion to the opium he took.[57] These overlapping inscriptions of water, milk, and wine trace the ways in which the writing of the palimpsest emanates from the waters of the mother's near-death in the *Confessions*, through the breast milk that came from her body, to the intoxicating substances — wine and opium— that De Quincey swallows. Moreover, water, as we saw in "The Vision of Sudden Death," recorded death's phantom in the flashing of cataracts. The palimpsests' "fruits and flowers," then, depend on and are born out of these maternal fluids and the hydraulic systems that nourish apparently organic modes of reproduction. The mother's reproductive capacity is built into the palimpsest's ability to resurrect script and recall moments that have been forgotten.

Yet De Quincey does not introduce the palimpsest to discuss the distortions of time and space that opium produces or the even to figure the capacity of dreams to reveal otherwise inaccessible memories or moments in time. Instead, he deploys the palimpsest to explain the unity of an individual's memories and, therefore, his or her subjectivity: "a mind that feeds on infinity."[58] Ironically, he gives an example of this subjective unity by repeating the story of mother's near-death from the *Confessions*. It is not just that the

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[57] For more on De Quincey's alcoholism see Robert Morrison's article on "De Quincey's Addiction" (270–277).

[58] In his essay on the Palimpsest ""The dark interpreter and the palimpsest of violence," Maniquis argues that the palimpsest as a figure for the brain renders De Quincey's writing incompatible with "post-modern," post-structuralist theories of the subject. Rather, the palimpsest, is a figure for the brain in which the mind *never forgets* anything, preserving the unity of the subject, as a Christic figure for memory. Maniquis returns to these issues in "De Quincey, Varieties of the Palimpsest, and the Unconscious." Charles Rzepka discusses the palimpsest in *Sacramental Commodities* (77-87); and Sarah Dillon offers remarks in her article "Reinscribing De Quincey's Palimpsest (246-248). Eve Sedgwick reads the palimpsest in terms of the Gothic in *The Coherence of the Gothic Conventions.* Josephine McDonagh writes on the importance of De Quincey for nineteenth century contexts and theories of mind (207-224).

mother's narrative supplements the descriptions of the palimpsest that are more than a bit convoluted and at times perplexingly incompatible; rather, just like the machinery of dreaming, this maternal narrative was already built into the descriptions of the palimpsest in ways that transform "the mind that feeds on infinity" into a mind that, like Victor Frankenstein, feeds on and off the mother's remains. That is, the palimpsest's ability to operate as figure that elucidates otherwise abstract concepts was already coded by and dependent on the reproductive maternal rhetoric that animates De Quincey's texts. In order to understand the palimpsest as another reproductive maternal allegory and to read the relationship between "mother Palimpsest" and "mother English," we must examine the repetition of the mother's near-death experience.

> …in the original Opium Confessions, I mentioned a case of that nature communicated to me by a lady from her own childish experience. . . According to my present belief, she had completed her ninth year, when playing by the side of a solitary brook, she fell into one of its deepest pools. Eventually, but after what lapse of time nobody ever knew, she was saved from death by a farmer, who riding, in some distant lane, had seen her rise to the surface; but not until she had descended within the abyss of death, and looked into its secrets, as far, perhaps, as ever human eye *can* have looked that had permission to return. At a certain stage of this descent, a blow seemed to strike her — phosphoric radiance sprang forth from her eye-balls; and immediately a mighty theatre expanded within her brain. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, every act — every design of her past life lived again — arraying themselves not as a succession, but

> as parts of a coexistence. Such a light fell upon the whole path of her life backwards into the shades of infancy, as the light perhaps which wrapt the destined apostle on his road to Damascus, yet that light blinded for a season; but here poured celestial vision upon her brain, so that her consciousness became omnipresent at one moment to every creature in the infinite review. (*Vol XV,* 175-176)

What has been signed then under the name of "mother," a name which, again, De Quincey does not enunciate, is not the mother herself, but the processes that her near-death experience represents. Moreover, the mother's vision as a narrative prosthesis reveals the ways that a shock leaves an impression on the palimpsest of the brain. In order to leave this impression, the figure suggests, the sensing organ must be struck dead for a moment, seeing "as far as ever human eye can have looked that had permission to return." This blow leaves its mark in the sensory field in ways that deposit, like the writing on a palimpsest, an indelible trace that also constitutes a limit. And yet, paradoxically, the "celestial vision" seems written not only on the brain, but also in water. While water is only one of the fluids that "writes" on the palimpsest in De Quincey's plumbing analogy, I want to emphasize that this anecdote is foundational for understanding what De Quincey means by the Palimpsest and its writing. If De Quincey's earlier maternal figures operate through displacements of light and image (vision), the palimpsest figures include the traffic of fluids and presumably even the displacement of breath by water. The writing on the palimpsest in this sense is not only the water of the mother's near-death, but the combination of these visual and fluid displacements that transform her body and her narrative into an allegorical transducer of visionary

experience. The "blow" that strikes her must be understood as a "convulsion," in De Quincey's sense of the term — a convulsion produces a shock in the mind and body, leaving an indelible and transformative trace "threaded in [and through] life" (133). The light that "poured celestial vision on her brain" does not disappear, but reshapes the very possibility of vision and its limits. Like latent writing on a palimpsest, the maternal vision insinuates itself in all possible visions, threading near-death's watery limits through the organs of De Quincey's dream machine. Indeed, even the "flashing cataracts" that illuminated the "sister unknown" in "The Vision of Sudden Death" emanate from such a limit.

Similarly, however, the mother's near-death also becomes a form of resurrection, designed to "emblazon God's love" and afterlife, even as it records a transmits the limits of life. She descends "into the abyss of death" and her eye takes its impressions, recording its "secrets." The "phosphoric radiance" that is projected out of her eyeballs produces a theatrical, almost cinematic vision in her "brain." The shift in language from "eye" to "eyeballs" emphasizes the organs' anatomical status; it is as if they are no longer integrated into the body, but constitute a separate apparatus that both transduces and transmits the shock of the "blow." In this version of the anecdote, there is no maternal mirror. Instead, De Quincey uses displacements of light, "shades," and radiances to reconfigure spatiotemporal reality and represent the mother's resurrection. The light writing and its shadows no longer need the mirror to figure the technical manipulation at work; the eye itself becomes this apparatus. The light writes each moment in her life as coextensive, producing a marvelous "photograph."[59] The eyeballs have already recorded

[59] Marder discusses the maternal body and the photographic apparatus at length in her book *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.* I am perhaps most directly drawing from her

"every creature in infinite review," the light pouring out of them merely illuminates these traces, confounding sequential flows of time and space in the field of vision. In this "celestial vision" she is transformed from a drowning child, to an exemplary writer of "mother English," to the figuration for the very possibility of De Quincey's confessional writings as a collection of visions of sudden near-death.

In this way, the elaboration of the mother's near-death not only reveals the maternal structure of the palimpsest, but also exposes the ways in which reproductive figures undergird De Quincey's rhetoric of death and resurrection. Just as her story in the *Confessions* gave birth to spatial and temporal distortions that figured the effects of opium dreams, here her story becomes an allegory of psychic and subjective revelation. In this sense, the "mother Palimpsest" refers to the imbrication of maternal figures with De Quincey's mind and imagination. If mind and imagination are the great abstractions of post-Kantian thought, De Quincey renders them through reproductive figures he roots in references to his mother that never can be divorced from the generative power of language.

IV. "What is it the sisters are?"

The mother, read as a reproductive allegory who "begets" the machinery of dreaming as well as the palimpsest's ability to resurrect memory, allows us to read the meaning of these sisters and their deaths otherwise. As Barrel points out, in De Quincey's idiom, actual parentage to a greater or lesser extent can be superfluous with regard to the relative term "sister." He says of Ann "I loved her as affectionately as if she had been my sister;" the lady from the carriage in *The English Mail-Coach* appears as a "sister unknown;" and

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chapter "Darkroom Readings: Scenes of Maternal Photography" that explores the camera and its photograph in relation to traumatic figurations of birth (163-194).

his dreams of death in *Suspiria* come in the allegorical form of sisters he calls "Our Ladies of Sorrow," including *Mater Lachrymarum* (Our Lady of Tears), *Mater Suspiriorum* (Our Lady of Sighs), and *Mater Tenebrarum* (Our Lady of Darkness).[60] It is not for nothing that these allegorical sisters are also mothers (*Mater*) through whom De Quincey figures the affective experiences of grief and despair: tears, sighs, and death.[61] None of these instances (Ann, the sister unknown, or Our Ladies of Sorrow) refer to *real* or biographically traceable individuals, let alone *actual* sisters.[62] Rather these "sisters" are considered sisters because they are born out of a maternal near-death narrative. Our Ladies of Sorrow are exceptional for the ways they manifest this maternal narrative in their names as well as their function: they figure and transmit De Quincey's affective experience. De Quincey asks, "What is it the sisters are? What is it that they do?" He answers his own question:

> They spoke not…they whispered not. *They* sang not…Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure, not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven – by changes on earth – by pulses in secret rivers – heraldries painted on darkness – and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. *They* wheeled in mazes; *I* spelled their steps. *They* telegraphed from afar; *I* read the signals. *They* conspired together; and on the mirrors of darkness *my* eye traced their plots. *Theirs* were the symbols, -- *mine* are the words. (Vol. XV 179)

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[60] *The Works of Thomas De Quincey* Vol. 2, 30; *The Works of Thomas De Quincey* Vol. 16, 449; *The Works of Thomas De Quincey* Vol. 15, 178-182.
[61] *Tenebrarum* can be translated as darkness, night, shadows, or death.
[62] Robert Morrison, among others, points out that Ann is most likely an invention. Morrison, *A Biography of Thomas De Quincey, the English Opium-Eater,* 81-82.

De Quincey describes each *Mater*-sister in an effort to answer the question "What is it the sisters are?" Yet De Quincey answers his own question in the description of the ways that they sign, write, and telegraph. He dislodges the *Mater*-sisters from the "infirmities of language" in an effort to figure and transmit his feelings – tears, sighs, and darkness – as feminine allegories that are apparently distinct from him.

However, these *Mater*-sisters only circumvent the infirmities of language by way of a "palimpcestuous" mode of writing.[63] They, like God, (like De Quincey's unnamed mother and the sister unknown as well) write by "changes on earth," "pulses in secret rivers," "heraldries painted on darkness," and "hieroglyphics" imprinted on the palimpsest of the brain. De Quincey again draws from figures of light, shadow, darkness, and fluid to describe the *Mater*-sister telegraphic writing that is also the expression of his own feelings. The accumulation of figure on figure, of mother on sister, shadows, fluids, light, writing, and painting reflects the ways that the reproductive functions of De Quincey's text, like the layers of a palimpsest, give "birth" by combining incompatible figures and opposing moments in time. It is the very contradictions and incoherence of such figures, of *Mater*-sisters, that gives De Quincey the capacity to translate the language (which is not one) of grief: "They wheeled in mazes; I spelled the steps." More to the point, the combination of mother and sister in a single set of figures reveals the ways that when De Quincey says "sister" he is drawing on and activating the reproductive function of his texts in order to "spell the steps" of otherwise elusive, inassimilable, and unspeakable memories and experiences. It is not only De Quincey's opium dreams or drug addiction that falls under this rubric, but also the experiences of

[63] Sarah Dillion refers to De Quincey's writing as "palimpcestuous" for the ways it encrypts the death of and desire for his sister Elizabeth (23-31).

separation, loss, and grief for which he will claim he has no words. However, and in the same breath, De Quincey names these experiences after his sisters: Ann, the sister unknown, the *Mater*-sisters, and, most importantly, his mother allow him to transmit the feelings, memories, and experiences that have, as it were, wasted away.

In an effort to unpack the role of sisters as placeholders for and expressions of otherwise unspeakable or inexpressible moments in time – a placeholder, Rei Terada argues, for trauma – I turn to the deaths of De Quincey's two sisters. Unlike Ann, the sister unknown, or Our Ladies of Sorrow, De Quincey's accounts of the deaths of his two sisters refer to biographically traceable individuals and, as such, dominant the ways that critics have read De Quincey's obsession with the word sister. However, I want to reread these two sisters through the reproductive allegory of the mother palimpsest and the complications it produces for the sister as a figure and textual function. While most critics focus exclusively on Elizabeth's death, I want to emphasize Jane's. Her death is figured obscurely by reproductive tropes that become strange reflections of De Quincey's own birth:

> My two eldest sisters — of three then living, and also elder than myself — were summoned to an early death. The first who died was Jane — about a year older than myself. She was three and half, I two and half, plus or minus some trifle that I do not recollect. But death was then scarcely intelligible to me, and I could not properly be said to suffer sorrow as a sad perplexity. (*Vol. XV,* 145)

Jane's death precedes Elizabeth's and registers not as a grief, but as confusion; it is almost wholly unintelligible. This record of death from a time that De Quincey barely

recalls suggests that even before he has a clear sense of what death is, he associates it with his sister. His inability to account for his own age, "plus or minus some trifle," signals a temporal "perplexity." Yet he is actually *wrong* about his age; he was four and a half when Jane died and, roughly two and a half years passed between Jane's death and Elizabeth's. That is, the age he gives himself is actually the time difference between his first sister's death and the second.[64] The age he gives himself is wrong but it nonetheless tells us a different truth; in this seeming lapse of memory, De Quincey rewrites his birthday as the death of his sister, Jane. In this respect, Jane gives De Quincey access to two experiences that he cannot describe and which cannot be rendered in "the infirmities of language": birth and death. Instead, his birth and its significance register for him, paradoxically, as an aftershock that can only be recorded, like a "pulse in a secret river," in the form of Jane's death. In this respect, when De Quincey refers to his sister Jane he also refers to the time of birth. The maternal language that undergirds De Quincey's theories of mind and imagination emanates from this obsession with the moment of birth. In this sense, his sister figures, from Jane to the *Mater*-sisters, mark, among other things, his (impossible) efforts to commemorate birth by repeating it and refiguring it as separation, grief, and death.

The mother Palimpsest and the figures of the *Mater*-sisters lurk beneath Jane's death in ways that activate the reproductive potential of language and its ability to

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[64] De Quincey is born August 15, 1785. Jane dies in March of 1790, which would make him a little over four and a half years old. Elizabeth dies on June 2nd, 1792 when De Quincey is just shy of seven. The difference between seven and four and a half – between the time of Jane's death and the time of Elizabeth's – is "two and a half, plus or minus some trifle." For a narrative account of these dates and events see Robert Morrison, *A Biography of Thomas De Quincey, the English Opium-Eater,* 13-14.

resurrect and transmit forgotten or repressed memories, incidents from childhood, and even the dead. Like the Frankenstein's aborted monsteress, a mother sister in her own right, Jane too figures De Quincey's fantasies of reproduction and resurrection. Indeed, De Quincey, as a child, believed that Jane would return and be reproduced like an annual flower:

> So passed away from earth one out of those sisters that made up my nursery playmates; and so did my acquaintance (if such it could be called) commence with mortality. Yet, in fact, I knew little more of mortality than that Jane had disappeared. She had gone away; but, perhaps, she would come back. Happy interval of heaven-born ignorance! Gracious immunity of infancy from sorrow disproportioned to its strength! I was sad for Jane's absence. But still in my heart I trusted that she would come again. Summer and winter came again — crocuses and roses; why not little Jane? (*Vol. XV* 147)

De Quincey recognizes his own mortality through his relation to Jane's death. "She had gone away, but, perhaps, she would come back" is the promise of death which may be undone. If life could spring up where death had been, like the "crocuses and roses," like the mother's near-death, perhaps even like Victor's Frankenstein's creature, reproduction *might* prepare the way for the possibility of resurrection. It is worth noting that just one year after Jane's death, another girl infant was born, who the Quinceys named "Jane" – in a manner, Jane *did* come again. The fantasy in which Jane returns, however, is a form of disavowal that also reveals how her death is itself a reproduction both literally (with the second Jane) and figuratively. The conflation, in De Quincey's account, of death and

spring-like resurrection offers a refracted image of his mother's near-drowning: both experiences are less "about" death, then about the writer's rediscovering the maternal impasse that both connects and severs him from the time of his own birth.

De Quincey goes so far as to describe death as a species of birth through the rhetoric of solitude. Sisters, routed through the mother Palimpsest, exist only in this paradox of near-death, even as they mark what seems to be a repetition of the moment of birth: "Oh, burthen of solitude, that cleavest to man through every stage of his being - in his birth, which *has* been – in his life, which *is* – in his death which *shall be"* (*S* 162). De Quincey's description of solitude does not merely privilege death as a relation to life, but situates birth, life, and death as different temporal expressions of the *same* solitude: "that wast, that art, and art to be" (*S* 162). To be near to death, then, is also to be near a traumatic memory of birth that cannot be recalled. In this schema, birth marks a historical solitude that "has been" and is subsequently recognized and registered, not in itself, but as Jane's absence – an aftershock, remainder, and waste product from which De Quincey derives a natal epicenter. Moreover, the double meaning of the verb "cleavest" ambiguously renders solitude – an aftershock of birth – as something that clings to man at every stage of life and splits him apart.

In this respect, De Quincey's birthday, written as the time between Jane's and Elizabeth's death, cleaves him. The experiences of birth and reproduction as well as the reproductive language in which De Quincey figures his mind and imagination are rewritten as splits among sisters in ways that are consistently refigured by his opium dreams. While there are numerous proliferations of sisters known and unknown, one dream from *Susipiria* figures the split between Jane and Elizabeth in a way that is helpful

for refining our definition of sister. In order to understand the dream, it is necessary to emphasize that the most memorable aspect of Jane's death is that "a woman servant... had on one occasion treated her harshly [punishing her with physical blows], if not brutally... and this ill treatment happened within two days of her death" (*S* 145). The servant-woman's literal blow, Robert Morrison suggests, is materialized in De Quincey's Oxford dreams with a crucial difference. It is not Jane who is hit, but De Quincey himself:

> The nursery of my childhood expanded before me: my sister moaning in bed; and I was beginning to be restless with fears not intelligible to myself. Once again the elder nurse, but now dilated to colossal proportions, stood as upon some Grecian stage with her uplifted hand, and like the superb Medea standing alone with her children in the nursery at Corinth, smote me senseless to the ground. (*S* 185)

The blow that took place before Jane's death is nonetheless the sole intelligible effect of it and as a memory reproduced in the dream it splits him in two. The blow becomes the very thing that is recorded as a memory and, as such, becomes the shock through which De Quincey assigns meaning to the event of Jane's death. However, because the blow takes place before Jane dies, it also means that De Quincey fails to register her death. De Quincey's dream appropriates the memory of Jane's death and his sister's experience of physical trauma as a way of reimagining the scene of his own birth: the nurse delivers him from unintelligible and "restless fears" with the force of a physical blow. The nurse, like the murderous mother Medea who killed her children at Corinth, paradoxically delivers De Quincey. The infanticidal blow registers the aftershock of his own birth through the aftershock of Jane's death. After all, to give birth is also in some senses to

give death.[65] By becoming his sister who is struck by death, the blow splits him not only between the sister who dies and the brother who survives, but between the time before Jane's death and the time after. More importantly still, the death blow is uncertainly poised between Jane and Elizabeth. The phrase "my sister moaning in bed" could easily figure either Jane *or* Elizabeth, rendering them as figures that are articulated, blow by blow, in the same structure. They are both aftershocks of birth that cling to him and split him asunder.

In order to read these aftershocks of birth and the language of light, shadow, sound, and fluid in which they are written, it is necessary to consider Elizabeth. De Quincey is seven years old when Elizabeth dies, but, like Jane, at first he does not realize that she is in mortal danger: "I grieved indeed that my sister should lie in bed: I grieved still more sometimes to hear her moan. But all this appeared to me no more than a night of trouble on which the dawn would soon arise" (*S* 150). Already, Elizabeth's moans mingle with the sound of Jane's death, recorded in the Oxford dream, confusing the sounds of death between two instances. The sonorous confusion quickly gives way to the realization that Elizabeth will die and with it comes a knowledge of all that death means, as if the sound of Jane's death and, indeed, its darkness, can be heard only through Elizabeth. Moreover, the figurative contrast between "the night of trouble" and the "dawn" establishes light and dark as figurative mediums through which Elizabeth's nearness to death is rendered:

> Oh! moment of darkness and delirium, when a nurse awakened me from that delusion, and launched God's thunderbolt at my heart in the assurance that my sister must die. Rightly it is said of utter, utter misery, that it

[65] Jacques Derrida discusses this problem at length in *The Gift of Death*, thinking through, among other texts, Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*.

> 'cannot be remembered.' Itself, as a rememberable thing, is swallowed up in its own chaos. Mere anarchy and confusion of mind fell upon me. Deaf and blind I was, as I reeled under the revelation. I wish not to recall the circumstances of that time, when my agony was at its height, and hers in another sense was approaching. Enough to say — that all was soon over; and the morning of that day had at last arrived which looked down upon her innocent face, sleeping the sleep from which there is no awaking, and upon me sorrowing the sorrow for which there is no consolation. (*S* 150)

The knowledge of death comes as a shock of the heart in which "God's thunderbolt" announces that "my sister must die." However, the shock is also already an aftershock leftover from Jane's death which De Quincey never entirely comprehends – not even in dreams. The light of the thunderbolt figure corresponds to figures we have already seen like the "flashing cataracts" associated with sudden death in "The Vision of Sudden Death" and the phosphoric radiance of the mother's near-death experiences. These luminous figures ironically help to illuminate the figurative "darkness and delirium" of loss. Still, the unintelligibility of Jane's death is included, like a foreign body, in the descriptions of Elizabeth's death, producing a sequence that registers death as what remains, like birth, senseless and in the dark. Indeed, following the revelation that "my sister must die," De Quincey says only that he cannot remember his misery, that all is "swallowed up into chaos." The image of "swallowing," as critics have pointed out, encourages us to think that Elizabeth has been incorporated.[66] Yet, by another reading,

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[66] Sarah Dillon is especially eager to place Elizabeth in a crypt, which is the name for the secret psychic space produced by incorporation (258-263). For the purposes of my argument, I have pushed back on Dillon's interpretation of crypt as a structure, suggesting instead that the

we might assume that Jane's death finally has been registered and it is she who is incorporated. However, neither account really gets at the tremendous effect of this moment. The return of death not only brings back all the unintelligibility of Jane's death, but, as I have argued, the moment of birth – the false birthday that De Quincey gives himself is the difference between these two deaths. De Quincey is swallowed by this difference.

If the time between Jane's and Elizabeth's is an aftershock of the memory of birth that De Quincey cannot recall, it is worth unpacking the ways that De Quincey narrates Elizabeth's death and its relation to reproductive figures. After Elizabeth dies, De Quincey sneaks into his sister's room to gaze upon her corpse and give her a final kiss. John Barrel argues that the kiss produces guilt over De Quincey's desire for his sister, while others point to it as a token of his love for her. However, it might be worthwhile to read De Quincey's visit to Elizabeth's death bed and the kiss in light of Victor Frankenstein's nightmare kiss with his Elizabeth. If Victor dreams that he kisses his "more than sister" only to find that she horrifically transforms into the corpse of his (un)dead and worm-eaten mother, De Quincey kisses his already-dead-sister in the hope that such a tender act might commemorate his "perfect love and perfect grief" for her. While these seem like different kisses, I want to suggest that in fact the desire behind the kiss is uncannily similar. That is, when De Quincey kisses his sister, he activates and draws from the remains of his mother's near-death experience in ways that rupture the fantasy of "perfect love and perfect grief." However, the maternal corpse at the heart of

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boundaries of incorporation and introjection are fluid, including multiple figures, affects, and traumatic non-memories, rather than only a single individual.

the kiss is not a dead body, but in fact the descriptive language that, like Victor's creature, reproduces a maternal vision of life beyond death. In this respect, Elizabeth's death bed and the final kiss he shares with her are actually reenacting the maternal narrative as a way of comprehending death and recognizing in his sister's death an elusive and melancholic memory of a birth he cannot figure otherwise.

I will highlight specific moments from this sequence in order to call attention to the maternal remains – the waste of the mother – that intrudes on the kiss and that De Quincey's descriptions reproduce in plays of light that cannot be blinked away and in sounds that cannot be unheard. In this respect, the mother's vision of near-death remains as reproductive traces embedded in the sterilities of Elizabeth's death bed. De Quincey writes:

> Entering, I closed the door so softly, that, although it opened upon a hall which ascended through all the stories, no echo ran along the silent walls. Then turning round, I sought my sister's face. But the bed had been moved; and the back was now turned. Nothing met my eyes but one large window wide open, through which the sun of midsummer at noonday was showering down torrents of splendor. The weather was dry, the sky was cloudless, the blue depths seemed to express types of infinity; and it was not possible for eye to behold or heart to conceive any symbols more pathetic of life and the glory of life. (*Vol XV* 143-144)

De Quincey remains to some extent "deaf and dumb," even as he describes an excess of light. He makes no sound and only the "silent walls" bear witness to his presence there. He creates a vacuum in which he details perceptions that are themselves written as

"silent" and blank, drained of the differences and contrast that would give them descriptive significance. He does not initially see his sister's corpse. Instead a vast summer sky and bright light overwhelms the eye and the heart with "symbols of life" that nonetheless redouble the lack of description. We can read this contrast between the elision of sense memory and the overwhelming "splendour" of the afternoon light, as a repetition of the "phosphoric radiance" that filled the visual field in the maternal narrative. The natural light becomes a medium through which the memory of his sister's death room is illuminated and exposed to "types of infinity," life, and revelation. De Quincey even links the light and "the tropical redundancy of life in the summer" to "the dark sterilities of the grave," as if the life that such light figures is born out of death. This is the light of life after death that emanates from the mother palimpsest and that casts its shadow on the sisters known and unknown. When De Quincey insists that this "image will survive for me in the hour of death," he suggests that "the image of death" itself appears as a sister, but only insofar as the sister is written through elements of the mother palimpsest that are not just imprinted into his memory, but are the very description he gives of the brain.

If the image of death takes the shape of the sister, De Quincey also attributes a sound to this image that cannot be expressed as the mere repetition of his sister's moans, but nonetheless follows him throughout his life. He describes her corpse and, as if by necessity, the image of the corpse gives way to this mysterious sound:

> From the gorgeous sunlight I turned round to the corpse. There lay the sweet childish figure, there the angel face: and, as people usually fancy, it was said in the house that no features had suffered any change. Had they

> not? The forehead indeed, the serene and noble forehead, *that* might be the same; but the frozen eyelids, the darkness that seems to steal from beneath them, the marble lips, the stiffening hands, laid palm to palm, as if repeating the supplications of closing anguish, could these be mistaken for life? Had it been so, wherefore did I not spring to those heavenly lips with tears and never-ending kisses? But so it was *not.* I stood checked for a moment; awe, not fear, fell upon me; and, whilst I stood a solemn wind began to blow — the most mournful that ear ever heard. Mournful! that is saying nothing. It was a wind that had swept the fields of mortality for a hundred centuries. Many times since, upon a summer day, when the sun is about the hottest, I have remarked the same wind arising and uttering the same hollow solemn Memnonian, but saintly swell: it is in this world the one sole audible symbol of eternity. And three times in my life I have happened to hear the same sound in the same circumstances, viz. when standing between an open window and a dead body on a summer day. (*Vol. XV* 143-144)

The description of Elizabeth's corpse seals the image of death by producing it through both visual and auditory figures. De Quincey explicitly situates the sound of death, the sole "audible symbol of eternity" as something which returns three times in his life, reproducing exactly the same image of a summer's day, an open window, and a dead body. The reproducibility of this moment finds its conditions in the descriptions he draws form the mother's near-death. While he does not tell us for whom the image and sound are repeated, the repeatability of this scene operates as a maternal remainder that

haunts the eye and ear in ways that are incommunicable and indigestible to the narrative itself. These are not straightforwardly De Quincey's sense experiences, but rather the superimposition of "heaven" and "eternity," as versions of "after-life" or life *after* death, into the audio-visual registers of his own fictionalized experience. Just as he experienced the blow in Jane's place, his sense perceptions imitate the sense experience of death produced at the intersection of his mother's narrative and his sisters' corpses. The images of death to which De Quincey bears witness from the mother Palimpsest that he is, entangle themselves in the writing of his own perceptions, making a recording that will repeat itself in his dreams forever.

De Quincey ends this vision that appears to draw on figures from the mother Palimpsest and his mother's near-death experience, suggesting that its qualities are the exact reverse of his opium dreams:

> But why speak of it in connexion with opium? Would a child of six years old have been under that influence. No, but simply because it so exactly reversed the operation of opium. Instead of a short interval expanding into a vast one upon this occasion a long one had contracted into a minute… when I returned to myself, there was a foot (or I fancied so) on the stairs…Hastily, therefore, I kissed the lips that I should kiss no more, and slunk like a guilty thing with stealthy steps from the room. Thus perished the vision, loveliest amongst all the shows which earth had revealed to me; thus mutilated was the parting which should have lasted forever; thus tainted with fear was the farewell scared to love and grief, to perfect love and perfect grief. (*Vol. XV* 145)

If the mother Palimpsest helped him to convey the ways that a short moment expands into eternity – like the moment of near-death – than Elizabeth's death bed contracts time. Still the opium dream and the reproductive figures that have come to define it operate as points of reference for Elizabeth's death as a temporal experience. In one sense, the "long [interval] contracts into a minute" because De Quincey loads the description with figures of light, dark, touch, sound, and silence. Yet in another sense, the scene is weighted with these descriptions because his senses have caught up to him. That is, if he is "smote senseless" and "swallowed" by Jane's death in a way that cannot be registered until Elizabeth too has died, in this scene, his senses return to him pregnant with figures of life after death, rebirth, and resurrection. Time contracts in this scene, and its contraction gives birth to De Quincey's language of eternity in a way that cannot be divorced from the reproductive language of the mother Palimpsest. Indeed, the final kiss with Elizabeth bears the traces of the maternal elements in this scene. Even as his lips meet her corpse, the kiss marks a separation and distance between the two: "I kissed the lips I should kiss no more." The separation is marked by a deprivation of the mouth which De Quincey goes on, as many critics have pointed out, to fill with opium: he calls himself "The Opium-Eater." Yet his empty mouth is not only emblematic of the loss of Elizabeth, but also of the deprivation of words that accompanied Jane's death. His mouth at the event of these two sisters' deaths is also a morphological echo of the birth and the mother that he can neither remember nor forget. That he fills this mouth with opium in more than one sense does not mean that the non-memory of birth is erased. Rather, it repeats itself, cleaving him together and apart, as the aftershock of an interval of solitude that paradoxically expands to fill his whole life even as it contracts into a single instant.

If the deaths of Jane and Elizabeth repeat language from the mother's near-death experience, they do so as a repetition of De Quincey's own birth that simultaneously splits open and sutures together the temporality of his autobiographical writing. While birth signals the moment in De Quincey's autobiography that can never be recalled, it also refers to the ways in which this impossible moment – the incident from childhood no one can recall – conditions his figurative descriptions of the work of imagination: it gives birth. The traumatic non-memory of birth repeats itself until death and allows us to read the figure of the sister as a literary aftershock of De Quincey's "first acquaintance (if such it could be called) … with mortality." Namely, of his birth. In this sense, De Quincey's maternal figures give "birth" to distortions of time and space, theories of mind, dreaming, and his sisters. His writing, in some respects, depends on the interweaving of maternal narratives and figures with reproductive tropes in ways that become increasingly difficult to tease apart. Yet, I suggest, that reading De Quincey with attention to these reproductive figures not only helps us to consider the complex role of the mother in his writings, but also helps us to reframe his many references to sisters; they are less historical beings, than effects of spatiotemporal displacements of birth and death. That is, De Quincey's sisters depend on maternal tropes that condition and underscore memory, reproduction, resurrection, and language at the very limits of life. The last words De Quincey uttered before dying were "Sister! Sister! Sister!" (Japp 450-451, Morrison 394). In these repetitions, we might hear a displaced call for the mother and the acts of reproduction and resurrection, both biological and imaginative, that she symbolizes. A call, in other words, for the sister to return, like the crocuses, to the nursery.

Chapter 3

Emily Brontë's Tears: Hunger and Suicide in *Wuthering Heights*

Everybody cries in *Wuthering Heights*. In some ways, this claim echoes Janet Gezari's claim that "Everybody mourns in *Wuthering Heights*" (Gezari 111). Nicholas Royle declares that there is, in fact, "so much mourning, [and that] there are so many deaths, in *Wuthering Heights* that it becomes difficult to maintain a coherent sense of it" (Royle 43). Even so, many critics set out to make sense of death and mourning in the novel. Despite these efforts, relatively little attention has been paid to the erratic nature of the novel's tears, especially as they might relate to or remain absent from representations of death, mourning, and their privations.[67] In concert with the critical tradition that examines death and mourning in the novel, this chapter tracks the bizarre representation of tears, placing particular emphasis on the way tears resist interpretation by narrators, characters, and even readers. In this way, my argument poises itself between two strains of criticism: feminist and psychoanalytic readings of death, desire, and mourning in *Wuthering Heights* on the one hand and narratological investigations of the novel's

[67] In addition to Gezari and Royle's more explicitly deconstructive approach to mourning in the novel, Ingrid Geerken writes on "mortal regret" as a mode of grief that moves beyond the distinction of mourning and melancholia, offering a way for subjects to reconstruct their lost objects in the world. Julian Wolfreys and Stephen Vine follow Royle's lead, reading the text through Nicolas Abraham's and Maria Török's theories of crypts and failed mourning, while Bettina Petersen and Elisabeth Bronfen stress Freudian concepts of melancholia. Deborah Lutz writes compellingly on the artifacts of mourning in the text, like hair jewelry, offering a reading of the ways in which these artifacts reflect the tensions generated by the novel's negotiation of death. Robin DeRosa, following Regina Berreca and Maria Koskinen, stresses the relationship between sex and death as "unspeakable" acts that lie outside the Lacanian symbolic realm. Lauran Inman breaks from the psychoanalytic discourses, focusing her attention on the importance of death as a plot device: there are no less than twelve deaths in *Wuthering Heights*.

complex frames and interpretive vicissitudes on the other.[68] J. Hillis Miller has gone so far as to claim that the novel stages the failure of interpretation, inviting and simultaneously refuting any attempt to discover its "secret" (Miller 369).[69] While the novel's tears do not unravel a heretofore-unknown secret, they reveal the ways that the novel stages its narratives and affects as failures of interpretation.[70] Moreover, tears and the interpretative failures that they incite in *Wuthering Heights* are necessarily bound up in the failure of language to render adequately or set to rights (rites) the dramas of death, mourning, and grief that respire at the novel's center, which, I will argue are, like Dorothy's apple core and the darling it produces, dramas of waste.

However, unlike the apple core and the forms of waste I have tracked in *Frankenstein* and De Quincey's confessional writings, the first tears of *Wuthering*

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[68] In addition to Royle, Wolfreys, and Vine, I am in conversation with Bronfen, DeRosa, and Margaret Homans' Lacanian analyses of the text. Homans positions the absence of the mother who is replaced by language as the novel's central drama played out between figurative and literal uses of words. Phillip Wion too writes on the significance of the banished maternal in instructive ways. Additionally, I follow a long tradition of feminist interpretations of the text from Sandra Gilbert, Juliet Mitchell, Ellen Moers, Carol Jacobs, and Stevie Davies.

[69] Miller responds to Frank Kermode's sense that the novel invites a plurality of interpretations each as valid as the next. Following Miller, narrative theorists like John Matthews, Carol Jacobs, Michael Macovski, Brian Olszewski, and Nancy Armstrong, to name only a few, have commented on the novel's difficult narrative structure. While many critics are less forceful than Miller about the failure of interpretative practice, there is a critical tradition, beginning with R.F. Leavis, of commenting on the novel's resistance to interpretation. Leavis writes: "I have said nothing about *Wuthering Heights* because that astonishing work seems to me a kind of sport."

[70] I work here with a theory of affect derived from the psychoanalytic tradition in which affects name a repressed, or as of yet unrealized emotion. My approach breaks from contemporary accounts of affect based on the texts of Silvan Tomkins, opting instead to return to Freud's accounts of affect and its privileged relation to mourning [*Trauer*], which he designates in "Mourning and Melancholia" as both an affect and a process. Since Freud, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torokhave elaborated theories of mourning and affect as a psychoanalytic concept, suggesting that it is intimately bound up in metapsychological processes and transgenerational neuroses. For Abraham and Török, affect is not necessarily an individual attribute, but a relay of unspeakable information, memories, and words that are transmissible from one individual to the next. This chapter attempts to understand the ways in which *Wuthering Heights* is shaped by the transmission of these unspeakable affects through language, caesura, and tears.

Heights are not directly narrated and instead make themselves apparent through a series of narrative displacements. After Catherine's spirit has vanished into thin air, Lockwood, dumbfounded by the specter, watches as Heathcliff enters the room and sets a "candle on a chair because he [finds] it impossible to hold steady."[71] As Graeme Tytler has pointed out, candlelight functions as storytelling device that enables narration, communication between characters, as well as, I might add, any transaction between a reader and a text.[72] However, at this moment Heathcliff becomes legible to Lockwood only when the candle is withdrawn and he has turned away from the narrative light that ought to illuminate him: "[Heathcliff] gradually fell back into the shelter of the bed…finally sitting down almost concealed behind it. I guessed however, by his irregular and intercepted breathing that he struggled to vanquish an access [sic] of violent emotion" (23). Lockwood cannot witness Heathcliff's tears. Instead, he figures them through a displacement of breath, documenting the "access of emotion" in "irregular and intercepted" patterns of breathing. "Access" is used in its antiquated form, meaning a sudden illness; still, the word suggests that the breath somehow allows the narrator to gain *access* to elements of Heathcliff that are otherwise unreadable. At the same time, "access" might be heard as "excess." While the two words are not etymologically related, the sudden illness implied by "access" can only be understood as such if the emotion is in excess of what the narrator can comprehend. In this respect, the narrative access that the breath provides obscures Heathcliff from view and, indeed, obscures the narrator's capacity to account for the

[71] Royle has discussed the hypnogogic dimensions of Lockwood's dream, arguing that the text nearly puts the reader to sleep with its "swarms of Catherines." Miller too writes on the dreams of *Wuthering Heights* and their special function as interpretative disruptions.
[72] Tytler writes about fire in "The Thematic Functions of Fire in *Wuthering Heights*."

breath's meaning.[73] It is excessive.

Indeed, while Lockwood connects the breath to an emotion, he avoids interpreting it: "Not liking to show him that I heard the conflict, I continued my toilette rather noisily, looked at my watch, and soliloquized on the length of the night —" (23). Lockwood's failure to interpret the breath highlights the tension between the novel's depiction of excessive emotions and its inability to narrate, contain, or comprehend the "accesses" it depicts.[74] They are waste products that resist direct forms of narration. In a desperate attempt to interrupt Heathcliff's emotion and disrupt its significance, Lockwood starts prattling on about the time, what time it is or isn't, as well as what time they ought to be in. "Not three o'clock yet! I could have taken oath it had been six. Time stagnates here — we must surely have retired to rest at eight!" (23). Lockwood's sense that "time stagnates" is not just a fear of time's lagging, but of the ways time becomes disjointed and recursive. The ways, that is, that time wastes.

In the interval between "eight," when the family retired, and "not yet three o'clock" Lockwood has had two dreams that have disrupted a coherent sense of narrative time. These dream-memories of Catherine and the Reverend Jabes Banderham encroach on the

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[73] Royle has written compelling about *Wuthering Heights* narrative tactics in relation to a deconstruction of narratological terms that privilege vision as the mode of narrative transmission. Royle argues that "telepathy" is a far better figure for the narrative transactions that the novel stages. This is perhaps a way to read the telepathic function of tears in Brontë's work, particularly with respect to the ways they transmit the affective traces of memories across time and space.

[74] Homans argues that Lockwood and Nelly both narrate in favor of patrilineal investments and the rules of the Father. For her, they deploy figurative language as an attempt to safeguard themselves from the literal, which is ineluctably tied to the body of the mother and nature as her substitute. I build upon this line of thought, suggesting that neither Lockwood nor Nelly can speak to or about emotion. As narrators, they systematically avoid the meaning of other characters' reactions when they do not fall in line with a worldview organized around the patrilineal transmission of wealth, as well as the theologically and juridically ritualized mourning practices that ensure it.

present in ways that take up narrative time and wrench the narrator out of linear temporal sequence. Peculiarly, however, these memories are not his own. Rather, they have been transmitted to him through the "dismal spiritual atmosphere" at Wuthering Heights. When Lockwood makes his first acquaintance with the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights, he has been eating dinner with them and he comments "the dismal spiritual atmosphere overcame, and more than neutralized the glowing physical comforts round me" (11). If the phrase "dismal spiritual atmosphere" evokes the spirits that come to inhabit the place in the form of dreams and stories, then memory at Wuthering Heights, like a temporal waste product, seems to saturate the present in ways that disrupt narrative time. Likewise, Heathcliff's access of emotion, like Lockwood's dreams, is a record of the wasted past, layered thickly into the narrative present in the form of a single tear.

As Heathcliff is recalled to the present, he "suppressed a groan, and [Lockwood] fancied, by the motion of his shadow's arm, *dashed a tear from his eyes*" (23 emphasis mine). For the naïve first-person narrator, Heathcliff's tear, like the memories of which it is a trace, is barely perceptible and understood only as a shadow he casts in the candlelight, turned away from the novel's narrative light. Heathcliff's tear can be figured only in his breath and through his shadow; displacements of light and air register the tear and simultaneously reflect the ways that tears, as a form of bodily excretion and waste, also resist direct narration. That is, tears are not available to Lockwood's diegetic expressions, but exist as poetic figures that bear within them traces of a moment in time that remains imperceptible to narrative points of view and unreadable by novelistic interpretation. Tears for Brontë resemble what Paul Celan calls "meridians;" they are, like a poem, the mute markers of a time that cannot be recalled which simultaneously

record an event as its displacement and elision (Celan 8-10).

In order to understand the poetic function of tears as forms of waste in *Wuthering Heights,* it is helpful to turn briefly to the ways in which tears figure the evasion and repression of memory in Brontë's poetic works.[75] The 1838 poem "The Lady to her Guitar" ends with a description in tears: "Guitar, thy magic tone/ has moved the tear and waked the sigh" (Hatfield 80).[76] Tears and sighs are conventional signs of grief and the guitar's "magic" consists in its power to recall them; it "bid[s] the ancient torrent flow,/ Although its very source is dry." Read conventionally, the guitar has moved the speaker to tears by recalling some forgotten memory. However, the tone does not recall a memory that can be voluntarily recollected; it grants "access" to the signs of grief — tears and sighs — where the source of grief has been forgotten.[77] The poem deploys the "torrent" as a figure that obscures, even as it refers to, an unknown time and place to which these tears belong. The occasion to which the speaker might reattach these tears is no longer available; it cannot be recalled or retold. In this sense, the "torrent" detaches the tears from a memory to which they could be meaningfully assigned; they are the "access" of grief without any history of mourning. Instead, their origin is poeticized in a

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[75] Walter Anderson argues that *Wuthering Heights* not only breaks with the novel's conventional form, but that Brontë invents a new form akin to lyrical modes of address. Maggie Allen too reads Brontë through her poetry and its influences, pointing out the correspondence between *Wuthering Heights* and German Romantic poetry. Stevie Davies turns to Brontë's poetry as a way of thinking through her text as a document of spiritual "freedom" that resists all patriarchal modes through its visionary meditations on spirit. For arguments about the other genres that make up and interrupt *Wuthering Heights*, see Nancy Armstrong's article, "Emily Brontë in and out of Time," Eve Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions,* and Ellen Moers on the female Gothic.

[76] I site this poem from C.W. Hatfield who gives the unedited notebook versions of Brontë's poems alongside Charlotte's editorial changes. The original title of the poem – which belongs to the Gondal notebook – is "A.G.A."

[77] Gezari notes the distinction between remembering and recollecting in relationship to mourning and melancholia in Brontë's poetry and *Wuthering Heights* in her book chapter "Fathoming Remembrance," from her monograph *Last Things.*

natural figure that holds any articulate history in abeyance.[78] The magic tones of the guitar, like the sonorous quality of the poem itself, have a power to call forth tears, but at the same time, refuse to let this grief be resolved in the retelling of a memory.

In this sense, Brontë's tears resist historiographic narratives like Lockwood's, and, as affective and material remainders of grief, are often, like waste products, obscured, refused, or recycled. In "I'll not weep that thou art going to leave me," tears are signs of grief that must be staunched. However, even as the speaker refuses to shed a tear, tears nonetheless take an evaporated form in the movements of her breath: "So, if a tear, when thou art dying, / Should haply fall from me,/ It is but that my soul is sighing/ To go and rest with thee" (Hatfield 142). While the speaker's tear registers her refusal to separate her "soul" from the dying addressee, the sigh supervenes on the tear and rewrites it in another form: the breath of the soul. Like Heathcliff's intercepted breathing, which marked the "access of violent emotion," this evaporation banishes tears from direct representation. However, it also reveals the ways that tears are invested with a self-destructive function, bearing a death wish within them.

The eruption of tears in the "The Lady to her Guitar" and the refusal to "weep" articulated in "I'll not weep…" represent two different and yet related characteristics of Brontë's tears that help to illuminate the tension between Heathcliff's "violent access of emotion" and the narrator's inability to read it at the beginning of *Wuthering Heights.* In Brontë's poems, tears are detached from the memories to which they belong because the

[78] In "The Name of the Mother in *Wuthering Heights,"* Homans makes some interesting claims about the ways in which Brontë deploys nature as a figure that actually covers over the literal representation, which she aligns with the lost body of the mother (68-70). In this sense, Homans aligns the figurative use of language with an act of mourning that cannot be recalled or retold in literal forms. Rather, it must be obscured by figures in order to be commemorated.

speaker either explicitly refuses them, or cannot directly represent them. Moreover, the gap in representation incinerates the memory to which the tears might be attached, leaving only inexplicable "accesses" of emotion that resist interpretation and direct narrative explanation. In this chapter, I read tears as poetic figures that consolidate a sense of impossible mourning and the affective and material remainders it produces, recasting our understanding of how affects of grief and "accesses of emotion" might be read in *Wuthering Heights*. Just as the refusal of tears in "I'll not weep" produces a self-destructive evaporation, the ways in which characters in *Wuthering Heights* turn away from their tears begets a contagious and suicidal discourse of breath as wasted, wasteful, and wasting that begins with Heathcliff's "access of emotion" and ends with his death in the very same bed. By tracking the transmission of tears from Catherine to Hindley to Heathcliff, as well as the atmospheric conversions through which they are displaced across the text, I highlight the ways in which the impossibility of mourning and its waste products are written in suicidal "accesses" of breath that redouble the "atmospheric tumult" from which the house and the text take their name.[79]

I. Reading Through Tears:
Hunger and the Earnshaw's Secret History

In order to understand how Heathcliff's tears infiltrate the narrative present from an unknown and unknowable past, it is necessary to turn to Nelly's account of Heathcliff's arrival at Wuthering Heights. By reconstructing the ways in which Heathcliff's tears have been communicated to him as from an inaccessible scene of mourning to which they can never be reattached, we can discover how they function as an inarticulate affective

[79] Barbara Gates and Bettina Pedersen write about suicide in *Wuthering Heights,* linking it to the discourses of depression and melancholy in "Suicide in *Wuthering Heights*" and "Suicidal Logic: Melancholy/Depression in Wuthering Heights," respectively.

monument to and waste product of a secret history of mourning. Heathcliff arrives at Wuthering Heights buried in Mr. Earnshaw's coat after a trip Earnshaw takes to Liverpool. Earnshaw has promised to bring back a fiddle for Hindley, a whip for Catherine, and apples and pears for Nelly. When he returns, the fiddle is "broken into morsels," the whip is lost, there is no sign of apples or pears, and in their place, materializes "a dirty, ragged, black-haired child, big enough to walk and talk [who] only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (29). Heathcliff takes the place of the father's missing gifts, leading Hindley to "blubber aloud" and Catherine to "grin and spit at the stupid little thing [Heathcliff]" (30).[80]

These reactions to Heathcliff and the lost, broken, and (probably) consumed gifts reflect the gifts' symbolic functions. Sandra Gilbert has written compellingly on these gifts, arguing that Nelly's choice of food is paradigmatic of the moral "cook" she becomes as the novel's narrator. However, Nelly's vanished comestibles have more to tell. While there is no apple core in sight, food waste and the function of Dorothy's apple core nonetheless haunt the scene. Specifically, the fruit and its waste (the apple cores and pear pips) disappears with Heathcliff's arrival and is displaced onto another gift: the violin shattered into morsels. The word morsel is etymologically derived from the Latin

[80] Gilbert writes compellingly about this fairy tale effect, referring to Heathcliff as Cathy's replacement "whip" — a way for her to wield authority in a masculine world. Brontë's Eve is Nelly (not Catherine), who Gilbert suggests, does "not pluck apples to eat them herself; she plucks them to make applesauce" (Gilbert 291). Furthermore, Gilbert argues she does not tell stories to "consume the emotional food they offer, but to provide moral fare for future generations" (291).

word *morsus,* which means "bite."[81] Written into the destruction of Hindley's gift is its transformation into bites of inedible food. Namely, its transformation into waste. Nelly's gift goes missing and has been most likely eaten by Heathcliff; however, this act of eating and its waste products become legible in the traces of Hindley's shattered music. These bites that cannot be swallowed make Hindley cry; in the face of an instrument he cannot play and food he cannot eat, he has recourse only to tears. But what is the significance of the violin? Why does it matter that it is transposed into morsels? In "The Lady and her Guitar," a stringed instrument has the power to recall tears that have been detached from the memory to which they belong; in *Wuthering Heights,* the partitioning of the violin into "morsels" scatters these tears and the memories to which they might be attached through disparate pieces of an instrument that cannot be made whole. The instrument, if we recall Brontë's poem, figures the structure of the poem or story itself. *Wuthering Heights* is a shattered, multiply framed instrument that cannot be reconstructed along formal lines, but instead must be read for its morsels, its waste, and the inarticulate, poetic tears they provoke.[82]

While many critics have noted symbolic hunger and even literal acts of eating or refusing food in the novel, few have traced these disturbances to the peculiar way in which Heathcliff upsets the distinction between real food (apples and pears) and inedible

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[81] See also my discussion of *mors* in Remorse: *Frankenstein's* Eating Disorders, which draws on Elissa Marder's chapter "Bit: Mourning Remains in Derrida Cixous" from *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.*

[82] Hindley's "blubbering" after all is not written as "tears," but through a colloquial diminution of the affect that deploys a trope designed to obscure the tears he cries: blubbering is derived from the Middle English word for "bubbling" of water or sea foam. Like the "ancient torrent," blubbering intervenes in the discourse of tears, obscuring them from view in order to write about them diegetically.

objects rewritten figuratively as food (violin morsels).[83] Steven Vine argues that Heathcliff's financial acquisitiveness is a form of hunger; however, it can be read as such only if Heathcliff also has disrupted the literal meaning of hunger in the novel more generally. The desire to eat no longer signals a desire to metabolize calories; rather, victual-language (morsels) reinscribes the literal act of eating (or its refusal) as a substitute for the blocked psychic assimilation of an event for which tears are the inarticulate memorial. Heathcliff displaces actual hunger for food with an insatiate hunger for words and memories to which the family's tears might be attached.

In this sense, Heathcliff's hunger and the hunger pangs he produces reflect the crisis in memory and speech that his arrival precipitates.[84] Indeed, Mrs. Earnshaw objects to Heathcliff's presence, asking her husband "how he could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to *feed* and fend for" (29 my emphasis). Earnshaw replies, "half-dead with fatigue," that he saw it "starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb in the streets of Liverpool" (29). Heathcliff's appearance is structured around the absence of feeding and language: he is "starving" and "dumb," wasting away without food or words. Lacking both, he threatens the household with these

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[83] Giulianna Giobbi writes about eating disorders in *Wuthering Heights* in her essay "The Aneorexics of *Wuthering Heights.*" Other critics such as DeRosa, Geerken, and Vine refer explicitly to Catherine and Heathcliff's refusal of food. Tytler too writes about "Eating and Drinking in *Wuthering Heights*," in which he unfolds the novel as a fabulous tale of porridge.

[84] In her accounts of Tomkins, Sedgwick distinguishes between the affect system and the drive system, suggesting that while drives have proper objects, affects are distributed over diverse fields of human experience – a distinction she echoes in "The Weather in Proust" to account for Proustian breath and weather patterns (*TF* 19, *WP* 11). In *Wuthering Heights,* drive (hunger specifically) knows no proper object and the perversion of hunger from a life-sustaining drive (pleasure principle) results not only theoretically from the Freudian account of the "death drive" (which upends assumptions that drives are straightforwardly life-preserving), but from the disruptions of language, memory, and mourning (as an affect and a process) that Heathcliff's arrival signals.

deprivations. While Mrs. Earnshaw is concerned with having enough food, the problem Heathcliff poses has less to do with taking food from the other children, than it does with the ways he transforms the significance of hunger, eating, and food for them. When Catherine "spits and grins at the stupid thing," she makes a series of oral transactions that empty her mouth of words and fluids. Her communication with Heathcliff is based on inarticulate and even contradictory gestures of mouthing. In the absence of a common language, her derisive acts ape the activities of consumption. Heathcliff has communicated his hunger to her not only by eating the fruit that might have fed her and the other children, but by contaminating articulate speech with his "gibberish."

Terry Eagleton argues that "Heathcliff is the name of hunger in *Wuthering Heights"* (3). However, after Heathcliff's arrival, hunger is no longer only a symptom of famine; it operates in a relationship to the deprivation of language, marked by the adjectives "stupid" and "dumb." Speechlessness and senselessness are deprivations of meaning that Heathcliff transmits to the Earnshaw children under the heading of "hunger." Nonetheless, the Earnshaws attempt to neutralize this contagion and glut themselves on the boy's meaninglessness by giving him a name: "They had christened him 'Heathcliff'; it was the name of a son who had died in childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for a Christian and a surname" (30). Royle argues that this act of naming marks Heathcliff not only with the death of a son, but "inscribes death in the name" (41). Building on this line of thought, Vine insists that Heathcliff harbors the secret identity of this dead son within him: the first Heathcliff is "a narrative corpse whose loss denotes deprivation in the Earnshaw clan" (Vine 178).[85] Heathcliff is not just

[85] Vine draws on Nicolas Abraham and Maria Török's theory of crypts to discuss some aspects of *Wuthering Heights.* I too draw on these psychoanalysts to explore how the effects of impossible

a substitute for the gifts that the children never receive; he is a substitute for the child who was not there to ask for a gift.[86] Moreover, the apples and pears that Nelly requests are not entirely a gift for her; they are a substitute for the gift the dead son cannot ask for: the first Heathcliff's unspoken memory and impossible-to-articulate desires are written as food for the narrator (apples and pears) that the second Heathcliff consumes. The act of naming the consumer of these memories and desires "Heathcliff" marks acts of consumption with the banished memory of the forgotten son, and, simultaneously, rewrites "Heathcliff" as a name that not only designates "death," but does so through insatiable hunger and its waste. The second Heathcliff and this hunger are the living monuments to a dead child who appears nowhere else in Nelly's history. Heathcliff Earnshaw is never mentioned again, his age is undocumented, and the cause of his death remains a secret. Like the inscription above the door at *Wuthering Heights,* "Hareton Earnshaw 1500," Heathcliff Earnshaw is part of an immemorial family history that the novel can never divulge; like a tear, it is inaccessible to the narrative.

However, the death of the first Heathcliff persistently haunts the narrative action through the life of the second.[87] Moreover, the effects of this catastrophic substitution can be discerned through the ways that the Earnshaws use Heathcliff not only to avoid mourning the dead son, but to avoid mourning entirely. Most conspicuously, less than

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mourning can be detected in the relationship between tears and the eating patterns that follow from them. Vine remains much more interested in figurative acts of eating, while I investigate literal acts of eating things that are not food, arguing that this mistake follows from the strange economy of tears that the novel lays out.

[86] Gilbert remarks that it "is as if Heathcliff is a reincarnation of the lost child" (387).

[87] Many critics point to the substitution of one Heathcliff for another, including Royle, Gilbert, Vine, Wolfreys, and Greer to name only a few. However, while this substitution is one aspect of their investigation of mourning and death in the novel, I argue that this substitution is the novel's central drama that it can neither directly represent nor forget.

two years after Heathcliff's arrival, Mrs. Earnshaw dies. Nelly narrates her death only in passing:

> From the beginning, [Heathcliff] bred bad feeling in the house; and at Mrs. Earnshaw's death, which happened less than two years after, [Hindley] had learnt to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges, and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries. (31)

Mrs. Earnshaw's death marks the passage of time as well as the growth of Hindley's antipathy and alienation.[88] Hindley's "bitter brooding" over his "injuries" becomes a substitution for the grief he might feel at her death and, indeed, the very time of her death. She literally dies out of narrative time. The antipathy toward Heathcliff becomes the only eulogy for the mother and a substitute for the mourning words that Hindley might otherwise express and even the tears that he might have shed. While in Hindley's eyes Earnshaw favors "a usurper," the structure of favor has less to do with usurpation than it does with substitution. Heathcliff is not only a substitute for the dead brother, he is a substitute for the entire family's cathartic remembering of that brother; he prevents them from remembering, even as he seems to embody a memorial. In this sense, Hindley responds to Heathcliff, upon his mother's death, as the entire family has always responded to Heathcliff: as a substitute for mourning. The "bitter brooding" that characterizes Hindley's sense of injury is less about Heathcliff and more about the grief over the loss of his mother converted into "Heathcliff" as the embodiment of death,

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[88] In "The Absent Mother in Emily Brontë 's *Wuthering Heights*," Phillip Wion writes about the absence of the mother in *Wuthering Heights,* arguing that the loss of the mother not only provides the model for the "symbiotic" and "undifferentiated" relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff*,* but that Heathcliff's arrival displaces her as well (Wion 145-146).

waste, and the family tomb. It is no accident that Hindley's brooding is "bitter" – it is the taste of a phantom morsel that he can neither swallow nor tolerate.

While Hindley's reaction to his mother's death is symptomatic of larger complications around discourses of hunger, mourning and food, Catherine's delayed reaction, embedded in a punitive scene, ties these hunger symptoms to the ways Heathcliff enables characters to turn away from their tears. In this scene, Catherine teases Heathcliff with "pretend insolence" and her father rebukes her. Her father mistakes her "pretend insolence" for genuine antipathy, like Hindley's "bitter brooding," and punishes her for it: "Nay, Cathy… I cannot love thee; thou't worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask God's pardon. I doubt thy mother and I must rue that we ever reared thee!" (34). Earnshaw insists that he cannot love his daughter because she is worse than Hindley, or perhaps Heathcliff (dead or alive), and that, in so many words, he and her dead mother regret that she had been born. Earnshaw protects Heathcliff and the memory of the dead son that he bears within him by castigating his daughter. His words conjure the memory of her dead mother to elicit an implicit indictment and, simultaneously, do not acknowledge that the mother is dead: "That made her cry at first; and then, being repulsed continually hardened her, and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry for her faults" (34). Catherine's tears emerge at the intersection of her father's words and the invocation of her mother in language that both remembers and forgets the mother's death. Catherine's tears are the lone affects of grief for this nearly anonymous woman's death. Catherine's tears, then, are not only a response to the mother's death or a child's response to her father's cruel words: they contain within them the wandering affects of grief – its waste – that neither she nor her father can reattach to the memory of

a dead son or brother. As the sister of a forgotten child called "Heathcliff," Catherine becomes a vehicle for the performance of unspeakable grief that has been detached from any memory to which it could be assigned.[89]

However, Catherine does not shed these tears willingly. Like the speakers in Brontë's poems, she converts them into something else altogether: "being repulsed continually hardened her, and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry." Catherine learns to convert her tears into laughter, transforming the waste of grief into another form. She accomplishes this by evaporating them in short bursts of breath. In the narration, respiration has already played a role in Heathcliff's "access of emotion," particularly the way in which tears can turn breath into a-rhythmic gasps. One way to think about this interruption of breathing is conversion; just as Catherine converts tears into laughter, evaporating a material condensation of grief, the tears — as a condensation of grief — take breath away. While the term "condensation" refers to the conversion of vapor or gas into a liquid state, I also draw on the psychoanalytic valences of the term: condensation (*Verdichtung*) refers to the ways in which an image, symbol, or word bears within it many different thoughts, memories, wishes or ideas. Tears are a form of condensation in both senses. As such, breath and tears participate in a figurative economy that models the evaporation or condensation of the novel's melancholic trauma: Heathcliff, the deformation of hunger which he instigates, and the deaths which he erases from memory.[90]

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[89] I am drawing from Abraham and Török's theory of the phantom in which the "crypt" or failed mourning of one generation is passed on to another in ways that are inexplicable. Catherine suffers from her father's illness communicated to her by tears that she can never understand.

[90] In "The Weather in Proust," Sedgwick discusses breath in relation to the weather as a way of indexing Proust's mysticism through object relations psychology and Balint's conception of benign transference. Sedgwick reads in the weather and breath an exchange that knits together

II. Hindley's Spirits:
Alcoholism, Consumption, and Breath

Catherine's transformation of tears into laughter reveals something about the ways the Earnshaws negotiate death and mourning. The transformation of tears is not Catherine's alone, but a family pattern in which grief is refused and its affective and material remains are converted into something like pleasure that nonetheless proves unremittingly self-destructive. Heathcliff is one such pleasure for Catherine. By the end of the novel Catherine has starved to death, Heathcliff has starved and frozen to death, and Hindley has drunk himself to death. Each of these deaths results from the substitution of Heathcliff for Heathcliff and the figurative reinscription of hunger as a drive that no longer signifies a satiable biological need. Instead, hunger refers to an insatiable desire for the family's wasted memories, words, and affects. In this sense, the disruption of hunger relates directly to the transmission and transformation of tears that begins with Catherine. Hindley's narrative arc, perhaps more than any other, reveals how the conversion of tears plays itself out in the novel's language of consumption, including, but not limited to, tuberculosis, alcoholism, and anorexia.[91] Hindley, like his sister, is caught up in a structure of impossible mourning that not only prevents him from mourning any of the deaths in the novel, but leads to his wasted dissipation and alleged suicide.[92]

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the outside and inside in ways that break open onto visions of kaleidoscopic Proustian reality. If Sedgwick outlines a reparative approach to transference that reads in the breath the freedom of a benign and satiable exchange, I am insisting that Brontë 's breath – unlike Proust's – remains enthralled to an insatiable desire for Heathcliff, which is also the name of the dead.

[91] For more perspectives on Hindley's alcoholism, see Debra Goodlett on "Love and Addiciton in *Wuthering Heights.*" For perspectives on anorexia in the novel see Giulianna Giobbi "The Anorexics of *Wuthering Heights.*"

[92] Gates "Suicide in *Wuthering Heights*," 1999.

Hindley's reaction to his mother's death is entirely subsumed by his hatred for Heathcliff. Similarly, when Mr. Earnshaw dies, Hindley buries his grief along with his father and becomes increasingly cruel to Heathcliff. Hindley significantly is absent from the scene of his father's death — away at school. He returns for his father's funeral, the new master and brings a wife with him. The second Mrs. Earnshaw, like the second Heathcliff, disrupts an explicit discourse of mourning. Frances comes into the house delighting in everything "except the preparing for the burial, and the presence of the mourners" (35). Frances nearly erases Mr. Earnshaw's funeral from the narrative, just as Heathcliff's arrival almost overtakes Mrs. Earnshaw's death. Indeed, Frances is one of the few characters to make the novel's antipathy to ritualized mourning practices explicit: "She began describing with hysterical emotion the effect it produced on her to see black; and started, and trembled, and, at last, fell a weeping — and when I asked what was the matter? Answered, she didn't know; but she felt so afraid of dying" (36). Frances weeps not because she mourns for Mr. Earnshaw, but because she does not want to be reminded of death. Her sense that "she didn't know" why she was crying and that she "felt so afraid of dying" suggest that the second Mrs. Earnshaw is not only afraid of mourning or death in the present, but registers and displaces— like Heathcliff before her — the death of another who has gone virtually unmourned: the first Mrs. Earnshaw. The tears she cries seem to be self-indulgent, but, in one respect, represent the narrative condensation of the grief the Earnshaw family continues to refuse. Where the narrative cannot describe the Earnshaws' feelings diegetically, it condenses tears onto the cheeks of characters to whom they should not belong. Frances becomes a vessel for the tears that have been

detached from the event of Mr. Earnshaw's death and the people — Hindley, Catherine, and Heathcliff — who ought to mourn it.

Frances herself dies from consumption shortly after her arrival and the birth of her son, Hareton. The breathless account of her death is not only tied to the respiratory rhythms it disrupts, it also transforms the meaning of breath in the novel more generally. Her death is marked by a struggle over words in which every syllable is costly and expenditures of breath are expenditures of life. The first news of Frances' impending death comes from a servant girl:

> Oh such a grand bairn!' she panted out. 'The finest lad that ever breathed! But the doctor says missis must go; he says she's been in consumption these many months. I heard him tell Mr. Hindley: and now she has nothing to keep her, and she'll be dead before winter. You must come directly. You're to nurse it, Nelly — to feed it with sugar and milk, and take care of it, day and night. I wish I were you because it will be all yours when there is no missis! (50)

The girl's excited "panting" ironizes Frances' consumptive death. Even reporting the news of her death costs the reporter precious respirations. The emphasis on breathing-words in this passage draws attention to the economical exchange of breath that has taken place between mother and child: just as the "finest lad that ever breathed" takes air into his lungs, his mother's lungs decay.[93] Frances has been infected for "many months,"

[93] Pulmonary tuberculosis, described in the novel as "consumption," is a disease that infects the lungs and produces abscesses, cavities, and holes in the lung tissue, diminishing the organs' capacity. It has many names, including "*phthiein,*" from the Ancient Greek, which means "to waste away," and in the nineteenth century, was referred to as "The Great White Plague," describing the pale appearance of those who suffered from it.

subtly linking her pregnancy to the wasting disease that consumes her. The baby and the disease may even have had the same gestational period; her son literally eats from her as the disease eats her up. Moreover, the servant girl has come to Nelly with the news because, in the mother's absence, Nelly must take over the duties of feeding the infant. These nursing activities repeat the disruption of feeding regimes with which the novel begins. It is not just that the mother can no longer feed the son. Frances would most likely have used a wet nurse just as the first Mrs. Earnshaw had used Nelly's mother (28). Rather, the milk and sugar that Nelly is destined to feed Hareton are, like the violin morsels, death-marked waste products. Edible though milk and sugar may be, together they are the sticky condensation of the mother's absence to be consumed as a substance that will ensure Hareton forgets her.[94]

Like his son, Hindley converts Frances' death into a substance; however, his substance is of a different formula. Hindley does not consume an edible displacement of the mother's body; he consumes an inedible, toxic displacement of what killed his wife, who also, in some respects, has been a substitution for his mother. Hindley accomplishes this displacement of mother for wife, and wife for substance by transforming her last breath and unconsciously reworking the meaning of breath around its allosemes.[95] The

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[94] Tytler remarks Hareton's affinity for milk and porridge as evidence of his healthful stature. However, the affinity for milk in the novel of many of its children seems rather to point to the ways in which its substance displaces all actual mothers, transforming desire for them into comestibles. In the *Telephone Book,* Avital Ronell writes that the invention of condensed milk coincides with the invention of modern technology because the "extension of this maternal substance into its technological other" is the "precise mode of [the maternal's] preservation and survival" (340).

[95] The reworking of "magic words" around allosemes – or non-synonymous related units of meaning – governs Abraham and Török's most famous study *The Wolf Man's Magic Word,* in which they read his case through the ways he uses language to avoid telling the truth about his desire. Royle plays around with allosemic translation in *Wuthering Heights* in his essay "Cryptaesthsia," only to suggest that in fact there can be no final word on it. Rather, the crypt

problem of mourning and its waste in *Wuthering Heights* cannot be understood without reading the ways in which Hindley transforms tears into breath, and breath into substance. His transformations are key to thinking through the ways in which the rest of the characters are unable to mourn. Moreover, the inability to mourn is written not just in the eruption of inexplicable tears, but through fixations on food and substances that again have become figures for the psychic assimilation that none of them can perform.

While Hindley is reluctant to acknowledge that his wife will die, he nonetheless recognizes how valuable her breath has become: "tell her that I'll come, if she'll promise not to talk[.] I left her because she would not hold her tongue; and she must— tell her Mr. Kenneth says she must be quiet" (51). Frances is told not to speak a word, lest she waste the last bits of life. Still, she prattles to Nelly: "I hardly spoke a word, Ellen, and there he has gone out twice crying. Well say I promise I won't speak: but that does not bind me not to laugh at him!" (51). Hindley's tears are legible as Frances' breath leaves her body because he reads her death in its wastful expenditure. Her last breaths evaporate into the thick atmosphere at Wuthering Heights, producing tears on Hindley's face that are also the condensation of many deaths which up until now knew no tears: the first Mrs. Earnshaw, his father, and his brother, Heathcliff. She dares to laugh, doubling her expenditure of breath and, simultaneously, releasing more consumptive contagion into the air.[96] The breath, sped up, in a consumptive state accelerates the consumption. That Brontë dramatizes Frances' death so explicitly — unlike either Catherine's or

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effects that the text gives off are themselves unresolvable according to any language. While I agree with his sense that there is no one magic word, the play of allosemes, synonyms, and anagrams nonetheless reveals something about the linguistic and affective conversions through which we have been tracking the novel's tears.

[96] Laughing, coughing, and singing are activities that release more TB bacteria into the air.

Heathcliff's who both die out of view — suggests that this mode of death is representative: tears, breath, laughter, and wasting evoke an economy of substitutions and conversions that the novel uses to stage death and the impossibility of mourning it.[97]

Indeed, after Frances' death, "Hindley's sorrow was of the kind that will not lament. He neither wept nor prayed — he cursed and defied — execrated God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation" (51). Put simply, he refuses to cry and does not mourn. Hindley's almost comical anger, however, is famous; his drunken rages seem out of place in the novel for their inexplicable motives and disproportionate excess. He holds a knife to Nelly's throat, he drops Hareton off of a balcony, and shoots off guns in the house. Hareton refers to him as "devil daddy." These acts are explained in the narrative by his habitual drinking. However, in order to think through Hindley's "reckless dissipation" and how it relates to his inability to mourn for Frances, it is necessary to understand: what "dissipation" means and how exactly it is characterized; and how his self-destruction is linked to Frances' death and the conversion of tears into alcohol. "Spirits" are the substances with which he banishes tears and consumes himself to death. Hindley, in a sense, catches consumption from his wife and he *consumes* a linguistic substitute for Frances' breath that also functions as a substitute for the tears he cannot shed for her, his mother, his father, or his brother. He does not replicate any of these deaths; he condenses them into the word and substance – "spirit" – in order to consume them as his own death.

Hindley's "reckless dissipation" is not a conscious mode of self-destruction. Dissipation, from the Latin verb *dissipare,* suggests a process of scattering, dispersing,

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[97] Emily Brontë died of consumption herself in 1848. Her sister Charlotte wrote that Emily was "torn conscious, panting, reluctant, though resolute, out of a happy life" (Gezari 116).

and disintegrating. Rather than assuming that Hindley's drinking is only a symptom of a disease (pathological alcoholism), it is necessary to explore how the drinking reflects the ways in which he is wasted and dis-integrated by an inability to mourn the many deaths at Wuthering Heights. Nelly's first description of Hindley's dissipation comes when he enters the house just after Edgar Linton proposes to Catherine: "[Hindley] had come home rabid drunk, ready to pull the old place about our ears (his ordinary frame of mind in that condition)" (57). Nelly's colloquialism tells us more about his "frame of mind" than first meets the eye. Nelly seems to say that Hindley wants to upend the household; one gets the impression this includes upsetting objects and inhabitants alike. However, it also sounds as if Hindley wished literally to pull the house down, destroy it, and sink it into nothingness.[98] In order to understand his impulse, it is necessary to recall the ways in which the "dismal spiritual atmosphere" contains the deaths that Hindley cannot mourn — the ways in which the tears have been dissipated like a contagion into the very air that the inhabitants breathe. His desire to destroy the house, then, too is a desire to destroy its "spirits" and the atmosphere, thick with unshed tears.

However, the desire to destroy the house is played out violently in ways that not only emphasize Hindley's alcoholism, but also place inedible foods in the mouth of the narrator.

Hindley threatens to make Nelly "swallow a carving knife," insisting "I want to kill some of you, I shall have no rest until I do." Nelly replies unfazed, "I don't like the carving knife, Mr. Hindley… it has been cutting red herrings, I'd rather be shot, if you please" (57-8). By threatening the narrator with a knife down her throat, Hindley is not only

[98]Hindley's impulse recalls Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Fall of the House of Usher, published in *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* in 1840.

threatening to kill her, but is asking her to swallow something. The blade is only an implement designed to produce the action itself: swallowing. His sense that the house is "abominable" and that he must "kill some of you" in order to remedy this abomination has less to do with killing any of its present inhabitants than it has to do with putting to death the ones who cannot be readily seen or acknowledged: the spirits. When Hindley invites Nelly to swallow the blade, he is materializing this murderous wish in the person of the narrator— the one who tells the story and keeps the record of all those characters dead and gone. He wishes, in some sense, to stop Nelly's story in the narrative present and, by extension, the spoken record of the house's lost inhabitants.

In this respect, Hindley's rage is directed at the figures around him who recall the past he is trying swallow and forget. He continues to rage at the household, going so far as to drop Hareton from the top of the stairs. Heathcliff catches the boy, saving him. Hindley, unfazed by his son's near-death, turns again to drink: "he took a pint bottle of brandy from the dresser and poured some into a tumbler…. He drank the *spirits* and impertinently bade us go; terminating his command with a sequel of horrid imprecations, too bad to repeat or remember" (my emphasis 59). Hindley's consumption is directly linked to a series of words that Nelly will not "repeat or remember." The curses that Nelly elides from the record are like so many knives swallowed or spat out. She has refused to narrate his behavior because his words are erased from memory. Just as he has seemingly swallowed the grief that attended the death of his wife, his mother, father, and brother, Hindley forces Nelly to "swallow" *his* words. In place of the words, Nelly can narrate only the brandy, the "spirits" which he drank. Alcohol is endued with spirit and all of the connotations that might attach themselves to this word: breath, respiration,

ghosts, and even, consumption – the wasting disease.

As they withdraw to the kitchen, Heathcliff remarks: "It's a pity he cannot kill himself with drink," and Nelly replies, "He's doing his very utmost; but his constitution defies him" (59). This exchange is prescient; Hindley kills himself with "spirits" at the age of twenty-seven. Alcohol linguistically sanctions a substitution in which Hindley materializes and swallows all that "spirit" might signify. In the context of the novel, the word passes through his mother, his father, his brother, and his wife, bearing within it the significance of their loss. In place of the words and the tears that would mourn and remember them, he consumes alcohol as if to consume their ghosts. He gets wasted. Heathcliff's comment that it is a pity "he cannot kill himself with drink" grimly ironizes the material conditions of Hindley's alcoholism without much sympathy. However, if the phrase is read as a statement about the relationship between drink and impossible mourning, Heathcliff is actually expressing a slightly different sentiment: it is a pity his grief doesn't kill him. As a condensation of the tears Hindley cannot shed, alcohol is a suicidal substitute. Like his wife's laughter on her own deathbed, Hindley's substitution of spirit for tears wards them off with a substance that ironically is also the externalized evaporation of them. (After all, alcohol evaporates at much faster rate than water). Nelly and Heathcliff mark his consumption as suicidal because he is killing himself in order to keep the grief at bay.

The term "suicidal" only appears once in the novel: it describes Hindley after Catherine's death. When she dies, Hindley is the only resident from Wuthering Heights invited to the funeral. He does not attend. Isabella later explains Hindley's absence from the funeral:

> Mr. Earnshaw should have been at the funeral. He kept himself sober for the purpose — tolerably sober, not going to bed mad at six o'clock and getting up drunk at twelve. Consequently, he rose, *in suicidal low spirits,* as fit for church as for a dance; and instead, he sat down by the fire and swallowed gin or brandy by tumblerfuls. (emphasis mine 134)

For the first time since Frances' death, Hindley keeps himself sober in an effort to make himself presentable for his sister's funeral. As a direct result of his abstinence, however, he wakes up in "suicidal low spirits." Read physiologically, he is in withdrawal. However, the symptoms of withdrawal, while they are both psychological and physical, seem less important than the language in which this withdrawal is rendered. He is in *spiritual* withdrawal. Literally, the spirits that he consumes as a substitute for the tears he might cry or the grief he might feel are "low." As a sober man, he is made to feel his losses acutely. The alcohol had covered them up by acting as a substitute for the memory of the dearly departed. Without the substance that is killing him, he is left feeling the desire to kill himself. Withdrawal has not made him suicidal; alcohol has been performing a displaced suicidal function and he misses it. Hindley's transformation of tears into alcohol wastes his life, and ultimately "kills him with drink."

Hindley dies six months after Catherine's funeral with Heathcliff by his side. This is not incidental. Heathcliff after all marks death in the family and comes to be associated with each death in increasingly intimate ways. Heathcliff remarks:

> I happened to leave him [Hindley] ten minutes, yesterday afternoon; and, in that interval, he fastened the two doors of the house against me, and he has spent the night in drinking himself to death deliberately! We broke in

> this morning, for we heard him snorting like a horse; and there he was laid over the settle: flaying and scalping would not have wakened him. I sent for Kenneth, and he came; but not till the beast had changed into *carrion*: he was both dead and cold and stark; and so you'll allow, it was useless making more stir about him. (145 emphasis mine)

In the face of loss, Hindley cannot bring himself to mourn and instead he redoubles his consumption of waste and "drinks himself to death deliberately." In place of tears, the spirits are swallowed as a proxy for the internalization of the grief he cannot express at Catherine's death. In an attempt to take on yet another loss in the alcoholic archive of the spirits he keeps, Hindley is finally overtaken — dissipated and wasted to death by the lost others whom he consumes. Heathcliff watches over his final moments, as if he were less an individual than a tombstone. The second Heathcliff, the walking tomb, embodies the inability to mourn that has destroyed Hindley. As if all along, all Hindley had been trying to do is live up to Heathcliff, turning himself into a walking tomb, a spiritual repository, and a keeper of the family's unacknowledged history. It kills him, leaving him "dead and cold and stark" and his body becomes "carrion" – decaying and wasted flesh – for whoever chooses to swallow it.

III. Queer Dreams:
Catherine's Tears and the Poetry of Hallucination

If Hindley's death results from the conversion of tears into breath and breath into the spirits that he consumes, Catherine's death results from a series of elemental and linguistic conversions that take other forms. In the early parts of the novel, Catherine, like Hindley, refuses tears, converting them into laughter. While Hindley's refusal of tears plays itself out around the polysemia of the word "spirit," Catherine's refusal

produces a chain reaction in which the tears that she attempts to dispel at the beginning of the novel reassert themselves in increasingly inexplicable patterns. Like the tears in "The Lady to her Guitar," Catherine's tears are bits of grief unmoored from the occasion to which they belong; they are not tears in the present, but the material condensation of grief she turned away from in the past. Put simply, Catherine's tears never belong to the scenes in which they appear. Instead they erupt as the wasted markers of her inability to describe what she feels, from the place and time the feeling emanates, and even to whom the feeling belongs. If her inability to place these tears has an uncertain origin called "Heathcliff," her near-ubiquitous tears in the later parts of the novel bear within them the refused memories of deaths that cannot be retold or recalled. Catherine's tears are, like Hindley's spirits, the record of absent others, and the confusion they incite encroaches on and wastes her life.[99]

However, critics more often than not read Catherine's behaviors as the symptoms of her two objects of desire: Linton and Heathcliff. Her nonsensical speeches, dreams, and hallucinations have been explained as products of two incompatible versions of herself that these objects create.[100] However, what appears to be her duality – the difference between Catherine Linton and Catherine Earnshaw, to say nothing of Catherine Heathcliff – is an effect of the secret family history in which the first Heathcliff can neither be acknowledged nor mourned. The phrase "I am Heathcliff" bears this out: Heathcliff is the living-dead monument of the lost son, who simultaneously

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[99] In *Memoires of the Blind,* Jacques Derrida writes that tears "perhaps reveal…in the course of watering up… the essence of the eye:" "it is destined not to see, but to weep" (Derrida 126). In so doing, eyes, for Derrida, are the organs of "prayer, love, joy, or sadness, rather than a look or gaze" (126). Reading Catherine's tears involves tracking the involution of prayer, love, joy, and sadness for which she has no language.

[100] Miller, Gezari, Bronfen, Homans, and even Vine all follow this line of thought.

commemorates and erases that son from view. When Catherine identifies with him she suggests that she too bears the death within her and elides it from memory; this is the function of Catherine's tears.

However, "I am Heathcliff" is born out of a conversation about love. As Martha Nussbaum, among others, has argued, love in *Wuthering Heights* describes a relationship in which the other is carried within the self, constituting an integral difference that is nonetheless part of one's own make-up (403).[101] The conversation between Nelly and Catherine that leads up to "I am Heathcliff" is about getting to the bottom of love: Nelly asks Catherine, "First and foremost do you love Mr. Edgar?" to which Catherine answers, "who can help it? Of course I do" (61). Nelly, unsatisfied with Catherine's answers, sums up her love for Edgar: "You love Mr. Edgar because he is handsome and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you. The last, however, goes for nothing. You would love him without that, probably; and with it you wouldn't unless he possessed the four former attractions" (61). Nelly reveals that Catherine's amorous arithmetic has nothing to do with "love" per se, but with a series of qualities that she attributes to Linton in the present. What is more, Catherine insists that because she has "only to do with the present," Linton is the ideal partner. To which Nelly replies, "Well that settles it — if you have only to do with the present, marry Mr. Linton." The distinction between Edgar Linton and Heathcliff turns on the distinction between the present and the past. While in a very literal sense it is the past which Heathcliff and Catherine share, it is also the

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[101] The two most prevalent readings of "I am Heathcliff" are that the structure of love is a relationship of self to other in which one takes the other into the self and that Catherine and Heathcliff want to return to a state of undifferentiation. Put simply, the phrase is read either as love makes one into two, *or* love is the desire for two to become one. Following a slightly different line of thought, I read the phrase as something along the lines of "I am (n+1 deaths subsumed under and marked by the name) Heathcliff."

indeterminate future and something that Catherine compares to "eternity." While it is easy to assume that Nelly and Catherine are debating about the difference between "true love" and a kind of socially acceptable sentiment, they are also discussing an existential problem that touches on a persistent symptom in the novel. Catherine's desire for Linton may be about "having to do only with the present," but, even if she wanted to be only in the present, she remains deeply plagued by her past in ways that she cannot articulate. The memories of loss that she cannot recollect saturate the air at Wuthering Heights. Catherine's desire for Linton is the desire to escape this "dismal spiritual atmosphere," to banish the tears that plague her, and to forget — in other words, to have "only to do with the present."

However, as Catherine recognizes, there is something fundamentally wrong with "having only to do with the present": " 'All seems well and easy — where is the obstacle,' says Nelly. '*Here!* And *here!'* replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead, and the other on her breast. 'In whichever place the soul lives — in my soul, and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong!' " (62). Catherine impossibly locates her soul in her head, heart, on her body and beside it. What she means by "soul" is perhaps even more indeterminate than its ostensible locations. While it might be taken to mean the vital essence of an animate body, it also has emotive and spiritual connotations. Many critics have pointed to the Christic value of the soul, but *Wuthering Heights* is nothing if not heretical, a "bible of hell" in Gilbert's words.[102] Nelly, the moral center of the text and the ever-faithful Christian, calls Catherine's gestures "very strange!" and declares that

[102] See also Stevie Davies text *Emily Brontë : Heretic* and J. Hillis Miller's chapter in *The Disappearance of God.* Graeme Tytler also has a short piece on religion in *Wuthering Heights* in which he gives an extensive review of the literature on this topic.

she "cannot make [them] out," indicating that Catherine's idea of "the soul" makes no sense from a Christian world-view. Catherine's confusion about where her soul resides and, indeed, what it is, reflects the novel's disturbance of fundamental Christian beliefs, including spirit, soul, afterlife, and redemption. Catherine is not speaking *doxa*; rather, she attempts to find a place, body part, or word called "soul" that might name the inarticulate internal struggle against her desire for Edgar and the present.

The dislocation of Catherine's soul that perplexes the novel's moralist reveals something about Catherine's relationship to essences, identity, and her body. The past, as a kind of waste, saturates the air at Wuthering Heights and contaminates the value of "soul," blocking Catherine's ability to name it as her own singular essence; the soul is no longer an ideal value, but a series of confusing and nonsensical statements. Catherine remarks: "It's my secret; but if you will not mock at me, I'll explain it; I can't do it distinctly — but I'll give you a feeling of how I feel" (62). As Vine suggests, Catherine's language here recalls elements of Abraham and Török's concepts of preservative repression, crypts, and intra-psychic secrets insofar as she has a secret that she can never tell; she cannot shape the words that could describe "the feeling."[103] Importantly, this secret scatters the idea of her own soul, moving it "here and here," and seemingly, everywhere. The secret that she cannot tell can be transmitted only by giving Nelly and the reader "a feeling of how [she] feels." Significantly, Catherine braces herself for an act of transmission that, like her definition of her soul, blurs the boundaries of linguistic and

[103] The crypts in *Wuthering Heights* have been investigated by Royle and Vine in ways that mirror my discussion of crypts in chapter one "Remorse: *Frankenstein*'s Eating Disorders." This chapter builds on the insights laid out in the first chapter by complicating the crypt as a psychic structure; it is no longer one un-mourned traumatic non-memories, but a relay of these un-mourned traumatic non-memories.

bodily integrity. She asks Nelly, "Do you never dream queer dreams?" The "queer dream" names a medium for Catherine's transmission: through the "queer dream" she gives a "feeling of how she feels," but can never name the secret that overwrites her soul and defies normal language.

The "queer dream," then, functions as medium that circumvents conventional speech and diegetic narration. Like the poetic utterances that condition the novel's tears, Catherine's famous dream cannot be read as a novelistic utterance: it is poetic fragment in prose.[104] "I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the color of my mind. And this is one — I'm going to tell it" (62). Catherine sets up the dream as a transformative medium that contaminates the mind. It is a queer dream that once dreamt leaves behind its chromatic traces. The figurative phrase "color of mind" suggests that the dream infiltrates the activities of perception in ways that precede any thought or cognition; this is not color perceived externally, but a dream-color that forever alters the "hue" of the subject. Color depends on the light spectrum that determines its appearance, including light that can be perceived by the eye, as well as the light that remains invisible to it. Catherine's tie-dyed mind reconfigures the very possibility of vision. The light spectrum and the appearance of colors concern variations in the intensity and frequency of light. Color as a figure then not only suggests the contamination of a transparent medium by a hue, but insinuates a shift in perception that

[104] Virginia Woolf describes De Quincey's writing as "impassioned prose" that combines the excesses of poetry and grammatical structure of prose. There is an argument to be made about the relationship between Brontë's and De Quincey's dreams read through the lens of "impassioned prose." For now, Catherine's "Queer Dream" echoes the dreams that De Quincey harbors as discussed in Chapter two "Sister, Sister, Sister" *and* the maternal narrative that gives them shape.

alters the very field of what is perceptible: Catherine now inhabits a different frequency of mind. Moreover, the water and wine figure that describes the transfusion of color into the clear waters of the mind perverts religious connotations in order to suggest that water, the day-to-day bodily need and the primary constituent of tears, has been contaminated by an intoxicating dream-vision that cannot be erased. The "queer dream" intoxicates cognition, religion, and the very liquid of life and vision, infiltrating the activities of mind. The water that washes the eyes and enables vision is saturated by the color of the dream that, even when she is awake, Catherine cannot dispel.

This dream formula terrifies Nelly who exclaims, "Oh don't Miss Catherine…We're *dismal* enough without conjuring up ghosts and visions to perplex us" (62 emphasis mine). Nelly inadvertently understands her metaphor better than Catherine. The dream clings to waking vision, conjuring ghosts that only Catherine can see. What is more, Nelly uses the word "dismal," the descriptor used by Lockwood for the "spiritual atmosphere" at Wuthering Heights: Nelly's use of "dismal" both points to and keeps at bay the ghosts that Catherine's dream threatens to unleash into the novel's construction of "reality."[105] If the narrator were to see ghosts, these apparitions would radically alter the novel's genre. Because Nelly refuses to see the ghosts, she insulates the text from Catherine's supernatural vision. As the narrator, Nelly wants nothing more than to dispel the ghosts that make Catherine their body, their medium, and their mode of expression. As a result, Catherine's dream is out of step with Nelly's realism and also Lockwood's

[105] Etymologically, dismal is derived from the Medieval Latin phrase "dies mali" or evil days. In Middle English it even referred to two specific days in a month that were thought to be unlucky. The word then is not only linked to an unfortunate atmosphere, but to a temporal concept of fortune. It is as if the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights are stuck in unlucky days, caught up in time in ways that do not allow them to move forward.

still more incredulous interpretation of dreams in the first pages of the novel. Catherine's dream exits the diegetic space of the novel, and poeticizes itself as a species of tear and a poetic fragment:

> I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there [Hindley] had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire. (63)

In the dream, Catherine is crying. On the surface, her tears suggest that she is out of place in heaven. However, they also gesture to the ways in which the dream is predicated on the discourse of tears that we have been following. The dream tells a secret that cannot be told otherwise. Catherine's dream may say less about her condition than it does about the dead, including her father, her mother, and the first Heathcliff. It expresses an anxiety that they are as ill-fit for the afterlife as she is in the dream. It is not she, but these unacknowledged ghosts, who have been flung from heaven to live at Wuthering Heights. She wakes "sobbing with joy," carrying over the tears from the afterlife, which do not

even belong to her, into waking life. The tears are the physical instantiation of the dream. They raise ghosts that cannot be named or described diegetically, but who instead are inscribed in the tears that mediate between waking and dreaming, life and death, heaven and the Heights: "That will do to explain my secret," she says. Catherine's dream tells a secret and also bears within it a secret; it does not only describe her, but transmits "the feeling" of an inarticulate "feeling" that haunts her: the dead are not in heaven and they insinuate themselves into the lives of the survivors.

Catherine's love for Heathcliff is based in these liminal figures and the dream that describes them because he operates as an object in the world that corresponds to her ghosts; like the tears and the dream, he figures and displaces the losses that haunt her. The second Heathcliff marks the Ur-substitution that instigates the novel's systematic erasure of mourning. The love she feels for him is rooted in the processes of substitution he instigates and the crisis of memory they precipitate. Indeed, Catherine exclaims, "he's more myself than I am," and asserts that "whatever our souls are made of his and mine are the same." She substitutes Heathcliff for herself and finds an articulate language of the soul only through the word "Heathcliff," which also means substitution, death, and forgetting.[106] Setting romantic love aside, Catherine has confessed that Heathcliff is a mirror image of herself and that she reads in him, living tomb that he is, a version of herself and the inarticulate meaning of her tears. However, the "soul" accumulates yet another series of figurative meanings. Catherine suggests souls can be made of fire or

[106] Bronfen, Homans, and Gilbert argue that Catherine and Heathcliff are one — that they are two that become one, moving toward a state of undifferentiation. Conversely, Miller, Gezari, and Nausbaum regard this statement as a description of how one is constructed through the other, in which love describes a situation of reciprocal constitution. However, what is compelling about Catherine's description of her love for Heathcliff is that she not only recognizes him as revealing some truth about herself, she credits him with her idea of what a soul "is."

lightning, moonbeam or frost. These figures analogize rather than illuminate, "giving [only] a feeling of what [she] feels." The elements, after all, may provoke certain feelings, physical and figurative, that one assigns to them, but they refuse to name a specific constitution or location of the "soul." As fickle as the weather, they turn away from straightforward definition.[107] The elemental analogies generate a logic in which Heathcliff, instead of heaven, becomes the conceptual repository for the parts of "herself" that she cannot describe – namely, the dead. Fire and lightning gesture to the ways that Heathcliff, as a cipher for the names and people Catherine cannot remember, incinerates their memory and casts, like tears, an amnesiac pall over the vision she calls love. Her love for Heathcliff is predicated on a commemorative amnesia that further complicates the tear as an emotional trace and memorial because it rewrites it in another form: fire.

Indeed, the relationship among queer dreams, tears, and the fire they produce governs Catherine's demise. She is struck with a "brain fever" that she contracts when Heathcliff returns after a long period of absence. However, the fever alone does not kill her; she also refuses food. Catherine feeds the fever with her own body by starving herself and wasting away. Just as Heathcliff disrupts dietary regimes at the beginning of the novel, Catherine draws herself closer to him by refusing what is edible, attempting to eat inedible things, and allowing herself to be consumed in the process. It is worth noting that, like Frances, Catherine is also pregnant during the period of her "consumption."[108]

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[107] While I am indebted her and elsewhere to Sedgwick's lovely reading of Proust in "The Weather in Proust," my argument diverges from her account insofar as weather in *Wuthering Heights* records the character's resistance to certain unspeakable affects and memories. Weather marks the displacement of feeling, rather than the calm satiation of "benign transference" that Sedgwick marks in Proust (3-5).

[108] Bronfen, Homans, Armstrong, Wion, and Moers among others discuss Catherine's pregnancy and the ways in which it kills her and dispossess her of an identity.

If rejecting food draws her closer to Heathcliff, it also brings her closer to death, rewriting the phrase "I *am* Heathcliff" as a death knell.

> Tossing about, she increased her feverish bewilderment to madness, and tore the pillow with her teeth; then raising herself up all burning, desired that I would open the window. We were in the middle of winter the wind blew strong and I objected. Both the expressions flitting over her face, and the changes of her moods, began to alarm me terribly… a minute previously she was violent; now supported on one arm, and not noticing my refusal to obey her, she seemed to find childish diversion in pulling the feathers from the rents she had just made, and ranging them on the sheet according to their different species; her mind strayed to other associations. (95)

Catherine wants the window open in the middle of winter. At the end of this episode, she comes back to her senses and begs Nelly: "The wind… do let me feel it … it comes straight down the moor… one breath" (97).[109] When Nelly refuses to open the window, Catherine goes into a fit, making a series of indeterminable facial expressions and biting into her pillow in an attempt to eat an inedible thing. Where Catherine no longer has words to organize her feelings and memories into meaningful utterances, she attempts to fill her mouth. Just as the violin morsels at the beginning of the novel marked the disruption of normal eating processes and the desire to assimilate otherwise inaccessible memories, the pillow and its contents are figuring memories that Catherine desperately

[109] For a compelling figurative reading of the window see Carol Jacobs "The Threshold of Interpretation" and for a more specific study of windows in the novel see Joanne Rea "Window Imagery and Suppressed Incest in *Wuthering Heights*."

wants to reintegrate into consciousness

The expressions that "flit over her face" at an alarming rate suggest that the memories she is consuming in fantasy and cannot articulate release affective charges in incoherent sequences, which like her tears, are entirely unrelated to external stimuli or temporal markers. Her taxonomy of feathers, torn from the bite marks in the pillow, tells an even stranger story.

> That's a turkey's… and this is a wild duck's; and this is a pigeon's, Ah they put pigeon's feathers in the pillows — no wonder I couldn't die! Let me take care to throw it on the floor when I lie down. And here is a moor-cock's; and this — I should know it among a thousand — it's a lapwing's. Bonny birds; wheeling over our heads in the middle of the moor. It wanted to get to its nest, for the clouds touched the swells, and it felt rain coming. This feather was picked up from the heath, the bird was not shot; we saw its nest in the winter, full of little skeletons. Heathcliff set a trap over it, and the old ones dare not come. I made him promise he'd never shoot a lapwing after that, and he didn't. Yes here are more! Did he shoot my lapwings, Nelly? Are they red, any of them? Let me Look? (96)

The pillow and its feathers are transformed into an archive. Catherine deciphers each feather and assigns a memory to it— as if the feathers lend coherence to the frenzy of unreadable facial expressions.[110] Her sense that the pigeon feather prevents her from dying reflects the Yorkshire custom that Richard Blakeborough records in which pigeon

[110] Sedgwick argues that "faces are signs" in the novel and that we can "read many things in Catherine's face" (106). However, part of what is being read her, is the incoherence of her facial expressions – they are not linked to events in the present.

feathers were used to forestall death and, in the case of prolonged suffering, they might be removed from bedding to help "shuffle off that mortal coil."[111] Gezari expands upon this folkloric practice, connecting Catherine's "saner" pillow talk to Ophelia's plant memories (Gezari *WH* 188 n6). In this respect, Catherine makes the feathers tell stories about her life and death that are otherwise unavailable to speech. Like her queer dream and her tears, they are endued with her secret history. Each feather bears a trace of her experience that she can remember only through it; these bits of fowl, perhaps on which she writes a daydream, record the memories she has lost. The lapwing memory stands out because it is not written in the past, but in the present tense, "birds wheeling over our head in the middle of the moor." Just as the guitar bids the ancient torrent flow, releasing past tears into the present, the feathers here release a memory from the past into present. Moreover, the image recalls Catherine's desire to open the window, to breathe the air coming from the Heights. The commingling of respiration in the form of breath and the wind figures a spiritual transaction in which spirit names the interpenetration of breath, wind, and atmosphere. These respirations and inspirations make up a spiritual archive that is written into the movement of air. The secret history and its tears are carried on the wind – as if Catherine wants to inhale them in order to pass them through her body. Just as the feathers recall memories in Catherine's mind — secret and lapwing alike — they retain a memory of the wind above the moors, the weather and the ways the "clouds touched the swells." As much as it is a personal memory, the feather is about the involution of Catherine's memories with the atmospheric tumult in and around Wuthering Heights. Her desire to have just one breath is also a desire to return, not just to

[111] Blackborough's account can be found in *Wit, Character, Folklore, and Customs of the North Riding of Yorkshire.*

the heights but to its inaccessible history and long dead inhabitants.

What is even more inscrutable about the feather story is the lapwing's fate. It seems to have been a victim and to have been spared, to have become food and to have escaped. She says, the feather was picked up from the moor, that the bird was not shot. At the same time, its nest was found full of skeletons; the birds died. It is as if the memory of its death is erased and in its place Catherine inserts the innocent activity of gathering memory-feathers from the ground. Despite her refusal to acknowledge that it has died, the young ones perish, leaving nothing but "little skeletons." The dead offspring stand in for the murder of the parent. Homans argues that Heathcliff uses the trap to kill the parent and the offspring alike. Gezari insists that Heathcliff sets the trap to kill the offspring and keep the parents – "the old ones" – from feeding them. Moreover, Catherine's "search for bloodied lapwing feathers" reflects a search for "evidence of a previously unimaginable deception:" that Heathcliff shot the "old ones" as well (Gezari 188 n7). Catherine's final thought on the matter betrays her whole story; she made Heathcliff promise never to shoot a lapwing again. He had shot it, and only in the final moments of the story does Catherine admit that the bird, along with its offspring, died. The lapwing story is Catherine's story: the Earnshaws' refusal to mourn the death of the first Heathcliff leads to the deaths of the other children in the cradle-grave through the disruption of feeding regimes. The feather archive, like the queer dream, is another way in which Catherine gives us a "feeling of how she feels" where articulate language fails. It is another tear.

Catherine's last tears in the novel occur just before her death. She is in Heathcliff's arms and they "wash" each other's faces in tears. However, these final tears

are predicated on a hallucination that I argue is the most representative form of her tears and exemplifies the ways in which they write over her conscious perception. After Catherine has organized her feathers, Nelly scolds her for "wandering associations." She insists that she is fully conscious, giving a description of the room as proof of her rational capacity: "I'm conscious it is night and that there are two candles on the table making the black press shine like jet" (96). However, there is no black press. "The black press?" Says Nelly, "Where is that? You are talking in your sleep." To which Catherine responds, "It's against the wall, as it always is… it *does* appear odd. I see a face in it!" While Nelly attempts to persuade Catherine that there is no press, Catherine stares into the mirror and insists it is a clothes cabinet: "Don't you see that face?" Nelly, unable to persuade Catherine that it is her own reflection, covers the mirror with a shawl. "Its behind there still! And it stirred. Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh Nelly this room is haunted! I'm afraid of being alone!" Nelly attempts to sooth her and tells her "It was yourself Mrs. Linton." "Myself," Catherine gasps, "and the clock is striking twelve! It's true then; that's dreadful!" (97). Catherine has hallucinated that she was "lying in [her] chamber at Wuthering Heights." The furniture she sees is the furniture from her childhood. Her memories have erupted into her conscious perceptions, so that she neither recognizes herself in the mirror nor the mirror as an object. The mirror is matter out of place that is reinscribed by tears as another place and time. After she regains consciousness, she tells Nelly that she thought she was twelve years old again and her father just buried. She explains her hallucination rather articulately, "supposing at twelve years old I had been wretched from the Heights…I lifted my hands to push the panels aside [thinking it was seven years before]; it struck the

table top! I swept along the carpet and the memory burst in — my late anguish was swallowed in a paroxysm of despair" (98).

Catherine explains the delirium in terms of the temporal confusion, the unmooring of past and present, which is also simultaneously an unmooring of perception. The thing that "haunts" Catherine is not the past, but the appearance of the present perceived from a past that has invaded and overrun the coordinates of presence. Catherine's former self is haunted by who she has become. Even as Catherine seems to have grown up, her tears from the past haunt her. Indeed, the tears that she represses when she is twelve are the marker of an unacknowledged grief for her father that she displaces onto a separation from Heathcliff. It is twelve o'clock when Catherine realizes the dreadful truth, and "shrieks" as the shawl falls from the mirror. Who has she seen? Catherine claims to have seen herself, and in a moment skipped seven years. She says, "my late anguish was swallowed in a paroxysm of despair," which she describes as "some great grief which just waking I could not recollect." While she attaches the grief explicitly to the forced separation from Heathcliff after her father's death, it also is linked to her father's death, her mother's, and the loss of the first Heathcliff. The grief is "swallowed" when the table at Thurshcross Grange breaks in upon her fantasy, dissolving it in one swift "stroke." The stroke of midnight (twelve) that recalls her to the dreadful truth jerks her out of the past, and the contrast between the two moments shows her precisely what has transpired in seven years: like Hindley, she has swallowed her family's grief.

The revelation brings her to tears. "She lay still now, her face bathed in tears. Exhaustion of body had entirely subdued her spirit; our fiery Catherine was no better than a wailing child" (97). Her "fiery" "spirit" is put out: her tears catch up to her and erupt as

these emanations from the past. At the beginning of the novel, it is not simply that Catherine exchanges one seemingly legible affect, tears, for another, laughter. Something transpires in this transformation that radically alters the ways she uses language, replacing a language that could articulate what she has lost with queer dreams, hallucinations, and, fevers, that have been her tears all along. The impossibility of mourning radically alters the ability of any character to put words to this experience, and tears mark the absence of an adequate language. The gap in language alters Catherine's perceptions, rendering the contours of the teary gap — the unspeakable loss and melancholic trauma — in the language of her waking-dreams. So, even, or perhaps especially, when tears are not physically present, or they seem to have been converted into another form, they persist as a hallucinatory residue that can never be blinked away: "I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there; not seeing it dimly through tears" (125).

IV. Heathcliff's Ghosts

No discussion of mourning in *Wuthering Heights* could be complete without a discussion of Heathcliff's decline. In a novel in which characters so consistently fail to mourn, why is it that Heathcliff's demise is characterized by an unmitigated obsession with the one he has lost? Where Catherine and Hindley rewrite tears as laughter, alcohol, and dreams, Heathcliff mourns for Catherine by transforming his tears into another form of spirit entirely. Indeed, Heathcliff reveals the ways in which the economy of tears is always wrapped up in the cultivation of spirits and their ghosts. Yet his tears, or lack thereof, redefine the very meaning of such ghosts, knitting his belief in supernatural entities to the movements of breath and tears.

On the night of Catherine's death, Nelly comes to inform Heathcliff that she has died and he pre-empts her: "She's dead… I've not waited for you to learn that. Put your handkerchief away — Damn you all, she wants one of *your* tears" (129). His attempt to stop Nelly from weeping corresponds to his desire to master tears. Heathcliff wants to ensure that his are the only ones shed for Catherine, insinuating a distinction between the kind of tears the narrator sheds and his own: Nelly's tears have recourse to heaven. Throughout the novel, her pious optimism allows her to shed tears at appropriate moments and banish the grief that they signify with the assurance of an afterlife. Her firmly held belief in God and heaven allows the tears to dispel grief once and for all. The Earnshaw children have never learned to cry this way; as a result, Heathcliff, like Hindley and Catherine before him, can neither dispel his tears, nor let them flow.

> Did she die like a saint? Come give me a true history of the event. How did —' He endeavored to pronounce her name, but could not manage it; and compressing his mouth, he held a silent combat with his inward agony, defying my sympathy with an unflinching, ferocious stare. (130)

Heathcliff refuses to cry – a refusal that is written into the "ferocious stare" that nonetheless betrays the tears that lie behind it. Before Catherine's death, even as the intensity of his gaze seemed destined to bring tears to his eyes, they "burn[t] with anguish but [did] not melt." The specters of unshed tears reveal themselves in Heathcliff's gaze as "fire." In fact, when Heathcliff seems to be the most affectively withholding, his tears become the most legible through the embodied contortions they produce.[112] As he attempts to say Catherine's name, stifling his "inward agony," the name leaves his body

[112] In *Coherence,* Sedgwick notes that in *Wuthering Heights* "faces are also signs" (106).

"trembling to his very finger-ends." The movements of his mouth – the attempted sneer and the compressed grimace – are physical markers of the tears that he stifles and are ineluctably attached to her name. However, stifling the tears stifles her name as well.

In order to speak her name, Heathcliff converts these tears into her ghost. The transformation transforms the tears into spirit, offering a counter-discourse to Nelly's account of her death.

> 'May she wake in torment,' he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his foot, and growing in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion. 'Why, she's a liar to the end! Where is she? Not *there* — not in heaven — not perished — where? Oh! You said you cared nothing for my sufferings! And I pray one prayer — I repeat it till my tongue stiffens — Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! You said I killed you — haunt me then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers, I believe — I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always — take any form — drive me mad! Only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! It is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!' (130, emphasis in the original)

Where Nelly's tears are quickly dispelled by her assurance that Catherine is in heaven, Heathcliff will not relinquish his tears to an afterlife. He rejects Nelly's vision of heaven; she is not "there." Instead, Heathcliff deploys a figure that wakes Catherine from the grave: he summons her prosopopoeically by the name "Catherine Earnshaw." The name carries with it a prayer that Heathcliff promises to repeat until "his tongue stiffens." He will not let her rest as long as he can speak this name. The name, much like his own,

functions as an incantation that converts the tears he has not shed into the desire that Catherine be always with him, take any form, and drive him mad.[113] Where tears had made her name unspeakable, this prayer and Heathcliff's vision of her afterlife transforms the "unutterable" loss into a form of speech that apostrophizes her back into the world. This is Catherine's ghost.

Heathcliff's prosopopoeic prayer works directly in relation to his stifled emotion. Catherine's ghost only comes when he holds back his tears, and his death is a process of discovering how to welcome her ghost. This discovery is not one among many; it reveals how tears throughout the novel express a desire to commune with the dead, to carry them "always in the mind," and ultimately to let the dead overwhelm the ego. Freud called this situation love. In the same breath, he acknowledged that it is a feature love shares with melancholia and suicide.[114] Heathcliff's death reveals how the dead inhabit the novel's perceptions of the living world as tears and how these affective specters at the edges of novelistic perception encroach on the lives of its characters, dissipating them in mind and body, and scattering them to the wind.

There are two phases to Heathcliff's demise. The first begins with his tears after

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[113] Bronfen characterizes him as something of a melancholic, suggesting he "preserves her as a libidinal revenant, as part of his process of mourning" (Bronfen 305).

[114] In "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud discusses melancholia and suicide, remarking on the relationship between love and suicide as object relations: "We have long known, it is true, that no neurotic harbors thoughts of suicide which he has not turned back upon himself from murderous impulses against others, but we have never been able to explain what interplay of forces can carry such a purpose through to execution. The analysis of melancholia now shows that the ego can kill itself only if, owning to the return of the object cathexes, it can treat itself as an object — if it is able to direct against itself the hostility which relates to an object and which represents the ego's original reaction to objects in the external world. Thus, in regression from narcissistic object-choice the object has, it is true, been got rid of, but it has nevertheless proved more powerful than the ego itself. In the two opposed situations of being most intensely in love and of suicide the ego is overwhelmed by the object, though in totally different ways" (Stratchey 252).

Catherine's death. He does not divulge this portion of his story to Nelly until eighteen years later. However, on the eve of Edgar's death, Heathcliff describes what transpired after Catherine's death, leaving us a clue as to what his prayer does with his tears.[115]

> The day she was buried there came a fall of snow. In the evening, I went to the churchyard. It blew bleak as winter — all round was solitary…Being alone, and conscious two yards of loose earth was the sole barrier between us, I said to myself 'I'll have her in my arms again! If she be cold, I'll think it is this north wind that chills me; and if she be motionless, it is sleep.' I got a spade from the toolhouse, and began to delve with all my might — it scraped the coffin; I fell to work with my hands; the wood commenced cracking about the screws, I was on the point of attaining my object, when it seemed that I heard a sigh from some one above, close at the edge of the grave, and bending down 'if I can only get this off.' I muttered 'I wish they may shovel in the earth over us both! And I wrenched at it more desperately still. There was another sigh, close at my ear. I appeared to feel the warm breath of it displacing the sleet-laden wind. I knew no living thing in flesh and blood was by — but as certainly as you perceive the approach of some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned, so certainly I felt that Cathy was there, not under me, but on the earth. (221)

This scene over Catherine's grave has been described in a variety of ways: she is a ghost,

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[115] In an effort to mark out the two distinct stages of his demise, which he describes only when he has entered the second stage, I will split up his speech to Nelly. The first section I cite is in fact from the middle portion of his story where he recollects what transpired after Catherine's death in order to contrast it to the condition in which he finds himself.

a vampire, a revenant. However, I want to call attention to the ghost's apparition as a breath written into the wind. Catherine dies, Nelly informs us, with a sigh: "She drew a sigh, and stretched herself, like a child reviving, and sinking again to sleep; and five minutes after I felt one little pulse at her heart, and nothing more" (130). Catherine's death converts the tears through which she sees the world dimly, into this last sigh, which — like Frances' last breath — turns out to be a fatal exhalation. Her ghost returns later that evening as a breath. The "sigh" moves from above the grave where Heathcliff is perched to his ear. The "warm breath" displaces "the sleet laden wind," making itself discernible only in contrast to the atmosphere. Catherine's ghost takes the form of breath that can be identified as such only because it produces a difference in the feeling of the "sleet laden wind." Ghosts in *Wuthering Heights* are written into the elements precisely for the ways apparitions are detected by transformations of them.

Heathcliff goes on to characterize his sense of her ghost, comparing it to "the approach of some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned." While this sounds more pedestrian than the elemental transformations in which he discerns her breath, it speaks to the ways in which he is blind to Catherine's ghost. Its presence is extra-visual, working by subtle displacements of space. He does not open her coffin — a detail that Bronfen argues is precisely why he fails to see her ghost. But in an important sense, he does not open the coffin because he has gotten exactly what he has come for: the sigh. He has managed to retrieve Catherine's ghost as her last breath. His ability to retain this breath becomes a substitute for his desire, which is not merely a desire to gaze on Catherine's body, but to be buried alive with her. Just as Hindley retains Frances through the consumption of spirits, Heathcliff holds on to this last breath as a way of

keeping himself and Cathy buried alive – or poised, as it were, on the edge of her grave. Her ghost appears as the repetition of a death rattle because this is precisely what her ghost does; it does not overcome the moment of death, it repeats the moment through the haunting trace of her last breath. The breath, however, endues Heathcliff with its fatal message: "a sudden sense of relief flowed from my heart through every limb." Rather than literally burying himself with Catherine, he has internalized her last breath. The last sigh is inhaled by his lungs, and is pumped by his heart through the bloodstream into every limb. Blood, after all, transmits oxygen from a breath to the entire body. So, too, it transmits Catherine's last breath. Etymologically, relief derives from a Latinate root that means to "raise up." He has raised Catherine in this sense and she lives in and as his very flesh and blood.

Heathcliff gives up his digging, does not gaze upon the corpse, and turns "unspeakably consoled" from the churchyard. The "unspeakable consolation" is nonetheless of a piece with the "unutterable" misery that precedes his prayer. What is "unspeakable" is Catherine's death and his inability to acknowledge or move on from it is powered by the delusional and fetishistic "consolation" he takes from the specter of her last breath. He insists "her presence was with me… I was sure it was with me, and I could not help talking to her." Despite his belief that she is there, his vision cannot comprehend her.

> I looked round me impatiently — I felt her by me — I could *almost* see her, and yet I *could not!* I ought to have *sweat blood* then, from the anguish of my yearning, from the fervor of my supplications to have but one glimpse! ... And since then sometimes more and sometimes less I've

> been the sport of that intolerable torture. (221)

Heathcliff's consolation is, also, and simultaneously, an "intolerable torture." His "unspeakable sadness' is not just sadness over his loss — that he might "sweat blood" or cry "tears of blood for Catherine" as Isabella has it — it is also sadness over the inability of the ghost he has created out of breath to materialize her: the impotence of prosopopoeia.

Catherine's capricious spirit tortures Heathcliff because the last breath summons and dispels her, "killing" him "not by inches, but by fractions of hair breadths" – or breaths, as the case may be. Catherine is the name of his death and she kills him by invading him.

> When I sat in the house with Hareton, it seemed that on going out, I should meet her; when I walked on the moors I should meet her coming in. When I went from home, I hastened to return; she *must* be somewhere in the Heights, I was certain! And when I slept in her chamber — I was beaten out of that — I couldn't lie there; for the moment I closed my eyes, she was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room, or even resting her darling head on the same pillow as she did when a child. And I must open my lids to see. And so I opened and closed them a hundred times a night — to be always disappointed! It racked me! I've often groaned aloud, till that old rascal Joseph no doubt believed that my conscience was playing the fiend inside of me. (221)

Tears are not just an affective, biological, or emotional response. They concern mourning and its impossibility precisely because they are a marker of Catherine's

paradoxical absence in the face of her overwhelming psychological, phenomenal, and linguistic presence. Heathcliff's response to her death exposes the way in which the impossibility of mourning consists in the radical impossibility of ever erasing her from a field of signification built out of memories of which she is forever a part. If Heathcliff takes his name and his meaning from the Earnshaw family, his language, identity, and actions are structured in relation to the loss of the son for which he is a substitute. His ambitions are those of this son and his sense of entitlement is predicated on fulfilling the role he does not know is his. In this same way, once he loses Catherine he cannot lose her entirely because she is woven into him as part of the fabric that makes up "Heathcliff." When he says, "it seemed that on going out I should meet her" or that "when I walked the moors I should meet her on coming in," he is not just testifying to a belief in her ghost; he is commenting on the way she presides over his sense of reality. She is built into his acquisition of language, meaning, and as a result, she can never be entirely absent. It is not that she is equal to all possible signification, but that her absence writes her presence into his very perceptions as their constitutive ghost.

Indeed, Catherine appears whenever Heathcliff "closed [his] eyes," suggesting that her absence is no longer felt as a loss or experienced as the naive belief that she might reappear just around the corner. Rather, absence has become the very condition of her presence, conjuring her, as some "imperceptible body approaching in the dark:" "She was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room, or even resting her darling head on the same pillow as she did when a child. And I must open my lids to see. And so I opened and closed them a hundred times a night — to be always disappointed!" In the frantic action of blinking, Heathcliff is seeing her by not seeing,

and opening his eyes only to be disappointed. Like tears that dim the vision, his closed eyes give him a sense of her; once they are open or the tears are shed, Catherine is gone. There would be no vision whatever without blinking or without tears. Heathcliff is trapped in a signifying regime in which Catherine can only appear as a negative image, a ghost in the dark, who is the founding absence that haunts his perception because, like his unshed tears, she has made it possible.

For eighteen years Heathcliff is killed in this way by "hairs breadths" or breaths. When he returns to her grave, however, the manner in which Catherine's ghost appears shifts dramatically. While the first phase of his mourning is characterized by the absence of Catherine in which he can *only* see her when his eyes are closed, in the second phase he sees her when his eyes are open and in fact she is all that he can see.

> What is not connected to her? And what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree, filling the air at night, and caught by glimpse in every object by day, I am surrounded with her image. The most ordinary faces of men and women — my own features — mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her. (247)

We are not only in the play of absence and presence that haunted him through his tears in the previous phase of his demise. Now the very materiality of the world dissolves as the impossibility of mourning Catherine — which is to say the impossibility of acknowledging that she is gone — announces itself as all that he perceives. While he claims the whole world reminds him only that he has "lost her," the dissipation of his

ability to make out "material appearances" and the persistence of her ideal features in the face of materiality suggests that he has never assimilated the fact of her loss. Curiously, this shift not only besets Heathcliff with strange visions of Catherine's face writing itself into the world, these hallucinations generate disruptions in his ability to see things in the world, to eat, and to breathe.

> Nelly there is a strange change approaching — I'm in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life that I *hardly remember to eat and drink*. Those two [Hareton and Cathy] who have left the room are the only objects which retain a distinct material appearance to me; and that appearance causes me pain, amounting to agony. About her I won't speak; and I don't desire to think; but I earnestly wish she were invisible — her presence invokes only maddening sensations. *He* moves me differently; and yet if I could do it without seeming insane, I'd never see him again! You'll perhaps think me rather inclined to become so … If I try to describe the thousands of forms of past associations and ideas he awakens or embodies …Five minutes ago Hareton seemed a personification of my youth, not a human being. I felt to him in such a variety of ways, that it would have been impossible to have accosted him rationally. (emphasis mine 274)

The shadow of the change that overtakes Heathcliff has the qualities of Catherine's ghost, a "substantial body" that cannot be deciphered, but only determined by an elemental displacement. The shadow is not, however, literally a shadow, but a figure for the ways in which something in Heathcliff's field of perception alters the phenomenal relationships

between what appears and what does not. Moreover, the shadow troubles his daily life to the extent that he cannot remember to eat or drink. This is not any pedestrian forgetting – Heathcliff forgets to consume because he is beset by the dietary displacement he had initiated as a foundling. Not only have inedible things replaced food as they did for Catherine and Hindley, food and drink have disappeared from the material world. Sustenance has no substance. His perceptions have been radically altered such that the "distinct impression of Catherine's face" in the grave has overwritten the distinct material appearance of the world. In place of food he can only see Catherine. Rather than eating, he is feeding a fantasy of her by wasting his body. Just as the disappearance of the apples and pears had inaugurated certain dietary disruptions linked to the disappearance of a discourse for mourning, here the disappearance of food as a substantial object or element of daily life corresponds directly to Heathcliff's cultivation of the fantasy of Catherine.

Cathy II and Hareton are the only material forms in his perceptual field because they correspond to the impressions of Catherine that are overriding his perception of things in the world. They draw up "thousands of forms of past associations and ideas." In a world where things about him have ceased to appear material, both Hareton and Cathy are made material by the nexus of memories and associations that give them form in an otherwise formless field of Catherine. They interrupt the fantasy of Catherine that has spread itself out over the world and, simultaneously, provide Heathcliff with nodal points in the world to which he can attach the Catherine-traces that form the building blocks of his perception. Heathcliff's sense that Hareton seems "a personification of my youth, not a human being," suggests too that the children do not operate for Heathcliff as subjects in their own right. They are objects through which he accesses his past. Hareton allows

Heathcliff to read himself by projecting otherwise unreadable memory traces onto his body as a prosthesis – like a screen. He says as much: "Hareton's aspect was the ghost of my immortal love, of my wild endeavors to hold my right, my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish" (247). Heathcliff patterns these impossible conjunctions across Hareton's face, transforming him into an emotional archive for his own story, which is not merely the story of his degradation and his revenge, but the story of himself as a substitute. For Hareton too, is a substitute. He is the second Hareton Earnshaw – a fact commemorated by the inscription that stands over the door at Wuthering Heights: "Hareton Earnshaw 1500." However, Hareton is also a substitute for Heathcliff in this moment and Heathcliff reads in him the process of substitution that began the novel. Heathcliff reads in Hareton the truth of himself. This is the climax of the novel. Heathcliff's function as a walking tomb is materialized before his very eyes; in fact, it is the only thing that *can be* material before his eyes.

Heathcliff responds to this realization in a bizarre way. He is both himself and the one for whom he is a substitute. While he claims that he has no conscious "fear, presentiment or hope of death," he nonetheless is magnetically drawn towards it, as if his body were mimicking the habits of a corpse.

> I have to remind myself to breathe — almost to remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending back a stiff spring; it is by compulsion that I do the slightest act not prompted by one thought, and by compulsion, that I notice anything alive, or dead, which is not associated with one universal idea. I have one single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have reached towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that

> I'm convinced it *will* be reached — and *soon because it has devoured my existence. I am swallowed* in the anticipation of its fulfillment. (248 emphasis mine)

Heathcliff has to remind himself to live biologically because everything aside from this "one thought," "one universal idea" is immaterial – including his own body. Heathcliff is not merely experiencing the impossibility of mourning Catherine, he is reckoning with his own existence that is predicated in ways he cannot command on the feelings, thoughts, and associations which, as a substitute for a dead son, he barred from her life. His own existence has been wrapped up entirely in the displacement of a dead son: one idea. The idea has "devoured [his] existence." Literally, the dead son devours Heathcliff's entire life – as a host and replacement for this dead other, Heathcliff is never himself. He acknowledges that "I am swallowed in anticipation" because he — as the mouthpiece of the dead son — finally announces that son's fate. After the deaths of all the Earnshaws and the Lintons, Heathcliff — the first son—speaks through his substitute. The energy is drained from Heathcliff because his purpose is no longer animated and the truth of the first son's fate becomes available to representation: the Earnshaws swallowed him long ago and the second Heathcliff has always already been swallowed in anticipation – eaten up by the Earnshaws in ways that ultimately disrupt vital eating regimes and appetites, confusing life and death, one Heathcliff for another. His faculties and whole being yearn for death because, with his death, the death of the first son can finally be complete. Heathcliff's death will dispel the fantasy that has beset Wuthering Heights, the secret history, and the dead that saturate its atmosphere. With his death, mourning will commence.

In this sense, Heathcliff's death wish is not his own. It is a complex interplay of substitution in which the forgotten son finally makes himself heard through and as the substitute. The opening of Catherine's tomb was also the opening of the family tomb and the opening of the Heathcliff who lives in Heathcliff. This aperture leads to the saturation of his vision by tears in the form of Catherine's features and their past associations, allowing Heathcliff to comprehend his bizarrely conflicting purposes in the novel: to resurrect and erase the dead. As such, he resurrects and erases himself. For the rest of the novel, Heathcliff does not shed a tear and yet, his hallucinations are the teary residue to which he holds fast: "he was pale, and he trembled; yet, certainly, he had a strange joyful glitter in his eyes that altered the aspect of his whole face" (249). The "glitter in his eyes" suggests rather than shedding tears, he is allowing them to saturate his field of vision. The more he holds the tears back, the more vivid his vision of the past and its meaning. Every time he sits at the table to eat, he is interrupted in the process: "he…looked at the opposite wall… surveying one particular portion up and down, with glittering restless eyes, and with such eager interest, that he stopped breathing during half a minute together" (252). His eyes are glittering with the tears he holds back and they arrest his vital processes. He can neither eat nor breathe. As he cultivates these tears and their hallucinations – of Catherine, life, death, and the past – he wastes his body and kills himself. As he puts it, "I must reach [my goal before I eat or sleep] and then I'll rest… I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself" (254). His refusal of food is linked to the cultivation of loss, death, and dissipation as bliss. The sense that he is "too happy and yet not happy enough" is strange because he is both ecstatic, happy in excess of himself, and yet this excess of self is still

not enough. The "happiness" concerns less an emotional state than it does dissipation: indeed, he remarks earlier that happiness would be to dissolve into the earth (221). Still, the happiness is situated in terms of a hunger that knows no satiation. His "soul's bliss kills my body" but is not satisfied. In this sentence, we have the sentiment that animates the novel. Happiness destroys the body because it is founded on the self-destructive conversions of tears into laughter, of grief into bliss, of loss into Heathcliff. The conversion not only entails a forgetting of what has been lost, it keeps what has been lost as a parasite that feeds off the body, kills it, in order that what is lost might be harbored secretly within the body, surviving off its hosts, just as Heathcliff survives off the Earnshaws.[116] He is the survival of loss and, as such, he survives the loss of his hosts. His final condition is revelatory for the ways it reveals this structure and in so doing, uses his death to make sense of survival not only as the ghost story with which the novel famously ends, but with the commingling of death and life that ultimately leaves the reader uncertain of who is dead and who is alive. Indeed, Heathcliff dies with his eyes open and a smile on his face, happy in his death and shaping his features mockingly into imitations of life.

At the end of the novel, the three Earnshaw children are dead: Heathcliff, Catherine, and Hindley. Each of them has killed him or herself. Their tears, shed and unshed, tell the story of the ways in which the impossibility of mourning does not destroy them at once, but delivers death on a delay as a most strange dissipation. Lockwood comments at the end of the novel, that Wuthering Heights, which is shut up shortly after

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[116] Again, I draw on Abraham and Török's accounts of crypts in *The Wolfman's Magic Word*, as well as critics such as Royle, Wolfreys, and Vine who put these theories to work on *Wuthering Heights.*

Heathcliff's death, will be left "For the use of such ghosts as choose to inhabit it" (257). The irony is that the house has always been inhabited by ghosts. As Lockwood brings the story to the close, he walks by the graves of Linton, Catherine, and Heathcliff.

> The middle one grey, and half buried in heath — Edgar Linton's only harmonized by the turf, and so creeping up its foot — Heathcliff's still bare. I lingered round them under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth. (258)

Lockwood, ever credulous, hears only "quiet." Yet, the "soft wind [is] breathing," "the moths [are] fluttering" and the graves, consumed and half-buried as they are, nonetheless prospoepeically recall the novel's central drama. As the wind breathes around them, and displacements of air bend and shape the grassy heath, there is an uncanny sense of some "unsubstantial body approaching in the dark," written into the wind that is the novel's last dissipating breath.

Afterlives:
Eating, Technology, and Maternal Waste

If this dissertation has considered Romanticism's relationship to eating as a metonymy for the activities of mourning it represses, then it attempts a slow deconstruction of eating as an act as well. After reading the preceding chapters, one cannot understand eating as a biological drive. Rather, eating has emerged as a threshold figure for acts of internalization that cannot be achieved, as well as those unconscious internalizations that always already have taken place.[117] The mouth and its capacity to eat figure these transformations because mundane acts of ingestion (eating in the vulgar sense) participate in acts of internalization and excretion, digestion and evacuation, mourning and melancholia more broadly. In each chapter I explore the ways that eating in this capacious sense is tied to the impossible distinction between mourning and melancholia, and, in turn, how this impossible distinction is bound to a fantasy of the maternal body.

Specifically, incorporation and introjection, the key terms this dissertation has explored to this end, derive these processes from the infant's experience of the mother as a source of food. In the case of introjection, the infant, in the absence of the mother's breast, calls out for food. The infant learns that the cry recalls the mother, linking the use of language to the expression of desire and its pleasurable satiation. In the case of incorporation, the cry does not work and, instead of using words or sounds that articulate desire for the mother's return and the food she provides, the subject finds other food

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[117] Tilottama Rajan and others have considered eating in Hegel as a figure for dialectic internalization in the realm of philosophical ideas. Even as eating in Hegel has a robust critical tradition, from Derrida to Rajan and others, there is a tendency in literary historical criticism to read eating as a matter of political and cultural identity. That is, as Timothy Morton and Denise Gigante argue, taste and acts of eating reflect secular modes of class formation that follow the growth of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century (Morton xvi-xxi, 261-267, Gigante 8-28).

sources or objects to fill her mouth as a substitute for the mother she can neither consciously remember nor recall. Eating enables fantasies of assimilation that aim to reconnect the subject to the comforts of an absent mother through the comforts of a full stomach that simulates her. It is in this sense that maternal bodies watch over acts of psychic and digestive assimilation, particularly as they relate to expressions of desire and experiences of pleasure.[118] However, these mouth experiences of eating and speaking are haunted by the maternal body and its vaginal lips that are the mouth's morphological double.[119]

Throughout my dissertation, "eating," whether it describes the process of chewing an oaten cake or internalizing a long-lost sibling, is haunted by a mother's reproductive function. Dorothy Wordsworth, Victor Frankenstein, Thomas De Quincey, and the Earnshaws eat not merely to recall and displace the forgotten mother but to recall and displace the sexual reproductivity for which she stands, linking her generative capacity to full mouths and full stomachs. Eating evokes the first acts of assimilation the mother enabled and, simultaneously, arouses memories of the pregnancy that preceded the subject's birth in which the mother ate for two. Eating, then, splits the time of the subject between a uterine fantasy in which the subject takes the place of the pregnant mother eating for herself as mother, and a developmental fantasy in which the subject eats in order to simulate the absent mother as the first food source. In this sense, eating expresses a covert desire for a mother who is either banished from textual representation,

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[118] Abraham and Török, following Sandor Frenezci, derive the processes of incorporation and introjection from the child's first relation to "the mother's breast." Incorporation is the fantasy of a return to the breast, while introjection psychically internalizes the absence of the breast as meaning (Abraham and Torok128).

[119] Avital Ronell writes provocatively in the *Telephone Book,* "The mouth doubles itself by metonymic displacement, getting on the shuttle to vaginal and anal sites" (193).

dead, or both. At the same time, the compulsive eating habits that these texts depict stand in for reproductive acts that appear to have vanished along with her.

What has been at work throughout this dissertation, then, is not just a reconsideration of eating on the level of metaphor, but a rerouting of "the eater" through theories of mourning and their relation to an unmourned and unmournable maternal function.[120] In *Frankenstein,* De Quincey's confessional writings, and *Wuthering Heights*, the absent mother simultaneously forms and deforms discourses of food and reproductive sex. While the mother's reproductive powers seemingly are excised from the texts, her reproductive function haunts each of these text's eaters as a melancholic residue that cannot be evacuated or excreted. In *Frankenstein*, Victor's "eating disorder" begets a hallucinatory condition in which the maternal eye haunts him throughout the novel, infiltrating and reordering his own perceptions according to the reproductive desires of his undead mother; in De Quincey's writings, his drugged up perceptions porously seep over into dreams where his mother's near-death overtakes his own lived experience and rewrites his memories as reproductions of a vision of sudden death; in Brontë's works unforgettable and unremembered deaths reproduce themselves in the vital perceptions of the living world as tears, leaving the novel's mothers unable to see, unable to eat, and ultimately unable to breathe. In each chapter, the unmournable mother haunts the text's eaters in hallucinatory flashes. These hallucinations mark the recollection and displacement of sexual reproduction for which she stands. The discourses of sexual

[120] Elissa Marder theorizes the maternal function as distinct from the role of the mother in the life of a child. It does not refer to "mothering," but to the impossibility of distinguishing between birth and death, absence and presence that haunts any consideration of "the Mother." In this sense, the maternal function names the anxious discourse around reproduction that struggles to make sense of the event birth, even as this event "is never our own" (Marder 3-7).

reproduction that might be figured by these mothers are banished from direct representation; they are swallowed and repackaged, to borrow Avital Ronell's words, like "freeze-dried foods" (341). Reproduction asserts itself in living perception only as a deadly maternal waste product that ironically can never be expelled. The more characters eat in unconscious pursuit of the lost maternal body, the more this deadly maternal waste accumulates in the text. The traces of the absent mother become an excretion that remains on the inside, asserting itself in "phantasmic, unmediated, instantaneous, magical sometimes hallucinatory flashes" that waste the bodies of those figures who have entombed and preserved her (Ronell 341).[121]

By way of conclusion, I draw out the links among eating, maternal waste, and technology that Ronell describes in the *Telephone Book* and elsewhere, in an effort to draw out the importance of technology for "Wasting Romanticism" and reflect on the significance of these narratives of waste in the twenty-first century. Ronell introduces incorporation in the *Telephone Book* as a way of reading the telephone as an object that simultaneously entombs the mother and simulates her:

> When mourning is broached by an idealization and interiorization of the mother's image, which implies her loss and the withdrawal of the maternal, the telephone maintains this line of disconnection while dissimulating the loss, acting like a pacifier. But at the same time, it acts as a monument to an irreducible mourning, offering an alternative to the

[121] Derrida, reading Abraham and Török, describes incorporation as "eating an object … in order not to introject it, in order to vomit it into the inside" (Derrida *Fors* xxxviii). The image of "vomiting inside" captures the complex logic whereby "eating" also refers to a concomitant excretion. However, the waste products of such psychic acts necessarily, according to Abraham and Török, remain inside; only the formation of strict boundaries *within* one's own psyche might cordon it off and, like an internal landfill, mark it as waste.

> process of introjection. In this sense the telephone operates along lines whose structure promote phantasmic, unmediated, instantaneous, magical, sometimes hallucinatory flashes. What happens to the perished Other when mourning is inhibited? The refusal to mourn causes the lost 'love object' to be preserved in a crypt like a mummy, maintained as the binding around what is not there. Somewhat like frozen-dried foods, the passageway is sealed off and marked (in the psyche) with the place and date in commemoration. (341)

Ronell's telephone reveals the ways that technological objects facilitate certain fantasies of eating that "dissimulate" loss in the face of "disconnection." That is, technologies act as transmission lines along which fantasies of eating may be deployed in service of denial, forgetting, and simulation. Ronell goes so far as to suggest that

> If one were to set an event, a date or a time bomb in order to see the beginning of the modern concept of technology touch off, then this event gets stirred up by the invention of condensed milk. In fact something like the history of positive technology is unthinkable without the extension of this maternal substance into its technological other: in other words, its precise mode of preservation and survival. (Ronell 340)

Ronell reads the telephone's transmission lines as an "umbilicus of loss," built, like Frankenstein's monster, out of a maternal "crypt." Indeed, for Ronell, the telephone is structured by a relation to an unmourned mother, so much so that it builds this absent mother into the structure of the phone itself. Moreover, the phone preserves the mother as

a hallucinatory and elusive maternal food: it is the *umbilicus* of loss.[122] Technology does not just index the extension of maternal substance in ways that erase her body and entomb its secretions in tin as condensed milk; technological desires, like Victor Frankenstein's monster, are coded by foods and spectral maternal bodies that these foods simultaneously repress and preserve.[123]

Elaborating on Ronell's telephone work, Elissa Marder derives a "technological drive" that "emerges from an attempt to (re)produce a 'mother' who would and could preserve the (philosophical, masculine) fantasy of full presence, life, and unending connection. Technology is the result of a fantasy to make artificial life more lifelike than life by denying death, absence, disconnection, the improper, and sexual difference" (Marder 116).[124] Like Frankenstein's monster, maternal technologies, as well as the real or imagined foods that they yield, always harbor a fantasy about life that not only displaces actual modes of living, but only manages to do so through the erasure of death.[125] Just as Victor Frankenstein, De Quincey, and the Earnshaw family attempt to

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[122] Ronell describes the incorporation of the mother explicitly in relation to the invention of the telephone in the *Telephone Book,* arguing that we can ask the same questions of the Frankenstein monster that we do of the telephone: they are both inventions that "elaborate works of mourning, memoralizing that which is missing in a certain way trying to make grow the technological flower from an impossible grave site" (194). Elsewhere in the book, she suggests, "the monster responds on automatic to the call of the dead mother" (146). Dr. Frankenstein remains a touchstone for Ronell's elaboration of the relationship among technology, experimentation, mourning, and the dead mother.

[123] While contemporary cellular technologies have lost the cords that might morphologically resemble an umbilicus and its fantastic phonic nourishment, smart phones and the modes of communication they enable (FaceTime, Skype, text message, location services) only enhance and extend the fantasy of total connection.

[124] From "Avital Ronell's Body Politics" in *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* 111- 129.

[125] Moreover, Victor's fantasy that he could erase death and reissue ties to the mother through the application of technological supplements denies her absence and any disconnection from her. Even sexual difference becomes subject to technological erasure as Victor fails to figure a female monster, opting instead to sacrifice the monsteress to the hungry mother that haunts him.

deny death in ways that redouble the deadly waste they cannot expel, the technological denial of death never works, but only redoubles the voracious appetites that attempt to ward it off.

Ronell's telephone and Marder's technological drive allow me to focus on and theorize the ways in which the maternal food fantasies that have undergirded "Wasting Romanticism" harbor technological fantasies as well, like Victor's monster or De Quincey's mother Palimpsest. In order to draw out the significance of the technological fantasies that saturate contemporary culture, in my conclusion I track what I call the "afterlives" of Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë 's texts. The term "afterlife" indicates the ways in which these authors, like the dead mothers that haunt their texts, live on as Romantic waste – as material and affective remainders – that can neither be excreted nor historicized. Instead, this Romantic waste builds up and continues to reflect, inform, and produce compulsive eating patterns. Like Ronell I investigate the ways in which technology preserves and dissimulates the banished maternal. However, building on Ronell, I suggest that the melancholic preservation of techno-maternal bodies does not merely take eating as a figure for technological dependence, but actually inflects contemporary production and consumption of food, drugs, and funeral practices. Specifically, by turning to contemporary technologies that restructure food, drugs, and mourning rites in efforts to eliminate death's waste, I expose the ways these technologies not only fail to ward death off, but also, like my dissertation's eaters and their wasted Romanticism, the ways they are infiltrated by death in the form of maternal waste.

I. Frankenfoods:
Our Twenty-First Century Eating Disorders

Looking askance at the garish dress of the late-September supermarket, a green head looms large over the Halloween candy display, decked out like Boris Karloff, and cartoonishly overseeing the cornucopia of seasonally repackaged, highly processed "treats." In one sense, it is bizarre to put a Romantic monster in charge of Halloween's sugary staples, a figure that is synonymous with grotesque reinscriptions of life as a figure for the seasonal reinscription of consumer practices. In another sense, who better to oversee one night of vile, unfettered, fetishistic consumption than the monstrous materialization of Victor Frankenstein's vile, unfettered, and fetishistic food fantasies? The vectors of desire, reproduction, and consumption that fuel Victor's mad science in the novel, continue to find expression through the recirculation and reinscription of the Frankenstein monster in discourses of contemporary food consumption -- particularly because the monster is called upon to figure its otherwise unfigureable waste products.

General Mills' Frankenberry Cereal, the Frankenbar, and its accompanying Bridebar are only a few examples of the ways that the monster looms over the fantasies and waste products of contemporary food production, from the scale of the molecule to that of the global food industry. A box of Frankenberry Cereal that reads "We're alive!" ironically captures the strange afterlife of *Frankenstein,* not only by adapting a phrase from the 1931 film, but by unknowingly reasserting the connections among life, death, and food on which the novel secretly insists.[126] The box seems to suggest that the food has begun to speak its own life after death, ironically insinuating that what we eat first must survive death in order to become food. The cereal, proclaiming its afterlife as a Frankenfood, then, also is haunted, both literally and figuratively, by its wasted status.

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[126] "It's alive!" is a phrase which is never uttered in the novel, even as it is often understood to be the Frankensteinian exclamation par excellence.

Like Victor or his creature, this Franken cereal names itself as the reanimated waste product of death. Mary Shelley's un-killable monster enjoys an afterlife beyond filmic adaptation and not merely as cereal; he lives on and makes himself felt as a neurotic repetition of the very food fantasies and waste products that twentieth and twenty-first-century adaptations of the novel largely have overlooked. In this sense, the cartoonish monster staring at you from the end of your local supermarket aisle is potentially a more faithful record of the novel's compulsive desires and its waste than more direct adaptations.[127]

However, the compulsive food fantasy that is the afterlife of *Frankenstein* is not limited to the iconic images of monstrosity spawned by the novel's many adaptations. Indeed, Frankensteinian food fantasies exceed anything that falls under the heading of adaptation – even cereal. In *The Omnivore's Dilemma,* Michael Pollan discusses a national "eating disorder" in the United States that stems from industrial farming practices that alienate eaters from food production in ways that precipitate a crisis of consumption. Pollan's insistence on the national "eating disorder" is helpful for thinking about the ways *Frankenstein* exceeds the boundaries of its literary heritage to inform the language of food consumption. Specifically, Pollan quotes a federal Judge's decision from a 2003 lawsuit against McDonald's: "Rather than being merely chicken fried in a pan, [McNuggets] are a *McFrankensteinian* creation of various elements not utilized by the home cook" (Pollan 112 emphasis mine). As the vehicle of the metaphor, Frankenstein's monster figures the McNugget in ways that are codified in federal jurisprudence. Pollan is less interested in the literary allusion or the structure of the

[127] For a recent study on contemporary *Frankenstein* adaptations see Lester Friedman and Alison Kavey. *Monstrous Progeny: A History of the Frankenstein Narratives.* NJ: Rutgers UP, 2016.

analogy, than in the force of their implications. McNugget's are monstrous. Yet it is precisely monstrosity for which *Frankenstein* has always stood. The insertion of a Frankensteinian food fantasy into the judge's ruling suggests that the novel has oozed into the law and, in so doing, reanimated its language in order to depict the fast food industry.

The Judge's allusion takes irreverent aim at an industry that engineers such technologically modified foods, exposing and displacing the productive and reproductive processes that have made up this monster. In order to unpack the Frankensteinian allusion, it is necessary to take a closer look at the McNugget in relation to life, death, reproduction, and technology. The McNugget begins its "life" as a chicken subject to chemical and technological interventions. Poultry farming relies on technologically supplemented forms of chicken reproduction that maximize the fleshy potential of the creature's body. Specifically, chickens are caged, injected with growth hormones and antibiotics. These animals are then consistently over fed on a corn-based diet. The McNugget only becomes a McNugget when maximally fleshy, technologically enhanced chicken bodies are killed, pulverized, and recombined with nearly thirty-eight other ingredients, including cornstarch, vegetable oils, and even a toxic form of butane (TBHQ) in trace amounts that keeps the nugget from spoiling (Pollan 113-114).[128] A gram of TBHQ causes "nausea, vomiting, ringing in the ears, delirium, a sense of suffocation, and collapse… five grams of TBHQ can kill you" (Pollan 114). The McNugget's monstrosity then not only describes the reproductive interventions of poultry farming, but the recombination of these animals' flesh with toxic, perhaps even deadly,

[128] For more on poultry farming and the treatment of livestock see Susan Squier's book *Poultry Science, Chicken Culture: A Partial Alphabet*.

preservatives. Technological prostheses transform chicken reproduction and they do so in the service of maximizing chicken as a food source. The production of the McNugget entails production of food in ways that are built on a technological drive that enhances and protects the food source from wasting. However, and ironically, the food source is only protected from waste by being combined with toxic chemicals. The preservatives that maintain the value of the chicken's flesh embalm a fantasy of a waste-free life after death in breadcrumbs to be deep-fried and served up hot. However, this fantasy of pure life and pure food is not just about chicken; it reflects a desire to engineer a food source so plentiful that it is unwastable, unkillable, and ultimately undead. This is a fantasy of a perfect Frankensteinian mother. In the absence of any legal or linguistic precedent for the repressions of preservation, death, and waste at work in the name McNugget, there is only the displaced figure of Frankenstein's monster.

Pollan even discusses the addictive quality of fast foods, whose fat, sugar, and salt contents simulate something like fast food addiction in eaters (10). Shelley's novel survives as a figure for such industry-induced eating addictions and disorders that result from the imbrication of desire, (re)production, and consumption with a fantasy of maternal plentitude and preservation, leading to the production of foods filled with poisons. While the story of the McNugget is horrific, it is horrific for the ways in which it embeds reproduction, waste, and death in food. Unlike popular representations of eating disorders as the psychological fixation of a particular individual, Frankensteinian fast foods reveal how compulsive and un-nourishing eating remains bound to maternal fantasies and their waste. As Pollan's book takes pains to demonstrate, the fast food industry relies on industrial farming practices that encourage large-scale production of a

single crop, generating surpluses of particular foods that, in turn, saturate markets with mass produced, highly processed, and often genetically modified products: the McNugget.

In this sense, *Frankenstein*'s eating disorder insinuates itself at the level of the genetic code, and maternal food fantasies of (re)production and consumption can be perceived in the rationales for the genetic modifications that enable modern industrial farming. Significantly, these genetically modified organisms have been popularly dubbed "Frankenfoods."[129] In her article, " 'Oh happy living things!': Frankenfoods and the Bounds of Wordsworthian Natural Piety," Anne-Lise Francois explores the philosophical and moral conditions that undergird genetic modification, linking them to larger questions about technology and reproduction in general:

> The popular term 'Frankenfoods,' … plays on the public's fears and fantasies about technology's power to unleash monstrous, alien, unrecognizable hybrid crops, even as the term identifies the makers of these crops as contemporary Frankensteins, sharing in the blind hubris of *his desire to bypass natural methods of (re)production.* (45 emphasis mine)

Francois reads the "Franken" lucidly, figuring it as a watchword for the "blind hubris" of the scientific desire to "bypass natural (re)production." The play on production and reproduction is, of course, not news to readers of Shelley's novel, but it situates the prefix "Franken" at the cross roads of economic production and scientific experimentations in

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[129] There is perhaps more to say about the prefix "Franken," which gets applied widely as a way of indexing the monstrosity of scientific experimentation and even politics. Most recently, in an article from *Slate* a headline reads "Franken-Trump."

reproduction.[130] In this sense, "food production" as we know it is always already food reproduction and as such it is tied to the strange reproductive food fantasies indexed by the prefix "Franken." Judith Butler extends this reproductive question by suggesting that *Frankenstein* poses salient questions before its time: can "technology become a way of departing from and criticizing established familial norms" or does it "figure a kind of monstrosity, associated with … the technological mastery of life processes?" (Butler 45). While Butler touches on the relationship between technology and desire as potentially queer, she makes less explicit the manner in which what makes the novel queer is not the triumph of Victor's science over heterosexual reproduction; it is the transgender maternal fantasy from which he creates his monster. Barbara Johnson calls this impulse Victor's "catastrophic male womb envy" (Johnson 23). However, as I suggest, Victor, and the maternal desire that he harbors, carry his creature to term. So, if it is womb envy, it is not marked by the failed appropriation signaled by Johnson's playful reinscription of "penis envy." To apply the term "Franken," with all of its reproductive baggage, including an undead maternal fantasy, to food is to activate fantasies of reproduction and a relation to an unmourned idea of motherhood and maternity more generally.

Along these lines, genetic modifications of industrially farmed crops not only restructure reproduction, but they do so by perpetuating a scientific fantasy about the limits of life. While Francois sees genetic modification as "the fantasy of having fabricated, and therefore of knowing, the extent of the existent" that "deserves … to be

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[130] In her book *Life as Surplus,* Melinda Cooper argues that postindustrial capitalism depends on the biotechnological interpenetration of economic production and biological reproducing, deploying an interpretative framework that considers GMOs, the pharmaceutical industry, stem-cell technology, and even in vitro fertilization as instantiations of industrial bio-technologies that co-opt and transform the meaning of "life" intervening in reproduction (Cooper 19-24).

thought through the lens of Romantic and post-Romantic assertions of infinity and finitude," I want to suggest that *Frankenstein* and all things Franken, reflect a cultural eating disorder that can be tracked through the persistent maternal fantasy that haunts food reproduction and consumption in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (44).[131]

In order to understand how GMO foods might be rethought in terms of this maternal food fantasy and the technological drive that structures it, I return to Francois' framing of the scientific fantasies that structure Frankensteinian desires:

> As supporters of GMOs like to point out, the appeal of the new biotechnologies is that they do not wage war against the environment, as did older methods of industrial farming that relied on heavy applications of pesticides, but seek to simulate and strengthen the crops' own natural defenses. Incorporating into the genetic makeup of corn Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt), a bacteria naturally found in the environment and long used by organic farmers as a "natural" killer of corn borer worms, *biotechnology is a fantasy of simulation, not mastery, of mimesis, not domination, a fantasy which instantiates the reverential, mimetic impulses that have fueled, as much as they have opposed, the seemingly unstoppable, dizzyingly transformative development of instrumental reason in the West.* (45 emphasis mine)

Equipping corn with its own "natural" defenses against the worms becomes a fantasy of "simulation" and "mimesis." But simulation of what exactly? Francois implies quite

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[131] Marder outlines the "maternal function" in her introduction to *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (4). See also my first and second chapters, "Remorse: *Frankenstein*'s Eating disorders" and "The Mother Palimpsest."

rightly that the modification at the level of genetic code works with material (genes) found in "nature" to enhance the matter of "nature" itself. However, the neutrality of "nature" and "natural" as terms allows the activity to pass for "simulation," when in fact the activity includes radical re-combinations of genetic material that reorganize the distinctions between plant and pesticide, life and death. Moreover, these reorganizations of organic matter from the genetic code on up reframe food reproduction. To operate on life at the level of genetic code is not only to intervene in sexual reproduction, but also to reroute life forms through technological fantasies that quite literally deny death and decay. The genetic modification of corn that allows it to include a pesticide in its biological make up is an attempt to restructure its very "life" so that it can forestall death by worm. Ironically, it does so by killing the worm – a desire that is not a far cry from Victor's own worm fantasies, which allowed him to deny death by using these parasites as agents of his own reproductive food fantasy. Just as Victor used the worm to figure his own internalization of death, the genetically modified corn is marked by a technological desire to resist death through a genetic internalization that literally reconfigures the inside and outside of the plant. Moreover, the survival of the corn is not a fantasy of the corn's satisfied self-abundance, but a human fantasy about food in which the desire to protect crops from worms harbors a secret and unacknowledged desire to protect the undead maternal fantasy of "pure life" from these very same pests that mark and facilitate processes of death, putrefaction, and decay. It is not that the mother is consciously preserved in the foods we eat, but that a fantasy of her uninterrupted and indestructible procreativity inheres in our relation to food production.[132]

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[132] Another name for such a fantasy might very well be "mother Earth."

While Francois devotes a good deal of time to thinking through the philosophical assumptions that undergird Monsanto's "Terminator seeds" and the hegemonic processes by which these seeds ensure and extend property rights, these crops – like Victor's monster and BT corn – re-encode life, reproduction, and death at the genetic level.[133] The language of scientific neutrality in which genetic modification is wrought covers over the fact that plants are sexually reproductive organisms structured by sexual difference. As is well known, Round-Up ready seeds have wreaked havoc on American agriculture, forcing small-scale farmers out of business. Monsanto patents the genetic make-up of their seeds that are engineered to be resistant to the Round-Up pesticides that they also sell (Cooper 22-23). Moreover, these seeds produce plants that are sterile, so that farmers have to buy these Terminator seeds every year. Monsanto has turned food production into big business by manipulating the reproductive life of plants in order to ensure their property rights, encoding life in ways that expel the "improper" pests, seeds, and farmers that threaten its technologically enhanced crops. Terminator seeds literally kill the maternal function of the mother plants. Simultaneously, they preserve and coopt it by engineering maternal death into the life of food reproduction: this is a form of maternal waste. The mother is entombed in the biotechnologies that displace her as a form of waste that ensures the corporate profits of Monsanto's plants.

Monsanto is only one example of the ways in which GMOs have reorganized food reproduction by engineering maternal death into life. My suggestion here is that when the neutral terms "engineering" and "modification" are reframed through *Frankenstein* we can see how Frankenfoods, GMOs, McNuggets, and even Frankenberry

[133] Cooper discusses the relationship between the terminator technology and Monsanto's acquisitive models that engineer the obsolescence of plants into the marketing of life (Cooper 23).

Cereal figure an afterlife for the techno-maternal food fantasies that plague Victor Frankenstein. Importantly, his starvation in the novel forecasts the double-bind of such food products, particularly as GMO business practices devastate traditional farming methods in the developing world. Frankenfoods are not just watchwords for healthy eaters or U.S. agriculture, they speak to a global eating disorder in which food reproduction, which is often an over-production, is used to reproduce power structures and flows of capital that ultimately lead to starvation in the developing world. Indeed, Francois notes, "countering the widely accepted claim that only genetically engineered agriculture can solve the problem of world hunger, such critics as the Organic Consumers Association often cite the statistic that 80 percent of malnourished children in the developing world live in countries producing annual food surpluses."[134] It is not only that Terminator seeds waste a generation of plants, but that genetically engineered crops actually contribute to food waste by producing surplus food and necessitating the use of toxic chemicals that pollute the land. GMO crops and their derivatives (the McNugget and Frankenberry Cereal) become the Frankenstein monsters of the dead landscapes their resistance has helped to create. Toxic foods, food waste, wasted landscapes, and wasting away go hand in hand. In this sense, contemporary modes of food reproduction form the afterlife of Victor Frankenstein's wasted Romanticism. The prefix Franken and the popularity of Frankenfoods as a term for the manipulation of supposedly natural reproductive processes express an anxiety about the ways in which his wasted Romanticism lives on as our food.

II. Designer Drugs and Opiate Technologies: The Afterlife of De Quincey's Addiction

[134] See Vandana Shiva's article "Betting on Biodiversity: Why Genetic Engineering Will Not Feed the Hungry or Save the Planet."

In 2008, drug overdoses superseded automobile accidents as the leading cause of accidental death in the nation.[135] In the last decade of the twentieth century, the United States was struck by an opiate epidemic precipitated by the proliferation of newly developed, heavily marketed prescription painkillers, like OxyContin and Fentanyl. Ironically, these pharmaceutical painkillers have materialized the term "opium-eater" in new ways, which for Thomas De Quincey was always a semi-figurative *nom de plume*; De Quincey drank opium in a laudanum tincture. Fentanyl is available as a lollipop (Actiq); and the warning label on the OxyContin prescription bottle instructs that the pill "should never be chewed" because it "will release a potentially toxic amount of the drug," nullifying its continual release mechanism. Chewing OxyContin is one way in which addicts have learned to abuse it (Quinones 126).[136] If De Quincey's term "opium-eating" reflects the exigencies of opiate use and abuse, it is worth reading the contemporary crisis through De Quincey's idiosyncratic use of the term. As E.S. Burt points out, while De Quincey insists on the figure of the eater throughout his confessional writings, there is an overwhelming lack of eating in his texts (Burt 157).[137] De Quincey almost never eats. In my chapter, "Sister, sister, sister!" I show that De Quincey's account of his stomach pains has less to tell us about his digestive tracts than it does

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[135] This statistic and others in this section are drawn from Sam Quinones book *Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic.* When I refer to information drawn from his text, I will acknowledge this in the notes.

[136] Quinones, noting in the irony of the pharmaceutical drug, suggests that addicts learned how to abuse the drug from its warning label, often chewing, crushing, and snorting the drug. Additionally, the drug is also frequently dissolved in water and injected (Quinones 126).

[137] While, as E.S. Burt points out, the absence of eating in De Quincey's text makes his nom du plume somewhat conspicuous, the Malay in the early episodes of the *Confessions* does in fact "bolt down" three pieces of opium. However, De Quincey himself drank opium in a solution of laudanum, a fact he details in great length. For more on De Quincey's addiction habits see Robert Morrison "De Quincey's Addiction."

about the ways in which opium affects his psyche: he suffers from psychic indigestion. In this sense, "opium-eating" refers less to the activity of taking opium than it does to the psychosomatic symptoms drug addiction produces and the ways in which these symptoms are tied to processes of psychic assimilation and repression. Specifically, De Quincey's psychic indigestion is a symptom of his inability to digest the maternal fluids that opium at once stimulates and displaces. These maternal fluids build up in his system as waste products that reassert themselves as a vision of sudden death. Contemporary literalizations of "opium-eating," concern a process of stimulation and displacement. However, such processes occur at the level of the chemical modifications to opium that have created a series of different opioid drugs whose variable potencies and mechanisms might, in turn, be read through De Quincey's opium habit and the dreams it produced.

Since De Quincey's death in 1859, opium has been transformed on a molecular level many times over in ways that enhance the pleasures and exacerbate the pains that De Quincey recorded in the nineteenth century. However, these molecular transformations have had one aim: ridding opium of the chemical dependence it fosters.[138] Morphine was the first alkaline derived from opium in 1805. By 1817, it was marketed as a cure for opium and alcohol addiction. In the years preceding the twentieth century, drug companies learned how to patent and brand opium's powers through molecular transformations and intellectual property laws extended to these biochemical derivatives (Quinones 52-55). By 1874, long after the general public had realized that morphine was in fact more addicting than opium, the Bayer company added a morphine

[138] Quinones evidences this tendency with a brief history of the Addict Farm, a prison for recovery heroin addicts that became a test site for pharmaceutical grade painkillers. As he describes it, the institution's chemists sought the "holy grail" of painkillers: an opiate that was non-addictive (Quinones 76-79).

derivative to its line of analgesics: they called it "heroin" and sold it to the general public next to their patented Aspirin by 1898.[139] Heroin, in turn, was considered a potential cure for morphine addiction. Since the nineteenth century, morphine and its derivatives have only become more ubiquitous. These chemical derivatives are most often referred to as "surrogates" of the morphine molecule (Al-Hasani and Bruchas online).

In the last decade of the twentieth century, it was theorized that opiate painkillers (morphine's surrogates) were non-addictive when they were used in the treatment of chronic pain, resulting in a boom in the manufacture and distribution of synthetic opioids. Pharmaceutical companies marketed painkillers to general practitioners at unprecedented rates, promising that when properly used the drugs were non-habit forming.[140] Both Fentanyl and OxyContin were released during this period. Although heroin is currently a Schedule I narcotic and illegal to distribute and Fentanyl is Schedule II (a controlled, pharmaceutical substance), Fentanyl is nearly fifty times stronger than pharmaceutical grade heroin and one hundred times more potent than morphine. This means that Fentanyl produces "pain-killing" effects in smaller doses than morphine or heroin. Yet it also means that when Fentanyl is abused for its more potent effects and stronger highs, the risk of overdose and death increases. All pharmaceutical opioids (and indeed all drugs) are labeled with therapeutic, toxic, and lethal doses; even though heroin and

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[139] Aspirin and Heroin actually share the same mechanism, even though their pain killing effects result from different neurochemical actions. The formula through which they release facilitates the transmission of the drug across the blood/brain barrier, speeding up and intensifying their effect. Wilson discusses the transfusion across the blood brain barrier in the "Chemical Transference" from *Gut Feminism*. Specifically, the more fat soluble the molecules the more quickly it crosses the densely packed capillaries that surround the brain (Wilson 100-101).

[140] A congressional report from 2003 investigated Purdue Pharmaceuticals for the aggressive marketing campaign. Following the report, Purdue paid nearly sixty million dollars in a settlement payment for false advertising ("OxyContin Abuse and Diversion and Efforts to Address the Problem" 4-5, 16).

Fentanyl occupy the same class of drugs (opioids), they differ in the strength and duration of their therapeutic effects. As of 2012, Fentanyl was the most widely used synthetic opioid in clinical practice ("Fentanyl and its Analogues" online). Medically, it is used for the treatment of pain in cancer patients and can be delivered intravenously, as a patch, and, more commonly, as a lollipop or lozenge. However, given its potency, wide availability, and low costs Fentanyl has also infiltrated illegal drug markets (Seelye March 25, 2016).[141] It is used to lace heroin, increasing the potency of the street drug in ways that alter the therapeutic, toxic, and lethal doses of the substance. This disrupts a user's ability to calculate these potencies and to predict how much of a drug will get them high versus how much of the drug will kill them. Fentanyl laced heroin has been linked to numerous deaths around the country and in the northeast (Seelye March 25, 2016). The rise in deaths result from the fact that the user can no longer interpret the drug in relation to the tolerance of his or her own body.

Like Fentanyl, OxyContin was first developed for pharmaceutical use in the mid-nineties. Drug companies marketed OxyContin as a non-addictive treatment for chronic pain, using aggressive advertising campaigns that suggested the time-release mechanism would curb any potential for chemical dependence. However, the time-release mechanism only redoubled the drug's addictive potential (Ryan, Girion, and Glober May 5, 2016). OxyContin does not last twelve hours with any regularity, and, as a chemical cousin of heroin, produces symptoms of acute withdrawal as frequently as every six

[141] Katherine Seelye. "Heroin Epidemic is Yielding to a Deadlier Cousin, Fentanyl." *New York Times.* March 25, 2016.

hours.[142] As physicians became increasingly aware that OxyContin is extremely addictive and potentially deadly, they stopped prescribing it so freely, cutting off chemically dependent users. Moreover, OxyContin is expensive. Indeed, a *New York Times* article from 2015 reports that 75% of heroin users first used prescription drugs before turning to heroin (Seeyle October 30, 2015). While OxyContin became less available for the management of pain, the chemical dependencies it fostered remained in the bodies of users, producing a need for cheaper, more readily available opioids like heroin-laced fentanyl.

Perhaps more importantly for my purposes however is the fact that OxyContin and Fentanyl are opioids; they are artificially constructed to resemble this maternal excretion. Just as the technological drive described the ways in which GMOs secrete a desire to deny death through the manipulation of food reproduction and maternal technologies, pharmaceutical experiments with opioids express a technological desire to engineer a painkiller that would numb the body to physical pain without producing physical or psychological dependence, or leading to death – to detoxify the toxic maternal. In a word, experiments in opioid production reflect a desire to unyoke the pleasures of opium-eating from the pains. Yet the word "painkiller" suggests that the obsession with killing pain is also an obsession with engineering a form of "chemical death" that would allay intense physical pain. Painkilling is not necessarily about forestalling death, but about dealing it

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[142] "Over the last 20 years, more than 7 million Americans have abused OxyContin, according to the federal government's National Survey on Drug Use and Health. The drug is widely blamed for setting off the nation's prescription opioid epidemic, which has claimed more than 190,000 lives from overdoses involving OxyContin and other painkillers since 1999." "You Want a Description of Hell? OxyContin's 12 Hour Problem." *LA Times.* Harriet Ryan, Lisa Girion, and Scott Glover. May 5, 2016.

out in artificial doses. Painkillers, whatever their pleasures may be, will always be ineluctably tied to the physical pains it suppresses as well as the pains of addiction and death it potentially produces.

Painkillers work by literally repressing the nervous system's physical responses to outside forces, injuries, and cancerous foreign bodies. Specifically, opioids mimic the body's endogenous opiate mechanisms and are introduced as an exogenous substance that binds to the opiate receptors in the brain (Al-Hasani and Bruchas online). The activation of the opiate-mu receptors in turn inhibits the transmission of pain in the spinal cord and produces a series of other effects in both the central and peripheral nervous systems that are both therapeutic and problematic. While opioids are used therapeutically to shut down the central nervous system's pain response and block the transmission of pain along the body's neural pathways, they bring with them a series of effects that not only (potentially) allay physical pain, but also produce profound effects on a body's respiratory functions and digestive organs (Al-Hasani and Bruchas online). These effects include, but are not limited to euphoria, sedation, difficulty breathing, inability to cough, constriction of the pupils, increased nausea and vomiting, constipation, inability to digest, esophageal reflux, and peristaltic waves in the colon (Al-Hasani and Bruchas online). It is not just the central nervous system which is numbed to pain, the peripheral nervous system is numbed in ways that short-circuit the subject's capacity to swallow or digest food, to cough when something gets caught in the throat, or even to breath. Elizabeth Wilson describes the pharmacokinetics of SSRI anti-depressants with great lucidity in *Gut Feminism*, modeling and analyzing the diffuse effects of this class of drugs across the body's peripheral nervous system, most especially its guts. She argues that the drug's

effects cannot be limited to the ways it affects the central nervous system, but extends to include the material and psychological substrates of the body (Wilson 99-103). I am interested in the ways that the pharmokinetics of opioid painkillers too produce diffuse effects across the central and peripheral nervous systems in which side effects, like dependence and death, cannot be divorced from painkilling. That is, the therapeutic effects of opioids cannot be separated from the effects they have on the body's vital signs. If on the one hand opioids seem to promise life without pain, it does so by engineering a "chemical death" that suppress the body's vital signs. Contemporary morphine surrogates, including the Fentanyl lollipop and the continuous release formula that made OxyContin "safe," not only enhance the therapeutic benefits of the drug, but also simultaneously strengthen and refine the ways in which it delivers small doses of chemical death.

If the contemporary opiate epidemic is exacerbated by the crisis that the variable potencies and mechanisms of designer drugs have generated in search of a non-addictive opioid pain killer, the production of these drugs is shaped by a technological drive that modifies and mimics the morphine molecule with the same fervor that it experiments in BT-Corn and Terminator seeds. Opiates refer to drugs derived from the *organic* material of the poppy plant. Opioids, which are distinct from opiates, refer to the *synthetic* drugs that have been artificially engineered to resemble these organic compounds on a molecular and pharmacokinetic level. The opium plant itself, referred to scientifically as *papaver soniferum,* "sleep bringing poppy," yields a sticky liquid from its seed pod after its petals have fallen away. This liquid is called *lachryma papaveris,* or "poppy tears," and is the crude material that makes opium, heroin, morphine, thebane, codeine, and the

like. These poppy tears are secretions not from the eyes of the plant, but from its reproductive medium — the amniotic fluid of the angiosperm. In *Crack Wars*, Ronell, reading Abraham and Török, attributes addiction to what she calls "the toxic maternal," wherein drugs as a maternal supplement take the place of food and the full presence the mother's body supplied: "The toxic maternal means that while mother's milk is poison [drugs], it still supplies the crucial nourishment that the subject seeks. It suggests, moreover, that the maternal is too close, invading the orifices and skin with no screen protection, as it were, no intervening law to sever the ever-pumping umbilicus" (Ronell 118-119). Opium is itself a toxic maternal substance, derived from the reproductive organs of the plant, then refined, eaten, crushed, snorted, or injected. In the case of intravenous transmission, a technique used by OxyContin users as frequently as heroin users, the hypodermic needle literally perforates the skin, creating new bodily orifices through which this toxic maternal substance, crucial to the addict-subject's "nourishment," is mainlined into the bloodstream through an artificial umbilicus.[143] *Lachryma papaveris*, the scientific name that codes opium as a bodily secretion, suggests that the drug is not only linked to mourning and loss through toxic maternal channels, but also in its name. Its very biochemistry is figured in the language of the mother, tears, sleep, and dreams (morphine/morpheus). Its modes of transmission, from eating to injection, recall the ways in which a toxic maternal excretion is destined to get under the

[143] The hypodermic needle was first invented in 1853, the same year the first volume of De Quincey's revised *Confessions* came out, entitled *Selections Grave and Grey*. The medical community believed that opium's addictive properties were linked to its mode of transmission, assuming that it created hunger-like cravings because users ate or drank it. Intravenous transmission, it was presumed, would bypass these addictive tendencies. As is well known, it only redoubled them. Indeed, the inventor's wife was the first person in history to die from an injected opiate (Quinones 53).

skin.

Along these lines, addiction has been theorized throughout my dissertation in terms of failed mourning with attention to the ways in which eating, whether it is opium or pharmaceutical grade painkillers, figures a desire to swallow death. In *Crack Wars*, Ronell argues that drugs allow users to commemorate absent others by numbing the pain of loss, and hollowing out the addict's own subjectivity in service of the other (Ronell 125). As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, melancholia produces regimes of eating and consumption that are the symptoms of a failure to assimilate the psychic event of death. The contemporary pharmaceutical industry is not only in the business of killing pain, but also of engineering new modes of eating death that may be either therapeutic or lethal. In this sense, we cannot only consider the ways in which morphine and its surrogates ease suffering, nor can we merely insist that they are inherently destructive substances. Rather it is necessary to unpack and interpret the ways that opioids engineer death both biochemically and culturally. If opioids act biologically on the body's nervous system in ways that depress its vital signs, pharmaceutical grade opiates culturally have been developed and tested on the bodies of "disposable" individuals, both human and non-human. That is, the opioids that are deemed "safe" for Westerners, like OxyContnin and Fentanyl – whether or not they are "safe" – were first tested on laboratory animals and prisoners. Indeed, the only way to ascertain the therapeutic, toxic, and lethal doses for a substance, information that *all* prescription drugs are required to provide, is through animal sacrifice.[144]

[144] To fully flesh out this thought it would be necessary not only to think through the increased rates of chemical dependence and overdose or the origins of the pain movement in the treatment of terminal cancer, but also the ethics of pharmaceutical drug trials. These drug trials not only depend on numerous, uncountable, and unacknowledged animal sacrifices (rats, dogs, and even

The afterlife of De Quincey's texts can be discerned in the technological drive that structures the pharmaceutical experiments of opiate production and the ways in which it engineers death both chemically and culturally. If opium is the "tears" from a mother plant, the surrogates derived from her secretions, like Fentanyl and OxyContin, may be conceived as substitutes, derived from the secretions of a "mother" plant.[145] Yet "surrogate," which etymologically means substitute, also carries connotations of pregnancy – of carrying to term a child that is not one's own. These surrogates are "sisters" to one another insofar as they refer to and displace the same "mother." I gender their lateral relation to one another because not only are they derived from a the substance produced by a female plant – a "mother" – they are, like De Quincey's sisters, surrogates or substitutes for the near-death experience that the mother doles out.[146] As I suggest in my chapter, "Mother Palimpsest: Opium Dreams and the Mechanical Reproduction of Sisters," De Quincey's mother Palimpsest looms over his autobiographical account as a strangely displaced and displacing maternal technology that fuels the complex delirium of his opium dreams, peopling them with sister figures who repeat and recast the near-death experience the mother records. The surrogates of the mother poppy, like those of the mother palimpsest, are "sisters" that retain the deadly visions of the mother and recirculate them, renewing the dream of life without death.

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primates), but also are given their first human trials in India before they are tested in the west (Prasad 2). Amit Prasad, "Capitalizing Disease: Biopolitics of Drug Trials in India." *Theory, Culture & Society* September 2009. 26: 1-29,

[145] It is worth noting that the temporal mechanisms and differences between these two drugs also seem to echo the temporalizing effects I trace at work in De Quincey's sisters, as well as his obsession with keeping time in dosages of laudanum.

[146] Incest of course is always a possibility, but for De Quincey, the specter of incest concerns the strange status of his sisters who are simultaneously evidence of a reproductive mother (Palimpsest) and themselves profoundly non-reproductive: they are all lost, dead, or gone forever.

Indeed, De Quincey's dreams often include the fantasy of evading death, of his sisters having assisted him in the evasion of such a death, particularly as they populate his dreams with opiated visions of a celestial afterlife.

In this sense, De Quincey's mother palimpsest anticipates contemporary opium dreams structured by a pharmaceutical desire to consume and forestall death through the chemical synthesis of opiates that hold out the promise of non-addiction. In fact, these synthetic drugs and the desire to produce a "sister" that would save us all, have redoubled the addictive properties of opioid painkillers. In 2014, the FDA approved a drug called Targiniq ER that combined time-released oxycodone with naloxone, which is the antidote for an opiate overdose. This newest sister in the annals of opium's daughters suggests that the overdose rate has not curbed our technological drive to produce new and improved ways of consuming death. Indeed, the death is now engineered into the very chemistry of the drug. Rather than addressing the opium dreams which the pharmaceutical industry produces, this new drug engineers the inevitability of overdose into our drugged-up lives.

While never in his wildest dreams did De Quincey imagine such an opium derivative, his own maternal waste and the sisters which it creates speak to the term "opium-eating" as an instructive lens through which to view the contemporary addictions produced by pharmaceutical drugs. Significantly, the pharmaceutical industry is not just out to make money; its business practices reflect a cultural investment in dreams of opium's chemical possibilities. That is, we have always been seduced, like De Quincey, by opium's pleasures, its ability to take pain away, and the maternal waste that undergirds these effects. In our seduction, we are plagued by its pains, its poisons, and its lethal

consequences. Opium and its daughters have always been *pharamkons* that enrapture and enthrall, even as they eviscerate and devastate. De Quincey's texts may not teach us how to overcome such waste, but perhaps may teach us to understand the fantasies that fuel our desire to purify the pleasures of the pains. For, as De Quincey insisted in 1821, there is no pleasure in opium without the most indigestible, unmournable, and even deadly waste.

III. Eating in Brontë's Afterlife: Poetic Reproduction and Eco-Burial

In my chapter "Emily Brontë's Tears," I argued that the melancholic reproduction of the second Heathcliff preserves the life of the first in a man who, in effect, becomes a walking tomb. Unlike the first Heathcliff, the second Heathcliff is not born out of Mrs. Earnshaw; he is born out of a melancholic substitution that is also a reproductive act. That is, the second Heathcliff – the only grave marker his namesake receives in the novel— is an organic tombstone that reproduces and decomposes the memory of the first son. This substitution of one Heathcliff for another, which is simultaneously a reproduction and decomposition, displaces the discourse of mourning in the novel. Moreover, the decomposition that sustains Heathcliff's reproductive function is embodied by the entanglement of fertile landscapes and moldering remains. Heathcliff, after all, is a name hewn from the moors, calling to mind the plants, weeds, and wild flowers that inhabit Brontë's landscapes. In this sense, Heathcliff disrupts the Earnshaw's ability to mourn, even as he reproduces and decomposes the memory of the first son in ways that fertilize the novel's wild landscapes.

In the novel's last moments, we are even invited to imagine, against Lockwood's credulous narration, the ways in which Heathcliff, Catherine, and Linton survive as an

interplay between the vegetation and the soil:

> The middle one grey, and half buried in heath — Edgar Linton's only harmonized by the turf, and so creeping up its foot — Heathcliff's still bare. I lingered round them under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth. (258)

The novel's last breaths intermingle and reinfuse the memories of each character by reanimating their gravesites with the vital signs of Brontë's moors. Even if Heathcliff is dead, the "heath" remains alive and the wind that "breathes" through the grasses recalls the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff that the novel's narrative never quite dispels. The afterlife of *Wuthering Heights,* in this sense, has always been its inability to bury its dead. It is a novel obsessed with graves and yet no grave ever remains undisturbed. Even when Catherine's corpse is exhumed and her body lies there preserved, Heathcliff, looking on her, is told that one gust of wind or breath would turn her body into dust (220). The erotic fantasies at play each time Heathcliff exhumes Catherine's body culminate in the fear and simultaneous desire that she will decompose. He even dreams of "dissolving with her and being more happy still" (220). Necrophilia in *Wuthering Heights* does not describe explicit sexual acts, but rather the tendency to figure sexuality and its reproductive potential through gravesites. At its most necrophilic moments, *Wuthering Heights* rejects traditional funeral rites for the passions of its landscapes, rewriting the afterlife out of a Christian tradition and into visions of life beyond death that tend toward organic dispersal.

The natural landscape has long since been a primary focus of Brontë scholars who are particularly interested in the ways nature inscribes the literary and psychological significance of her work. Margaret Homans argues that Brontë's landscapes are infused with symbolic potentials that lie outside patriarchal law, recalling instead the body of the dead mother through ostensibly "natural" reproductive language (Homans 71-73). In this way, landscapes not only become a repository for symbolic meanings that Lockwood's diegetic narration cannot represent – maternity, reproduction, sexuality – they also actively participate in reproducing memories of the dead when language fails to do so. It seems to me that the reproduction of such memories, like the reproduction of the second Heathcliff out of the buried memory of the first, hinges on the appropriation and reinscription of the dead mother's reproductive functions. That is, the fantasy that nature will reproduce those who are dead is wrapped up in the fantasy that "mother earth" can sustain Catherine and Heathcliff and replace their mothers who have both perished. In this sense, *Wuthering Heights*' reproductive fantasies are not only born from a grave called Heathcliff, but result from the ways in which landscape and its "natural" modes of reproduction encroach on and cover over the mourning rites Heathcliff displaces.

In recent years, the biological and chemical waste products of death have compounded environmental waste, reflecting the entanglement of natural landscapes and the grave that structures the melancholic ecology of *Wuthering Heights.* Phillip Olson, discussing the ecological dimensions of funeral practices in the twenty-first century, argues that cemeteries "are kind of like landfills for dead bodies" (Paulus Oct. 30, 2014). Olson explores the ecological costs of mourning rites, as well as the push for "green" alternatives to afterlife care that diminish the waste of death. Shannon Paulus reports that,

"Each year, a million pounds of metal, wood, and concrete are put in the ground to shield dead bodies from the dirt that surrounds them. A single cremation requires about two SUV tanks worth of fuel" (Paulus Oct. 30, 2014). Olson refers to this environmental pollution as "necro-waste." Indeed, a metric that compares the carbon emissions of SUVs to those of funerary incineration asks us to rethink afterlife care in terms of energetic costs and the use of fossil fuels. Where organic matter once decayed and recombined with minerals over time to produce the raw material of fossil fuels, we now use these ever-precious resources to incinerate the organic matter that might – eons later – reproduce them. However, even as Olson focuses on the environmental costs of "necro-waste," he does not reflect explicitly on the desires that produce such waste.

"Metal, wood, and concrete" are intended to "shield dead bodies from the dirt that surrounds them," protecting them, like Catherine's corpse, from the earth into which they otherwise would decompose. Coffins, as Nelly points out to Heathcliff, protect corpses from such a fate, preserving the dead from decay in order to retain a fantasy of bodily integrity. Contemporary mainstream funeral practices, and the often astronomical costs of funeral rites, result from similar fantasies of preservation, manufacturing containers that seal bodies off from the earth that might decompose them. The practice of embalming replaces bodily fluids with chemicals like formaldehyde and rubbing alcohol that preserve the body. Embalming as a process keeps the corpse from deteriorating and makes open-casket funerals more practical. However, such practices not only ensure that a body will "keep" longer, but in so doing preserve a fantasy of life even as mourners are asked to come face to face with death. Just as the casket preserves a corpse from the worms and bacteria that threaten to decompose it, embalming and the cosmetic

reconstruction of corpses participate in a fantasy of bodily integrity, preservation, and the illusion of a postmortem identity in the face of death. These preservation chemicals leach over time from the body, contaminating the earth around it as the corpse inevitably decomposes. Ironically, the mourning rites that embalming reinforce also bear the traces of a melancholic attitude toward the very bodies they try to preserve from time and decay. That is, the desire to preserve the corpse is also a desire to deny what it means to die: decay, putrefaction, and dissolution of bodily, psychic, and subjective integrity.[147]

Contemporary eco-funerals, however, replace embalming fluids, like formaldehyde and rubbing alcohol, with essential oils and metal coffins with decomposable cedar, or even forego the coffin altogether for a "natural burial" in a shroud. In major cities, there are even plans to dispose of bodies in "industrial-sized compost bins" that will allow the waste of death to become fertilizer for our future (Paulus).[148] Perhaps, more peculiarly, alkaline hydrolysis, a method commonly known as "green cremation," dissolves bodies using a chemical bath in a pressurized chamber which allows the remains to be safely flushed into the sewer system. This method of cremation, however, resembles less the incineration processes from which it takes its name, and more evocatively recalls a process of digestion. The body is literally eaten away by the chemical agents in a pressurized "stomach" from which it is expelled as

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[147] While I refer to contemporary funeral practices like embalming, it is worth noting that mourning rites vary widely depending on cultural and religious practices. Still, in the United States, embalming came into vogue during the Civil War and was incorporated into mainstream funeral practices by late 1880s. As Gary Laderman argues in his book *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America*, it is "a uniquely American way to dispose of the dead" (Laderman 14-16).

[148] The Urban Death Project has planned a three-story underground pit, filled with "microbes" that decompose the bodies into compost, folding bodies "back into the communities where they have lived" (Paulus).

sewage, becoming a form of technologically produced excrement. “Green cremation” literalizes the ways in which eco-funeral practices harbor fantasies of eating, being eaten away, and excreted. Death is not something to be preserved, but digested.

This is not to say that eco-funeral practices are less or more melancholic than more traditional methods of afterlife memorialization. Rather, eco-funerals, like *Wuthering Heights*, reinvest the intransigent melancholia of death in figures of dissolution and decomposition, as opposed to preservation. In this sense, eco-funerals recognize how necro-waste can be disposed of only through mourning rites that reconceive of death’s waste in terms of fantasies of digestion, excretion, and rebirth. That is, eco-mourning, if there is such a thing, hinges on the materialization of the melancholic eating habits that have undergirded “Wasting Romanticism” as mourning rites – incorporation made manifest and, as it were, partially, but never completely, worked through.

In this context, I want to turn briefly to burial pods in order to read eco-burial practices through *Wuthering Heights*. Twenty-first century burial pods reveal how versions of afterlife at work in Brontë’s novel not only survive in the form of eco-burial, but allow us to study the melancholic reproductive fantasies on which such eco-afterlives turn. In recent years, an Italian company has developed pods designed to transform a person’s remains into a tree. Ironically, this organic process in which putrefaction and decay lead to rebirth echoes lines from Emily Brontë’s poem “Death”: [death] “Strike it down that others may flourish/ where that perished sapling used to be;/ Thus at least its moldering corpse will nourish/ that from which it sprung –Eternity” (Brontë 25). As Janet Gezari emphasizes, “Death” uses the tree as an allegorical figure for the temporal

limits of life and thereby derives an "Eternity" that is reproduced from the "mouldering corpse." This is, in Gezari's view, Brontë's vision of an afterlife (Gezari 121). The burial pods developed by *Capsula Mundi* are material instantiations of this fantasy, reproducing a version of afterlife out of organic matter that takes its nourishment from a "mouldering corpse." Moreover, these reproductive fantasies materialize acts of incorporation, which are fantasies of eating and being eaten – fantasies, that is, of wasting. The website for *Capsula Mundi* describes the burial process:

> Bodies will be laid down in a *fetal position* in larger pods. The pod will then be buried as a *seed in the earth*. A tree, chosen in life by the deceased, will be planted on top of it and serve as a memorial for the departed and as a legacy for posterity and the future of our planet. Family and friends will continue to care for the tree as it grows. Cemeteries will acquire a new look and, instead of the cold grey landscape we see today, they will grow into vibrant woodlands. (*Capusla Mundi.it*)

The pods, referred to as an "egg," position corpses as fetuses and reframe dead bodies as reproductive embryos. However, the embryo is described as a "seed," rhetorically converting the mammalian fetal position into a nutrient-rich ovule that supplies reproductive energy for vegetal life. The corpse's putrefaction becomes plant food. The tree, born from this "seed" is not only infused with the raw material of a composted corpse-fetus, but friends and family are encouraged to conceive of the tree as a mode of memory and life that is born out of the vegetal digestion of a loved one's remains. The plants are eating us.

In order to maintain this fantasy of the tree as monument, an organic tombstone, and an afterlife, the burial pods must control the way that the body decays and the way the tree metabolizes it. The corpse-embryo, rather than maturing to be born, decomposes and is digested in order to reproduce life from waste. While the technology that manages this decomposition first shapes the corpse into an artificial womb, it inverts the processes of feeding that originally defined the relationship between the fetus and the maternal body. The womb decomposes and the fetus around it is eaten:

> The material of the Capsula is a bio-polymer which is a polymer derived from seasonal plants. It is completely biodegradable and, if buried, becomes decomposed by microorganisms in the ground. This kind of material does not impede the natural transformation of organic substances of which we are made and allows the organic matter to transform into minerals, integrating the earth with nutrients for vegetative organisms. A tree will be planted over the buried Capsula, so a new form of life starts living and gives back oxygen and nutrients for others living species. (*Capusla Mundi.it*)

The container, shaped to mimic the mammalian womb, is made of dead plants that enshroud the dead body. The bio-polymer is plant-waste, derived from organic material and technologically refined in order to restage the process of gestation as disintegration. Where the mammalian womb and its placental viscera nourishes and protects a fetus, this dead and artificial womb is eaten by microorganisms leaving the fetus-corpse to be dissolved and reintegrated into "minerals," "earth," and "nutrients" for "vegetative organisms." It is fertile waste.

Rather than maintaining the fantasy of a maternal body and the plentiful food she supplies, the burial pod puts such fantasies into reverse: the manufactured maternal body transforms the corpse-fetus into food. The benign imagery in the website description distances itself from the unruly and threatening aspects of its own visions of eco-transformation. In this regard, the maternal body bites back in an aggressive reinscription of her reproductive function as cannibalistic, parasitic, and even murderous. The maternal fantasy goes bad and, rather than preserving an unending connection figured through food, this mother consumes and wastes the infant in order to give birth to new life. The fantasy is completed when the tree, feeding off of the decomposed fetus-corpse, breathes oxygen and nutrients back into the atmosphere that it has derived energetically from the burial pod. Like the melancholic maternal fantasies that link Frankenfoods and prescription painkillers to dreams of "pure life" and unending food supplies, these capsules reinscribe melancholic eating as itself a source of life, birth, and reproduction. However, unlike the Frankenfoods and prescription painkillers that denied death, these burial pods take death and its waste as the necessary possibility for life.

Even as they replace embalming with composting and the desire to preserve corpses against decay with a desire to put decay to work, burial pods consequently participate in fantasies of life and afterlife that redouble reproductive fantasies about the earth. As I have suggested, the maternal function at work in eco-burial can be read through Emily Brontë's post-Romantic revisions of life, death, landscape, and poetry. If my last chapter argued that the central drama of Brontë's novel relies on the atmospheric conversions of grief that give rise to confusions among tears, breath, alcoholic sprits, and ghosts, then contemporary eco-funeral practices that convert grief into new life forms,

urban compost heaps, and "vibrant woodlands" reflect a distinctly Brontë-esque view of life and death. Specifically, the waste of death in both cases is converted into the "bracing ventilations" of a hauntingly reproductive afterlife.

IV. The Ends of Afterlife: Mourning, Transmission, Reproduction

Wuthering Heights and Brontë's poetry offer accounts of the afterlife that many critics point out are, at times, heretically divorced from the Christian tradition. However, Brontë is less concerned with rejecting this tradition, then she is with figuring afterlife and mourning as modes of transmission. Indeed, her "last" poem, "No coward soul is mine" has been read as a lyric that theorizes poetry itself as a mode of survival.[149] The poem announces the speaker's fearlessness in the face of death, calling on "God within my breast" to preserve her against mortality. However, as the poem unfolds, God becomes less and less recognizable. As Gezari argues, by stanza five the poem seems to have reconceived of divinity in a more diffuse and plastic form that recalls Coleridge's secondary imagination: "with wide-embracing love/ Thy spirit animates eternal years/ pervades and broods above/ Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears" (Brontë 182, Gezari 131-134). Gezari claims that Brontë offers a version of afterlife that is the poem itself and, specifically, the powers of imagination, rendered, as it is, in explicitly reproductive language.[150] This language, like the ads for burial pods, does not move from

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[149] Charlotte Brontë suggests that "No Coward Soul" was the last poem Emily ever wrote. However, not only did Charlotte heavily edit the version she published of the poem, it was not, in fact, Emily's last poem. As Gezari argues, Charlotte edited these "last poems" for the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* in an effort to shape the public reception of Emily as a woman and an author (Gezari 134). Charlotte's revisions are often far more conservative than Emily's original poems, placing a more Christian God at the center of the texts.

[150] Gezari eagerly highlights the differences between Coleridge and Brontë as differences that turn on Brontë's use of creative language, as opposed to Coleridge's descriptions of "recreation."

birth to death, but contrariwise. "Creates and rears" follow an act of dissolution that supervenes on the verbs "pervades, broods, changes, and sustains." There is no act of creation or birth prior to the dissolution.

However, as the last two stanzas of the poem make clear, such a diffuse and reproductive afterlife imprints itself not only in the wind or on the landscape as trees, flowers, or other organic life, but in the very fabric of existence:

> Though Earth and moon were gone
> And suns and universes ceased to be
> And Thou wert left alone
> Every Existence would exist in thee. (Brontë 182)

Even after apocalyptic catastrophe –climatological or cosmological – Brontë figures the poem as an archive of life after death whose very reproductive power emanates from the destruction of all else, including the "earth and moon," the "sun and universes" beyond our own. The line "every existence would exist in thee" claims that the afterlife of the speaker has been imprinted not merely into the poem or the literary object, but in the act of poetic reproduction that carries with it all possibilities – pervading, brooding, changing, sustaining, dissolving, creating, and rearing – that are the reproductive modes endemic to poetic afterlife. Even if the poem itself is incinerated, the reproductive afterlife of the poem lives on after all dissolution and even takes its procreative power from such destruction.

> There is not room for Death

Coleridge writes of secondary imagination: "It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate" (Gezari 131-132).

Nor atom that his might could render void

Since thou art Being and Breath

And what thou art may never be destroyed. (Brontë 182)

The insistence that there is no room for death is not merely ironic, but a version of afterlife in which the act of literary or imaginative production sets in motion a reproductive cycle that exceeds all mortal economies, propelling itself into the future on a chain of verbs: "pervades, broods, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears."[151] The final two lines of the poem make a strong ontological claim: the poem, as breath, is transfused into a mode of being, just as a corpse might be transfused into a tree and its oxygenated emissions. The repetition of the apostrophe "thou art" may be read as an antiquated declarative statement "you are" that, like Dorothy Wordsworth's utterance "Oh the darling" with which this study began, simultaneously addresses and produces an absent other. Yet "thou art" might also be read as an apostrophe to "Art" itself that, in keeping with the aims of the poem, reflects on the reproductive power of aesthetic practices like poetry. "Thou art" as the personification of aesthetic practice is yoked to being and breath in ways that tie Brontë's poetic and literary production to her definitions of life. However, the second "thou art" cannot be read as repetition of the same. Rather "what thou art may never be destroyed" encourages us to read a reflexive figure behind the

[151] This line is reminiscent of Emily Dickinson's line "Because I could not stop for death." Dickinson was a reader of Brontë's poetry and asked that "No coward soul is mine" be read at her funeral. Gezari devotes the chapter of her book *Last Things* entitled "Last Things" to considering the significance of this request in light of Dickinson's question "Did you ever read one of her poem's backwards, because the plunge/ from the front overturned you?" (Gezari 8). Gezari, following Susan Howe, speculates that Brontë's poem was not only read at Dickinson's funereal, but that Brontë was the poet that Dickinson read backwards (8-9). I only want to point out that the desire to read this Brontë poem backwards reverses (again) the already contrariwise reproductive process, perhaps allaying the "plunge from the front."

apostrophe to an other. In this sense, what one produces as art can never be destroyed precisely for the ways the previous line personified art as a mode of "Being and Breath" that actually outlives all forms of death. As I have suggested, breath for Brontë is never associated with self-contained states. Rather, the transfusion of breath, wind, and spirit in her novel is reflected here in the hauntological mode figured through the chain of reproductive and destructive verbs. By this metric, art itself – its personified "Being and Breath" – become a form of waste.

It is in this manner that this conclusion and its theory of afterlife ought to be read. Brontë imagines a way of existing postmortem that is not limited to the disturbing ways in which her novel dreams of life after death. Rather, she engages in a rewriting of poetic imagination as reproductive waste that never ends, even at the end of the world. In the same way, the mode of poetic transmission called "afterlife" never finishes. It "pervades and broods" in ways that saturate the atmosphere and transform its boundaries and significance. Similarly, the afterlives addressed in this chapter have considered the ways in which Shelley, De Quincey, and Brontë "pervade, brood," and even waste within cultural memory such that they are subject to, at times, illogical and counterintuitive actions: "sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears." "Wasting Romanticism" tracks the ways in which melancholia and its acts of wasting produce these actions, and, simultaneously, it suggests that these actions are ultimately the modes through which these texts are transmitted. In this way, this final afterlife includes and completes the other two because it considers how afterlives – whether they are a matter of funeral rites, Frankenfoods, opium-eating, or even poetic imagination – always involve a theory of survival that does not limit a literary text as a cultural object, but reimagines these literary texts as part of a

cultural atmosphere that infuses contemporary attitudes toward eating, life, death, and reproduction.

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