

REFIGURING THE FALL:  
SHAME AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN WORDSWORTH,  
MARY SHELLEY, AND KEATS

by

JAMES C. HATCH

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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Abstract

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JAMES C. HATCH

Advisor: Prof. Joshua Wilner

*Refiguring the Fall* examines four Romantic works in which shame is of central importance: Wordsworth's "Nutting" and the first book of *The Excursion*; Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*; and Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*. The particular parts of these works covered are ones with intertextual connections to book 9 of *Paradise Lost* (and in the case of Keats, to Dante's *Purgatorio*); they are also instances of learning or instruction. Given Romanticism's importance in the formation of psychoanalysis, these moments of shame would usually be described in terms of guilt. Guilt, however, which has a structure of exchange that includes the possibilities of debt and reparation, is a highly developed and social emotion. In psychoanalytic terms it depends on anxiety and the fear of punishment. But underneath and previous to guilt is an affect more primitive than the typically Romantic emotions whose structures are those of exchange (guilt), giving (joy), or collapse (dejection). This is the affect of shame, as described by the American psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991) in his *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* (4 vols., 1962-1992). Tomkins sees shame as an innate affect that moderates other affects. It springs from the interruption of the

interocular circuit between mother and child and is a reaction not to what is “wrong” or the source of possible punishment and anxiety, but to what is “strange,” the fact of interruption itself. Tomkins’s formulation of shame can describe an intertextuality that involves violation and shame independent of any Oedipal cause for guilt. Because each affect must be moderated by shame for it to have shape and contour—for it to become “other”—and for it thus to make itself present in relation to another affect, shame can be seen as helping temporality become real in consciousness and in narrative. In this way, shame as Tomkins enunciates it is the affective corollary to allegory.

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Introduction:  
Shame, Romanticism, and Allegory

1.

Whether it is connected with Rousseauvian primitivism, the irrational, the renewal of religious experience (from Blake's mythopoesis to the importance of *Gefühl* in Schleiermacher's theology), the expressive theory of poetry, revolution and reaction, aesthetics (the achievement of "immediacy"),<sup>1</sup> or the isolated individual cut off from the supposed reassurances of the Enlightenment, emotion finds its way into many if not most general critical schemata of Romanticism.<sup>2</sup> One thinks in the context of English poetry almost automatically of joy (the crucial peripety near the end of the "Immortality Ode," "Tintern Abbey") or dejection ("Dejection: An Ode," *Alastor*) or guilt (*Manfred*, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*). The prominence of extreme emotions in Romantic poetry is also consistent with the aesthetic valuation of the sublime that is usually pointed to as typically Romantic. When associating an emotion with the psychoanalytic structures whose genesis can be located in Romanticism—i.e., repression, identification, the Oedipal conflict, etc.—it is guilt that would seem to function as the affective signal of psychoanalysis's beginnings. The structure of guilt, however—one of exchange, the possibilities of debt and reparation—is a highly developed and social one. But what

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<sup>1</sup> The problem is one also of interpretation, and therefore hermeneutics: "An aesthetics of pictorialism is replaced by one based on feeling as a way of achieving 'immediacy,' making meaning present." Tilottama Rajan, *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> I am referring here to broad generalizations which, of course, have their limitations, perhaps especially in the case of Romanticism. The question of how far a certain attitude towards emotion can be seen as definitional of "Romanticism" fades all too quickly into the question of what "Romanticism" is. The answers to this question have not grown any clearer since Lovejoy's classic essay, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms."

Romantic representations of joy, dejection, and guilt also rest on is the imagination, and imagination's origin, for the Romantics, is typically deprivation, denial, emptiness, and death.<sup>3</sup> That which blocks or impedes cognition, desire, or mimesis itself forms, as a boundary, the shape and the force of the imagination. If one is to find an affect that corresponds to this, such an affect must be (to use a Romantic description) more primitive than emotions whose structures are those of exchange (guilt), giving (joy), or collapse (dejection). Such an affect is shame.

This dissertation looks at four moments that involve familiar Romantic encounters with the problem of the self and of learning where shame is present: these moments occur in Wordsworth's "Nutting" and the first book of *The Excursion*; Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*; and Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*. The moments chosen have a certain obviousness (the boy's shame at seeing the ruined bower; the Poet's sudden sympathetic entry into the Wanderer's story; the Creature's catching sight of himself in a pool of water; the unveiling of Moneta's face). In reading them in terms of the phenomenology of shame rather than the moral or ethical structure of guilt, I hope to gain some insight into the peculiar power of these moments. One could pursue the issue of shame in other instances as well, especially in Wordsworth: one thinks of the bashfulness of the brother in "The Two Brothers"; the terrible sense of impropriety in "Laodamia"; the Vaudracour and Julia episode of *The Prelude* (1805); the Maid of Buttermere; the Boy of Winander. But the moments I have chosen to treat also

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<sup>3</sup> This deprivation may also be related to ruination. Ruination and the fragment as central to Romantic literature are treated in Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Modalities of Fragmentation* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981). See esp. pp. 3-55. It is important to note that the deprivation in question here is not cognate with the exchange structure of guilt (detailed below), for what is denied or deprived cannot be restored.

have a certain clarity in their intertextuality: all have a fairly clear relationship to earlier texts, especially *Paradise Lost* (and in the case of *The Fall of Hyperion*, Dante's *Purgatorio*). As in any intertextual relationship, the two texts read each other, and it is this aspect, in conjunction with shame, rather than the psychoanalytical or biographical position of the works—a matter already handled with consummate mastery by Harold Bloom—that is of interest here.<sup>4</sup> In the specular encounter of texts the “pre-text” or “intertext” is not determinative or preeminent: instead, the interplay of texts and how, in the process of reading, we coordinate levels of affect, reference, and figural language (tropes), are what may be said to make the presence of intertexts in these Romantic works of interest. A “pre-text” will not exist without a text, so that the presence of *Paradise Lost* or *Purgatorio* in these Romantic texts is more than memory or reference: indeed, it is an indication of the Romantic texts' own self-realization, their consciousness of themselves as already implicated in narratives of lack, deprivation, and death. This self-realization is not, however, simply a blind repetition of the patterns of Christian eschatology: it centers on emotion rather than on belief, so that in seeing the ruined works of the Western canon—works whose intellectual (that is to say, religious) content most of the Romantics never fully embraced—these Romantic works begin the task of theorizing the processes later delineated by Freud, particularly identification and repression.

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<sup>4</sup> In a sense, any attempt to look at Romantic poetry in terms of psychology (not just psychoanalysis) and intertextuality can only be a footnote to Bloom's great works of imagination and synthesis. See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973); *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975); and *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976). Bloom's work necessarily stresses Freudian “anxiety.” In following Tomkins, I hope to highlight other psychological events.

What I have phrased drastically above as the Romantic text's realization of itself as "implicated" in earlier narratives of ruin is a statement in terms of affect of the most current ideas of intertextuality, which Barbara Johnson summarizes as "the multitude of ways a text has of not being self-contained, of being traversed by otherness." Johnson writes, "The integrity and intentional self-identity of the individual text are put in question in ways that have nothing to do with the concepts of originality and derivativeness, since the very notion of a self-contained literary 'property' is shown to be an illusion."<sup>5</sup> One can see that intertextuality, when it threatens the self-sufficiency of a text, can raise issues of violation and shame independent of any Oedipal cause for guilt. The decorous intertextuality of Neoclassical poetry, where citation inserts the author into a tradition, is turned into something potentially threatening when the author is working—as all Romantic writers are, to some extent—towards originality. As Johnson points out, current theories of intertextuality are influenced by Freud's idea of the unconscious; but the intertextuality of Romantic texts—the texts that are part of the foundation of psychoanalysis—manifests not only the Oedipal struggle and the attendant anxieties of guilt but something older, the realization of inherent existential insufficiency which can be described as shame.

## 2.

Since shame is at issue here, we must try to define it. There is a congeries of affects and emotions—shame, guilt, bashfulness, shyness—relating to the apprehension of the self, or self-consciousness. Shame is not always precisely the same as *modesty*,

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<sup>5</sup> "Les Fleurs du mal armé: Some Reflections on Intertextuality," in Chaviva Hošek and Patricia Parker, eds., *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U P, 1985), pp. 264-80, 264.

which, though it may be a related emotion, has a very different effect from shame. Modesty prevents shame, wards off disgrace. As *pudeur* is to *honte*, or *Schande* to *Scham*, or *vergona* to  *Pudore*, so *modesty* is to *shame*.<sup>6</sup> With modesty we are dealing already with a highly developed system of social signals and conventions. This is true even though the blush, which Darwin considered one of humanity's defining features,<sup>7</sup> seems uncontrollable. It displays, in social terms, the reassuring presence of a correct attitude, which means in the case of the eighteenth-century novel of sentiment, good breeding, the triumph of innate morality that enables one to be "well brought up."<sup>8</sup> As

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<sup>6</sup> But apparently, not *aiskune* to *aidos*: see David Konstan, "Shame in Ancient Greece," *Social Research* 70 (2003): 1031-60.

<sup>7</sup> See *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), pp. 309-46. For Darwin, "Blushing is the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions" (p. 309), and it is of great concern to determine whether people of different races blush (pp. 315-20).

<sup>8</sup> See Ruth Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel* (Chicago: U of Chicago p, 1991). This quality is shared with the high-born characters of romance (whose innate goodness shines through their disguises), but since the middle class also necessarily must rely on self-discipline in their self-definition (they must be better than both aristocrats and plebs in their behavior), bashfulness is, as Dr. Johnson put it, "that short and temporary shame, which secures us from the danger of lasting reproach" and brings us into moral line of proper Christian humility ("No cause more frequently produces bashfulness than too high an opinion of our own importance") (*The Rambler*, no. 159 [September 24, 1751], quoted by Christopher Ricks, *Keats and Embarrassment* [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1974], pp. 87-88.) The blush is indeed part of the phenomenology of shame, and its apparently involuntary nature functions in the idea of modesty as a reassurance of genetic propriety. The importance of the blush in the novel, the genre of middle-class self-justification, thus bears some relationship to that class's self-presentation vis-à-vis the aristocracy's unassailable position undergirded by "blood," as well as a perhaps more distant relationship to the emerging ideology of racism that helps provide the middle and upper classes with income from the slave plantations of the colonies. The contradictions in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave. A True History* (1688) are symptomatic of some of the complications of the relationship between the blush and race. Oroonoko has "European" features which mark him as noble: "His Nose was rising and *Roman*, instead of *African* and flat. His Mouth, the finest shap'd that cou'd be seen; far from those great turn'd Lips, which are so natural to the rest of the

shame and modesty may be related but different, shame is often differentiated from guilt. Though I would say that guilt is inherently social, relying as it does on a structure of exchange, an anthropologist might take the situation of a person in a social situation as determining the opposite:

[T]here is a long-standing notion that shame is a more “public” emotion than guilt. Shame is seen as arising from public exposure and disapproval of some shortcoming or transgression, whereas guilt is seen as a more “private” experience arising from self-generated pangs of conscience.<sup>9</sup>

Psychoanalysts will see the distinction between guilt and shame as determined by a struggle between the ego (or an ego-ideal) and the superego in the former case and a similar struggle between the ego and the ego-ideal in the latter.<sup>10</sup> Or guilt can be seen as focused on an act and shame on the self:

The experience of shame is directly about the *self*, which is the focus of evaluation. In guilt, the self is not the central object of negative evaluation, but rather the *thing* done or undone is the focus. In guilt, the self is negatively evaluated in connection with something but is not itself the focus of the experience.<sup>11</sup>

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*Negroes*. The whole Proportion and Air of his Face was so noble, and exactly form'd, that, bating his Colour, there cou'd be nothing in Nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome.” As such, Oroonoko is almost outside his race: he has “a native Beauty so transcending all those of his gloomy Race.” But Behn also insists that blacks can blush (and in this way are *like* whites): “And I have observ'd, 'tis a very great Error in those, who laugh when one says, A Negro *can change Colour*; for I have seen 'em as frequently blush, and look pale, and that as visibly as ever I saw in the most beautiful *White*.” Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*, ed. Joanna Lipking (New York: Norton, 1997), pp. 13, 12, and 19.

<sup>9</sup> June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: Guilford P, 2002), p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> Helen Block Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (New York: International Universities P, 1971), p. 30. Quoted in Tangney and Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*, p. 14.

Guilt can also be seen as a long-term predicament that can be “made right” in some way: the emphasis on something separate from the self—an act or oversight—allows this. In Nietzsche’s analysis of guilt, it is literally what the German word *Schuld* means: a debt to be paid.<sup>12</sup>

The phenomenology of shame is compelling; it takes forms which, if they are extended through time, can kill. As Carroll E. Izard describes it, in shame “The self is seen as small, helpless, frozen, emotionally hurt. The self is seen as foolish, inept, out-of-place. The domination of consciousness by the self and by self-imaging results in a temporary inability to think logically and efficiently. In shame one feels a loss of words.”<sup>13</sup> It is the job of religious penance and the “talking cure” to find ways to overcome this “loss of words,” so that shame can be relieved. In the case of penance, the phenomenology of shame is channeled into a structure of guilt, or exchange, so that a feeling of shame can be verbalized as “I have sinned,” and the sin, having been named, can ultimately be absolved. In the talking cure, the etiology of the feeling of shame is uncovered and worked out; once articulated, it can be overcome.

Descriptions of shame have certain elements in common—looking, the eye, and the face (even guilt involves a “loss of face”). The dropping of the eyes and head are the marker of shame even in very young babies. This cutting off of the ability to

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<sup>12</sup> For Nietzsche, bad conscience (“schlechtes Gewissen”), which perhaps better translates what most of us mean by *guilt*, involves the same blocking structure as is found in Freud’s struggle between the super-ego and the ego or between ego and id: “In its earliest phase bad conscience is nothing other than the instinct of freedom forced to become latent, driven underground, and forced to vent its energy upon itself.” See the second essay (“‘Guilt,’ ‘Bad Conscience,’ and Related Matters”) of *The Genealogy of Morals* in Francis Golfing, trans., *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Doubleday, 1956).

<sup>13</sup> *Human Emotions* (New York: Plenum, 1977), p. 391.

communicate, this interruptive state, is the affect's most primitive enunciation. It was the American psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991) who was able to explain the relationship of this affect to the others we are born with (interest-excitement; enjoyment-joy; surprise-startle; distress-anguish; fear-terror; contempt-disgust and dissmell; and anger-rage) in a way that can account for the immense power of its development into toxic states of guilt and depression, as well as its importance in building social bonds. For Tomkins, shame is "an innate auxiliary affect and a specific inhibitor of continuing interest and enjoyment. . . . The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy" (*AIC* 2:123).<sup>14</sup> There is a "barrier" to the continued interest or excitement: "Such a barrier might be because one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange, or one expected him to be familiar but he suddenly grows unfamiliar, or one started to smile but found one was smiling at a stranger" (*AIC* 2:123).<sup>15</sup> As an affect

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<sup>14</sup> Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 4 vols. (New York: Springer, 1962-1992) (abbreviated in the text as *AIC*). Selections from this work are available in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1995). When Michael Lewis ("The Role of the Self in Shame," *Social Research* 70 [2003]: 1181-1204, p. 1184) comments of this passage that "it is more likely we could transpose the elements and state that shame results in the interruption and termination of excitement and enjoyment," he seems to leave the interruptive state uncategorized and unnamed. If the interruption and partial blocking of joy or interest is not shame, what is it? As Donald L. Nathanson states in his extended treatment of Tomkins's theories (*Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* [New York: Norton, 1992]), "Each affect is an analogue of their [*sic*] triggering stimulus" (67); Lewis's position would apparently leave the particular triggering stimulus Tomkins calls "shame" without any status at all.

<sup>15</sup> Compare Freud's evaluation of children's reactions to strangers, which stresses separation anxiety and libido: "At the very beginning, what children are afraid of is strange *people*; situations only become important because they include people, and impersonal things do not come into account at all until later. But a child is not afraid of these strangers because he attributes evil intentions to them and compares his weakness with their strength. . . . A child is frightened of a strange face because he is adjusted to the sight of a familiar and beloved figure—ultimately of his mother. It is his

then, shame in fact moves between other affects as a boundary line or quickly shifting state. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes,

Shame, like other affects in Tomkins's usage of the term, is not a discrete intrapsychic structure, but a kind of free radical that (in different people and in different cultures) attaches to and permanently intensifies or alters the meaning of—of almost anything: a zone of the body, a sensory system, a prohibited or indeed a permitted behavior, another affect such as anger or arousal, a named entity, a script for interpreting other people's behavior toward oneself. Thus, one of the things that anyone's character or personality is is a record of the highly individual histories by which the fleeting emotion of shame has instituted far more durable, structural changes in one's relational and interpretive strategies toward both self and others.<sup>16</sup>

In the phenomenology of shame that Tomkins outlines, desire forms part of its beginning:

The experience of shame is inevitable for any human being insofar as desire outruns fulfillment sufficiently to attenuate interest without destroying it. The most general sources of shame are the varieties of barriers to the varieties of objects of excitement or enjoyment, which reduce positive affect sufficiently to activate shame, but not so completely that the original object is renounced: 'I want, but—' is one essential condition for the activation of shame. (*AIC* 2:185)

Of all the affects outlined by Tomkins, shame is the one that has temporality built into it, for it contains in itself the awareness of continuity from one affect at one level of excitement to the same affect at a different level of excitement that does not correspond

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disappointment and longing that are transformed into anxiety—his libido, in fact, which has become unemployable, which cannot at that time be held in suspense and is discharged as anxiety. . . . [I]n this situation . . . there is a repetition of the determinant of the first state of anxiety during the act of birth—namely, separation from the mother" (*Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey [New York: Norton, 1966], pp. 505-06).

<sup>16</sup> Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003), p. 62. Insofar as shame has this structuring effect, it would be a worthwhile project to see if shame is then the primary or enabling affect of narrative, the affect that allows literary experience, insofar as narrative relies on the articulation of events.

to the normative and predictable rate of change in neural firing that defines an affect for Tomkins.<sup>17</sup>

Shame is the affect of the face: the outside establishes an inside and the presentation the substance. The surface is where things happen. As Tomkins writes, “Why is shame so close to the experienced self? It is because the self lives in the face, and within the face the self burns brightest in the eyes. Shame turns the attention of the self and others away from other objects to this most visible residence of the self, increases its visibility and thereby generates the torment of self-consciousness” (*AIC* 2:133). The lowered eyes and head of shame break the circuit of looking, the “look-look,” as Tomkins calls it. This may be because the expected look—the smile that should answer the infant’s smile—is not given. Thus it can be seen as a break in a narcissistic energy-circuit. But the “look-look” can be primarily sexual (and for Tomkins, the intimacy of looks is far greater than that of sex), so that the shame that intervenes here is almost more active than reactive as it works to counteract the overwhelming nature of intimacy.

Tomkins’s theory gives shame an extraordinary flexibility or fluidity; its form in an “I want, but—” situation puts it between complete renunciation of what is desired and the obtaining of what is desired. It carries more than one burden at a time: so the shamed child who hides his eyes with his hands will peek out from between his fingers because there has only been a *reduction*, not the *elimination* of joy or interest (*AIC* 2:137). In its role in forming self-consciousness it shares a structure with mourning: “Self-

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<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of this aspect of Tomkins’s theory, see Sedgwick and Frank, “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins,” *Shame and its Sisters*, pp. 1-28, esp. pp. 8-11 (also found in *Touching Feeling*, pp. 93-121, esp. 101-104).

consciousness is heightened by virtue of the unwillingness of the self to renounce the object. In this respect it is not unlike mourning, in which I become exquisitely aware of the self just because I will not surrender the love which must be surrendered” (*AIC* 2:137). Even in an infant unable to feel self-consciousness or to mourn, shame can be part of “depression-withdrawal reaction” (the case of the infant “Monica,” *AIC* 2:124-27).

### 3.

The moments of shame in Romantic literature which I attend to in this work are intertextually related to the paradigmatic moment of shame, the Fall of Man, especially in Milton’s retelling of it and in Dante’s overcoming of the attendant shame when he meets Beatrice at the end of *Purgatorio*. Shame can come from exposure, and exposure can be seen as a kind of ruination, the loss of innocence that is represented in the Bible by the recognition of nakedness. We tend to think of exposure as revelation—the truth coming out, the naked truth revealed. This would make nakedness into the pattern of epistemological certainty. But if shame is associated with nakedness (and this will depend on the situation, the culture, the people involved), nakedness becomes a diminishment and ruination: the naked truth becomes incompleteness and powerlessness. The truism that consciousness is a fall (and “ignorance is bliss”) takes many forms. Before the advent of psychoanalysis, shame in English literature is inextricably associated with religious conversion and with the Fall of Man, as in *Pilgrim’s Progress* and *Paradise Lost*.<sup>18</sup> It is the connection of shame with sin that Milton treats in book 9 of

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<sup>18</sup> A summary treatment of shame in relationship to repentance is found in *The Faerie Queene* 3.12.24:

*Paradise Lost*, not in the context of conversion but of the Fall. Nakedness and the

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Behind him was *Reproch*, *Repentance*, *Shame*;  
*Reproch* the first, *Shame* next, *Repent* behind:  
*Repentance* feeble, sorrowfull, and lame:  
*Reproch* despightfull, carelesse, and vnkind;  
*Shame* most ill fauourd, bestiall, and blind;  
*Shame* lowrd, *Repentance* sigh'd, *Reproch* did scould;  
*Reproch* sharpe stings, *Repentance* whips entwind,  
*Shame* burning brand-yrons in her hand did hold:  
All three to each vnlike, yet all made in one mould.

Also see *FQ* 2.7.22 and 2.9.40-43. Thomas P. Roche, Jr., ed., Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978).

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is illustrative of the many uses of shame. Shame can be the sign of one's awareness of error or wrongdoing, or the sign of one's contrition, as when Christian encounters Evangelist after being misled by Mr. Worldly-Wiseman. The approach of Evangelist is the confirmation that Christian has erred: "And now he began to be sorry that he had taken Mr. *Worldly-Wisemans* counsel; and with that he saw *Evangelist* coming to meet him; at the sight also of whom he began to blush for shame." And on seeing the pillar of salt that had been Lot's wife, Hopeful compares his desire to see the hill Lucre to Lot's wife turning to see the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha: "I am sorry that I Was so foolish . . . ; let Grace be adored, and let me be ashamed, that ever such a thing should be in mine heart" (89). But Bunyan also has the sign of shame, the blush, giving away Demas's deceit: when Christian asks if the silver mine is not dangerous, Demas answers, "Not very dangerous, except to those that are careless: but withal, he *blushed* as he spake" (87). And Talkative blushes as he becomes conscious that Christian and Faithful have seen through him (69). Talkative is someone Christian knows to stay away from: "[G]ood men are ashamed of him, they can neither call him *Brother* nor *Friend*: the very naming of him among them, makes them blush, if they know him" (65). Of course, Shame himself is a character that Faithful encounters. Very often allegories will be metaleptic, exchanging cause for effect (as in "pale death" and "red-faced anger"). Here the allegory undergoes a different kind of transference: Shame is "bold faced" and "audacious," and represents the opinion that scorns the low, the humble, and the "unmanly" (59-61), qualities that a rougher morality sees and despises in the Christian. One might say Shame could also be called "Shaming." The temptation of Shame here is the temptation to be ashamed of one's own Christianity and to follow the (sinful) ways of the world. The association of shame with sin is made most powerfully in Hopeful's description of his conversion experience, when he realizes that Christ can save him: "It made me see that all the World, notwithstanding all the righteousness thereof, is in a state of condemnation. It made me see that God the Father, though he be just, can justly justifie the coming sinner: It made me greatly ashamed of the vileness of my former life, and confounded me with the sence of mine own Ignorance" (117). John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984).

presence or lack of shame are found in Adam and Eve's relationship and the fact that they are the "image" of their creator. When Satan (and the reader) first sees Adam and Eve, they are "Godlike erect, with native Honor clad / In naked Majestie" (4:290-1).<sup>19</sup> Adam is utterly naked, but Eve "as a vail down to the slender waste / Her unadorned golden tresses wore / Dissheveld" (4:304-5). (Milton emphasizes here not the veil so much as how the hair "impli'd / Subjection" [4:306-7] since it is like a vine that curls around a tree and needs pruning and attention.) Nakedness, in this passage, is unruined, the guarantee of its own truthfulness, which is associated with the lack of shame:

Nor those mysterious parts were then conceald,  
Then was not guiltie shame, dishonest shame  
Of natures works, honor dishonorable,  
Sin-bred, how have ye troubl'd all mankind  
With shews instead, meer shews of seeming pure,  
And banisht from mans life his happiest life,  
Simplicite and spotless innocence. (4:312-17)

When Adam encounters Eve after she has eaten the Forbidden Fruit, he describes her as "Defac't, deflowrd, and now to Death devote" (9:901); she is, he says, "ruind" (9:906), which in conjunction with "defac't" points to the meaning "spoiled" or "damaged," but which also holds onto its Latin meaning, "thrown down." It is only after the first postlapsarian sex act that shame itself enters Adam and Eve, and this only after shamelessness is found. One can say that Eve is shameless in proudly announcing her crime to Adam, so shamelessness—not innocence anymore, but a lack of modesty or shamefastness—comes before shame itself.<sup>20</sup> After their post-coital sleep,

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<sup>19</sup> The Milton edition used throughout this work is John T. Shawcross, ed., *The Complete Poetry of John Milton* (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

<sup>20</sup> Compare Eve's manner to the innocent lack of shame the couple shows from book 4 to this point. Eve's shamelessness in book 9 must also be seen in the context of Bunyan's

up they rose

As from unrest, and each the other viewing,  
 Soon found thir Eyes how op'n'd, and thir minds  
 How dark'n'd; innocence, that as a veil  
 Had shadow'd them from knowing ill, was gon,  
 Just confidence, and native righteousness,  
 And honour from about them, naked left  
 To guiltie shame: hee cover'd, but his Robe  
 Uncover'd more. So rose the *Danite* strong  
*Herculean Samson* from the Harlot-lap  
 Of *Philistean Dalilah*, and wak'd  
 Shorn of his strength. They destitute and bare  
 Of all thir vertue: silent, and in face  
 Confounded long they sate, as struck'n mute,  
 Till *Adam*, though not less than *Eve* abash't,  
 At length gave utterance . . . (9:1051-66)

In keeping with the play on reversing covering and nakedness (nakedness adorned or sheltered by virtue is no nakedness),<sup>21</sup> the comparison to Samson plays on Adam and Eve's "Eyes . . . how op'n'd" and Samson's blindness. Adam and Eve are "abash't" and totally given over to shame:

since our Eyes  
 Op'n'd we find indeed, and find we know  
 Both Good and Evil, Good lost, and Evil got,  
 Bad fruit of Knowledge, if this be to know,  
 Which leaves us naked thus, of Honour void,  
 Of Innocence, of Faith, of Puritie,  
 Our wonted Ornaments now soild and staind,  
 And in our Faces evident the signes  
 Of foul concupiscence; whence evil store;

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allegory of Shame that sees Christian humility simply as weakness and foolishness. Before revealing what she has done, Eve considers keeping the knowledge to herself in order that she may become more powerful than Adam (9:816-25).

<sup>21</sup> Certainly Milton is also comparing Adam and Eve's nakedness with the idea of being clothed in righteousness: the Bride is clothed "with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). In book 10, the Son shelters Adam and Eve's "inward nakedness" with his "robe of righteousness" (10:221-22). Carey and Fowler's notes to 9:1052-9 are invaluable: they note that shame is "the first of the four degrees of death distinguished by theologians" (John Carey and Alastair Fowler, *The Poems of John Milton* [London: Longman, 1968, p. 917]).

Ev'n shame, the last of evils; of the first  
Be sure then. (9:1070-80)

Shame here is the “last of evils,” which is the worst—or least—of evils.<sup>22</sup> Milton’s flexible syntax gives the “whence” of “whence evil store”<sup>23</sup> the freedom to refer back (*where* “evil store” comes *from*) to concupiscence, the evidence in their faces of this concupiscence, the loss of honor, innocence, faith, and purity, or the opening of their eyes—or all of these. The “signes / Of foul concupiscence” are in their faces, faces which now reveal the evidence of their desires. How are we to read “Ev’n shame”? It can be read as going with “concupiscence” (I repunctuate to make this clearer):

And in our Faces evident the signes  
Of foul concupiscence (whence evil store),  
Ev’n shame, the last of evils;

or as going with “store”:

And in our Faces evident the signes  
Of foul concupiscence, whence evil store,  
Ev’n shame, the last of evils. . .

But of course Milton does not want to distinguish too clearly among the different possibilities, so shame is not only a bad feeling caused by the realization that one has committed an infraction but is also the result of *not being able to hide* that crime.<sup>24</sup>

Shame, as the last of evils, is the sign of the first of evils, Adam and Eve’s disobedience:

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<sup>22</sup> This is the interpretation in most of the commentaries I have looked at, but Fowler glosses “last” as “least” in Fowler, ed., John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1998). It least because it is “the first step to repentance” (p. 533).

<sup>23</sup> “Evil store” I take to mean “supply (or stock) of evil,” or “abundance of evil.” (These are definitions 4.a, 7.c, and 4.b of *store* in the *OED*.)

<sup>24</sup> A similar kind of polysemy can be found in the phrase “Bad Fruit of Knowledge,” which is the forbidden object, the forbidden object as metonymy for an infraction, and the forbidden object as metonymy for the results of the infraction.

shame points back to shame, reveals shame, prevents shame from disappearing. Like any shamed person, Adam now wishes to hide “in some glade / Obscur’d” (9:1085-86). And now it is necessary for Adam and Eve to cover their genitals, “that this new commer, Shame, / There sit not, and reproach us as unclean” (9:1086-97).

Shame is seer and seen, audience and performer, both a theological sign of fallenness, a theological help in achieving redemption, and a defining human emotion (what god or angel feels shame?).<sup>25</sup> It is, as Sedgwick points out, performative in the most theatrical sense.<sup>26</sup> Of all the affects, it most drastically unites and divides at the same time, making one feel shame *for* and *with* the shamed, which has the same phenomenology as feeling ashamed *of oneself*. Yet shame, as described by Tomkins, is structured affectively so as to bring about a consciousness of temporality, a before and after not made by the movement from one affect to another, but in the variation of intensity within the same affect. The overcoming of shame is then temporally an impossible return to a previous state of ignorance whose purity is undergirded by its own ruination. Hence the difficulty theologians have had in locating the exact moment of

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<sup>25</sup> When Milton’s angels blush “Celestial rosie red, Loves proper hue,” they mix the flushing of sexual excitement with the desirable loveableness, one might say, of modesty (though they intermingle, these angels are chaste). Fowler notes of this passage (8:618-19) that probably “the blush is from joy or ardour” (p. 463). Alastair Fowler, ed., John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Longman, 1998). Notice that Adam recalls in his first sexual experience with Eve how “To the Nuptial Bowr / I led her blushing like the Morn” (8:510-11). Eve’s blush, like that of Raphael’s, is a sign of modesty and innocence.

<sup>26</sup> Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 38.

Eve's sin (when she eats the apple, when she considers eating it, when the idea of eating it occurs, etc.), since innocence depends ontologically on the presence of sin.<sup>27</sup>

4.

The importance of considering shame in Romantic literature stems partly from the renewed power of allegory for Romantic writers. If shame is the affect of self, it is also the affect of the other, since it breaks the narcissism of the infant so that an "other" becomes a possibility along with a "self." Yet that other is ruined in the very act of being recognized, and to re-establish contact is to attempt the impossible union with the past found in allegory. The ruined face—frowning or preoccupied, or otherwise strange—is re-established, but not as the original face, only as that which stands for the never fully known original. In this way, the affect of shame as Tomkins enunciates it is the affective corollary to allegory. As Paul de Man has pointed out, "in the world of allegory, time is

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<sup>27</sup> For an account of this theological difficulty, see J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1968). Evans summarizes the problem this way:

First, if Adam was created perfect in the image and likeness of a perfect God, as in P [the Priestly Author], how could he possibly have behaved so foolishly and sinfully as he did according to J [the Yahwist Author]? The defection of an innocent childlike creature poses no great problem; the disobedience of a demigod does. The introduction of the concept of free will into the argument is of very little help in this case, for, granted that he enjoyed the freedom to choose, one would still expect a perfect being freely to choose the good. In practice any thoroughgoing attempt to deal with the problem ultimately involves a reduction of Adam and Eve's intellectual or moral stature before the Fall. If Man was morally perfect he must have fallen because he was deceived, not tempted, by a superior intelligence which directed his good impulses to an evil end. If, on the other hand, he was intellectually invulnerable he could have fallen only because his reason was overcome by his sinful nature. If he had been perfect in both respects he would not have fallen at all. (23)

the originary constitutive category.”<sup>28</sup> This is in contradistinction to symbols, where “it would be possible for the image to coincide with the substance” (the symbol is essentially a synecdoche).<sup>29</sup> In allegory it is necessary “that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority. The secularized allegory of the early romantics thus necessarily contains the negative moment which in Rousseau is that of renunciation, in Wordsworth that of the loss of the self in death or in error” (207).

The face of the other that triggers shame in the infant is necessarily disfigured: lack, deprivation, and alienation (strangeness) make it unreliable, never again fully present, never again “itself,” so that as shame establishes “my self,” it simultaneously erodes any “other” self: the “other” thus posited becomes only what is desired, never achieved, and never even seen with complete clarity. The change of expression in the face of the other that triggered this whole process means that the face is understood finally *as a face*, something which changes, covers, distorts, represents, or lies. The face then becomes a substitution for another face, but this endless chain, as in de Man’s idea of a chain of allegories, never can lead to an origin or transcendental original. What is sought is figured as memory or memorial, a lost and unredeemable yet all-sustaining original. This can be figured as the innocence that cannot be located again after the Fall

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<sup>28</sup> “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” pp. 187-228 in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983), p. 207.

<sup>29</sup> Coleridge’s idea of the symbol relies on the Christian idea of communion with God through love which overcomes the ultimate separation between self and other.

except in the artifice of art—the “redemptive” aspect of aestheticism—or it can be figured as the memories brought forward in psychoanalysis, memories that Lacan recognized as a constantly evolving narrative, signifiers that would never give away their signifieds, never be exhausted. In Tomkins’s terms, it is not only that shame must be overcome for a narrative to begin—for anyone to tell anyone else anything—but shame is the residual affect that motivates telling itself, insofar as telling (communication) is constitutive of intersubjectivity. The Romantics recognize telling as inherently allegorical, inherently a “cover-up,” the figure of prosopopeia. As the child understands the face as face—precisely because it is no longer the face that enabled the narcissistic circuit of looking—a face is *given* or *made*. De Man notes of prosopopeia that it “means to *give* a face and therefore implies that the original face can be missing or nonexistent. The trope which coins a name for a still unnamed entity, which gives face to the faceless is, of course, catachresis.”<sup>30</sup> Catachresis is *abusio*, a “misuse” of language, even an absurdity, that stretches metaphor past itself, almost past its potential to relate separate terms: “Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold / A sheephook” (*Lycidas*, 119-120). If I am right and Tomkins’s theory of shame is what allows for the articulation of otherwise all-absorbing affects each in its separate “now,” then it is analogous to the rhetorical process by which apostrophe and address itself—the speaking out *to another*—becomes possible. De Man’s connection of prosopopeia with catachresis shows that whatever is named or referred to is, by the nature of the figure of mimesis itself, disfigured. In terms of affect, each affect—joy, interest, etc.—must be damaged for it to have shape and contour—for it to become “other”—and for it thus to make itself

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<sup>30</sup> “Hypogram and Inscription,” p. 44, in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986), pp. 3-20.

present in relation to another affect, and for temporality to become real in consciousness and narrative.

The consciousness of change is what makes shame central to all teaching and learning; in terms of affect, it is the fact that learning is painful and distressing that differentiates it from impersonal entertainment or intersubjective relations. The works and parts of works examined in this dissertation—as is made clear in their intertextual connections with the primal, mythical moment of learning and exposure of ignorance known as the Fall of Man—are centered on moments of instruction and learning. In “Nutting,” the teaching is done by the evasive Wordsworthian category of nature, and its effect (or what one might call its “student-effect”) is realized in the personification addressed as the “Maiden.” In *The Excursion*, book 1, the Wanderer is baldly presented as the teacher (as naturalized mediator of Margaret) and the Poet as student. In *The Fall of Hyperion* it is Moneta, with Dante’s Beatrice behind her. In *Frankenstein*, the teacher—though it can be said to be the intertextuality of the moment and its status as literary topos (Narcissus looking at himself in a pool of water)—takes the form of the student, and therefore of mimesis itself, in the Creature’s reflected face. The teaching situation figured in these works is, like all teaching situations, both intersubjective and impersonal, and one which almost inevitably re-enacts or recalls the dynamic of parent and child, God and creature. As every new formulation encountered by a student is at first catachretic—a new fact makes no sense, or it makes the wrong sense, a provisional one which must soon be modified—its adoption by the student (always a form of error) is the beginning of learning, which is to say of individuation, since error—wandering beyond the already marked paths, or through contingency—is what the good (Romantic)

teacher ultimately hopes for. So the shame of not understanding, not “connecting” (“Are you with me?”), once overcome, must recur if learning, which by definition never ends, is to continue. The move will be from allegory to allegory, ever forward in an attempt to go backward, to return to the wounding and wounded parent, the origin, or the gods (depending on whether one is a Freudian, a Christian, or a Platonist, for example). In Romanticism, of course, there never is any real return, and it is the affect of shame that has ensured this.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> I diverge from the models used by Abrams and Stillinger—on the one hand the fall and redemption (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*) and on the other a kind of psychic journey (A – B – A’ in Jack Stillinger’s model of a “typical” Keats poem [John Keats, *Complete Poems* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap P, 1982), p. xvi]). These models bear a resemblance to sonata form (exposition, development, recapitulation) and owe much to concepts of heroism. See Harold Bloom, “The Internalization of Quest Romance,” *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 3-24.

## Chapter One

Wordsworth's "Nutting" as Ethical Persuasion:  
The Roles of Shame and Intertextuality

Wordsworth's "Nutting" presents itself as the confession of a transformative experience, one that authorizes a definitive statement on how to behave (or be) in relation to nature, and why: "with gentle hand / Touch,—for there is a Spirit in the woods." The relationship between the enabling experience and the credibility of the poem's moral and didactic message has exercised critics now for over a generation. If there is a moralistic tinge to some of this discussion, it should not surprise us: as Paul de Man notes in "Excuses (*Confessions*)," "To confess is to overcome guilt and shame in the name of truth: it is an epistemological use of language in which ethical values of good and evil are superseded by values of truth and falsehood, one of the implications being that vices such as concupiscence, envy, greed, and the like are vices primarily because they compel one to lie."<sup>1</sup> Certainly concupiscence and greed are faults regularly assigned to the boy of "Nutting," and the scholarly preoccupation with truth and falsehood sometimes treads a familiar path back to good and evil, or at least to their corollaries, praise and blame. The question that haunts the last three lines of the poem is whether the didactic power of its imperative mood is enabled by a cannily strategic admission, one that uncovers or exhibits only what it wishes to, and that thus allows the speaker to assume an unearned and uncomfortably patriarchal authority vis-à-vis the "Maiden." That the "merciless ravage" of the "virgin scene" is a "rape" which it is the job of the critic to uncover,

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<sup>1</sup> Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), p. 279.

explain, and condemn or ameliorate has become axiomatic for some critics.<sup>2</sup> The confession then becomes a false justification for the speaker's rhetorical and educative authority—an excuse.

The efficacy of criticism that enters the poem from the angle of testing the ethos of the speaker is reduced if the generic status of the poem is not taken into account. Certainly, confession is used in the poem, but not primarily to excuse. The poem is one of demonstration and exhortation, and thus ethical persuasion, a perlocutionary speech act<sup>3</sup> here involving the use of an exemplum (*paradeigma*) and a fable (whose pattern of

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<sup>2</sup> Many readings speak directly of a “rape” or stress a punishing differential in power between the speaker and the Maiden, which can be connected to the relationship between William Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth. Gregory Jones, in “‘Rude Intercourse’: Uncensoring Wordsworth’s ‘Nutting,’” *Studies in Romanticism* 35 (1996): 213-243 reads “Nutting” in light of the unpublished versions and sees it as a poem about the power of female sexuality, even the rape of the male by the female. Robert Burns Neveland, “Wordsworth and the Violent End of Reading,” *ELH* 63 (1996): 657-80 takes up the question of whether the bower can be more male than female. Other works which discuss the poem with a special emphasis on sexuality and gender include Jonathan Arac, “Wordsworth’s ‘Nutting’: Suspension and Decision,” in *Critical Genealogies: Historical Situations for Postmodern Literary Studies* (New York: Columbia UP, 1987), pp. 34-49; Marlon B. Ross, “Naturalizing Gender: Woman’s Place in Wordsworth’s Ideological Landscape,” *ELH* 53 (1986): 391-410, esp. pp. 392-96; Mary Jacobus, “Behold the Parent Hen: Romantic Pedagogy and Sexual Difference,” in *Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989), pp. 237-66, esp. pp. 254-59; and Michael G. Cooke, *Acts of Inclusion: Studies Bearing on an Elementary Theory of Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), pp. 137-46.

<sup>3</sup> J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, second ed., eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1975), esp. pp. 101-32. Telling apart performative and constative becomes a vexed subject in Austin’s work. This is particularly important in trying to tell apart the constative (descriptive) portion of “Nutting” (roughly speaking, the recounting of a remembered action) and the performative (in this case, persuasive) aspects of the poem. The problem of trying to separate the older narrator’s voice from that of the boy is addressed in Bruce Bigley, “Multiple Voices in ‘Nutting’: The Urbane Wordsworth,” *Philological Q* 70 (1991): 433-52, but without recourse to Austin’s categories.

*actio, reactio, conclusio* [i.e., the “moral”] is quite obvious in the work)<sup>4</sup> contained in both the boy’s “sense of pain” and the whole narrative. The exemplum is a form of induction;<sup>5</sup> one must assume that the Maiden of “Nutting” will understand that ungentle harm done to nature will bring an undesirable “sense of pain” and that the pain indicates harm done to the person doing the harm as well as to nature harmed—a corresponding harm. The fable as a whole, with its “moral” included (“with gentle hand / Touch,—for there is a Spirit in the woods”) explains and exhorts at once.<sup>6</sup> But if a poem is a fable, then, as Susan Rubin Suleiman points out in discussing parables, its meaning will depend

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<sup>4</sup> See Gert Ueding, ed., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1996), s.v. *Fabel*.

<sup>5</sup> In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* example in rhetoric corresponds to induction in dialectic: “I call an enthymeme a rhetorical syllogism and an example rhetorical induction” (1.2.8; 1056b). The edition of the *Rhetoric* used here is John Henry Freese, trans., Aristotle, *The “Art” of Rhetoric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1926).

<sup>6</sup> David Ferry, *The Limits of Mortality: An Essay on Wordsworth’s Major Poems* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1959), pp. 22-28, eloquently argues against considering the last three lines as the “moral” of the poem. His argument turns on the problem of whether the devastation of the bower is literal or figural. I maintain that the last three lines must be considered, generically and rhetorically, as the “moral” of the fable that has been told. On the level of rhetoric and generic expectation, then, the last three lines’ presence is not shocking.

Bruce Bigley, “Multiple Voices,” p. 448, argues that the last line “is as irregular as one is likely to find in blank verse” and “keeps us suspended still within this experience,” i.e., the boy’s experience, so that adult narrator and boy come together rhetorically here. But his scanning of the line as / x x x x / x x x / neglects the fact that “is” will be more highly stressed than “there” or “a,” and it is quite possible to read the line with a slight caesura after “is.” The fact that the second syllable of “spirit” is a homophone with “in” means that “in” is also more stressed than “-it” and “the.” (And the *t* in “spirit” needs to be pronounced clearly, which tends to give more emphasis to the following “in.”) The line should thus be scanned / x x / x / x x x / or even / x x / x / x / x /, rendering it quite regular (beginning an iambic line with a trochee is perhaps the commonest kind of substitution in an iambic pentameter line). The proper reading of the line is of course important if we are to take it as in any way the “moral” of the poem; it would normally have some weight.

on a context, “none other than another text (or a set of other texts), in relation to which the story presents itself as a variant or an illustration—or, more generally, which can be ‘read into’ the story. What we have here, then, is a particular kind of intertextuality.”<sup>7</sup> It may be that the intertexts that the poem recalls for a student of Romanticism (most obviously those dealing with the reciprocity of mind and nature found in Wordsworth and Coleridge) bear an uncomfortable relationship to the intertexts buried more covertly in the text. This chapter intends to explore how rhetoric and intertextuality on the one hand and affect on the other articulate and disarticulate each other (and *with* each other) in the poem’s pattern of self-assurance and shame, with the particular hope of beginning to read Wordsworth with the presence, pressure, and structure of affect, in this case shame, in mind. If the thematic hinge or crisis of “Nutting” is the act of tearing down the branches of the hazel tree, in order to read the poem one needs to examine that moment in itself, but also to compare first the conditions of the poem’s rhetoric and intertextuality, and then its affect, on either side of the divide. By recording the actions of theme, affect, intertextuality, and rhetoric against and with each other, the peculiar power of this poem may manifest itself, perhaps inevitably, again.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), pp. 43-44.

<sup>8</sup> The poem considered here is that found in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800. Gregory Jones (“‘Rude Intercourse’: Uncensoring Wordsworth’s ‘Nutting,’ ” *SiR* 35 [1996]: 213-43) insists that the poem as it stands is a cover-up for more alarming versions (those found in DC MSS. 15 and 16). The other versions of the poem include Wordsworth’s attempt at an introduction to “Nutting” (Dorothy Wordsworth describes her transcription of “Nutting” in a letter of 21 or 28 December 1798 as “the conclusion of a poem of which the beginning is not yet written”). See James Butler and Karen Green, eds., *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800 by William Wordsworth*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992, pp. 302-05, 391-2, and 544-55. MS. 16 lacks the lines of the 1800 “Nutting” altogether.

The problem of confession that must, of necessity, be addressed is one of self-presentation, and this is an issue in persuasion which is already, by Aristotle's admission, a problem of rhetoric and the the situation of a character in an oratorical context. The character [ἦθος] of the speaker<sup>9</sup> is, for Aristotle, circularly, a matter of the speaker's own persuasive power. It is not undergirded by the assurance of any transcendent authority or

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The discarded introduction begins with "my beloved Maid," whose "keen look / Half cruel in its eagerness" and whose violent "crash[ing]" through the woods (a "rude intercourse") present a form of feminine violence that the poem's speaker hopes to change. The speaker's hope here is that the Maid's "eye" will become like still water ("still as water when the winds are gone"). (The still water may remind one of Eve's still water in *Paradise Lost* 4:453-65.) The exchanged gaze of Verdant and Acrasia (discussed below) is found in this introduction in the "dearest maiden thou upon whose lap / I rest my head." But the introduction turns the temptation to see the "merciless ravage" as sexual back to the general tendency of *Lyrical Ballads*: it is now more in the nature of an "involuntary act of hand / Or foot u[nruly] with excess of life" that mistakenly ignores the small and simple things of nature.

I take the discarded introduction as Wordsworth's own reading of "Nutting" at one particular time. The introduction, had it been retained, would have given a particular context for the "Then . . . for" logic of instruction that ends the poem. The instruction of the Maiden could then be seen as more reactive, dependent on the poem's addressee.

<sup>9</sup> *Ethos* refers to characters in the drama in the *Poetics*, which emphasizes that character depends on action. In the *Nichomachean Ethics* the word means personal or moral character; its etymological relationship to habit [ἥθος] and thus habituation is pointed out as well. The terms *ethos* and *pathos* change in the works of Quintilian, Cicero, Demetrius, and Longinus so that *ethos* comes to mean temperate or restrained passions and *pathos* energetic and sublime ones. See Christopher Gill, "The *Ethos/Pathos* Distinction in Rhetorical and Literary Criticism," *The Classical Quarterly*, n.s., 34 (1984): 149-66. An early rhetorical reading of Wordsworth's style that takes account of this shift is Klaus Dockhorn, trans. Heidi I. Saur-Stull, "Wordsworth and the Rhetorical Tradition in England." In Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence D. Needham, eds., *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995, pp. 265-80, p. 267. (Dockhorn's original article appeared in 1949.) Dockhorn tries to demonstrate that Wordsworth is following the later tradition, which contrasts violent *pathos* to tranquil *ethos*; he sees a division along these lines in Wordsworth's work between sublimity, passion, and imagination on one side and the benevolence, tenderness, and manners on the other.

principle or empirical evidence besides his own eloquence: “The orator persuades by moral character when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of confidence; for we feel confidence in a greater degree and more readily in persons of worth in regard to everything in general . . . But this confidence must be due to the speech itself, not to any preconceived idea of the speaker’s character” (*Rhetoric* 1.2.4; 1356a).<sup>10</sup> The speaker’s character as disclosed by his speech through a self-presentation or self-representation carefully fitted to the audience and designed to move them (*pathos*), means that no room is left for lying as in itself a separate ethical problem. Eloquence itself guarantees its own validity--it is testimony to itself--so that the outside is not the manifestation of *ethos*, which one might consider an “inside,” but the *ethos* itself.

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<sup>10</sup> Part of the successful speech (and therefore one would guess part of the speaker’s “good character” is knowledge, among which would be the knowledge of his audience. *Pathos* is used to inspire your audience with certain feelings, but to do this one will speak so as to fit one’s words with the character of the audience (this is the burden of much of the discussion of emotions in book 2). Being able to portray a “character” in poetry or plays is another kind of *ethos*: see the *Rhetoric* 3.16. The emotion of the speaker is stressed in 3.7: “Propriety of style will be obtained by the expression of emotion and character, and by proportion to the subject matter” (*Rhetoric* 3.7.1; 1408a) and “Appropriate style also makes the fact appear credible; for the mind of the hearer is imposed on [or, “draws a wrong conclusion”] under the impression that the speaker is speaking the truth, because, in such circumstances, his feelings are the same” (*Rhetoric* 3.7.4; 1408a). (See also *Poetics* 6 and 15.) Aristotle here seems to be depending partly on Plato’s *Phaedrus*. The fitting together of oratory to audience is part of Plato’s idea of rhetoric as a *techne*, an art dependent on the knowledge of the soul, as well as other kinds of knowledge (see *Phaedrus* 270b-272b). The later Stoic idea that knowledge is the key to the good life—knowledge of what is good and evil, when to allow emotion free rein and when not, what can be changed and what not—is a development of the connection between knowledge and character. In the *Poetics* *ethos* is inseparable from action. Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) analyses it this way: “The basis of character for Aristotle is constituted by developed dispositions to act virtuously or otherwise. These dispositions are both acquired and realized in action; they cannot come into existence or continue to exist for long independently of practical activity” (p. 151). As for speech in the *Poetics*, “For speech to function in such a way as to characterize the speaker, it must involve the assertion or revelation of determinate ethical desires and intentions, and a discernible relation to action” (Halliwell, p. 155).

There is no essence to be revealed or covered. Through eloquence the rhetor would seem to determine his own character. And this character may even be said not to be the speaker's own. As Nietzsche pointed out in his *Description of Ancient Rhetoric* (1872-3), the orator's art is one of exchange: "The art of the orator is never to allow artificiality to become noticeable: hence, the characteristic style which, however, is all the more a product of the highest art, just like the "naturalness" of the good actor. The true orator speaks forth from the *ēthos* of the person or things presented to him: . . . what is remarkable about him is that, through art, through an interchange [*Vertauschen*] of persons, and through a prudence that hovers over them, he finds and turns to his own advantage what the most eloquent lawyer of each person and each part, namely egoism, is only able to discover. It is an exchange of egos [*Vertauschung des ego*], as with the dramatist."<sup>11</sup> It is this successful actor's egoism and self-presentation (which is in fact, selfless, as in acting) that is thematized at the beginning of "Nutting," for the poem presents its narrator as remembering himself as a boy deluded by his perception of the world as purely literary and fictional, and himself as a character in this literary landscape.<sup>12</sup> Added here to the orator's exchange of persons are the temporal distinctions of memory and autobiography, the self looking (back) at the self, an activity that involves

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<sup>11</sup> Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, David J. Parent, eds. and trans., *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*. New York: Oxford UP, 1989, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> This is in marked contrast to the boy Wordsworth in book 5 of *The Prelude*, who is strengthened and prepared to face the real horror of the drowned man by his literary knowledge. (See *The Prelude* (1805), 5.470-81.) Literariness is so constitutive of "Nutting" as to set it apart from the other famous passages of instruction by nature (most prominently the woodcock-stealing, boat-stealing, and nest-robbing episodes). Perhaps this alone was what moved Wordsworth to excise it from his autobiographical poem.

not only the presence of two subjects in the work but also learning (the work of reason) and emotion (often enough with memories of youth, shame).<sup>13</sup>

The genre of the work is unclear at first: the narrator's voice is more dreamlike and inward than one might expect at a poem's beginning. (As what one might argue is an early dramatic monologue—even if this is only confirmed at the poem's end—"Nutting" possesses what must rank high in the annals of arresting beginnings, even when compared to "Gr-r-r—".)<sup>14</sup> The opening oddity of "It seems a day"—with its ambiguities as to what "it" might be, the misleading feint of "seems" (one might expect "it seems *to me*"), the confusing tense (why "seems," not "seemed"?), and the jarring incongruity of the vagueness of the impersonal construction with the piercing, eschatological finality of a "heavenly day that cannot die"—all this eccentricity shows a perfect control of tone. It is certainly misleading to some purpose, for one cannot tell at first whether we are in a lopped-off excursus of some longer work or the nearly hallucinatory transcript of the approach of a "day" loping across the fields of time to our poetic narrator-observer (a kind of surreal cry of "Day ahoy!"). We can only call the story of the day's adventures an exemplum at the end, with the introduction of the auditor (the Maiden) and the moral ("gently / Touch"). There we come to realize that "It seems" is an equivalent (though indecisively descriptive rather than jussive) of Chaucer's "Looke" ("look how" or "observe") with which many of the exempla of *The Pardoner's Tale* are introduced

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<sup>13</sup> The presence of shame and other affects in the backward look of autobiography is most usefully distilled in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*," pp. 35-66 in Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham: Duke UP, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> The opening of Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (*Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842).

(“Looke, Attila, the grete conquerour, / Deyde in his sleep, with shame and dishonour, / Bledynge ay at his nose in dronkenesse; / A capitayn sholde live in sobrenesse” [lines VI.579-83, and a perfect illustration, in miniature, of the same exemplum schema, complete with moral, found in “Nutting”]).<sup>15</sup> The careful choice of “It seems” ostensibly marks Wordsworth’s exemplum as one derived from personal experience and memory, not one culled from a book, yet the impersonality of “it” puts emotional distance between the speaker and the recollection. This somewhat questionable marker of the personal catches against the positive presence of the many allusions to Spenser (and the Spenserian) apparent in the first part of the poem. In fact, it creates friction with the very genre of the exemplum itself, which is general, if not universal—chronicled and ready for use in any sermon when needed.<sup>16</sup> If there is any moment that could be called Chaucerian in the poem, it would be the near illegibility of that “It seems,” its elusive tone, its mimetic rendering of a memory emerging from the nothingness of time (the blank space of an unfinished or unbegun line) which turns out also to be the crowded space of pre-texts (the broken-off line even miming any number of broken branches that we will see are recollected in the poem itself). In allowing the day to be both recalled and summoned, the poem’s opening stages its own oscillation between the purely descriptive (the constative) and the performative, here not only the persuasive

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<sup>15</sup> The edition used is Larry D. Benson, gen. ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). These four lines occur within the larger exemplum that forms the core of *The Pardoner’s Tale*: the rioters’ search for Death (VI.463-903).

<sup>16</sup> The medieval sermon, for instance, included exempla as part of the presentation of the sermon’s theme and as part of its treatment (*tractatio*). The appeal of the exemplum has always been its brevity, obviousness to the unlearned, and its directness. This is true even in the shift during the Enlightenment from classifying the exemplum as *amplificatio* or *ornatus* to *argumenta illustrantia*. See Gert Ueding, ed., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1996), s.v. *Exemplum*.

(perlocutionary) role of the exemplum itself. The poem mimics obliquely the ceremonial bow of the story-teller pulling out a fictional (a conventionally made or clichéd) narrative—as in “Once upon a time.” “It was a day” would fit the performative requirement well: again, it is “seems” that plays against (or upon) what would be a more conventional inaugural phrase.

The intertextual frame of the poem is Spenserian. According to the memory as narrated at the poem’s beginning, the boy’s endeavor is portrayed as self-consciously archaic and literary—a quest romance of the Spenserian type--and his awakening from this false consciousness is what is at stake. The presence of the Spenserian as a topos in “Nutting” is suggested at the beginning of the poem: the boy is a “Figure” and “quaint,” dressed in a “proud disguise” of “Motley accoutrement.” These “rhetorical” words indicate a Spenserian tale and with their mock-antique air throw the boy’s adventure into the realm of self-delusion. Because the diction is more Shakespearean than Spenserian (as if a Shakespearean character were recounting a Spenserian scene), the parallels between the Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene* and the bower of “Nutting” are made more self-consciously literary.<sup>17</sup> In *The Faerie Queene*, Guyon and the Palmer move through a series of barriers and confrontations to reach the innermost bower: the outermost is a false or delusory barrier (“Yet was the fence thereof but weake and thin,”

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<sup>17</sup> The distancing effect of the Shakespearean tone pervades one of the manuscript versions of the poem. In the longer versions of the poem in DC MS. 16, “Lucy” is characterized with quotations from Orlando’s speech in *As You Like It* when he comes upon Duke Senior and his court in the forest (Act 2, scene 7; see Butler and Green, eds., *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, pp. 305-06). This intertext works against Gregory Jones’s idea of Lucy as an aggressive, sexually threatening being (“Rude Intercourse”). Orlando, after all, is desperately searching for food to give his aged servant Adam. The quotations do, however, provide another pastoral intertext to a poem which is already highly overdetermined.

*FQ* 2:12:43),<sup>18</sup> permeable only by wisdom or temperance. There is a similar movement towards a center in “Nutting”: the putative “thorns, and brakes, and brambles” become real “woods” and “pathless rocks” that need to be forced through. The barriers that the boy is prepared for allude to the “many covert groves, and thickets close” (*FQ* 2:12:76) in the Bower of Bliss. These hints at the presence of the Bower of Bliss in “Nutting” become more emphatic when the boy finds a nook where

the hazels rose  
 Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,  
 A virgin scene! — A little while I stood,  
 Breathing with such suppression of the heart  
 As joy delights in; and with wise restraint  
 Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed  
 The banquet, or beneath the trees I sate  
 Among the flowers; and with the flowers I play’d. . . .

The scene is reminiscent of Acrasia and Verdant in the Bower of Bliss. First one might note the “milk-white clusters,” a phrase which operates metonymically to suggest breasts, specifically Acrasia’s, available to anyone’s sight: “Her snowie brest was bare to readie spoile / Of hungry eies” (*FQ* 2:12:78). The words “A virgin scene” manage in a moment to mix this particular message, for who is the virgin here? “A virgin scene” is virginal because it is untouched. This quality is then metonymically related (as a quality) to a sexual “virgin,” a *person* who is untouched, which anthropomorphizes the scene, so that the pun “A virgin *seen*” emerges. But in the Bower of Bliss, is it not Verdant who is the virgin and Acrasia the despoiler? The circuit of energy is completed in “Nutting” with the “eyeing” of the “banquet,” a nearly pornographic moment which is typically

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<sup>18</sup> References to *The Faerie Queene* (abbreviated *FQ*) are to P. C. Bayley, ed., Spenser, *The Faerie Queen: Book II* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965).

Spenserian.<sup>19</sup> In a phrase that sums up the interchange of gazes, Acrasia is said to hang over her lover “with her false eyes fast fixed in his sight” (*FQ* 2:12:73). This simultaneity of exchanged looks is transferred by Wordsworth to the play on transitive and intransitive in the phrase “I sate / Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played,” a phrase that allows for both the boy’s “playing” along with flower-playmates and “playing” with them as a cat plays with a mouse.

The consciousness or self-consciousness demonstrated by a boy who is able to “suppress” his heart and have a “wise restraint / Voluptuous” is akin to (or brought about by) the speaker’s narrative skill. Where Marjorie Levinson sees the force of retelling as almost violently shaping the narrative at moments such as this,<sup>20</sup> it may be that here the boy and the older narrator are in agreement. Just as the boy who sees the dead body rise up from Esthwaite Lake in book 5 of *The Prelude* is prepared for his experience by his reading of literature, so here the boy seems aware that he has come upon the quaint bower of literature which his “Motley accoutrement” (the costume of the Shakespearean clown?) prepared him for. The “suppression” mirrors a moment in *The Prelude* where the apocalyptic power of the poet-prophet needs to be damped down:

Whereat, being not unwilling now to give  
A respite to this passion, I paced on  
Gently, with careless steps, and came erelong  
To a green shady place where down I sate

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<sup>19</sup> As Hazlitt remarks, “Spenser . . . is very apt to pry into mysteries which do not belong to the Muses. Milton’s voluptuousness is not lascivious or sensual. He describes beautiful objects for their own sakes. Spenser has an eye to the consequences, and steeps everything in pleasure, often not of the purest kind” (“On the Character of Milton’s Eve,” in P. P. Howe, ed., *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt* [New York: AMS P, 1967 (1930)], 4:105-11, p. 110).

<sup>20</sup> See Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1986), pp. 60-74.

Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice  
 And settling into gentler happiness. (*Prelude* 1805, 1:68-73)<sup>21</sup>

This section of *The Prelude* and the lines in “Nutting” beginning with “Perhaps it was a bower” have the patterns found by Hartman in Wordsworth’s reinterpretation of the eighteenth-century inscription poem.<sup>22</sup> The speaker is bound into the landscape and the landscape itself echoes back to him his state of pregnant potentiality; in the case of *The Prelude*, now and then “an acorn from the trees / Fell audibly, and with a startling sound” (*Prelude* 1805, 1:93-4). This scene of resting is also a scene of planting, promising future fecundity.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of “Nutting,” however, the binding of boy and landscape is particularly threatening, and the narrator’s anxiety breaks through the syntax in moments of agrammaticality where the suppression of the visionary fails.<sup>24</sup> As Hartman has

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<sup>21</sup> References to *The Prelude* (1805 version, abbreviated as *Prelude* 1805) are to William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: A Parallel Text*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (New Haven: Yale UP, 1971).

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey H. Hartman, “Wordsworth, Inscriptions, and Romantic Nature Poetry,” in *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958-1970* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1970), pp. 206-230.

<sup>23</sup> Retreat into the shade of trees is of course a pastoral topos. In the case of “Nutting,” the retreats that come to mind include Jaques’s ironic monologue (recounted by the First Lord) in act 2, scene 1 of *As You Like It*, the Wandering Wood in book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, and a passage in Blair’s *The Grave* where meditation sheltered by the woods and friendship are combined (lines 94-110; see Blair, *The Grave* (1743) [Los Angeles: Augustan Reprint Society, 1973]). The topos of “the grove” or “the pleasance” goes back to antiquity: see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983 [1952]), pp. 193-202. Note that Adam and Eve retreat into the forests to escape God’s eye after the Fall in what Carey and Fowler call “the archetypal poem of retirement.” See John Carey and Alastair Fowler, eds., *The Poems of John Milton* (London: Longman, 1968), note to lines 9.1085-90.

<sup>24</sup> The boy’s excitement—and anxiety—on stumbling on a virgin grove has a classical precedent in Actaeon’s sight of Diana naked in a grove. It has another parallel in

remarked of Wordsworth's landscape lyrics, especially the Lucy poems, the landscape can become a funeral monument. Here its fictiveness, its Shakespearean-Spenserian remoteness, is stressed, just as its relationship to the inscription poem (the murmuring waters, for instance) becomes most intense:

— Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves  
 The violets of five seasons re-appear  
 And fade, unseen by any human eye,  
 Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on  
 For ever, and I saw the sparkling foam,  
 And with my cheek on one of those green stones  
 That, fleec'd with moss, beneath the shady trees,  
 Lay round me scatter'd like a flock of sheep,  
 I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,  
 In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay  
 Tribute to ease, and, of its joy secure  
 The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,  
 Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,  
 And on the vacant air.

From the conditional "Perhaps," which sets up a doubt signalling the present of the poem, emerges the powerfully indicative "and I saw the sparkling foam," a vision that cuts through the doubt. The "fairy water-breaks" *perhaps* have murmured on forever, but the speaker very definitely "heard the murmur and the murmuring sound." (The coordinating conjunction *and* here introduces a new subject and verb: there is no parallelism between "Perhaps it was" and "I saw.") As with the Lucy poems, a perception of fairy magic moves into the threat of very real dissolution of a human being into nature itself, but one which comes as a kind of revelation: "I saw." If Spenser's poetry is present now in the poem, it is submerged below the level of lexical signals. The boy's pulling down of the

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Faunus's trespass in the Mutabilitie Cantos of *The Faerie Queene*. The fatal and deleterious effects (Actaeon is killed by his own dogs, Faunus threatened with castration) of these precedents point to an undercurrent of anxiety about female sexuality, one which is elaborated by Gregory Jones (" 'Rude Intercourse' "), though Acteon and Faunus are not mentioned by him.

trees which follows this passage is of course reminiscent of Guyon's pulling down of the Bower of Bliss after all its temptations. But if the boy in "Nutting" is like Guyon, he is also like Verdant, at ease on Acrasia's lap (*FQ* 2:12:76), and with his shield—from which his coat of arms, and thus his identity, has been erased—hanging in a tree (*FQ* 2:12:80). Unlike Verdant, who is enchanted, and unlike Guyon, who is guided by the Palmer and has a specific mission to destroy the Bower of Bliss, the boy of "Nutting" enjoys his bower as a space in nature where literariness and reality become one. The pleasures of memory and the pleasures of reading are cognate for a moment, and it is such pleasures that work against the very effect of Spenserian allegory, which aims at a moral effect.

The Spenserian enchantments of "Nutting" quickly threaten the very identity of the boy, whose enthusiasm exhausts itself in a scene that becomes lifeless and senseless ("stocks and stones") and empty ("vacant air").<sup>25</sup> How to read "stocks and stones" becomes acute here and leads to the second important source of pre-texts, Milton. The words are proverbial, but they find their most powerful literary use in Milton's sonnet "On the late Massacre in Piedmont" (1655). Milton's poem refers to God's saints, "Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old / When all our Fathers worshipped Stocks and Stones." Of the many resonances of these lines, the most important for "Nutting" is the fact that "stocks and stones" are idols, whether pagan or Catholic.<sup>26</sup> The trees ("stocks")

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<sup>25</sup> David Bromwich (*Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s* [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998], p. 122) points out the positive resonances for Wordsworth of the "wast[e]" here, which points back to private pastoral space of unplucked flowers found in Gray's *Elegy* and the Lucy poems. The phrase "stocks and stones," however, quickly snuffs out any positive connotations.

<sup>26</sup> See Jeremiah 2:26-27, "As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou has brought me forth: for they



“intruding sky” looks back at the boy when the veil of the bower’s branches has been torn down. Nature, it is revealed, is not “stocks and stones” but a “spirit.” The words “stocks and stones” become more than a stock phrase in light of the simile that Milton uses in connection with Adam and Eve’s rising from the bed of sin. This passage compares the fallen Adam and Eve to Samson, the Nazarite whose fight against the idol Dagon is the setting for Milton’s tragedy:

. . . . So rose the *Danite* strong  
*Herculean Samson* from the Harlot-lap  
 Of *Philistean Dalilah*, and wak’d  
 Shorn of his strength. They destitute and bare  
 Of all thir vertue: . . . (9:1059-63)

Though commentators have often overlooked this, Samson is compared here not to Adam alone but to Adam and Eve, so that not Eve but fallen Eden is compared to the lap of Delilah.<sup>28</sup> When the boy in “Nutting” rises, it is to strip the bower of its hazel nuts; in so doing, however, if we allow for the intervention of Milton’s intertext, he rises shorn of virtue. If he ever was to be read as a Spenserian hero of quest-romance, he has here faced real defeat. The connection of Wordsworth’s boy to the first postlapsarian sex-act of Adam and Eve must make us doubt whether this is in fact a “rape,” for this is Milton’s description of how the sex-act is begun:

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<sup>28</sup> See Mary Nyquist, “Fallen Differences, Phallogocentric Discourses: Losing *Paradise Lost* to History,” in Annabel Patterson, ed., *John Milton* (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 165-84. Nyquist also discusses the intertextual connections between this passage of *Paradise Lost* and books 14 and 15 of the *Iliad*. There Hera and Zeus make love and Zeus falls asleep (as Hera has planned). His anger at her after he wakes up is vented in a reminder of how he once punished her by hanging her with anvils tied to her feet. All that is retained of this in the passages of *Paradise Lost* is the description of the flowers growing around Adam and Eve as they make love. I do not believe that the background of treachery and violence in the intertext suggest a submerged masculinist slant to the passage in *Paradise Lost*: the relationship between Adam and Eve is nothing like that between Zeus and Hera.

So said he [Adam], and forbore not glance or toy  
 Of amorous intent, well understood  
 Of *Eve*, whose Eye darted contagious Fire.  
 Her hand he seis'd, and to a shadie bank,  
 Thick overhead with verdant roof imbowr'd  
 He led her nothing loath; . . . (9:1034-39)

Adam and Eve's love-making, though sinful, is not enforced by one or the other party.

It may be the shamefulness of the first postlapsarian sex-act ("naked left / To guiltie shame") that connects Milton's passage with the other intertexts of the "merciless ravage" in "Nutting." While it is true that the violence of the "merciless ravage" is found in the destruction by Orlando of Angelica and Medor's bower (*Orlando Furioso* 23.129ff.),<sup>29</sup> the prevailing emotion in that scene is desperate anger, not shame. Shame here is connected to the breaking of branches, and we should be alerted by Wordsworth's reference to "Astolpho's horn" in the longer versions of the poem in Dove Cottage MSS. 15 and 16. Astolfo is an English knight changed into a myrtle by the enchantress Alcina. This is revealed in book 6 when Ruggiero's hippogryph, tethered to the myrtle, "frightened by I know not what he had descried in the tangled wood" (*Orlando Furioso* 6.24) tears off its branches, and Astolfo's voice is heard. Ariosto continues:

At the first sound of this voice Ruggiero turned his face and jumped up; when he realized that it [the voice] issued from the tree, he was no little astonished. He hastened to untie the hippogryph and, blushing for shame [*di vergogne rosse*], 'Whatever you are,' he said, 'whether human spirit or woodland goddess, pardon me. If I deranged your fair branches and wrought damage to your living myrtle, it was through not knowing that a human spirit was hidden beneath your rough bark. . . . And if now or in the future I can do you some favour by way of amends, I promise you, by the fair woman in whose keeping lies the best part of me, that I shall so

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<sup>29</sup> See Jones, " 'Rude Intercourse,' " 233-34. With its emphasis on the carving of names in the trees, the bower also seems to be a parody of certain effects of Arcadian pastoral (the same as those gently mocked in Rosalind's reactions to Orlando's love-sonnets hung on the trees of the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*).

perform in word and action that you shall have just cause to thank me.  
(*Orlando Furioso* 6.30-31.)<sup>30</sup>

We have here in fact all the elements of “Nutting”: the unintended damage to a tree (effected here by an unknowing, if magical, animal), the shame that follows the unexpected, the attempt at reparation, and the spirit. The history of this passage is well known, extending back to the *Aeneid* (3.22-40, where plants bleed from the roots and Polydorus’s voice comes from underground) and Dante’s *Inferno* (13.31-44: the Forest of the Suicides) and extending through *Gerusalemme Liberata* (13.41-51), to the *Faerie Queene* (1.2.30-43: the episode of Fradubio and Fraelissa).<sup>31</sup>

The “sense of pain” that follows the “ravage” is a form of *anagnorisis*, which for Aristotle is either the recognition that one has done (or not done) something, or “a change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus to either love or hate.”<sup>32</sup> It seems that the hate or love depends on the discovery of a family relationship between two persons who were previously unaware of it, or on the revelation that what was thought of as a familial relationship is in fact not one at all. One recognizes (to use Oedipus as an example) a stranger as one’s father, or one’s wife as one’s mother, or on the other hand, one becomes orphaned in the moment of recognizing one’s father or mother to be strangers. Pity and

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<sup>30</sup> Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983), p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> See also the episode of Erysichthon and the oak of Deo in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.740ff. In *Orlando Furioso*, Ruggiero’s shame is probably introduced because of the poem’s basis in courtly romance, whose characters are exquisitely aware of honor and often blush (the most familiar example would be Sir Gawain’s shame at the end of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*).

<sup>32</sup> *Poetics* 11. The edition used in this paper is G. M. A. Grube, ed., Aristotle, *On Poetry and Style* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989 [1958]). See p. 21, note 2 on the importance of family relationships in *anagnorisis*.

fear spring from this most fraught of recognitions, one of the incidents that are “best achieved when the events are unexpectedly interconnected” (*Poetics* 9). This can be related to the “primal scene,” where the child seeing his parents *in flagrante* feels betrayed as the security of blood-bonds is replaced by the anxiety awakened and the child must wonder which parent to identify with—if either—in a scene that seems violent and degrading (*AIC* 2:177-9). For Oedipus, *anagnorisis* means being suddenly placed inside the primal scene itself. The intertext in “Nutting” is Adam and Eve’s “primal scene,” which we as readers witness. This forces shame to the foreground of the poem. Significantly, the pre-text of Ruggiero’s encounter with Astolfo is another *anagnorisis*, as a tree is revealed to be not an “other,” an outsider, but another human being, a relation.

In Vergil, Dante, Ariosto, and Spenser, the torn branch (or plant, in the case of Vergil) issues in a voice; in “Nutting” the voice is absent: it is the purely visual “intruding sky” that silently makes itself felt (along with the stripped trees). In “Nutting,” the exchanged looks of Verdant and Acrasia are exchanged for a narcissistic “eye[ing]” of the “banquet,” but the revealed sky is a new, interrupting look. So while it may be banal enough to say that the “sense of pain” here is shame, one can see that this involves the reader in the breaking of the boy’s “look-look” with the bower. The “sense of pain” is not a moral reaction to a sexual crime and the “intruding sky” is not a prohibitive entity that warns of transgression and dire results, but simply a stranger, the strangeness of the sky that is not what the boy had expected, the look that is not a mirroring confirmation of himself or his affect.<sup>33</sup> The “intruding sky” may be ironically related to schemes of instruction and revelation, the “light of reason” or the “light of

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<sup>33</sup> I do not see the sky as a “third party,” i.e., the father who, in the Oedipal conflict, enters the boy’s fantasies to block his access to his mother.

truth” that enter scenes of moral choice.<sup>34</sup> At the same time there is an exchange of positions, for the voice that instructs the Maiden “with gentle hand / Touch” is the same as that of Polydorus, the suicides in Dante, Astolfo, and Fradubio who speak from their imprisoning trees or earth. The trees the boy has wounded turn out to be the man who asks that he be gently touched. When this substitution of the other by the self is effected, nature’s voice turns out to be that of the grown man telling this story. This projection of the child’s “sense of pain” is “itself an act of imaginative violence,”<sup>35</sup> one mediated through texts whose burden is the imprisonment of the human in inhuman forms and the wounds which force speech from those forms. As so often in Wordsworth, nature and the observing self both seem to dwell in the interface between a self and a non-self, or between subject and object, or between human and natural. The plea from within natural forms that they be spared violence is, it turns out, an instruction from within the self, and specifically a self that exists most effectively in literature.

The “sense of pain” marks a moment of extreme emotion, but just as emotionally powerful is the appearance of the “gentle Maiden.” The connection of the address to the “Maiden” to the rest of the poem has been difficult for critics to determine. If the Maiden is present all the time, as Levinson believes, then her appearance makes the interplay of boy’s actions and man’s narration a performance that contains within it appeasements of the audience and amplifications of events appropriate to a scene of instruction or of confession. It is true that the sudden naming of the Maiden gives the impression of

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<sup>34</sup> Such as the oft-translated and paraphrased “Choice of Hercules.” See, Earl R. Wasserman, “The Inherent Values of Eighteenth-Century Personification,” *PMLA* 65 (1950): 435-63, pp. 437-8.

<sup>35</sup> Joshua Wilner, *Feeding on Infinity: Readings in the Romantic Rhetoric of Internalization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000), p. 64.

apostrophe, but on the level of rhetoric, the Maiden is simply the addressee of the poem and no apostrophe takes place (the “Then” of line 52 would imply that the Maiden has been the addressee from the poem’s beginning). Apostrophe, as Lausberg puts it, is a “‘turning away’ from the normal audience (the judges . . . ) and the addressing of another, second audience, surprisingly chosen by the speaker. This practice has an emotive . . . effect on the normal audience, since it is an expression, on the part of the speaker, of a pathos . . . which cannot be kept within the normal channels between speaker and audience; apostrophe is, so to speak, an emotional move of despair on the part of the speaker.”<sup>36</sup> It is undeniable that the relationship of speaker to Maiden is at any rate charged with urgency at this point, and that what is evaded at the level of rhetoric is at the same time accomplished by rhetoric’s accommodation of affect, for the Maiden has the force of a new element in the poem, one that issues forth from the speaker’s excitement as a personification of the virginity of the “virgin scene” (or now, indeed, a “virgin seen”).

From Quintilian and Cicero on, personification was considered to be a “bold” figure, one associated with emotion and imagination. By the eighteenth century, as Earl Wasserman writes, “creation of the personified abstraction was looked upon as one of the most energetic activities of the imagination and the passions, and therefore as an aspect

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<sup>36</sup> Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study*, trans. Matthew T. Bliss, Annemiek Jansen, and David E. Orton. Leyden: Brill, 1998 [1960], p. 338. The moment at question in “Nutting” is not a framing device, as for instance in Horace’s “Beatus Ille” or Milton’s *Lycidas*, where a speaker is unexpectedly indicated, but it does have the same effect of giving a limit or boundary to an experience by readjusting or shifting the reader’s idea of who the speaker is. It is true that the idea of apostrophe derives from forensic speeches given in public to an audience, so that the addressee (the judge) is clear. The question of who is being addressed in a written poem is more difficult to assign.

of the rhetorical sublime”;<sup>37</sup> it is connected by eighteenth-century theorists to creation (as opposed to imitation) and dream (“almost every extended allegory of abstractions in the century is presented as a dream or vision”).<sup>38</sup> Yet this particular personification, if we can consider it such for a moment, actually lacks the requirements for the various kinds of personification that the rhetoricians catalogue, for the  *fictio personae*  “is the introduction of non-personal things as persons capable of speech and other forms of personified behavior.”<sup>39</sup> The Maiden is spoken to, but does not speak; she appears as named, but is not described. The  *fictio personae*  is one of the emotive figures, and “it is not the natural expression of a real emotion that is valued as an emotive figure, but the expression of an emotion feigned by means of automated devices.”<sup>40</sup> Lausberg explains that

“As  *ornatus* , figures represent a change with regard to unadorned speech. Unadorned speech is compared to the expressionless position of a body at rest (the body of a person, such as the actor or the orator), or perhaps to an ancient statue, whereas the  *figura*  (the  *schema* ) is the bodily position of the person or statue deviating from the position of rest. The deviating position of the body is an expression of life and expresses states of emotion . . . . Similarly, rhetorical figures are also an expression of life and express emotions . . . through their deviation from the linguistic resting position.” (271-2)

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<sup>37</sup> Wasserman, “Inherent Values,” p. 440. An indispensable discussion of personification in eighteenth-century and Romantic poetry is found in P. W. K. Stone, *The Art of Poetry, 1750-1820: Theories of Poetic Composition and Style in the Late Neo-Classical and Early Romantic Periods* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), esp. pp. 64-76, 83, and 90-92. A brief consideration of personification in Romantic poetry is found in M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1953), pp. 290-7.

<sup>38</sup> Wasserman, “Inherent Values,” p. 446.

<sup>39</sup> Lausberg, p. 370.

<sup>40</sup> Lausberg, p. 358.

Alan Liu sees the use of personification without the vocative in Wordsworth as metonymic, part of a pattern of displacement of the tragic character (the *ethos* of Aristotle's *Poetics*) that will become "the alienated, memorial, or otherwise self-differentiated person-within-a-person that we are rapidly approaching: the Romantic self. Self will be the ultimate 'friend' or personification."<sup>41</sup> For Liu these personifications are part of a pattern of displacement of ethos, most importantly from the social ethos (the mores of the middle class) to that of romance (and thus those of literary courtly love). Certainly the Shakespearean-Spenserian frame of "Nutting" conforms to this pattern of displacement. That we are indeed also here in the presence of the third of Liu's stages, sensibility, may be seen from a reading of "Nutting" by Longfellow, the poem, "The Spirit of Poetry" (1827), which begins, "There is a quiet spirit in the woods" and contains details which recall "Nutting" ("Hence gifted bards / Have ever loved the calm and quiet shades" and "Groves, through whose broken roof the sky looks in").<sup>42</sup> Longfellow's poem is a throwback to the personifications of Collins and the late eighteenth century (it is a variant of the "evening poem") and shows how the "Maiden" of "Nutting" is a personification in Liu's sense, a metonymy that stands next to the speaker rather than

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<sup>41</sup> Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989), p. 297. It is difficult to summarize Liu's very complex argument (pp. 286-94). Liu sees the emergence of Wordsworthian "affection" as the result of the irony of the poetry before *Lyrical Ballads*: "[T]he deep structure of Wordsworth's poetry at the time of *The Borderers* was irony—a mythos and rhetoric whose combined effect was to make his fundamental social ethos, familial love, illegitimate. But to provide the basis for a full poetic program, irony had to convene at least as much authority as the convention in the poet's immediate background: tragedy" (p. 289). The displacement of middle-class ethos by the ethos of romance (courtly love) allows a movement to the mythos of tragedy, thence to the rhetoric of sensibility, and finally to the ethos of redemption, or "affection."

<sup>42</sup> *The Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (New York: AMS P, 1966, pp. 42-44.)

replacing him metaphorically. Liu argues that the “spirit in the woods” in “Nutting” is a case where personification “seems destined to project itself ‘outward’ into a detached realm of feeling,” but is in fact “the sign of imminent internalization” (294). The “spirit in the woods” is part of what Liu describes as “affection,” or “the rhetoric of the Archimago of metonymy: personification, in which the human identity is substituted for an attribute (for example, an emotion) or contiguous association (a feature of landscape, for instance)” (292). This ultimately leads not outward but inward, as Longfellow seems to have sensed in converting the “spirit in the woods” to the Romantic spirit of the self, “the spirit of poetry.”

Liu’s use of “ethos” brings us back to the rhetoric of persuasion at work here. The “Then . . . for . . .” formulation of the poem’s end (the “moral” of the fable) is the concentration of its attempt to persuade the Maiden.<sup>43</sup> As Lausberg notes, *persuadere* consists of *docere*, *delectare*, and *movere*. *Docere* is of two types, “the narrative report and the concluding argumentation,” or the boy’s story and the “Then . . . for . . .” conclusion. *Delectare* produces pleasure “and by this the audience’s sympathy with the topic of the speech . . . and with the speaker himself.” This is achieved by an “emotional bridge” of gentle, suasive emotions. And *movere* “produces an (only momentary, even if quite lasting in its effect) emotional shock in the audience, which aims to move them to side with the speaker’s party.” (113-16). To be moved is to be touched. The level of rhetoric (here the synecdoche of sensation for emotion) corresponds to perception, the perception that the body itself is possessed by the emotion. In reading the final three

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<sup>43</sup> If this is an apostrophe, then the Maiden is the one being persuaded. Nevertheless, the reader is implicated in this persuasion if the reader identifies at all with the Maiden as one receiving the poet’s instruction.

lines of “Nutting”—lines that evoke an Elysian landscape—we may remember that in *Paradise Lost* Eve determines to have Adam eat of the apple “in bliss or woe: / So dear I love him, that with him all deaths / I could endure, without him live no life” (9:831-33). And Adam eats the apple out of the same love for Eve. The last three lines of “Nutting” are not so much the conveying of a lesson as an invitation, as is illustrated in the line break between the last two lines:

Then, dearest Maiden! move along these shades  
 In gentleness of heart with gentle hand  
 Touch, . . .

“Gentleness of heart” in a maiden would seem to preclude touching forbidden fruit: writing “move . . . / In gentleness of heart with gentle hand” would have sufficed. But Wordsworth has written, “In gentleness of heart with gentle hand / Touch,” which is an invitation to share the experience of the narrator and realize that there is a “spirit in the woods.” The sharing of the experience, as with the sharing of the apple from the Tree of Knowledge, involves the conscious acceptance of mortality as something which binds the living together rather than separating them.

The “scene” now is “silent”—still for the moment, not incapable of speech—and “quiet,” that is, capable of communication if one listens carefully enough. The poem ends with an invitation to “touch,” to experience nature tactilely and directly, without words.<sup>44</sup> Here the poem, as if tired of its own intertextual reflexiveness, seeks to escape its own being in the turn to touch, a mode of communication through nakedness where

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<sup>44</sup> Touch as an alternative to speech is indicated in *Paradise Lost* 8, where Eve leaves Adam and Raphael to their discussion while she “went forth among her Fruits and Flowrs” (44): “they at her coming sprung / And toucht by her fair tendance gladlier grew” (46-7). Significantly, Eve prefers discourse of the kind engaged in now by Adam and Raphael when it is between Adam and Eve only, and is mixed with “conjugal Caresses” (56) and the intimate touch of kisses.

language is given up. Yet here too intertexts rise to the surface. The passion involved here is specifically human, as Adam explains to Raphael in book 8 of *Paradise Lost* (and for which the archangel rebukes him, calling it not human, only animal). Comparing all of nature to Eve herself, Adam says of his spouse, “but here / Far otherwise, transported I behold, / Transported touch” (8:528-30). As “hand in hand” Adam and Eve approach their “blissful bower” (4:689), so “hand in hand” they take “their solitary way” out of Eden (12:649).

The turn to touch is achieved in another chain of intertextuality, one that extends from Wordsworth to Milton and thence to Vergil. The narrator of the bower’s devastation indicates that he is aware of how his reading and re-reading of the events narrated can mix present and past:

and unless I now  
 Confound my present feelings with the past,  
 Even then, when from the bower I turn’d away,  
 Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings  
 I felt a sense of pain when I beheld  
 The silent trees and the intruding sky. —

How can the boy have turned away from the bower, as the narrator writes, and *then* see the trees he has just devastated?<sup>45</sup> This physically impossible turn is the repeated turn of memory and the bower he beholds is the remembered one. The catachresis of “I beheld the silent trees,” in mixing the senses of sight and hearing, pushes the scene from perception into memory--or even imagination. The turn here is one from action to reaction. There are many turns and turnings in *Paradise Lost* that are of interest and could be alluded to here. One is the doubling of “turn,” “return,” and “returning” right

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<sup>45</sup> Wordsworth replaces line 48 with “Ere from the mutilated bower I turned” in 1836. The revision removes the ambiguity.

after Eve has plucked the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge and has decided to share it with Adam. First, “So saying, from the Tree her step she turn’d” (*PL* 9:834). Then there are two references to “her return” (*PL* 9:839 and 844). Finally, the word “returning” appears: “by the Tree / Of Knowledge he must pass, there he her met, / Scarse from the Tree returning” (*PL* 9:848-50). These “turns” are suggestive in themselves, but Wordsworth’s “turn’d away” is connected to another event of turning and returning, Eve’s first meeting with Adam after she awakens and sees herself in the pool of water. After seeing herself there, a warning voice tells her to follow him. Then Eve encounters Adam:

. . . I espi’d thee, fair indeed and tall,  
 Under a Platan, yet methought less fair,  
 Less winning soft, less amiablie mild,  
 Then that smooth watry image; back I turnd,  
 Thou following cryd’st aloud, Return fair *Eve*,  
 Whom fli’st thou? (4:477-82)

Adam’s first words to Eve are Aeneas’s last words to Dido in the Underworld.<sup>46</sup> In book 6 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas sees Dido and says, “Stay thy step and withdraw not from our view. Whom fleest thou? The last word Fate suffers me to say to thee is this!” (*Aeneid* 6:465-6; Fairclough, trans.). But Dido, “having turned away” (“aversa”), flees into the woods (“refugit / in nemus umbriferum”). Indeed, “There is a Spirit in the woods,” and like Dido it is a wounded one, for the shades in the Underworld display their never-to-be-healed wounds. (Here it is the boy who turns away, which, if these intertexts are at work, perhaps fits in with a reading that sees the boy as having been wounded [lessened, or fallen] in this experience.) In Milton’s text, Eve’s turn back to her own image brings on

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<sup>46</sup> This is pointed out by John Guillory, *Poetic Authority: Spenser, Milton, and Literary History* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), pp. 143-4.

Adam's first words and first touch. Adam claims her as his "other half": "with that thy gentle hand / Seized mine" (*PL* 4:488-9). (Notice that the immediate intertext of the bower's devastation of "Nutting," the scene of Adam and Eve's first postlapsarian sex, has "Her hand he seized" [*PL* 9:1037], a touch which lacks the gentleness of the couple's first touching.) In Wordsworth's text, the boy's turn away is toward the memory of the Fall and towards the Maiden. The Maiden, moving among the shades, can be said herself to be the "Spirit," one of the dead who lives forever, an unchanging figure that silently rebukes (for Dido does not speak) a man (Aeneas), who, like the poet, sees past, present, and future in the Underworld.

So the elegiac mood, the quiet withdrawal of the end of "Nutting" leaves both the boy and the narrator incapable of fulfilling a desire which is felt but never articulated. For Jonathan Arac, the Maiden is a sacrifice made (in an elaboration of the castration of the mother) to allow the opening of the bower to light.<sup>47</sup> If the scene of devastation is based on the events Milton recounts in Eden, the guilt that creeps up from the long-distance reference to Dido may have another source. As Christine Froula has pointed out, in *Paradise Lost* Eve looks *down* at a sky reflected in a pool of water after her creation whereas Adam looks *up* at the sun, and thus metonymically at the real sky.<sup>48</sup> Eve's situation recalls that of Wordsworth's boy before he rises up. Eve experiences the "murmuring sound / Of waters" (*PL* 4:453-4); in an almost hypnotic polyptoton, the boy

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<sup>47</sup> Arac, *Cultural Genealogies*, pp. 46-7. The fact that "Nutting" comes after "Yew-Trees" in the 1815 collection by Wordsworth suggests a connection between these poems through the idea of sacrifice. See Raimonda Modiano, "Blood Sacrifice, Gift Economy, and the Edenic World: Wordsworth's 'Home at Grasmere,'" *Studies in Romanticism* 32 (1993): 481-521, pp. 486-91.

<sup>48</sup> Christine Froula, "When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy," in Annabel Patterson, ed., *John Milton* (London: Longman, 1992), 142-162, p. 153.

“heard the murmur and the murmuring sound” of the stream.<sup>49</sup> Eve finds herself “reposed / Under a shade of flowers” (*PL* 4:451) that is like the boy’s flowery bower. Froula notes how Eve’s situation allows immediate connection to herself and physical reality, which implies the female’s ability to reproduce herself. And Adam, she correctly points out, sees Eve as perfect and himself as incomplete. When the boy of “Nutting” settles into his bower, he finds his powers being “wasted,” spent on lifeless “stocks and stones / And on the vacant air.” He realizes that the bower can renew itself season after season, but that he is mortal. His ravaging of the bower opens it up to the unreflecting sky and renders the bower silent, denying its maternal qualities and re-enacting the split between Eve’s self-sufficiency and Adam’s reliance on an invisible authority.<sup>50</sup>

The words “Then up I rose” in “Nutting” come *before* the bower is devastated. The realization that the boy lives in a fallen world is the trigger of the re-enactment. The re-enactment establishes an identity while assuring that the being established is then rendered mortal. The mutilation of the bower by the boy comes after the possibility is established that all nature is nothing but “stocks and stones,” idols and therefore projections into what is lifeless of the life that is within us. Only by testing the life of the bower—which is to say, only by killing the life that is in the bower—can the bower’s reality be ascertained. And that mutilation of an object to establish that it is in fact a subject becomes self-mutilation. “Deform’d, and sullied,” the speaker gains life. The boy stands in for Eve here, the Eve who then offers knowledge, and therefore mortality, to

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<sup>49</sup> Bruce Bigley, in “Multiple Voices in ‘Nutting,’ ” p. 441, points out the use of polyptoton. He also notes how lines 45-8 are a chiasmic reversal of lines 17-9: thus the earlier lines are proleptic in one sense but have a structural integrity which their premonitory quality alone cannot account for.

<sup>50</sup> Froula, “When Eve Reads Milton,” pp. 152-7.

Adam—whose place is taken in “Nutting” by the Maiden. The narrator’s words echo Adam’s when he hears that Eve has eaten the Fruit of Knowledge so that the destruction of the trees is like Eve’s self-destruction. After Wordsworth’s boy pulls down the trees,

the shady nook  
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower  
Deform’d and sullied, patiently gave up  
Their quiet being: . . .

Notice that Adam stresses how Eve’s beauty is part of a formative process, and how in plucking the fruit from the Tree and eating it, she has defaced herself:

O fairest of Creation, last and best  
Of all Gods works, Creature in whom excell’d  
Whatever can to sight or thought be formd,  
Holy, divine, good, amiable or sweet!  
How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost,  
Defac’t, deflowrd, and now to Death devote?  
(*PL* 9:896-901)

As Eve is now “defac’t, deflowrd” by her action, the boy of “Nutting” himself is “Deform’d, and sullied” by his, and the trees by being defaced have lost their “being.” They have done so patiently and quietly because the tearing down of the tree and the mutilation of the self in the attainment of knowledge are inevitable repetitions, fatal and, by tradition, fortunate, of the Fall of Man.

The Fall of Man is originary myth, but also monitory fable. Criticism of “Nutting” must take some account of the problem of knowledge and virtue and their relation to teaching in the poem, if only because of the obvious importance of moral instruction to Wordsworth’s work in general. The Miltonic intertext present in “Nutting,” because it points back to a series of texts authorized by metaphysics and given ethical weight by the concept of God, would seem to point even at this early date (1800) forward to the Wordsworth of *The Excursion* (1814) and the later poems, a Wordsworth who is

often more explicitly Christian. The text, even if it is left untroubled by its intertexts, points to the problem of *teaching* virtue, since teaching necessarily must connect to reason (which in education needs to be turned toward the truth, the correct goal), not just behavior (the realm of ethics).<sup>51</sup> The Fall of Man as a myth crystallizes two particular problems of learning and ethics. One is the impossibility of locating change, in this case the change from a state of being “unfallen” to one of being “fallen.” Theologians have had to posit some evolutionary change in the interior of the actors here to explain the exterior act of eating the apple, but in so doing, they assure that the whole question of origins proliferates uncontrollably.<sup>52</sup> (Milton’s treatment of this act of transgression, misbehavior, or transcendence appropriately stages it in an elaborate rhetorical performance by Satan and Eve, where Satan teaches Eve what she really is. The line between persuasion and teaching is tested in this passage.) Locating the exact moment of the Fall remains impossible. One can gesture to it, but never find it. The other problem of learning that the myth recapitulates is its endless repetition (this is what makes it a monitory fable, for the Fall predicates the inescapable repetitiveness of blameable or sinful human behavior). In the Bible the Fall is a historical occurrence, in the same way the Crucifixion is, or (when it comes) the Millennium. The Fall is unique and yet always reoccurring; in fact, it is overdetermined in the way paranoia is. As Sedgwick points out, paranoia’s structure is one of news that isn’t new: “because there must be no bad

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<sup>51</sup> Obviously, “correct behavior” is taught by modelling or conditioning to some extent; I am speaking, instead, of a virtue that can be said to be “known,” as in articulated, reasoned over, and understood.

<sup>52</sup> See J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1968).

surprises, and because learning of the possibility of a bad surprise would itself constitute a bad surprise, paranoia requires that the bad news be always already known.”<sup>53</sup>

In this sense the myth of the Fall easily becomes a more static emblem, and the Shakespearean-Spenserian intertexts in “Nutting” function as emblem. The use of Spenser here works both on the level of connotation and of theme: in Spenser’s work the dangerously or immorally pleasurable is so lovingly presented that it convinces the reader and leaves us caught in the web of aesthetic enchantment. The pleasure is then shown to be pain, and the “sense of pain” the boy in “Nutting” feels corresponds to that reversal. However, the dissonance between this presentation of the Spenserian and the actual tradition in which Spenser worked is more to the point here. Redcross and Guyon, like any number of romance heroes, turn out to be innocents, heroes who are easily and continually deluded and who reach their goals only by a process of trial and error (though the contingency here leaves open the question of supernatural aid or the predestined nature of their achievements). The romance hero seeks out but also suffers his education, as does the boy of “Nutting.” But can one isolate one episode from a romance and have it *stand for* the long educative journey of the romance hero achieved through a narrative that involves multiple episodes and the epistemological challenges of *entrelacement*, shapeshifting enchanters, and distracting digressions?<sup>54</sup> The attempt in “Nutting” to

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<sup>53</sup> Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 130.

<sup>54</sup> This problem is not Wordsworth’s alone. Spenser’s influence on neoclassical and Romantic poetry was indeed complex, as Greg Kucich’s indispensable book, *Keats, Shelley, and Romantic Spenserianism* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1991) demonstrates. According to Kucich, the example of *The Faerie Queene* both authorized fragmentary works and ways of addressing “states of mental division” (p. 95) while also engendering a stream of heavily moralistic works which the Romantics chafed against. A poignant example of Wordsworth’s own “state of mental division” can be seen in the way “literary” shepherds (those of Sannazaro, Shakespeare, and Spenser) are

make inevitable or fated what would occur by chance in a romance—here, forcing a “spot of time,” as if such a thing were possible—marks the most salient disarticulation between the self-presentation of “Nutting” and its Spenserian pre-texts. The emblem of quest romance that “Nutting” provides to signify romance in its miniaturization, in its solidification of romance’s fluidity, in its form as residue is an allegory, and as such displaces the contingencies and richness of Spenserian romance and is *in itself* the sign of the boy’s delusion.<sup>55</sup> The allegory is itself a misuse of Spenser in its violent foreshortening of his romance, and may stand as a token for the pedagogical use of Spenser in eighteenth-century England, where Latin allegorical works were translated by generations of schoolboys into Spenserian stanzas.<sup>56</sup> The long educative process of Spenserian romance is reduced, as is common in formal pedagogy, not purified, to the “cautionary tale.”

The use of the Spenserian frame and the pointedly ethical myth of the Fall indicate a problem with the use of the exemplum in persuasion and the difficulty of reconciling education with ethical persuasion. Education implies formalization and

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contrasted with the actual shepherds of Wordsworth’s boyhood and the shepherds outside Goslar, shepherds who are so admired by the author that they become far more idealized and moralized (and to this extent then, literary) than any Arcadian shepherd. (See the treatment of shepherds in *The Prelude* 1850, book 8.)

<sup>55</sup> Spenser’s romance is allegorical, but in a far different way than, say, Prudentius’s *Psychomachia*. It is, as Angus Fletcher points out, “ambivalent,” as the poem works against its own explicit allegory through its style, the treatment of characters, and the situations. (See Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1964, pp. 268-74). As C. S. Lewis writes, “Not everything in the poem [i.e., *The Faerie Queene*] is equally allegorical, or even allegorical at all. We shall find that it is Spenser’s method to have in each book an allegorical core, surrounded by a margin of what is called ‘romance of types’, and relieved by episodes of pure fantasy” (*The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1936], p. 334).

<sup>56</sup> Wasserman, “Inherent Values,” pp. 437-39.

system, and of course reason, while ethics implies habituation and action (doing rather than, or in addition to, knowing). Certainly virtue cannot be uncovered in the student's mind in the same way that geometrical proofs are in the *Meno*. And if education for Plato has a metaphysical aim as the teacher leads the student from conjecture to belief to understanding and thence to higher reason, virtue remains part of habit and the acquisition of a "second nature."<sup>57</sup> For Aristotle, too, education must be centered on the rational part of the soul, and virtue remains in a part of the soul that is irrational but controlled by the rational. There is no way easily to separate these categories in ethics itself, as Aristotle notes in trying to find the relationship between a state of virtue and virtuous action. If philosophical wisdom, understanding, and prudence are part of the rational soul, and the rational soul governs the irrational part to produce virtues of character, then truly ethical behavior—in which virtuous action is accompanied by a state of virtue—must be partly achieved through education, which devotes itself to reason and thus to faculties related to it, such as decision, understanding, thought, and goal-directed reason: "The principle of an action—the source of motion, not the goal—is decision; the principle of decision is desire and goal-directed reason. That is why decision requires understanding and thought, and also a state of character for acting well or badly requires both thought and character" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1.4).<sup>58</sup>

It is true, however, that Aristotle places his remarks on the governance of the irrational soul by the rational soul in the context of a particular kind of persuasion:

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<sup>57</sup> See Plato's discussion of the proper kinds of fables for children to imitate (*Republic* 3; esp. 395c-d): *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1961), p. 640.

<sup>58</sup> All references to the *Nicomachean Ethics* are to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (second ed., Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999).

The nonrational [part], then, as well [as the whole soul] apparently has two parts. For while the plantlike [part] shares in reason not at all, the part with appetites and in general desires shares in reason in a way, insofar as it both listens to reason and obeys it. This is the way in which we are said to “listen to reason” from father or friends, as opposed to the way in which [we “give the reason”] in mathematics. The nonrational part [obeys and] is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by correction, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13.18)

The mixed state of persuasion, with its use of emotion (rhetoric is, after all, the “counterpart” to dialectic, not a special form of dialectic, and thus accommodates devices that can persuade but need not be as intellectually rigorous as dialectic) is clearly put in the province of a type of education here, at least on the level of perlocutionary speech acts, or trying to get someone to do (or not do) something. Undoubtedly, the “correction,” “reproof,” and “exhortation” of fathers and friends can include shaming, and shame (“a kind of pain or uneasiness in respect of misdeeds, past, present, or future, which seem to tend to bring dishonor” [*Rhetoric* 2.6.2; 1383b]) is covered in detail by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* as an emotion that is socially conditioned and socially useful.

On a practical level, no matter how complicated the relations between ethical persuasion and education may be, they may share methodologies or devices, as in the case of the exemplum, whether it be illustrative, synecdochal, or a matter of similitude, because, as Alexander Gelley points out, they share a basic rhetorical attitude:

“[T]he function of pictorial realization in ancient rhetoric, *eikon* and *imago*, was closely linked to the structure of example. But in a rhetorical sense not only does the example picture, it may also induce an imitative reproduction on the part of the receptor or audience. The mimetic effect here is linked not, as is usual, to techniques of representation but to forms of behavior, to a goal of ethical transformation. The example turns into an exemplar and its function becomes that of propagating itself, creating multiples.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Alexander Gelley, Introduction to Gelley, ed., *Unruly Examples* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993), 1-24, p. 3. In the “propagation,” as Gelley calls it, of the exemplum’s *imago*,

The importance of imitation in education is of course stressed by Plato in his strictures on the contents of fables provided for children and the models of men of good qualities to be emulated. Aristotle's definition of man as the imitative animal (in the *Poetics*, as well as the "political animal" in the *Nicomachean Ethics*) makes the child whose nature is being drawn out or realized by habituation a likely subject for education through imitation, as long as a teacher is there to guide the child to a state of virtue, which requires knowing why one thing is virtuous as well as being habituated to doing what is virtuous.

The difficult relationship between shame and memory itself seems to be one of Wordsworth's preoccupations, for memory in the poet's work is never precisely happy: happy memories are always shaded by the elegiac or wrenched from the merely human by the sublime. The alienation of the remembering self from what is remembered is figured variously—as power lost (The "Immortality" Ode) or as an inhumanness whose "renovating virtue" forces regret away all too powerfully. One can see the predicament of the "sense of pain" in "Nutting" as another example. Is this moment in the poem constative or performative? In other words, is pain merely described, or does the ever-presentness of this pain change the ethical state of the speaker? If this moment is one of shame, as I have argued, how is it to be rephrased? Does it mean "I was ashamed," or does it mean "I am shameful," and therefore, in the active sense of emotion that Sartre outlines, "The world is filled with (my) shame," or even, "The world is all shame"? Consider emotion as Sartre describes it, "a mode of our conscious existence, one of the

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one sees the problem of sexual reproduction itself in the context of the fable of the Fall: the reproduction promised to Eve in *Paradise Lost* as God's voice leads her to Adam: "he / Whose image thou art, him thou shall enjoy / inseparably thine, to him shalt bear / Multitudes like thyself, and thence be called / Mother of human race" (*PL* 4.471-5).

ways in which consciousness understands . . . its Being-in-the-World.”<sup>60</sup> The overwhelming force of memory in Wordsworth comes from its indissoluble connection to emotion. The coloration of the world which Coleridge describes being given to the world through imagination<sup>61</sup> is the cognate but weaker form of a formulation by Sartre that Wordsworth’s poetry confirms: emotion gives qualities to objects, “But no quality is conferred upon an object without passing over to the infinite.”<sup>62</sup>

It is the purity of the narrator’s feelings and his disinterestedness in presenting them that seem to be at stake when criticism of this poem turns to what is seen as its tawdry subject, and this may be so because Wordsworth has superimposed a genre (if it is that) of confession, which uses the first person narrative, with the structures of third-person narratives, the exemplum and the fable. The personal and subjective (the “sense of pain”) is invoked in the form of a rhetorical teaching device (exemplum and fable) implying universality that cannot support their opposites. The two tendencies—subjective experience and the clarity of the exemplary—work against each other. And, as we have seen, the multiple intertexts of the work also tend to exert their gravitational force against the personal experience that would seem to wish to outrun it. The contradictory energies at work produce, in the moment of greatest stress, a complicated residuum of the eighteenth-century’s “bold” figure, the personification. Yet this figure—recalling Eve and Dido—pulls the poem back to the affect which it would seem it seeks to escape: shame. As such, the poem is not ultimately a reflection on libertinism, rape, or

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<sup>60</sup> Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, p. 91.

<sup>61</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1983), 2:5.

<sup>62</sup> Sartre, *Sketch*, p. 82.

male prerogatives: it is concerned with an affect rooted in our first experiences of difference, temporality, blockage, and disappointment, the affect that, in any number of exemplary psychological and literary scripts, can come to haunt our every moment.

## Chapter Two

Shame, Irony, and Intertextuality in Book 1 of *The Excursion*

## 1.

Wordsworth's theory of poetry in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800, revised 1802) reverses the oft-preferred order of emotion and its object: where one might see something in the world outside us as the cause of our emotions, in Wordsworth's new kind of poetry, emotion gives the poetic object its "importance." While this reversal of an empiricist view of emotion (an outside influence occasioning an inside "feeling") may resemble the reversal of Lockean epistemology which Coleridge saw as part of Wordsworth's project in *The Excursion*—man as "informing the sense from the mind, and not compounding a mind out of the senses"<sup>1</sup>—it can also be viewed, as Adela Pinch points out, in relation to the "autogenerative quality" of sentimentalism and "the tendency of the sentimentalist to stage for him or herself the occasion for feeling."<sup>2</sup> In considering the number of women who suffer from desertion, distress, or death in Wordsworth, Pinch writes, "One suspects that earlier critics tended to avoid the gender of Wordsworth's principal sufferers in order to persist in trying to dignify or distance Wordsworth from a sensational engagement with others' suffering, as if it were indeed 'a wantonness' (to quote the Pedlar of *The Ruined Cottage*), a morally suspect sexual pleasure, to write about suffering" (85). Of course, whether one can represent suffering at all without giving pleasure has been a question since Aristotle: mimesis and representation have a

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<sup>1</sup> *Table Talk*, July 31, 1832, quoted in E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, eds., *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1949), p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), p. 77.

power to arouse excitement and emotion that has long been viewed as intrinsically pleasurable.<sup>3</sup> In the case of *The Excursion*,<sup>4</sup> the framework of the poem—the Wanderer reciting the story of Margaret to the Poet on the stage of the ruined cottage and its overgrown garden where the narrated events took place—itself thematizes the issue of how suffering, memory, narration, and the reception of stories are connected. To this already dense mixture of issues one must add that the scene is one of instruction in which a quasi-parental status is given to the Wanderer vis-à-vis the Poet, and in which Margaret’s condition takes on the status of exemplum and the shadings of allegory. With such elements in place, it might be difficult to avoid the occasional occurrences of shame in the Poet receiving the instruction, but a shame relating to Margaret is impossible to avoid, given the contents of Margaret’s story, a story in which the shame of

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<sup>3</sup> Since Aristotle, theorists have had to ponder why disgusting or horrifying events when portrayed are pleasurable. For Aristotle, “all men take pleasure in imitative representations. . . . The reason is that learning things is most enjoyable” (*Poetics* 4). (G. M. A. Grube, trans., Aristotle, *On Poetry and Style* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989], p. 7. “Learning things” translates *manthanein*, and could be translated “understanding” or “comprehension.”) Pinch discusses Hume and Burke in this context (*Strange Fits of Passion*, pp. 114-15), but the background for Wordsworth is much more crowded. See, for instance, James H. Averill, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980), pp. 121-34 and Earl Wasserman, “The Pleasures of Tragedy,” *ELH* 14 (1947): 283-307.

<sup>4</sup> I will attend mostly to *The Excursion* here (published first in 1814 and revised up through 1845) rather than *The Ruined Cottage* because it is the work known to other writers and critics of the time. The complicated history of the development of *The Excursion* from the works known as *The Ruined Cottage*, *Home at Grasmere*, and *The Pedlar* is given in the notes to volume 5 (*The Excursion; The Recluse, Part I, Book I*) of E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, eds., *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1949), pp. 363-72. In addition, see Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Music of Humanity: A Critical Study of Wordsworth’s Ruined Cottage* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), *passim*; Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere*, ed. Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977), esp. pp. 3-32; and Wordsworth, *The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar*, ed. James Butler (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979), esp. pp. 3-39. All references to the text of *The Excursion* are to the de Selincourt and Darbishire edition.

the deserting husband is transferred to the deserted wife. This fact stems not only from the real, historical difference in the standards applied to men and women in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century England, but from the way shame shapes the structure of the poem.

In his theoretical writing, Wordsworth moves from an emphasis on feeling recalled (having been modified in an interaction with thought) to sensibility and imagination. The latter ideas are exactly, and even clinically, described by Wordsworth in the Preface of 1815, which begins with the importance of the poet as dispassionate observer. This apparent division in his theoretical approach is reflected in the divided reaction to his poetry when it first appeared. Some readers (e.g., Anna Seward and Lucy Atkins) at first found his work over-sentimental; others (e.g., Hazlitt and De Quincey) found it often cold.<sup>5</sup> The Wanderer, who in many ways is a portrait of Wordsworth himself, embodies both the poet's concentration on emotion and its control or appropriate use. One of the roles the Wanderer plays in the poem is as a regulator of emotion and a teacher who uses emotional reactions in the guidance of his auditor. This seems to have been true even in the earliest versions of the poem, before the personal history of the Wanderer was expanded, for the Wanderer (at that point the Pedlar) seems to have narrated Margaret's tale from the earliest drafts on.<sup>6</sup>

The centrality of emotion to Wordsworth's poetics in his mid- and late thirties is so familiar that the relevant points need only be briefly reviewed here. Wordsworth announces the importance of emotion in his own poetics with the Advertisement to

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<sup>5</sup> Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>6</sup> See de Selincourt and Darbishire, eds., *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 1:365-66.

*Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. In the 1802 Preface, “the essential passions of the heart” and “our elementary feelings” are connected to manners and language: the country provides a good setting for the feelings from which manners “germinate,” and it is in the country that “the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature” (245).<sup>7</sup> “[A]ll good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (246), but not just of any feelings: thought guides these feelings, and yet thoughts are themselves “representatives of all our past feelings” (246). “By contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other” one discovers “what is really important to men” (246). As with any education—here one of sensibility and feeling—“habits of mind will be produced” (247). Then, however, “by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulse of those habits” the poet will “enlighten[ ]” others (247). Wordsworth rephrases this later in the Preface:

I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. (266)

In the description of the poet (added in 1802) the emotion that “actually exist[s] in the mind” is what assures that the poet is not engaged merely in mimesis:

[W]hile he describes and imitates passions, his situation is altogether slavish and mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; . . . (256)

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<sup>7</sup> The text of *Lyrical Ballads* used here is Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Methuen, 1963). The 1802 text is used in this essay.

The status of emotion in the poet finds its echo in the preeminence of emotion in the poems: Wordsworth tells his readers that the poems of *Lyrical Ballads* will be different from other poems, for “the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, not the action and situation to the feeling” (248). Whatever the emotion, the poet is able to achieve “a state of enjoyment” in his description of it, and “whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions . . . should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure” (266).

Contrast this with the beginning of the Preface to *Poems* (1815):

The powers requisite for the production of poetry are, first, those of observation and description, i.e. the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the Describer: . . . (632)<sup>8</sup>

The strange rigidity of this conception is soon enough modified by “Imagination,” which is “a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws” (636). Wordsworth considers that the “processes of imagination” involved in a number of metaphors and “are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to react upon the mind which hath performed the process, like, [*sic*] a new existence” (637). Wordsworth then considers his own remarkable description of the Leech Gatherer in

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<sup>8</sup> Carl H. Ketcham, ed., William Wordsworth, *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1989). In the 1800 Preface Wordsworth also stresses clarity of observation, but in the context of purging his poetry of “what is usually called poetic diction”: “I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject, consequently I hope it will be found that there is in these Poems little falsehood of description, and that my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance” (251). The emphasis in this passage is on decorum (the calibrating of content to style), not on the objectivity and affective evacuation of the 1815 Preface.

“Resolution and Independence.” Here, rather than “Imagination acting upon an individual image” we have “the same faculty employed upon images in a conjunction by which they modify each other” (637). The passage Wordsworth quotes shows “the conferring, the abstracting, and the modifying powers of the Imagination” (637), all of which would fall into the category of metaphor, which involves the transposition of qualities from one thing to another. The stress here seems to be on separation and combination of qualities; it is a controlled intellectual event that is apparently not helped by emotion. The evacuation of emotion in this description may betray some anxiety about the kinds of looking that may involve the punitive, the shaming, and the sadistic. It is hard not to feel that the 1815 Preface itself enacts a careful turning away from the dangers that spectacle presents to any moral stance—the moral dangers of representation, sympathy, and shame.<sup>9</sup>

In book 1 of *The Excursion* (“The Wanderer”) it is assumed that one cannot look at suffering for long if one has not been prepared for it by a discipline of piety, solitary contemplation, and the influence of nature. The unearned feeling of superiority one sees in the parson of “The Two Brothers,” who laughs at the touristic impulse to stare at

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<sup>9</sup> The dangers of sympathy that seem to be reflected in the 1815 Preface are the same ones which Adam Smith outlines in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Smith sees sympathy as ameliorative, as undoing extremes: we desire sympathy, but because of the inevitable difference in the sympathizer’s feeling and the feeling of the person he is sympathizing with, there is a modification or “flatten[ing]” of the emotion in the person who wants sympathy (1.1.4.7-8). A “concord” is achieved through the suffering person’s putting himself in the place of the spectators of his suffering. There’s then a growing sense of “coolness” with respect to his own fortunes. Because the spectators will have a less violent passion than his, his putting himself in their place will lessen his own passion (1.1.4.8). The commiseration of the spectator with the sufferer engenders the gentle, “amiable” virtues; the effort by the sufferer to “bring down his emotions to what the spectator can go along with” are the “awful” or “respectable” virtues of self-denial or self-command of the passions (1.1.5.1). Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982).

perfectly ordinary things—whose very ordinariness makes them impossible for the thrill-seeking tourist to even understand—this attitude is far from the poetical one of the Wanderer. Though he has “The vision and the faculty divine” (1:79) which make a poet, he never acquired the technical skills of a poet; he is one of those

Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,  
 (Which, in the docile season of their youth,  
 It was denied them to acquire, through lack  
 Of culture and the inspiring aid of books,  
 Or haply by a temper too severe,  
 Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame) . . . (1:80-85)

The Wanderer does not lack book-learning: he goes to school (indeed, in the editions from 1814 to 1820 his mother is said to have married the village schoolteacher), and even tries a career as a teacher (1:312-15), but “wandering thoughts were then / A misery to him” (1:313-14) and he takes up a life of peddling. This life allows him to continue his meditations in nature and to observe humanity. His clear sight depends on the same thing which denies him the status of poet: “a temper too severe, / Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame” (1:84-85). The odd phrase “afraid of shame” would seem to mean a natural modesty or bashfulness that will not allow him to put himself forward in the position of poetic authority. However, it also literally means a fear of getting into situations where shame might ensue (even from an association with shameful actions), and there is a current of sexual privation flowing under the career of a man who remains not only unmarried, but committed to a separation from humanity in

the peace  
 And liberty of nature; there he kept  
 In solitude and solitary thought  
 His mind in a just equipoise of love.  
 Serene it was, unclouded by the cares  
 Of ordinary life; unvexed, unwarped  
 By partial bondage. (1:352-57)

With this freedom he is capable of sympathy:

He had no painful pressure from within  
 That made him turn aside from wretchedness  
 With coward fears. He could *afford* to suffer  
 With those whom he saw suffer. (1:368-71; emphasis in original)

When the Wanderer comments on the tendency of poets to personify nature (the model of course being the pastoral poets), he admits it is an understandable occurrence, because related to human passion, but he has reached a deeper understanding of a scene whose pathos is known only to the person who has occupied it, visited, and loved it:

[W]e die, my Friend,  
 Nor we alone, but that which each man loved  
 And prized in his peculiar nook of earth  
 Dies with him, or is changed; and very soon  
 Even of the good is no memorial left. (1:470-74)

The burden of the Wanderer's instruction of the Poet now must consist of making the landscape as meaningful as the pastoral poets made it through using emotion:

—The Poets, in their elegies and songs  
 Lamenting the departed, call the groves,  
 They call upon the hills and streams to mourn,  
 And senseless rocks; nor idly; for they speak,  
 In these their invocations, with a voice  
 Obedient to the strong creative power  
 Of human passion. (1:475-81)

But the Wanderer will provide a more dispassionate alternative:

Sympathies there are  
 More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,  
 That steal upon the meditative mind,  
 And grow with thought. (1:481-84)

This does not mean that the Wanderer rejects the anthropomorphisms of the pastoral poet: indeed, the waters of the well “seem[ ] to feel / One sadness, they and I” (1:485-6).

As the trees of this grove are a “brotherhood” (1:29) so in the case of the waters of the

pool, “a bond / Of brotherhood is broken” (1:486-7), here a bond between them and the humans who “Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up / In mortal stillness” (1:488-9). But the emphasis in these anthropomorphisms is not on passion but on sympathy, and one feels again the Wanderer’s need to moderate strong grief to something gentler. In effect, the Wanderer’s use of the pastoral here points to the importance of allegory (which is typical of pastoral) as an alternative to emotions which can mislead us ethically.

By its peculiar concentration on objects moved toward, dwelt on, and away from in the slow, deliberate tempo that is typical of this work, “The Wanderer” gives its reader the feeling that allegory is present, if not on the surface, then not far below. The strange slowness indicates the lack, ruin, death, and emptiness that for Wordsworth often prompt the imagination. The Wanderer’s attempts to interpret Margaret’s situation from the condition of the cottage both engage the picturesque, with its reliance on time, and the sublime, as the poignant details develop not into a reassuring social scene but into an ever-bleaker state where nature seems ready to overwhelm its human inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> As

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<sup>10</sup> See the analysis by Judith W. Page, *Wordsworth and the Cultivation of Women* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994), pp. 19-22, of the Conistan passage of the 1799 two-part *Prelude*. The passage she quotes from Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque* (1794) is telling:

Observe the process by which Time (the great author of such changes) converts a beautiful object into a picturesque one: First, by means of weather stains, partial incrustations, mosses, &c. it at the same time takes off from the uniformity of the surface, and of the color; that is, given a degree of roughness, and variety of tint. Next, the various accidents of weather loosen the stones themselves; they tumble in irregular masses upon what was perhaps smooth turf or pavement, or nicely-trimmed walks and shrubberies, now mixed and overgrown with wild plants and creepers, that crawl over, and shoot among the fallen ruins . . . while the ivy mantles over other parts, and crowns the top” (quoted in Page, p. 20).

Angus Fletcher points out, allegory tends towards isolation or separation of objects. The concentration on pregnant details (the pool of water “Shrouded with willow flowers” (1:462), which reminds one of Ophelia; the scattered books in the cottage, etc.) begins to verge on the diagrammatic quality of emblems.<sup>11</sup> And what Fletcher points out about the allegorical hero could apply to some extent to Margaret as well:

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One can easily see the parallels here between Price’s description and the orderly (beautiful) garden tended by Robert, the weathering and staining and incrusting of the cottage after he leaves, and the plants that begin to overwhelm the structure itself as it starts to be ruined. The fact that generally the beautiful and the sublime were gendered as feminine and masculine by Burke complicates the process in “The Wanderer,” since Robert would be associated with the beautiful and, as she becomes assimilated to a nature that conveys a teaching (one of the paradigmatic forms of Wordsworth’s sublime), Margaret with the sublime. In connection with the boat-stealing and Coniston passages of the two-part *Prelude*, Page notes, “The boat-stealing episode evokes the structure of the Gothic tale, with psychological rather than supernatural explanations; the scene on the lake of Coniston remains pictorial and ritual-like, rather than a dramatically plotted narrative [in distinction to *The Ruined Cottage*]. The beautiful is framed and contained in a memorial scene, whereas the sublime intrudes itself into the unconscious memory” (22). This evaluation makes one see how the Wanderer’s observations of the cottage as it decays can mix the categories of the picturesque (time’s slow decay) with the sublime (the loneliness of the child’s cry, for instance, which, I would argue is not sentimental but a domestic version of the helplessness and horror of the sublime), a kind of “visionary dreariness.”

<sup>11</sup> See chapter 2 (“The Cosmic Image”) of *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1964), esp. pp. 98-108. Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984), remarks on the disintegration (and, as he sees it, “monstrous” quality) of Margaret, the title characters of “The Discharged Soldier,” and “The Cumberland Beggar” (pp. 48-9). It must be noted too that the Wanderer’s returns to Margaret’s cottage and the landscape’s belated and overdetermined quality may have their ultimate model in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, whose typical structure is one of belated arrivals (or non-arrivals) at Homeric sites and situations. Typical is the arrangement of events on Aeneas’s arrival at Carthage: he sees a frieze on which the events of his own life are recorded; Dido arrives; the scattered Trojan men (who think Aeneas is dead) relate the disaster of the shipwreck; Aeneas is mourned; Aeneas himself arrives on the scene and must then recount the very stories portrayed in the frieze. The situation here plays on Odysseus’s return to Ithaca in disguise and the framing of his adventures in tales told along the route of his return. The Trojans in general wander through a landscape already well known from Homer. In book 3 they pass Ithaca and meet Achaemenides, left behind by Odysseus fleeing from the Cyclops; in book 7 they pass the island where they can hear the sounds made by Circe’s enchanted beasts; in book 8, Evander shows Aeneas places

The hero is either a personified abstraction or a representative type, which amount to much the same thing, and in either case what is felt as a narrowed iconographic meaning is known to us the readers through the hero's characteristic way of acting, which is severely limited in variety. . . . We find that he conforms to the type of behavior manifested by people who are thought (however unscientifically) to be possessed by a daemon. (38-39)

In drawing out the suffering of Margaret, by having the Wanderer leave and return several times to an altered situation, Wordsworth gives Margaret the typical characteristic of allegory, the fixation or stasis that, as Fletcher writes, "is tantamount to an image" (66). How far we are from Aristotelian mimesis becomes clear in the many other ways "The Wanderer" recalls the other characteristics of allegory that Fletcher lays out. Fletcher notes that one approaches allegory when the "human" detail does not interfere with "the ritual *form of the whole*" which gives importance to the characters or "agent[s]":

The apparent surface realism of an allegorical agent will recede in importance, as soon as he is felt to take part in a magical plot, as soon as his causal relations to others in that plot are seen to be magically based. . .

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that will someday be parts of Rome, and Aeneas looks at the shield of Mulciber, on which future conflicts in Rome are portrayed. It would be worth investigating the extent to which the premonitory, ominous, and inexplicable feeling that a scene is fraught with significance one finds in much of Wordsworth owes something to his love of the *Aeneid*. Wordsworth's own process of translating the *Aeneid* is one of comparison with a number of older translations, so that it almost replicates the situation Vergil is faced with—and thematizes—in writing an epic that will be Rome's imitative answer to Homer's perfection. See Bruce E. Graver, ed., Wordsworth, *Translations of Chaucer and Virgil* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998). Neil Hertz has already made much the same point in regard to Wordsworth and Milton: "[I]t is chiefly in the telling of the [i.e., Margaret's] tale, in the rehearsal in words of the truth of loss, that the poem asserts a saving continuity; the pathos of Margaret's history is given additional depth and poignancy because it comes to us as a story within a story, and, just as in *Paradise Lost*, a chain of mediations is established that brings the reader into the continuum, into the repetitive process by which reality is turned into truth" ("Wordsworth and the Tears of Adam" in *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* [New York: Columbia U P, 1985], 21-39, p. 38).

. Naturalistic detail is “cosmic,” universalizing, not accidental as it would be in straight journalism. (198-99)

So, for instance, in “The Wanderer,” the water that recalls the suicide of the deserted Ophelia (through the reference to “willow flowers”) also once “ministered / To human comfort” (1:490-91) as does the water of baptism—and the water of simple nourishment. The fact that the Poet is directed to the water by the Wanderer makes the water that quenches his thirst quickly reverberate with echoes of the knowledge that fills a student’s “thirst” for it and the Psalmist’s for spiritual consolation. Here the details of the poem irrepressibly shift back and forth between naturalistic detail and allegorical significance, illuminating each other in both naturalistic and allegorical patterns but never quite settling into one category or the other.

That *poète manqué*, the Wanderer himself awakens a sense that the story he is telling is allegorical, not only in his introduction to his story (“I see around me here / Things which you cannot see” [1:469-70]), but in the urgency of his didactic impulse. As Fletcher writes:

The mimetic poet using metaphor is only trying to understand nature; his art attempts to bring about catharsis of spent emotion. By means of his “message,” on the other hand, the allegorical poet is furthermore trying to control his audience. He seeks to sway them by magical devices to accept intellectual or spiritual attitudes. (192)

As we shall see, the Wanderer’s lessons have to do with the proper reaction to the tale of Margaret: the Poet’s emotive response is what he seeks to control. The Wanderer’s problem here is reminiscent of the one dealt with in *The Republic*—how the student should or will react to certain kinds of stories, and whether those stories will demoralize or strengthen the student. This is a problem of imitation and habituation when looked at in pedagogical terms; in “The Wanderer,” however, the main terms are emotional, and

because allegory hovers over the poem's transactions, the Wanderer seems to be not only teaching a lesson but initiating the Poet into a mystery.<sup>12</sup>

The suffering Margaret, here dwelt on in painstaking detail and with painful slowness, recalls any number of long-suffering figures, from Penelope to Christ,<sup>13</sup> and

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<sup>12</sup> See Fletcher, *Allegory*, pp. 212-13. The complicated emotional interchange between the Pedlar (the Wanderer's earlier title) and the Poet in *The Ruined Cottage* is seen in Aristotelian terms in James H. Averill, "Suffering and Calm in Wordsworth's Early Poetry," *PMLA* 91 (1976): 223-34. Averill writes, "The narrator and the Pedlar function as a tragic chorus, guiding and intensifying the reader's emotions. The calm of nature is the metaphor by which the poet describes the cathartic effects of Margaret's tragedy" (224). Such an interpretation cannot make sense, however, of the shimmering aura of allegory that surrounds the poem's images. And the Wanderer's stress on the tempering and moderating of emotion directly contradicts Aristotle's emphasis on the violent emotions of pity and fear, unless we follow Milton's interpretation of Aristotle's theory as one where the poet works "to temper and reduce them [i.e., pity and fear] to just measure with a kind of delight" (Introduction to *Samson Agonistes* ["Of that Sort of Dramatic Poem which is Called Tragedy"]). But Milton may be influenced by Christian tragedy, in which one finds, as Barbara Lewalski puts it, "the endurance of sin and suffering, pain and loss, while waiting in faith and hope for God's providential design to be brought to its final comedic resolution" (Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* [Princeton UP, 1985], pp. 223-4). There are few characters in Greek tragedy as passive as Margaret: even Aeschylus's Prometheus, though chained to a rock, resists nobly, and, as Coleridge shows, he is part of an allegorical structure (see Fletcher, *Allegory*, pp. 228-31). Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* remarks that "Margaret, the veteran [of "The Discharged Soldier"], and the old Cumberland beggar are not tragic figures, as they have made no fateful choice to cause their suffering nor do they have any significant recognition of its causes. Each of the poems is a scene of tragic recognition for the narrator rather than the sufferers" (p. 36). Though the question of tragedy in "The Wanderer" impinges on the important problem of the poem's genre, it is perhaps more productive to press the dissolving boundary between naturalism and allegory than to allow the poem to settle into the paradigm of Aristotelian or Christian tragedy. Wordsworth's revision of lines 1:934-55, done in 1843 and 1845 explicitly invite the lens of Christian tragedy; these revisions, probably made in reaction to criticisms by "Christopher North" (John Wilson), can hardly be said to settle the matter, however, since they come rather late in the narrative. See notes to lines 1.934-55 in de Selincourt and Darbishire, *Poetical Works*, 5:415 and Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Music of Humanity*, pp. 26-7. In these final revisions, which include Margaret's praying at the crucifix, an implicit Christianity is not suddenly made explicit: instead, the crucifix merely forms another instance of the theme of long-suffering women, as Margaret becomes like the three Mary's at the foot of the cross.

from Psyche to the suffering Griselda. In her melding with nature she begins to recall the rock-bound, endlessly weeping “Niobe all tears” (*Hamlet* 1:2:149), and the figure of Melancholy, pacing with her eyes cast on the ground (as in *Il Penseroso*).<sup>14</sup> As it is slowly enveloped by the surrounding vegetation, the cottage becomes representative not only of decay but of hiddenness, that which lies under a slowly lowering veil. At the same time, the cottage’s decay exposes its inhabitants to the elements, so that they become homeless, subject to wind and rain in a pattern of self-destruction and rejection that reminds one of Edgar’s—Poor Tom’s—hovel on the heath in *King Lear*. The decline of Margaret and the cottage into the fertile ground is a metamorphic form of allegory: Fletcher points out that “[m]uch of the literary interest in metamorphosis comes from the idea of liberation or imprisonment that it conveys; it continually turns humans into their bestial equivalents on the scale of the Great Chain, or frees them to live as humans, with free will” (193). The “equivalent” here, vegetable not bestial, would be the

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<sup>13</sup> Sharon M. Setzer, *Wordsworth’s The Excursion and the Discourse of the Other* (Ph.D. diss., Duke U, 1985), p. 48, also points out the resemblance to Penelope in the context of Margaret’s spinning.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart Curran sees the slow dying-away of Margaret in terms of pastoral pining: “Margaret’s decline is a modern, demythologized version of the affliction of Daphnis recounted in Theocritus’s First *Idyll*. An unfathomable, immedicable sorrow is translated into the wholeness of an art that recognizes that there must, indeed, be a harmonious interchange between humanity and nature if the pastoral ideal is even to be conceived as possible” (*Poetic Form and British Romanticism* [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986], pp. 103-4). The broken wooden bowl (what’s left of the cup Thyrsis wins in the song contest?), the spring (“yonder stream that tumbles plashing from the rocks” in *Idyll* 1), the fact that it is noon (when Thyrsis sings his song)—these are indeed reminiscent of Theocritus’s pastoral, in which Daphnis drowns in the stream, an image that is congruent with the evocation of Ophelia found in the “willow flowers.” See A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1950), pp. 4-15.

famous image of “the high spear-grass on that wall, / By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o’er” (1:943-4).<sup>15</sup>

2.

That Margaret’s suffering may remind one of Chaucer’s *Griselda* and Shakespeare’s *Edgar* is not perhaps as far-fetched as it might at first seem. However different these stories are in their details, they curiously share elements that may shed some light on the peculiar power of Wordsworth’s story. Both *Griselda* and *Edgar* are put through a trial of loyalty and patience, the first to her husband, the second to his father. The origins of the *Griselda* story go back to *Cupid and Psyche* and even further: the wife/lover disregards a taboo and is assigned an impossible task in order to be restored to her husband/lover.<sup>16</sup> The rejection comes from the male partner (originally a god) and the female partner’s test includes, in the case of Chaucer’s *The Clerk’s Tale*, sacrificing her own children. While Wordsworth’s *Margaret* does not suffer the indignity of divorce and her husband’s remarriage (one of the motifs that characterize the *Griselda* story),<sup>17</sup> her husband does desert her, which could stand in for the divorce and certainly is a form of rejection. And *Margaret* does neglect her children, wandering

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<sup>15</sup> Alison Hickey’s important discussion of allegory and the Poet (*Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth’s “Excursion”* [Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997], pp. 31-45) is considered in part 3 of this essay.

<sup>16</sup> See Judith Bronfman, *Chaucer’s Clerk’s Tale: The Griselda Story Received, Rewritten, Illustrated* (New York: Garland, 1994), esp. pp. 7-18.

<sup>17</sup> Bronfman, *Chaucer’s Clerk’s Tale*, p. 14, summarizes the schema from William Edwin Bettridge and Francis Lee Utley, “New Light on the Origin of the *Griselda* Story,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 13 (1971): 153-208 as “1) the promise and test of patience, 2) abducted children, 3) divorce or rejection, 4) second marriage, and 5) reunion.”

when she should be attending to them. But unlike Griselda, Margaret is not patient, and pines for her missing husband. The patience and tranquillity of that work are transferred to the Wanderer and form the burden of the lesson he is trying to convey to the Poet. De Quincey's reaction to Margaret's and the Wanderer's passivity—his comments dwell on what he sees as the absurdity of Margaret's inaction after her husband's desertion<sup>18</sup>—may betray the same kind of discomfort at watching Margaret's dissolution as can be found in reading Griselda's sufferings in *The Clerk's Tale*, a work that provokes heated dislike among some readers and critics.<sup>19</sup>

Particularly distressing in “The Wanderer” is the way Margaret treats her children. The georgic world (in which work and happiness are interdependent) that prevails before Robert's illness is one in which the child takes his place in the theological order of things: “So their days were spent / In peace and comfort; and a pretty boy / Was their best hope, next to the God in heaven” (1:532-34). When after diminished harvests and war strike the land in almost Biblical fashion, so that the rich are made poor and the poor die, disordering the hierarchy of the land (“And their place knew them not” [1:546]—a phrase derived from Psalm 103, verse 16), Margaret continues “With cheerful hope” (1:550) but her husband falls ill, “Smitten with perilous fever” (1:552). He recovers only to find the money stored up for “The hour of accident or crippling age” (1:555) is gone. And

A second infant now  
Was added to the troubles of a time

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<sup>18</sup> See “On Wordsworth's Poetry” in David Masson, ed., *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890), 11:294-325, pp. 304-307.

<sup>19</sup> See Bronfman, *Chaucer's Clerk's Tale*, pp. 3-6.

Laden, for them and all of their degree,  
 With care and sorrow: shoals of artisans  
 From ill-requited labour turned adrift  
 Sought daily bread from public charity, . . . (1:556-61)

The first child was a “hope,” the second one of the “troubles” of the time. This is the revision Wordsworth made from 1827 on. The versions from 1814 to 1820 ran thus:

Two children had they now,  
 One newly born. As I have said, it was  
 A time of trouble; shoals of Artisans  
 Were from their daily labour turn'd adrift  
 To seek their bread from public charity, . . .

What is striking about the revisions of 1827 is the way they seem to point out the second child's birth as being coincident with Robert's recovery, and the labor of the artisans being not “daily” anymore but “ill-requited.” The “now / Was added” creates a subtle dissonance in the texture, for if the second child was born just at Robert's recovery, when was he conceived? The “ill-requited,” which means “badly rewarded,” also quietly disrupts the meaning, for we are meant to see the laborers as unemployed (“turned adrift”), which would mean their labor could not be badly rewarded, since they were given no chance to labor at all. The phrase “ill-requited labour” seems more to apply to Robert himself, whose labor in making the happy cottage has been used up: “A sad reverse it was for him who long / Had filled with plenty, and possessed in peace, / This lonely Cottage” (1:566-8). Is the “labour” in question also Margaret's labor, the labor that yields the second child? This labor and this second child might certainly be unwanted in a time of economic distress, but the phrase “ill-requited” connotes betrayal as well, perhaps the kind of marital betrayal known as adultery.

As Robert declines, he “mingle[s], where he might, the various tasks / Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring” (1:576-7) unnaturally. His “unnatural” state extends even to his children:

One while he would speak lightly of his babes,  
And with a cruel tongue: at other times  
He tossed them with a false unnatural joy:  
And 'twas a rueful thing to see the looks  
Of the poor innocent children. (1:584-89)<sup>20</sup>

When Robert disappears for three days and then leaves the money he got from joining the army—but no letter—Margaret believes

he could not gather heart  
To take a farewell of me; for he feared  
That I should follow with my babes, and sink  
Beneath the misery of that wandering life. (1:678-81)

The children are “my babes,” not “his” or “ours.” Might it not be that “he feared / That [Margaret] should follow with [her] babes” for other reasons, and that the desertion of his family stems not from some self-disgust or shame at his inability to sustain them but from some shame at a stain in the family itself? Margaret’s own attitude towards her children becomes hard. When the Wanderer returns after an absence, Margaret is away, and he waits by the cottage:

From within  
Her solitary infant cried aloud;  
Then, like a blast that dies away self-stilled,  
The voice was silent. (1:735-8)

The ominousness of such lines is only increased by what Margaret tells the Wanderer:

I’ve wandered much of late;

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<sup>20</sup> This passage is less suggestive in the MS. B and MS. D versions of *The Ruined Cottage*, where instead of “At other times / He tossed them with a false unnatural joy,” the text reads “He played with them wild freaks of merriment.” See Butler, ed., *The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar*, pp. 54-55.

And sometimes—to my shame I speak—have need  
Of my best prayers to bring me back again. (1:754-56)

The elder child is “happily apprenticed”—a phrase that one can almost read as “luckily—considering the state of his mother.” To the Wanderer’s look—apparently one of concern or disapproval—Margaret replies that she has “changed” and has “done much wrong” both to herself and her younger child. The “wrong” is a neglect that includes the temptation to abandon the child. “And to my shame I speak it”: again, the shame here can be read as referring to the particular shame of this child “added to the troubles of a time / Laden . . . / With care and sorrow.” If the first child was one of “hope,” the second could be considered one of what Milton names the offspring of an unhappy marriage, the “*childern [sic] of wrath and anguish.*”<sup>21</sup>

This is not to say that the “real” or empirical reason for Robert’s departure is his having been cuckolded, or that Margaret’s depression is induced by guilt over an affair. The text is not that kind of riddle, though it repeatedly does riddle (and the suggestion of shame can arise in relation to the mysteriousness of the way Margaret’s dilemma is presented). Nor is it only to say that a psychological reading of the characters—one that provides various repressed anxieties about paternity—can explain the poem’s power. Both positions would simply rationalize a text that consistently resists—in its approach toward and retreat from allegory—being summarized in terms of narrative alone. But it *is* to say that the problem of shame’s contagiousness and its structure, wherein feeling ashamed *for* someone else means feeling ashamed *of oneself*, assures that the poem’s overdetermination repeatedly invites a kind of overreading that veers between the moral

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<sup>21</sup> See *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1959), 2:259-60.

and the sensational, both of which, one might remark, can function as ways out of the feeling of shame itself.<sup>22</sup>

Shame multiplies itself throughout the work. If Robert deserts the family because he cannot support them, shame is present. His refusal to even write a letter to Margaret points to shame as well: “he could not gather heart / To take a farewell.” If Robert leaves for some other reason—perhaps a careless kind of madness—this too is shameful. And if he has left in order to help the family, as the money he leaves could indicate, why are there no letters or money forthcoming thereafter? In short, Robert has shamed Margaret by deserting her. The shameful act becomes a stigma, a shame that attaches to the deserted woman rather than to the now absent husband. As in many allegorical figures,

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<sup>22</sup> Johnston remarks on the mingling of images of death and erotic or domestic love in MS. B, lines 157-65 and MS. D, lines 103-11 of *The Ruined Cottage*, lines which precede the Pedlar’s (and the Wanderer’s) warning about sensationalism (“It were a wantonness, and would demand / Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts / Could hold vain dalliance with the misery / Even of the dead” (1:636-9). These earlier lines read in MS. D:

She is dead,  
The worm is on her cheek, and this poor hut,  
Stripp’d of its outward garb of household flowers,  
Of rose and sweet-briar, offers to the wind  
A cold bare wall whose earthy top is tricked  
With weeds and the rank spear-grass. She is dead,  
And nettles rot and adders sun themselves  
Where we have sate together while she nurs’d  
Her infant at her breast.

In MS. B “breast” is “bosom” and “sweet-briar” is “jasmine.” Johnston points out the polyvalences of the flowers, the nursing, and phrases such as “offers to the wind” and “Stripp’d of its outward garb.”

In the MS. B version of *The Ruined Cottage*, the Pedlar says, “You will forgive me, Sir, / I feel I play the truant with my tale” (170-1). This apology, as well as the earlier lines are not included in *The Excursion*, so that any hint of erotic or domestic attachment between the Wanderer and Margaret is diminished.

cause and effect are switched metonymically in a way that recalls the phenomenology of shame itself, in which shame at another's condition feels like shame at one's own condition.<sup>23</sup> Margaret's shame also shows the familiar reversals of melancholia as described by Freud, the "*identification* of the ego with the abandoned object."<sup>24</sup>

The breaking of what the psychologist Silvan Tomkins calls the "look-look," the ocular circuit between the care-giver and the child,<sup>25</sup> is one trigger of the affect of shame, and death is thus only another version of shame in which the caregiver's face, disfigured, no longer wears the expression of response and approval the child expects. Wordsworth describes the importance of the "look-look" in *The Prelude* (1805) in his description of the

babe who sleeps  
Upon his mother's breast, who, when his soul  
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,  
Doth gather passion from his mother's eye. (2:240-3)

(The 1850 version has "who with his soul / Drinks in the feelings of his mother's eye" [2:236-7]). There is a confidence in this passage that the connection between mother and child lays down an unbreakable foundation for the mind's development. But the very vitality of the mediation of emotion through sight is part of its fragility. Shame is triggered, Tomkins shows, not only by the loved one's turning away, but by an injury to

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<sup>23</sup> A typical example of the switching of cause and effect is found in Spenser, *Faerie Queene* 2.7.22 (see especially line 9, "And Shame his vgly face did hide from liuing eye"). See also the allegorical character "Shamefastnesse," *FQ* 2.9.40-43.

<sup>24</sup> "Mourning and Melancholia" in James Strachey, trans., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth P, 1957), 14:243-58, p. 249.

<sup>25</sup> See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), pp. 144-50.

the loved one caused by the child: “In this case, the impediment in communication is endopsychic. The self cannot be interested in and cannot enjoy itself. It has become a stranger to itself and is alienated from itself in much the same way that separate selves may become alienated”.<sup>26</sup> The danger of an interrupted circuit of emotion between child and caregiver thus strikes at the sense of self. In the “Blessed Babe” passage, Wordsworth expresses the loss of his mother in terms of sight: the circuit of looks then is completed by nature as objects that are loved:

For now a trouble came into my mind  
 From unknown causes: I was left alone  
 Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.  
 The props of my affections were removed,  
 And yet the building stood, as if sustained  
 By its own spirit. All that I beheld  
 Was dear to me, and from this cause it came  
 That now to Nature’s finer influxes  
 My mind lay open—to that more exact  
 And intimate communion which our hearts  
 Maintain with the minuter properties  
 Of objects which already are beloved,  
 And of those only. (2:291-303)

The transfer described here (from mother to nature) is of course also reflexive, so that the love that is established in the mother-child bond now establishes the objects being looked at, in a manner that Tomkins’s word “endopsychic” could apply to. In the early recollections found in the first two books of *The Prelude* it is the child’s misuse or abuse of nature that triggers fear, and the child’s psychological reaction in perceiving nature to respond is as valid a teacher as an actual reaction by nature would be (if such were possible without nature becoming *supernatural*). A fear caused by an inward state is as true an indication of the power of nature as a fear brought about by an external cause.

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<sup>26</sup> Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* (New York: Springer, 1963-1992), 2:138.

This careful mediation of the inner and the outer, the psychological and the empirical is typically Wordsworthian of course, and it involves a structure of correspondances. It is not surprising then that one of Wordsworth's only recorded recollections of his mother involves being shamed by his mother in relation to a situation that correspondingly allegorizes this very shaming and possibly dramatizes the fear of abandonment or disowning that a shamed child would feel. Christopher Wordsworth's *Memoirs* record the memory, which is related to Wordsworth's mother's piousness:

I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast when I was going to say the catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter. I remember also telling her on one week day that I had been at church, for our school stood by the churchyard, and we had frequent opportunities to see what was going on there. The occasion was, a woman doing penance in the church in a white sheet. My mother commended my having been present, expressing a hope that I should remember the circumstance for the rest of my life. 'But,' said I, 'Mama, they did not give me a penny as I had been told they would.' 'Oh,' said she, recanting her praises, 'if that was your motive, you were very properly disappointed.'<sup>27</sup>

As Keith Hanley reports, such acts of public shaming of women as the boy Wordsworth witnessed were rare, and they were mostly in response to cases of adultery.<sup>28</sup> In acknowledging her adultery the woman acknowledges and disowns her bastard child at the same moment, shaming herself and stigmatizing her son or daughter. In this remembered scene, Wordsworth juxtaposes shame and death ("for our school stood by the *churchyard*," i.e., burial ground, indicating its proximity to the church), while provoking a reading of the scene which must go backwards as well as forwards, from a prostitution of motives (the expected penny) to the debased and penitent woman, and

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<sup>27</sup> *Memoirs*, 1.9.

<sup>28</sup> Keith Hanley, *Wordsworth: A Poet's History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 33-35.

again from the penitent woman as allegory of shame to the shame of the child (the actual verbal exchange between mother and son).<sup>29</sup> Such reversals are found in Margaret's situation as well, for she differs from many abandoned mothers in Wordsworth's poetry whose "refusal to let go itself affirms an insistence which heroically promises the object of their fixed attention, usually a baby, some kind of fulfillment, however brief."<sup>30</sup> Margaret essentially abandons her children (here De Quincey's irate reaction is understandable) rather than fixating on them as replacements for her abandoning husband. Her shame, it would seem, is penitential or purgatorial.

### 3.

As most teachers would hope for, the test (Margaret's) is itself a new lesson (the Poet's). "The Wanderer" sets up a binary frame of suffering vs. tranquillity that puts the Poet immediately in the position of the student who must learn detachment while being led on the narrative journey of Margaret's slow, lingering death. The poem opens with a

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<sup>29</sup> The possibility that in these substitutions Wordsworth's mother may stand in for the shamed penitent woman can also be seen as a motivation for the use of "churchyard" in this passage, for the penitent mother is necessarily estranged from her children, i.e., is dead to them. Yet the child of such a woman would also perhaps crave his own disappearance through death: a bastard child is the sign of an adultress's shame, a living stigma. Notice that while Margaret's first child is apprenticed, her second grows melancholy and dies. The biographical background to *The Ruined Cottage* and Wordsworth's experience of maternal abandonment is explored in Peter J. Manning, "Wordsworth, Margaret, and the Pedlar," *Studies in Romanticism* 15 (1976): 195-220. Karen Swann, "Suffering and Sensation in *The Ruined Cottage*," *PMLA* 106 (1991): 83-95, also discusses Margaret and the Pedlar's relationship in terms of the anxiety caused by maternal abandonment.

<sup>30</sup> Hanley, *Wordsworth*, p. 58. For Barbara A. Schapiro, "The infant's experience of loss and betrayal in relation to the mother . . . lies at the heart of Wordsworth's image of the deserted woman" (*The Romantic Mother: Narcissistic Patterns in Romantic Poetry* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1983], p. 125). Schapiro shows how an oral need (symbolized by food) on the mother's part, when frustrated by the desertion of the husband is found again in the child's frustrated oral need and concomitant rage (see esp. pp. 121-9).

landscape that suggests the opposites of a choice—a view to the south where “the landscape indistinctly glared / Through a pale steam” (1:2-3) and the “northern downs, / In clearest air ascending” (1:3-4). This view would be “most pleasant” to a man in the shade of a cave watching—a Stoic figure watching from the ramparts, as it were, of ethical detachment<sup>31</sup>—while the narrator (the Poet) is “toiling” through “slippery turf” and a “host of insects.” Apparently we should know where we should like to be, since these images, in their allegorical concreteness, point directly to a long line of high and low places.<sup>32</sup> The Poet’s seeking of a pastoral “shade” where he will receive instruction is reminiscent of Christian’s reaching the Delectable Mountains in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, where the shepherds Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere, teach him; but the shade itself, when reached, has a somewhat more sinister “gloom.” The site of instruction is the “brotherhood of lofty elms” (1:29) which make the gloom and which shelter “four naked walls / That stared upon each other!” (1:30-31). These “naked walls” suggest Adam and Eve looking at each other and realizing that they are naked for the first

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<sup>31</sup> See the touchstone at the beginning of book 2 of *De rerum natura*: “Sweet it is, when on the great sea the winds are buffeting the waters, to gaze from the land on another’s great struggles; not because it is pleasure or joy that any one should be distressed, but because it is sweet to perceive from what misfortune you yourself are free” (Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. Cyril Bailey [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1910], p. 65).

The scene is “made more soft, / More low and distant!” (1:16-17) from 1814 to 1820, as if to stress the height and removedness of the watcher. From 1827 on it is “thrown / To finer distance,” which finely combines removedness (“thrown” distance is somehow more distant than simple “distance”) and a paradoxical visual clarity (“finer” in perception), which is perhaps also ethically “finer.”

<sup>32</sup> For an interpretation of *The Excursion* which reads the work in terms of a “redemptive strategy” (p. 79) working against the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, see Setzer, *Wordsworth’s The Excursion*. In addition to setting forth an extremely original interpretation, Setzer’s sensitive reading provides an invaluable guide to following the many intertexts of *The Excursion*.

time in *Paradise Lost*;<sup>33</sup> the gloom of the grove suggests that “glade” (*PL* 9:1085)<sup>34</sup> where Adam would hide “Obscur’d” (*PL* 9:1086) from God; the “brotherhood” suggests that the instruction there will create a “brotherhood” of Poet and Wanderer. Test and lesson are intermingled here in other intertextual terms as well, in that this opening passage, as Sharon Setzer points out, resembles Jesus’s meeting with Satan in *Paradise Regained*: the elements of hill, woods, cottage, and a meeting with a man are all present, as is the reference to noon (repeated in the Wanderer’s “ ’Tis now the hour of deepest noon” (1:593) as he nears the crux of the lesson of tranquillity.<sup>35</sup>

For Allison Hickey, the Poet’s particular inability to fully be a poet—to understand things the way the Wanderer does—is connected with his inability to present complete allegories from the situation he is in: “He tends to present scenes in a way that encourages allegorical translations, but the details escape from under the shadow of convention and suggest ways in which conventional interpretation may be undermined.”<sup>36</sup> This poet “moves metonymically from object to object without seeing through to signification. The text provides signals of his metonymic ‘lack’ in the form of allegory left hanging” (32-33). The “lack” here makes the Poet a kind of *alazon* (the

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<sup>33</sup> The “naked” walls that “stare[ ]” are suggestive in themselves; the fact that there are four walls, however, makes the comparison more complicated. Since four doubles two, perhaps the power of this phrase comes from the two men (Wanderer and Poet) considering the married couple (Margaret and Robert).

<sup>34</sup> The edition used here is John T. Shawcross, ed., *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*, rev. ed. (New York: Anchor, 1971).

<sup>35</sup> Setzer, *Wordsworth’s The Excursion*, pp. 82-4.

<sup>36</sup> Hickey, *Impure Conceits*, p. 32.

deceived or self-deceived character found in New Comedy).<sup>37</sup> So the context of this teaching is suspended somehow between friendship and enmity, that is, between revelation and deceit. In order to gain some idea of the kind of lesson that could take place in these circumstances, it is necessary to consider the Wanderer again as *poète manqué*, one who lacks the word-skill or characteristic technique of poets. The Wanderer has his insight and his speech: what the Poet and narrator can supply is verse and thus a lasting record:

And some small portion of his eloquent speech,  
 And something that may serve to set in view  
 The feeling pleasures of his loneliness,  
 His observations, and the thoughts his mind  
 Had dealt with—I will here record in verse;  
 Which, if with truth it correspond, and sink  
 Or rise as venerable Nature leads,  
 The high and tender Muses shall accept  
 With gracious smile, deliberately pleased,  
 And listening Time reward with sacred praise. (1:98-107)

Nature leads, the Muse accepts: it would seem that Nature prevails, but for the fact that this presentation to the Muse is made through the intervention of the Poet (rather like the Son who clothes the prayers of sinful Adam and Eve so that they will be acceptable to the Father).<sup>38</sup> Verse is the artificial addition here that “correspond[s]” to the natural, the

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<sup>37</sup> Hickey, pp. 31-32. See Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957), pp. 39-40, 226-28.

<sup>38</sup> See *Paradise Lost* 11:14-20. The phrase “sink or rise” and the “pleased” Muses may have some relationship to the invocations to books 3 and 7, where the poet’s journey with the Muse Urania’s help is mentioned. Note these instances: “Taught by the heavenly Muse to venture down / The dark descent and up to reascend” (3:19-20); “Descend from heaven Urania, . . . / . . . whose voice divine / Following, above the Olympian hill I soar” (7:1-3); and “Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play / In presence of the almighty Father, pleased / With thy celestial song” (7:10-12).

supplement that completes the *poète manqué*'s natural completeness (he is one of the "Poets that are sown / By Nature" [1:77-8]).

It may seem too tempting a reading, but there is a temptation here (and temptation turns out to be the heart of the matter) to remark that what the Wanderer lacks is only a pen, or perhaps a pen-penis,<sup>39</sup> and that though he acts as father-friend to the Poet, he has no actual human children and no poetic children to carry on his name (unlike the Pedlar, Armytage, of *The Ruined Cottage*, he has no appellation in *The Excursion* beyond "the Wanderer"). The pen, which is the poet's tool (whether applied to paper or as plectrum to the strings of the lyre) is displaced by the Wanderer's staff, the sign of the wandering life that he chose over the life of a schoolmaster, teaching pupils to write with quills. The staff is an object mentioned twice in our introduction to the Wanderer: when first seen by the Poet the Wanderer lies "as if asleep; / An iron-pointed staff lay at his side" (1:37); the day before the Poet had encountered his old friend

with face  
Turned toward the sun then setting, while that staff  
Afforded, to the figure of the man  
Detained for contemplation or repose,  
Graceful support. (1:39-43)

And after the narrator has given the details of the Wanderer's life, he states

So was he framed; and such his course of life  
Who now, with no appendage but a staff,  
The prized memorial of relinquished toils,  
Upon that cottage-bench reposed his limbs . . . (1:434-7)

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<sup>39</sup> "[T]he pen-penis writing on the virgin page participates in a long tradition identifying the author as a male who is primary and the female as his passive creation" (Susan Gubar, "The 'Blank Page' and Female Creativity," in Elizabeth Abel, ed., *Writing and Sexual Difference* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982), p. 75.

The fact that this staff may remind us of any number of literary staffs, variously magical or spiritual,<sup>40</sup> is probably of less importance than the fact that one of the signs of Robert's absence from the cottage is that his staff remains behind. In their antepenultimate meeting, Margaret expresses her despair to the Wanderer:

When to the House  
 We had returned together, she enquired  
 If I had any hope:—but for her babe  
 And for her little orphan boy, she said,  
 She had no wish to live, that she must die  
 Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom  
 Still in its place; his Sunday garments hung  
 Upon the self-same nail; his very staff  
 Stood undisturbed behind the door. (1:846-54)

The sign of Robert's absence is what normally would disappear in his absence (its lack would be the sign of his absence), but like the loom and the clothing (and, one might think, the Wanderer's own loom of words, since *text* and *textile* derive from the same root), it is the sign of memory and the sign of the "wandering life" that Robert is now engaged in (presumably with a gun rather than a staff in his hand). The "yet" in the Wanderer's observation implies that he is reassured by the presence of Robert's things because they indicate that Margaret has not given up hope, that she is in that sense faithful and steadfast; but it also implies that they are kept there as *signs* of hope, which when removed (presumably by Margaret herself) would grant her permission to die. The

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<sup>40</sup> The staff, along with the cockle shell, is part of the traditional costume of the pilgrim. It refers not only to the journey itself, but to its spiritual significance. See, for instance, Hebrews 11:21 ("By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff"); Genesis 32:10 ("I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness which thou has shown to thy servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies"); Psalm 23:4 ("thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me"); *Faerie Queene* 1.6.35 (Archimago in disguise holds "a *Iacobs* staffe, to stay / His wearie limbs vpon"); and the leech-gatherer in "Resolution and Independence."

staff is the visible sign of what is absent for both Wanderer and Robert. His wandering life (like that of a pilgrim) and his leaning upon his faith have given the Wanderer the ability to see “Things which you [i.e., the mere Poet of verse] cannot see” (1:470). And the staff in the cottage is also the sign of the absence of a man whose last letter to Margaret was blank (“She opened—found no writing” [1:669]) and contained only coins. Yet the staff which is present also obviously suggests that while Robert is gone, the sign of a male—now the staff-bearing Wanderer—is present in Robert’s cottage, which once again curiously suggests that the Wanderer is more a double or counterpart for Robert than simply an observer. That staff alone can hardly represent Christian patience or the faith of the pilgrim for Margaret, who shows little patience and whose wandering has no goal.

For the Poet, the most stressful point in the narrative actually comes before this, and well before the narration of Margaret’s death. After his illness, Robert becomes the wandering, disaffected, drooping man whose very smiles cut Margaret to the quick. It is at this point—all foreboding and suspense, for the Poet does not yet know how this story will end, though the ruins of the cottage suggest it will end badly—that the Wanderer cuts off his tale, pausing to remark on the fact that it is noon and the flies are buzzing. And further:

“Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,  
And in the weakness of humanity,  
From natural comfort shut our eyes and ears;  
And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb  
The calm of nature with our restless thoughts?” (1:599-604)

To the staginess of this pause the intertexts present add another kind of ominousness, for it is not only noon when Jesus encounters Satan in *Paradise Regained*, but it is noon

when Eve, in *Paradise Lost*, having been tempted by Satan, reaches for the forbidden fruit:

He [Satan] ended, and his words replete with guile  
 Into her heart too easie entrance won:  
 Fixt on the Fruit she gaz'd, which to behold  
 Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound  
 Yet rung of his perswasive words, impregn'd  
 With Reason, to her seeming, and with Truth;  
 Mean while the hour of Noon drew on, and wak'd  
 An eager appetite, rais'd by the smell  
 So savourie of that Fruit, which with desire,  
 Inclivable now grown to touch or taste,  
 Solicited her longing eye; yet first  
 Pausing a while, thus to herself she mus'd. (9:733-44).

Eve then pauses to consider what Satan has said, including the problems of whether God really “forbids us to be wise” (9:759). Her self-response: “Such prohibitions bind not. But if death / Bind us with after-bands, what profits then / Our inward freedom?” (9:760-2). And she concludes that as the fruit brought good to the Serpent, so it shall to her: “Here grows the Cure of all, . . . / . . . / Of vertue to make wise” (9:776-8). In *The Excursion* the Wanderer’s tale slips from the Poet’s mind for a while, and the Wanderer and Poet talk of “trivial things” in a “discourse / To me [the Poet] soon tasteless” (1:611-12). Then in the same way as Eve muses to herself, the Poet turns from the Wanderer to ponder the story of Margaret so far and finds himself now entirely in the story itself: “I thought of that poor Woman as of one / Whom I had known and loved” (1:613-4). Disturbed by the fact that “the things of which he spake / Seemed present” (1:617-18) he feels “A heart-felt chillness [creep] along [his] veins” (1:619) and goes into the sunlight for a moment before asking the Wanderer to resume his story. The Wanderer warns him that

“It were a wantonness, and would demand

Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts  
 Could hold vain dalliance with the misery  
 Even of the dead; contented thence to draw  
 A momentary pleasure, never marked  
 By reason, barren of all future good.” (1:626-31).

These passages hark back to Adam’s encounter with Eve after her fall.<sup>41</sup> When he hears what she has done, Adam “Astonied stood and Blank, while horror chill / Ran through his veins, and all his joynts relax’d” (9:888-9).<sup>42</sup> When Adam eats the fruit, Adam “on *Eve* / Began to cast lascivious Eyes, she him / As wantonly repaid; in Lust they burn: / Till *Adam* thus ’gan *Eve* to dalliance move” (9:1013-16) and he puns on “taste”: “*Eve*, now I see thou art exact of taste” (9:1017), he says, and rues that “Much pleasure we have lost, while we abstain’d / From this delightful Fruit, nor known till now / True relish, tasting” (9:1022-24). The eagerness of the Poet in “The Wanderer” to hear the tale of Margaret is structured as a temptation scene, one in which the Wanderer plays not only the Serpent of honeyed voice tempting Eve, but Eve (recounting the tale of her tasting the fruit)

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<sup>41</sup> Hickey sees this moment as part of the Poet’s *alazon* status, his inability to make sense of what he is told: “According to a long and venerable tradition, if narrative fails to teach, it is apt instead to propagate its straying tendencies in the audience. The implied danger of the Poet’s profligate sympathy is the possible replication of Margaret’s fate” (Hickey, *Impure Conceits*, p. 41).

<sup>42</sup> The line recalls *Aeneid* 2:120-21, “obstripuere animi, gelidusque per ima cucurrit / ossa tremor” (“their hearts were dazed, and a cold shudder ran through their inmost marrow”) (Fairclough translation). This line occurs when Aeneas recounts Sinon’s treacherous stories of how he has come to the Trojans. This line is Eurypylos’s quoting of the oracle of Apollo (Phoebus) that will require the sacrifice of Sinon. Wordsworth’s own translation of these phrases lacks the cold chill: “ ‘an universal dread / Among the shuddering multitude was spread’ ” (2:165-66; see Bruce E. Graver, ed., Wordsworth, *Translations of Chaucer and Virgil* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998]). The phrase “gelidusque per ima cucurrit / ossa tremor” occurs also in *Aeneid* 12:447-48 to convey the sudden fear created by Aeneas’s unexpected appearance in battle.

tempting Adam, and the Archangel Raphael reminding Adam and Eve of the prohibition on the Tree of Knowledge.<sup>43</sup>

This moment is ironic in many senses, first of all because of the density of the intertexts marking for the reader a rather obvious parallel between the knowledge that causes death but also redemption history, and the knowledge of a death (Margaret's) that is redeemed by nature. The sexless or unsexed Wanderer alludes to the moment of Adam and Eve's first sinful carnal embrace (the succession "wantonness . . . dalliance" in "The Wanderer" leaving out the "lust" that is present in *Paradise Lost*'s "wantonly . . . lust . . . dalliance") in considering the moral pitfalls inherent in the Poet's emotional reaction to Margaret's plight. Shame, the result of the Fall, spreads in "The Wanderer" from Robert to Margaret, and by extension to the tempted Poet for whom Margaret seems a woman he actually knew. And the intertext comments rather contradictorily on the chaste loyalty of

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<sup>43</sup> The many ironies of a moral instructor's name being "The Wanderer" are obvious enough. Stanley Fish outlines the many uses of *wander* (some more positive than negative) in *Paradise Lost* (*Surprised by Sin* [London: Macmillan, 1967], esp. pp. 130-41); in "The Wanderer," the Wanderer, Margaret, and Robert are all said to "wander." Only in the case of the Wanderer does the word have any positive connotation. *Wanton* occurs many times in Milton's epic, and Fish also demonstrates how it too has many shadings (see pp. 102-7 and 130). (See also Manning, "Wordsworth, Margaret, and the Pedlar," p. 214.) *Wanton* and *wander* are not etymologically related, but in "The Wanderer," a word like *wanton* cannot help but stand out, especially when connected to another word associated with Eve in *Paradise Lost*, *dalliance*. The proximity of these words is also made memorable by the exchange between Viola and Feste in *Twelfth Night* (3.1.14-21):

Viola: They that dally nicely with words may quickly make them wanton.

Feste: I would therefore my sister had had no name, sir.

Viola: Why, man?

Clown: Why, sir, her name's a word, and to dally with that word might make my sister wanton.

Margaret, who never forgets her beloved husband, living as both “A Wife and Widow” (1:874).<sup>44</sup>

The paradox of a teacher who is a tempter ironizes the entire poem, and not only because the Wanderer plays the *iron*<sup>45</sup> of this tragedy as it becomes a divine comedy of nature, the simple man of the people who really is an archangel. This moment of intertextuality interrupts the work just as any parabasis would; it is a rip in the fabric of the fiction, or, in Paul de Man’s words, “the disruption of narrative illusion, the *aparté*,

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<sup>44</sup> In De Quincey’s ironic critique, Margaret’s problem is easily solved by tracking Robert down: “To have overlooked a point of policy so broadly apparent as this vitiates and nullifies the very basis of the story” (*Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, 11:306). To illustrate what he sees as the absurdity of the poem’s premise, De Quincey tells the story of the man whose face is dirty and has tried everything to get it clean—everything, that is, but soap and water. This little moral tale of the power of common sense plays on the stigma Margaret is experiencing here (since the face is the place where shame shows itself), as well as what one could view as a self-indulgent attachment to stigma, a self-indulgence like that of Margaret’s “criminal self-indulgence” (in De Quincey’s phrase) in neglecting her child (11:307). Wordsworth’s poem does wear its unreality rather boldly, right back to the way it has played with allegory from the beginning. Of course, the mere fact of absurdity might lead in another direction. Bacon writes, in connection with allegory, “But there is yet another sign, and one of no small value, that these fables contain a hidden and involved meaning; which is, that some of them are so absurd and stupid upon the face of the narrative taken by itself, that they may be said to give notice from afar and cry out that there is a parable below” (*Of the Wisdom of the Ancients [De sapientia veterum]*, James Spedding, et al., eds., *The Works of Francis Bacon* [Boston: Brown and Taggard, 1860], 13:78). De Quincey’s critique is ironic, but not ironic enough, for the stain here is not to be wiped away with a little rationalism or deism or other forms of godly cleanliness. More to the point, he is relying on the Aristotelian idea of probability, which if followed in this case would turn the Wanderer’s recitation from poetry to police report and the transcriptions of a divorce trial. For a taste of what actual desertion could entail in the way of reports and transcripts, see chapter 11 (“Desertion and Incompatibility”) in Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution: Volume 1: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998).

<sup>45</sup> Hickey does not see the relationship of Wanderer and Poet in such fully ironic terms: “My argument is not that he [the Poet] represents an impersonal force of irony, but that, for all his sympathy (indeed because of it), he remains deficient as a reader, and that deficiency in his mode of reading is associated with (though not identical to) his thinness as a character” (*Impure Conceits*, pp. 194-5, n.19).

the aside to the audience, by means of which the illusion of the fiction is broken (what we call in German *aus der Rolle fallen*, to drop out of your role)."<sup>46</sup> This preserves the usual idea of intertextuality as an eruption of the unconscious into the conscious, but in the form of an "artificial" role revealed as inauthentic. Because the intertext here is the Fall as related in *Paradise Lost*, we must take account of that idea's problematic structure. The Fall shows that knowledge kills, but also allows for a redemption history. It thus is a fall from a fiction where humans pretend to be gods (though they don't know they're pretending) to a reality where shame takes its place as part of repentance and the human can enter into a historical progress in which the Son of God intervenes. This fall from fiction to history reverses the Aristotelian idea that fiction (which portrays what *could* happen) is superior to history (which only tells us what *has* happened). As such, it is a fall from freedom into bondage, from the fruitful playfulness of art to the determinism that haunts the omniscience of the Christian God and which Milton has the Father so laboriously defend himself against in book 3 of *Paradise Lost*.

For Friedrich Schlegel, poetry is a "permanent parabasis," a statement which, as de Man shows, means that any theory of "tropological structure," such as a theory of narrative, is always undone by the theory of irony which of course posits the interruption of narrative. So we might say that the structure of "The Wanderer" is inherently ironic—or that it thematizes the problem of irony—in that its stabilizing character (ironically, of course, a "Wanderer") posits as natural a landscape which is clearly allegorical and,

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<sup>46</sup> Paul de Man, "The Concept of Irony," *Aesthetic Ideology*, p. 178. Deborah Dawson Davis, "The Romantic Irony of *The Excursion*" (diss., U of Alabama, 1996), analyzes the poem in terms more in line with Schlegel's ideas of irony and their reception, finding in the opposition of "real" and "ideal" or "being" and "becoming" some of the roots of the poem's power.

through crucial moments of intertextuality, literary. Schlegel's paradox of poetry as an unending interruption is borne out here in the way the categories of natural and literary cannot be stabilized. The affective marker, or allegory, of such interruptive conditions—either where a self must split into a self observed and a self observing, or where a Narcissistic circuit is interrupted to reveal a self and an other where there was neither—is shame. It is the same kind of shame that is found in stagefright, where an actor cannot forget that he or she is playing a role. Once the split takes place—an “I” that cannot play a “role”—shame overwhelms the “I” and the “role” both. (So the “knowledge” that the apple of the Fall gives is simply that Adam and Eve have been playing the role of gods, which was only possible while they didn't know what they were doing.)

Margaret's shame allegorizes the contradictions of the Wanderer's narrative, one of which can be said to illustrate Wordsworth's own theory of poetry, where the “the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, not the action and situation to the feeling”.<sup>47</sup> The comfort and consolation we are instructed to feel by the Wanderer depends on the “a state of enjoyment” in the Poet's description of it, and “the overbalance of pleasure” (266) which distinguishes a poem about a sad subject from a police report. In the ironized “The Wanderer,” the allegory of shame, thematizing the literariness of the Wanderer's narrative, provides the pleasure that leads—if we follow the Wanderer's tale—to a natural, moral truth.

The moral instruction here is thus accomplished by the most extreme configuration of emotion and its origin that Wordsworth provides in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, where “it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those

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<sup>47</sup> Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 248.

of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs” (256). When the Wanderer calls back the Poet from “wantonness,” it seems to be precisely this situation of “delusion” that the Poet is sinking into. I would suggest, then, that the Poet is, in this moment of entering into Margaret’s story, caught in the structure of shame, in which another’s shame feels like one’s own or becomes one’s own, in which the barrier between the self and the other is lowered. This is not the same structure as Adam Smith’s version of sympathy, wherein there is some *comparison* at work;<sup>48</sup> instead, this is the vertiginous fall into the situation of the other that characterizes the contagiousness of shame which has, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick puts it, a “double movement—towards painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality.”<sup>49</sup> The Poet here is therefore not warned against engaging in sadistic absorption in a spectacle: rather, he is warned against entering fully into the shame-structure of Robert, Margaret, their children, and the Wanderer, and specifically against taking on the role of Margaret who here is implicitly compared to Eve, whose “wantonness” brings shame into Paradise. The Poet is then not only feminized—made one with Margaret—but impotent (in the “impotence of grief”), as she is, to help, to alter, to change circumstances. The only way then to remain a poet is to detach oneself from the situation, to be able to “*afford* to

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<sup>48</sup> It is typical of Smith’s approach that situations are evaluated in terms of comparison between a self doing something and a self observing. Moral behavior comes from this comparative method: “We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behaviour, and endeavour to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. This is the only looking-glass by which we can, in some measure, with the eyes of other people, scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct” (*Theory of Moral Sentiments* 3.1.5).

<sup>49</sup> *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003), p. 37.

suffer,” as the Wanderer, that poet of nature, the poet without any pen, without the supplement of writing, does. If Wordsworth came to see as the poet’s chief qualification (in the words of the 1815 Preface) “the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the Describer” (632), he did so in the way that “The Wanderer” demonstrates. The tranquillity of the scene in which Wanderer and Poet give and receive instruction is only enabled or brought about by the suffering which the scene reminds the Wanderer of and which he sees in it, but which is not there for anyone else without the poetry whose wellsprings are the carefully controlled emotions theorized in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

## Chapter Three

“That I Was in Reality the Monster that I Am”:  
Shame and Disgust in *Frankenstein*

## 1.

Given the persuasiveness of so many of the readings of *Frankenstein* in the past thirty years that depend on psychoanalytic concepts, Mary Shelley’s first novel must now be considered an important monument in the development of psychoanalysis itself. Though not known to Otto Rank when he wrote on the *Doppelgänger* or to Freud when he developed his theories of narcissism, melancholia, and paranoia, the novel remarkably illustrates—and, as part of the Romantic movement in general, must be said to take part in the formation of—a number of ideas which remain central to psychoanalytic theory. The chiasmic relation between Frankenstein and his creation points unmistakably to projection and identification in a pattern that, along with Frankenstein’s delay in marrying Elizabeth Lavenza, can be seen as shutting out the female as the principle of difference—a type of solipsistic homosociality that has led Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to dub the nineteenth century the “Age of Frankenstein.”<sup>1</sup> So overdetermined are these mirrorings, exchanges, identifications, and projections between the two beings, that Shelley’s use of the Narcissus topos in the Creature’s narrative seems to fit the general pattern with ease.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p. x.

One of the conventions of the Gothic novel found in *Frankenstein*<sup>2</sup> is that of the barrier that constitutes the relationship between characters or narrative elements—barriers such as embedded narratives, deathbed revelations cut off before being finished, or the sudden illegibilities in manuscripts where some ostensibly all-explaining matter is erased or lost and rendered “unspeakable.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most outstanding moment of the unspeakable in *Frankenstein* is the loss of memory that erases the scientific (or quasi-scientific) process by which Frankenstein found how to “make” a living being. The same passage in which this surprising lacuna occurs proposes that Frankenstein is striving both to make a new human being and to revive the dead, an observation that renders, in psychoanalytic terms, the Creature a projection of part of himself but also of his own maternal origin. Within two paragraphs we find these statements: “I began the creation of a human being” (81); “A new species would bless me as its creator and source” (82); “Pursuing these reflections, I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time . . . renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption” (82). The passage moves from the creation of another self (another human) to another species (where Frankenstein is God and father) to the reanimation of the dead (in this case, most obviously his mother, whose dead spirit hovers over most of

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<sup>2</sup> The edition used here is D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf, eds., *Mary Shelley, Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview P, 1999). This edition gives the 1818 text and the 1831 variants.

<sup>3</sup> On the question of “barriers” in the Gothic, see Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*.

the book). The contradictory nature of these aims frame the process by which the “secret” of life is found.<sup>4</sup>

Unspeakableness occurs where the diachronic process of logic and science yields a result which, like a synchronic revelation, looks like the intervention of the supernatural into the natural world. Life is approached first of all through death (“To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death” [79]); it can be reached only by “almost supernatural enthusiasm” (79); it is related cyclically and causally to death (“causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life” [79]); and the knowledge of life comes as “a sudden light” that separates Frankenstein from all other scientists and human beings (79-80). But his access to supreme scientific knowledge is presented as an enlightenment that wipes out that very scientific knowledge at the same time. Frankenstein is careful to say that “Some miracle might have produced it [his knowledge of the “secret” of life], yet the stages of the discovery were distinct and probable” (80). These stages, and the causations that linked them, are wiped out, erased, and made unspeakable: “But this discovery was so great and overwhelming that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result” (80). The unspeakable covers a process, whether it is science or magic, a process which moves through time and involves representation, as language does; but what is accessible is a “result” which is “beheld,” “a sudden light” which is seen, a direct,

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<sup>4</sup> The question of what Frankenstein’s motivations are is further confused by the way his early interest in Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus, and Cornelius Agrippa is described: their “secret stores of knowledge” (68) include “the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life” (69), the second of which is the ability to “banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death” (69).

sensory, immediate experience that seems to escape temporality.<sup>5</sup> The power of this religiously inflected “light” is doubled by the Creature’s face, a visage that cannot change and become attractive, and so cannot lie: the automaticity of people’s reaction to his face is the sign of this truth.<sup>6</sup>

So along with unspeakableness, we find unseeableness in *Frankenstein*. Both bring with them connotations of taboo and religious knowledge, in the former case a sudden “enlightenment,” in the latter case the destructive power of a god when it is made visible (think of Semele and Jupiter, for instance, or Moses and Yahweh). Whenever the Creature’s face is seen, the reaction is always—and the certainty and sameness of the reaction here is at times almost comical—the same: disgust and fear. When Frankenstein looks at the animated body he has created, “breathless horror and disgust” cause him to flee (85). When he meets the Creature on the Mer de Glace, he remarks that “its

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<sup>5</sup> This discussion is influenced by de Man’s treatment of Derrida’s *De la Grammatologie* in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983), esp. pp. 132-33. The “light” is explicitly related to Frankenstein’s early reading of Cornelius Agrippa (“A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind” [68]).

<sup>6</sup> Knowledge is also a site of the unspeakable for the Creature. When he describes his acquisition of knowledge, starting with hearing Felix read Volney’s *Ruins of Empire* to Safie, he draws an obvious parallel between his growing knowledge of his separation from human beings and the “strange nature of knowledge” (146) and the Fall of Man (this paragraph clearly refers to Adam and Eve’s speculations on death in *Paradise Lost*, books 9 and 10). But there is also a moment of the unspeakable—knowledge lost and never found—that parallels Frankenstein’s lost knowledge of the process by which he discovers the “secret” of life: “No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing” (146-7). This “blot” relates back to his earlier question, “When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned?” (145-6). One wonders whether it was this passage that allowed Percy Shelley to use “blot” in his sonnet “Lift not the painted veil” in such a striking way—“A splendour among shadows—a bright blot / Upon this gloomy scene—a Spirit that strove / For truth, and like the Preacher, found it not.—”

unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes” (125). The Creature appears to Frankenstein only as “the filthy mass that moved and talked” (171). Fear and disgust are mixed in these reactions, but disgust predominates. In fear, we keep our eyes open, because it is vital to observe what is dangerous to us, and fear can admit combination with curiosity or contact. In disgust,<sup>7</sup> the face turns away from what is noxious and the body vehemently rejects physical contact with it. When the Creature encounters little William Frankenstein, the child “place[s] his hands before his eyes” (167). When asked by Clerval after he arrives in Ingolstadt what the matter is, Frankenstein replies, “Do not ask me,” “putting [his] hands before [his] eyes, for [he] thought [he] saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room” (89). And near the end of their colloquy, when Frankenstein cries out, “Begone! relieve me from the sight of your detested form,” the Creature obliges him: “ ‘Thus I relieve thee, my creator,’ he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes” (127). When Walton sees the Creature, it is the face that causes his most violent reaction: “Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome, yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily” (240).

When the “secret” of life enlightens Frankenstein, it becomes material in the body of the Creature. As the metaphor becomes literal, it becomes unseeable. The Creature’s coming to life is signalled in his eyes—here, eerily, only one: “I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open” (85). It is then that a “secret” knowledge becomes a *person*. Immediacy replaces representation; the possibility of a representative system, language, yielding knowledge is obliterated by the immediacy of the Creature’s appearance, which in its truth creates overwhelming fear and disgust. At the moment when the interpersonal

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<sup>7</sup> Tomkins refines his ideas about disgust in *AIC* 3:21-25. Disgust is a reaction to a bad taste, “dis-smell” to a bad smell.

or intersubjective is enabled, it is simultaneously closed off by an appearance that erases the linguistic connection that would realize this intersubjectivity. Frankenstein is characterized by an unspeakableness in relation to knowledge acquired (he asserts) through a system of representations (science or magic);<sup>8</sup> the Creature is characterized by an unseeableness that prevents acquiring that same kind of knowledge. The Creature's acquisition of language, achieved through a literalization of Locke's metaphor of the mind as a dark room (which becomes the little shed and a chink in the wood covering a window), is as fantastically constructed as a body made of many human and animal body parts.<sup>9</sup> But the two assemblages allow at last the only real intersubjective relationship in the Creature's life, that between creator and creature.

When one thinks of how affect becomes apparent in the barrier between Frankenstein and the Creature, one must think immediately of the fact that the affects of shame and disgust are intimately related. Shame is a great many things, but in terms of the structure of our innate affects as outlined by Silvan Tomkins, it has a special position. Whereas the other affects—startle, fear, interest, joy, anger, and distress—can be graphed in terms of the density of neural firing, shame-humiliation, along with disgust and

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<sup>8</sup> Shelley's description (in the 1831 preface) of the vision that inspired the work has the proto-Frankenstein a "student of the unhallowed arts" and an "artist" (357), but these descriptions do not erase the fact that the text itself describes a process that is discursive and logical (proceeding step by step, through causation). The artist here is of course Mary Shelley herself.

<sup>9</sup> Nancy Yousef ("The Monster in a Dark Room: *Frankenstein*, Feminism, and Philosophy," *MLQ* 63 [2003]: 197-226) argues that the novel critiques (but does not reject) empiricist theories of development which largely ignore intersubjectivity (so that, for instance, there is no difference for the Lockean baby between people and things). Yousef points out that the un-childlike size, completeness (there is no period of growth), and agility of the Creature simply draw attention to the fact that such theories also picture learning as the mind in isolation looking out, thereby ignoring both the importance of embodiment and of interaction in development.

dis smell, is different. As Tomkins says, “shame is an innate auxiliary affect and a specific inhibitor of continuing interest and enjoyment. Like disgust, it operates ordinarily only after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and inhibits one or the other or both” (*AIC* 2:123). One can say roughly that shame gives a boundary line, a shape, to other affects, reducing, but not eliminating them. Although shame is often thought of in terms of ethical processes, we should remember that its origins are not to be found in an ethical quandary, in other words, in what is *wrong*, but in what is *strange*. Again, Tomkins: “The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy. Hence any barrier to further exploration . . . Such a barrier might be because one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange, or because one wishes to look at or commune with another person but suddenly cannot because he is strange, or one expected him to be familiar but he suddenly appears unfamiliar, or one started to smile but found one was smiling at a stranger” (*AIC* 2:123).

Shame interrupts a visual connection between the self and the other, driving consciousness back to the self. This is what makes it the original affect of self-consciousness. But it is not a complete turn away from the other. Writes Tomkins, “Self-consciousness is heightened by virtue of the unwillingness of the self to renounce the object” (*AIC* 2:137). On the other hand, the contempt found in the related affects disgust and dis smell reverses this pattern: “there is least self-consciousness, with the most intense consciousness of the object” (*AIC* 2:128). When contempt is internalized, it causes yet more shame, especially what we know more familiarly as guilt, here seen by Tomkins as contempt for the self by the self (*AIC* 2:152).

Shame is present in the Creature in several ways, most basically in the fact that all faces are turned from him and inter-ocular communion is impossible. Not only is shame present as a reaction to the contempt of all those he meets (and an internalization of that contempt), but it necessarily follows from the Creature's failure to identify with those he loves (the De Lacey's), a failure which replicates one of the processes by which shame enters the relationship between parents and children. As Tomkins points out, children want to *be* or *be like* their parents, and do this through imitation, with more or less successful results;<sup>10</sup> here the Creature imitates the De Lacey's by learning language, but of course the fact of his physical form prevents any complete identification, which depends for the child on the response of the parents.<sup>11</sup> On top of this, there is the shame the Creature feels inevitably following the disenchantment with his identification figures, the De Lacey's.<sup>12</sup> Shamed and rejected by his "protectors," and having never been loved,

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<sup>10</sup> "[M]any necessarily unsuccessful attempts of children at identification are the source of great distress and shame which increases proportionately with the intensity of the identification wish, which is largely a function of the strength of excitement and enjoyment about the identification figure" (*AIC* 1:446). Even after the De Lacey's and Safie react badly upon seeing him, the Creature still refers to them as his "protectors" (162). I am placing the De Lacey's here, and Frankenstein elsewhere, in a parental role because the Creature does so.

<sup>11</sup> "[A]s a consequence of over-achievement and its linkage with the immediate and direct reward of being watched and appreciated by parents, there is generated intense distress and shame either when the child fails to imitate or achieve perfectly, or when the child fails to evoke attention and appreciation from the parent" (*AIC* 1:447). The shame in this case is intense, since the parental or identification figures cannot watch the Creature at all.

<sup>12</sup> "Disenchantment with the primary identification figures is perhaps the most serious threat to communion to which the human being is vulnerable. Whereas his own failures to achieve complete identification leave open the hope of future attainment, the destruction or contamination of the idealized identification figure jeopardizes the very possibility of identification, evokes shame, and threatens the sense of identity" (*AIC* 1:450).

the Creature still resembles a depressive more than a paranoiac. As Tomkins writes, “For the depressive there is always a way back from the despair of shame to communion with the loving parent who ultimately feels as distressed as does his child at the breach in their relationship” (*AIC* 1:436). With the De Lacey’s gone, the Creature resolves to seek “[his] father, [his] creator” (164).

Frankenstein’s shame is complementary to the Creature’s: where the parent’s absence shames the child, the child’s presence shames the parent. He does not wish his creation to identify with him, and he is ashamed of him and of having created him. If he is “[u]nable to endure the aspect of the being [he] had created” (85), this is the result as much of shame as of disgust. This shame develops into guilt, which is an emotion whose main affective component is shame.<sup>13</sup> While Frankenstein feels guilty about the deaths of William, Justine, and Henri Clerval, the moral aspect of his horror of the Creature is superadded to an already existing shame which is expressed in terms of “disappointment” (86), or shame at not achieving perfection, and in terms of shame at something that must be hidden (“I dreaded to behold this monster; but I feared still more that Henry should see him” [88]).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Tomkins’s discussion of shame as the “underlying affect” to guilt (*AIC* 2:150-52). Shame, guilt, and shyness “are differentiations of the varying conditions under which the same affect is evoked or reduced, and under which it is included a a component in varying types of central assemblies. Like a letter in an alphabet, or a word in any sentence, the other sub-systems of the nervous system with which shame is assembled, and the messages in those sub-systems at the moment, as well as components of the preceding and following central assemblies, are capable of radically transforming the apparent quality and meaning of shame” (*AIC* 2:150). See *AIC* 1:111-15 for a description of the “central assemblies,” which involve the “messages” from the nervous system and a “transmuting” mechanism that makes them conscious.

<sup>14</sup> If the quotation of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (p. 87) points to moral guilt, it does so most unclearly, given the fact that Coleridge’s poem relies for its power on the

I have mentioned the almost comic sameness of people's reactions to the Creature. That fear is present is undeniable, but disgust is what is stressed by the narrative's insistence on the face, not the Creature's size or general shape, as the thing that makes people react so badly.<sup>15</sup> Tomkins points out that disgust is a response related to hunger and the prevention of the ingestion of what is noxious: "The nature of this mechanism does not change when it is recruited to defend the self against psychic incorporation or any increase in intimacy with a repellant object" (*AIC* 2:233).<sup>16</sup> The affect shuts down desire itself (to "I don't want," as Tomkins says [*AIC* 2:233]), as opposed to the "I want, but—," of shame, the *reduction*, not the elimination of desire. Desire operates in vital ways to motivate the acquisition of language.

Shelley shows how the acquisition of language is related to emotion and sight. The relationship of sight to sound, a dichotomy which Rousseau discusses in terms of music and melody vs. painting and harmony,<sup>17</sup> is played out in both the awakening of emotions in the Creature and in his acquisition of language. After dispassionately observing the De Lacey children while they are outside, he watches them and M. De Lacey through the chink in the wood covering up a window of the house. M. De Lacey

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near-illegibility of the Mariner's action. Notice that Walton, too, quotes *The Ancient Mariner*, but in reassuring his sister that "I shall kill no albatross" (55).

<sup>15</sup> As Denise Gigante points out ("Facing the Ugly: The Case of *Frankenstein* [*ELH* 67 (2000): 565-87), the Creature is at first proportional and "fit" in Burke's terms. But note Walton's evaluation, near the end of the novel: the Creature is "gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions" (240).

<sup>16</sup> Is it entirely accidental that the Creature's first encounter with the disgust and fear he creates is when he comes upon a shepherd "preparing his breakfast" (p. 132) or that he is struck most by the vegetables and the milk and cheese of the village he next enters? The physical hunger of the Creature seems to act as a physicalization of his emotional hunger.

<sup>17</sup> See the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*.

begins to play an instrument, “and to produce sounds, sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale. It was a lovely sight, even to me, poor wretch! who had never beheld aught beautiful before” (134). Without transition, sound becomes sight. The sound of the music here evinces a reaction to the harmony of the family and their gentleness and benevolence; music’s power to communicate through emotion gives it the power to help the Creature make sense of the scene.

Though the Creature’s observation of the De Lacey family continues for some time, he only slowly learns that “these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers” (137). There follows the construction of the Creature as a Lockean, who assembles language starting from concrete nouns (“fire,” “wood,” etc.). This literal language stands in contrast to the language of music, the language of emotions, that makes the Creature see the De Lacey family in one harmonious moment, one educative tableau, where instead of the contrastive “pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness” of language, the Creature feels “sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature: . . . a mixture of pain and pleasure” (p. 134)—in other words, sympathy.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Brooks points out that the Creature’s “first ideas demonstrate the processes of Lockean sensationalism and Hartleyan associationism. His discovery of language implies Rousseau’s argument, in the *Essai sur l’origine des langues*, that language springs from passion rather than need.” “‘Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts’: Language, Nature, and Monstrosity,” in George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher, eds., *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley’s Novel* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979, 205-20, p. 209. This observation is considerably expanded on by David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988), pp. 128-227.

This is the birth of fully formed emotion in the Creature, a birth as miraculously inexplicable as his own, for sympathy requires the sense of a self so that one can compare oneself with others, imagining what it would be like to be in someone else's place.<sup>19</sup> It would seem to be the birth of sympathy from error, however, for in order to put yourself in someone else's position, you must recognize them as like you, a fellow, or one of your own species. At this point, the Creature is making an assumption which further experience will contradict. In the terms of modern psychology, we are witnessing a scene of identification, part of the process that helps form a sense of the self in relation to others: affectively, it is an occurrence of enjoyment-joy, where through a kind of empathic mimesis—the process of identification—the child wants to learn speech not so much to communicate as to *commune*. According to Tomkins,

The major motive to speech is, paradoxically, the intensely rewarding claustral and pre-verbal social affect. Speech is in the first instance a continuation of that kind of communion in which the distinction between subject and object is attenuated. It is only because the infant feels so close to the other, we think, that he wishes to mimic the sounds he hears from the other. In our view, earliest speech is an empathic act, a wish to do what the other is doing rather than to communicate something to the other. (*AIC* 1:428)

The tableau which the Creature sees is not so much pantomime as opera, where music speaks to a being that does not yet understand speech. The Creature observes the tableau from a point of safety, which plays on Locke's image of the dark room but makes it affectively real as the hovel becomes not a dark room of ignorance but a claustral space of comfort and safety.

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<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1.1.4.5-7.

The Creature's first attempts at language acquisition are followed by his realization that language is a system of signs,<sup>20</sup> his discovery of written language and by the decision to learn language well enough to converse, "which knowledge might enable me to make them [i.e., the De Lacey] overlook the deformity of my figure" (139). Having seen his face in a pool of water, the Creature now knows that the truth of his face, that overwhelming sign that apparently cannot be misunderstood, needs to be "overlook[ed]," that it must be made invisible, or covered (i.e., absent and therefore available to representation) and not unseeable (i.e., present but overwhelming).<sup>21</sup> It may not be too fanciful to say that a "deformed figure" would be literal, as in the mimetic function of language, while an overlooked figure, one to which its viewer is blind, would

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<sup>20</sup> Even before the Creature understands that the De Lacey "possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds," a process which is basically emotive (words "produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers" [137]), he considers the relationship between appearances and interior life ("What did their tears imply? Did they really express pain?" [137]). Apparently, it is this earlier stage which allows the Creature to say that words can bring about facial expressions and emotions ("in the minds and countenances"). Peter Brooks points out that the Creature also learns "an important corollary to Rousseau's postulate of the emotional origin of language: the radical figurality of language, its founding statute as misnaming, transference" ("'Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts,'" p. 209).

<sup>21</sup> In "*Frankenstein*, Invisibility, and Nameless Dread" (*American Imago* 60 (2003): 135-58, Lee Zimmerman shows that Frankenstein can be considered to have been "invisible" as a child (i.e., not allowed to develop a self), and that the Creature shares this with him. Zimmerman usefully discusses Winnicott's and W. R. Bion's ideas of the importance of looking and being looked at in the development of a self. I agree that Frankenstein may have been invisible as a child, and remains in some sense invisible to himself, the Creature is unseeable, not invisible, i.e., ugly, affectively shocking, and very present.

be figural.<sup>22</sup> If so, the Creature is placed in a familiar quandary: he must lie to be true, be figural to be literal, inaccurate to be accurate.

Let us now look, if we can, at this reflection. The Creature describes the event thus to Frankenstein:

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. (139)

Here shame (“despondence and mortification”) follows from truth, the overwhelmingly convincing horror of the face seen in the water. The Creature learns the truth from the true reflection of his unchangeably truly signifying face. Mimesis (representation), in the classic form of the mirror held up to life, is able to convey what immediacy cannot,

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<sup>22</sup> David Marshall draws parallels between the famous passage on the giant and the man in the *Second Discourse* and the way the Creature is not seen as human: “What is at stake in the story of the monster, however, is more than the error of not recognizing an other as a *semblable*: a fellow creature who shares the common name of *man*. The monster . . . is denied that status of a fellow creature because—unlike the *homme sauvage* in Rousseau’s story—Frankenstein never realizes that the appellation of “gigantic monster” is only a figure for a man: a figure of man” (*The Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, p. 206). It is possible, however, that Shelley’s use of a variety of names for the Creature—creature, monster, fiend, daemon, wretch, etc.—points to the fact that reconciling the Creature’s outside with his inside is itself metaphorical. In addressing Locke’s concept of language, de Man points to passages in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* that discuss the definition of the word “man.” Locke admits the difficulties of defining “man” by (internal) rationality alone: the outside of the human being must be considered too (see 3.11.20 and 4.4.13-16). As de Man writes, “The problem is that of a necessary link between the two elements in a binary polarity, between ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ that is to say, by all accounts, that of metaphor as the figure of complementarity and correspondence” (“The Epistemology of Metaphor,” *Aesthetic Ideology* [Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996], 34-50, p. 40). Locke’s imaginative experiment in book 4, where we are to see the face of a “changeling” (a severely retarded person) slowly modified to the point where we would call it a “monster” is instructive: the status of “monster” is reached by its relative difference from “man” and “beast.”

which is meaning.<sup>23</sup> The pathos of the phrasing “the monster that I am,” rather than just “a monster,” points up the relationship of this past representation to a stable, unchanging, unredeemable meaning that centers on the shame that isolates, confines, and determines the individual who internalizes the contempt which he is confronted with, seeing it now as “fatal,” that is, as immutable and inscrutable as Fate itself.

This moment foregrounds too many intertexts, however, to allow us to take the Creature’s shame as an uncomplicated event.<sup>24</sup> In this moment Mary Shelley enters the text most directly, for it is a moment of specularly that recalls most specifically Eve in *Paradise Lost*. The ironies of Shelley’s treatment of the intertext are too obvious to

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<sup>23</sup> Of this moment, Brooks writes, “This specular *cogito*, where the Creature witnesses his outward identity as alien to his inner desire, estranged, determined by the view and judgment of the Other, clinches the importance of language as the symbolic order that must compensate for nature” (“ ‘Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts,’ ” p. 210), but there is no direct evidence that the Creature’s “view and judgement” comes from anyone but himself. John B. Lamb (“Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Milton’s Monstrous Myth,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 47 [1992]: 303-19) sees the Creature’s sense of himself as determined through the ontology of *Paradise Lost*, so that the acquisition of language and the Creature’s process of naïve reading of *Paradise Lost* inscribe him into a pre-existing, oppressive, hegemonic narrative. The moment where the Creature sees himself in the water comes before he has read *Paradise Lost*; the use of the intertext would have to be seen, if we were to accept Brooks’s and Lamb’s interpretation, as the Creature’s reading (or re-reading) of this moment through his identifications with Adam and Satan, which is reasonable enough, since it occurs before the Creature acquires language.

<sup>24</sup> The relationship of Mary Shelley’s reading and the intertextuality of *Frankenstein* is covered in numerous works. For an overview, see Burton R. Pollin, “Philosophical and Literary Sources of *Frankenstein*,” *Comparative Literature* 17 (1965): 97-108. *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost* is considered in detail in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1979), pp. 213-47. See also Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein’s Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1987), pp. 37-44.

note—the use of the word “start” not in the context of sympathy but of disgust,<sup>25</sup> the reversal of positions of the reflection and other available human models, so that Eve’s greater beauty and Adam’s lesser beauty become the Creature’s ugliness and the De Laceys’ attractiveness. Only slightly submerged in this passage as well would be the way Eve is called a “fair creature” by the voice of God that draws her away from her reflection the first time.<sup>26</sup> The path from Eve to the shame that follows the Fall is short enough, and from this shame to the risky assertion of authority by the teenaged Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley even shorter.

The Creature looking at his image in the water must be disgusted by and with himself, but he does not have the same reaction as others have to him. He “start[s] back” but continues looking; what he sees is not “answering looks” but his own looks. If this

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<sup>25</sup> “I started back, / It started back, but pleased I soon returned, / Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks / Of sympathy and love” (*PL* 4:462-65). Compare also Adam Smith, *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, 1.1.1.3, where Smith uses the example of an audience moving involuntarily in sympathy with a tight-rope walker. One has to wonder whether Eve’s encounter with her reflection doesn’t also lurk behind one of Endymion’s visions of his beloved in Keats’s romance:

behold!  
 The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,  
 Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap  
 Through the cool depth.—It moved as if to flee—  
 I started up, when lo! refreshfully,  
 There came upon my face in plenteous showers  
 Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers, . . .  
 (*Endymion* 1:893-900)

<sup>26</sup> The Creature (whom, for a perhaps spurious wish to impose some stability of reference, I have only called “the Creature” is called “creature,” as well as “monster,” “fiend,” “daemon,” etc., throughout the work, and Shelley’s frequent use of “creature” to describe human characters as well, perhaps undermines on the lexical level the idea that the Creature does not fit into the “chain of significations” (see Brooks, “‘Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts’”) in the work. Lexically, the Creature has no secure position, but neither does anyone else in the book.

moment portrays the mimetic, at the moment the Creature sees himself and finds his reflection convincing him of his own monstrosity, he is also momentarily being crushed by the failure of the expressive theory of emotions, for his face apparently can only convey monstrosity, and cannot convey to the outside the interior goodness and benevolent emotions that he possesses. I have said above that his face signifies “truth,” in that it cannot differ from what it is, cannot change, lie, or represent. Its stability is that of truth, but it does not express the interior “truth” of the Creature, or the Creature’s “meaning.” Apparently it is the dead face, the material face of truth itself. The possibility of intersubjectivity and the communication of meaning is blocked by the immediacy of the truth of the Creature’s face.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Creature’s face is what Kant would say is an object “represented as insisting, as it were, upon our enjoying it, while we still set our face against it.” That which disgusts, he writes, cannot be represented “conformably to nature” without falling outside of the aesthetic. Disgust is a “strange sensation, which depends purely on the imagination.” As Denise Gigante describes this passage, the stress of Kant’s rhetoric falls on “insist” (*bestehen*), whose root is “stand” (*stehen*). She writes, “The ugly is offensively obtrusive in standing between the subject and its representation of the object. It stands in for itself, as it were, refusing to budge, and thus stripping the subject of imaginative capacity. . . . It stands in the way of the subject’s quest for the elusive *Ding-an-Sich*, the thing the subject can never attain, and thus must incessantly desire, by presenting itself as an unwanted *Ding*” (Denise Gigante, “Facing the Ugly: The Case of *Frankenstein*,” p. 577). So in this moment of disgust, whose affective structure is “I don’t want,” as desire is shut off, the affective structure of shame, where desire is reduced but not eliminated, is recapitulated: “I want, but—.” The affect of the greatest self-consciousness occurs at the same moment as the affect of the least self-consciousness. Of course the root of “understanding” (*Verstand*) is also “stand,” so any reading that pursued the implications of *stehen* here would have to pursue the paradox of blockage enabling the stability of knowledge.

Slavoj Žižek’s description of ugliness can perhaps also be used to point out the paradox of the moment in which the disgusting is perceived, and therefore, represented: “The ugly object is an object that is in the wrong place, that ‘shouldn’t be there.’ This does not mean that the ugly object is no longer ugly the moment we relocate it to its proper place; rather, an ugly object is ‘in itself’ out of place, on account of the distorted balance between its ‘representation’ (the symbolic features we perceive) and ‘existence’—being ugly, out of place, is the excess of existence over representation.

The mirroring water in Shelley's text refers not only to *Paradise Lost*, but to *Gulliver's Travels* as well,<sup>28</sup> and the scene where Gulliver catches sight of himself in water as he is attempting to imitate the Houyhnhnms (who in Shelley's text mirror the De Laceys). Gulliver loved to listen to his master speak. He says, "I admired the Strength, Comeliness, and Speed of the Inhabitants; and such a Constellation of Virtues in such Amiable Persons produced in me the highest Veneration".<sup>29</sup> But:

WHEN I thought of my Family, my Friends, my Countrymen, or Human Race in general, I considered them as they really were, *Yahoos* in shape and disposition, only a little more civilized, and qualified with the Gift of Speech, but making no other use of Reason, than to improve and multiply those Vices, whereof their Brethren in this Country had only the share that Nature allotted them. When I happened to behold the Reflection of my own Form in a Lake or Fountain, I turned away my Face in Horror and Detestation of myself, and could better endure the sight of a common *Yahoo* than of my own Person. By conversing with the *Houyhnhnms*, and looking upon them with Delight, I fell to imitate their Gate and Gesture, which is now grown into an Habit, and my Friends often tell me in a blunt way, that *I trot like a Horse*; which, however, I take for a great Compliment: Neither shall I disown that in Speaking I am apt to fall into the Voice and manner of the *Houyhnhnms*, and hear myself ridiculed on that account without the least Mortification. (234-35)

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Ugliness is thus a *topological* category; it designates an object that is in a way 'larger than itself,' whose existence is larger than its representation" (Slavoj Žižek/F. W. J. von Schelling, *The Abyss of Freedom/Ages of the World* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997), p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> According to her journal, Mary Shelley read *Gulliver's Travels* in 1816. See Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert, eds., *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1987), 1:96 and 1:145-6). Percy Shelley is recorded as reading the work aloud from November 9 to November 15, 1816.

<sup>29</sup> Albert J. Rivero, ed., Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 234.

In both cases, seeing the reflection of oneself impedes the process of identification underway. The occurrence of the words “form” and “mortification”<sup>30</sup> (along with Gulliver’s “really were” and the Monster’s “in reality”) may be more than coincidental, as may the trinity of virtues—“grace, beauty, and delicate complexions” in the case of the De Laceys, “strength, comeliness, and speed” in the case of the Houyhnhnms. The passage in *Gulliver’s Travels* continues rather suggestively with the relationship of faces and speech: “IN the midst of all this Happiness, and when I looked upon myself to be fully settled for Life, My master sent for me one Morning a little earlier than his usual Hour. I observed by his Countenance that he was in some Perplexity, and at a Loss how to begin what he had to speak” (235). What his master has to convey is how upset the other Houyhnhnms are that Gulliver is treated as more than a “Brute Animal” (235), and of course it is his ability to speak that distinguishes him from the Yahoos in general. The first word Gulliver speaks (in imitation of the first Houyhnhnms he has met, and without knowing what it means) is “Yahoo,” and to complete the reflexivity of the moment of first encountering the other, the first word the surprised Houyhnhnms teach Gulliver is “Houyhnhnm” (234).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> On Swift’s use of this word and “monsters” in *Gulliver’s Travels*, see Dennis Todd, “The Hairy Maid at the Harpsichord: Some Speculations on the Meaning of *Gulliver’s Travels*” in Rivero, ed., Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, pp. 396-427 (reprinted from *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 34 [1992]: 239-83). As Todd points out, Gulliver refers to Yahoos as “deformed” and “ugly Monster[s]” at first.

<sup>31</sup> There are further ironies in Swift’s pre-text, since Gulliver is in many ways a fantasist, and part of his interest as a character is that we never know when to trust him, i.e., when to find him sane or insane. As Christopher Fox points out, Gulliver is engaged here not only in “fantasy and wish-fulfillment,” the overwhelming desire to be *like others* (here the Houyhnhnms), but the Christian “sin of similitude,” wanting to make the world *like oneself*. Fox gives the example of Sin and Death in *Paradise Lost*, characters who are incestuously reflective of their “parent,” Satan. Recall that when Eve turns away from

Becoming convinced that “I was the Monster that I am” means a temporal space is opening up, not only between the present of the narrative and the past event, but between the first trigger of the Creature’s shame and the Gorgon-like stoniness of a dead face freezing a living one. As we all remember, when the Creature achieves life, as is indicated by the opening eye, it becomes unbearable to its creator, who runs away. But like any child whose parent has gone missing, the Creature finds Frankenstein:

He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs (86).

The “look-look,” as Tomkins calls it, the circuit of looks where two people (think of a mother and child or two lovers) understand each other’s emotions,<sup>32</sup> is broken by Frankenstein and then by every other being the Creature encounters—until, that is this moment when he looks at himself. Tomkins considers this “look-look,” or what he also calls the “eye-to-eye scene” to be more intimate even than sexual intimacy (*AIC* 2:179-

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her “other,” Adam, in book 4, the “voice” that corrects her tells her that she is *his* “image,” and with him she will “bear / Multitudes like thy self” (*PL* 4:472; 473-4). Eve’s turning from Adam is analogous to Narcissus’ turning from all sexual partners; Gulliver’s horror at being embraced by the female Yahoo is also based on this quality of Narcissus’. See Christopher Fox, “The Myth of Narcissus in Swift’s *Travels*,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20 (1986): 17-33.

<sup>32</sup> “Because of the possibilities of such shared awareness there is no greater intimacy than the interocular interaction. It is an incomplete intimacy when one is looked at, without seeing the other, or when when one looks at the other without being looked at” (*AIC* 2:180). As the Creature says of the De Lacey’s, “my heart yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures: to see their sweet looks turned towards me with affection, was the utmost limit of my ambition” (157).

83). In this scene of reflection, intimacy that allows affective knowledge<sup>33</sup> is replaced by pure chiasmus, the “I am that I am”—or the “that I was in reality the monster that I am”—of the unknowable.

Shelley’s use of the mirroring-water trope plays most ironically on Ovid’s account of Narcissus. In the *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus encounters his image while drinking from a spring; then he stares motionlessly at his image “like a statue carved from Parian marble” (155); then he tries in vain to touch the image that he sees. The following speech that Narcissus gives on the parity of action between himself and the image provides a picture of mimetic-empathic identification, or more basically, the “look-look” or “eye-to-eye scene” of mothers and children and lovers: “When I have smiled, you smile back; and I have often seen tears, when I weep, on your cheeks. . . . and, as I suspect from the movement of your sweet lips, you answer my words as well, but words which do not reach my ears” (157). As language is approached, suddenly Narcissus recognizes that the image is himself, and finds that he cannot pull away from his own image/self: “What I desire, I have; the very abundance of my riches beggars me. Oh, that I might be parted from my own body! and, strange prayer for a lover, I would that what I love were absent from me!” (157). The parallels between this scene and the relationship of Frankenstein and the Creature are too obvious to mention, from the first encounter after Frankenstein’s dream (when “a grin wrinkled his [the Creature’s] cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me”) to the Creature’s never-ending desire for an answering response in his creator

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<sup>33</sup> This knowledge is dependent on maintaining ocular contact, not on the parity of affects: “Nor is mutuality of awareness limited to homogeneity of shared affect. If I smile at you and you frown at me, we share the knowledge that I like you but you hate me” (*AIC* 2:180).

(“whilst I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my desires. They were for ever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned” [243]). In Shelley’s rendering, plenitude is replaced by lack, love by shame, and attraction by disgust. The “thin barrier of water” (157) in Ovid’s account divides presence and absence, reality and image, truth and falsehood, but in Shelley’s account, the truth, the overwhelming reality of ugliness, is on both sides of the barrier of self-consciousness.<sup>34</sup>

The topos of mirroring water returns in the narrative just before the Creature prepares to take advantage of M. De Lacey’s blindness to use language to allow him to “overlook” the Creature’s “figure”: “I cherished hope, it is true; but it vanished, when I beheld my person reflected in water, or my shadow in the moon-shine, even as that frail image and that inconstant shade” (156). The fragility of hope is related to the Creature’s solitariness, which the Creature expresses to Frankenstein two paragraphs before: “‘Cursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of your’s [*sic*], more horrid from its very resemblance. Satan had his companions . . . but I am solitary and detested’ ” (155). The Creature believes he is a

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<sup>34</sup> Taken as a topos, the reference to Narcissus in Shelley’s work reflects ironically on Frankenstein, of course. As Christopher Fox points out, it is illusion that becomes a major component of the way the Narcissus story is interpreted, in manners which range from “the (a) folly of worshipping an image, to the (b) blindness that arises from pride, and . . . to a (c) self-pleasing delusion, a mental aberration created by his own imagination,” all of which could apply to a moralistic reading of Frankenstein’s own behavior (Fox, “The Myth of Narcissus,” p. 27). The Creature’s singularity is the parodic literalization of Narcissus’s own pride. How the Creature should see himself mirrors the epistemological problem of the female autobiographer, as Barbara Johnson has shown: “The problem for the female autobiographer is, on the one hand, to resist the pressure of masculine autobiography as the only literary genre available for her enterprise, and, on the other, to describe a difficulty in conforming to a female ideal which is largely a fantasy of the masculine, not the feminine imagination” (“My Monster/My Self,” *Diacritics* 12 [1982]: 2-10, 10).

“type,” that is, a copy or reflected image of his creator: the image is subordinate in the binary of original and copy, and rather than being weaker or diluted in its ugliness, grows more ugly in its removal from the original.

It would seem, then, that the topos of the mirroring water works all too neatly into a psychoanalytical scheme in which, as Sedgwick writes, “the male paranoid plot is not separate from the maternal or monstrous plot” (ix) and the concentration of man on man leaves no meaningful place for women in a world constructed only in the image of the male. In this reading, the Creature is right: he *is* a monster, and he is the image of his creator. The “thin barrier of water” is no real barrier, but just the borderline between the two halves of the chiasmus man/monster/monster/man. This is why, psychoanalytically speaking, the surface reasons for Frankenstein’s violent destruction of the female Creature cover the need to allow nothing to come between man and Creature. The topos, as allegory, certainly seems overdetermined, and it is this that should give us pause.

In choosing to reverse the general design of the allegory of the water-image, Shelley calls attention to it *as allegory*. In Ovid, Milton, and even in Swift, the allegory is one in which knowledge is avoided, not gained. Narcissus first does not know that the image he sees is his own reflection; when he discovers this, he finds knowledge leading to death. Eve also does not know who the image in the water is; her return to it after having it revealed that the image is herself is her first error or swerve from the true. Gulliver’s seeing himself in the water cannot dissuade him from trying with all his might to identify with the Houyhnhnms. In the case of the Creature, he concludes from the watery image that it *is* himself he sees, and that he *is* a monster, and though his decline from benevolence and sympathy to criminality can be seen as a process of identification

with his creator, the allegory of knowledge here is used to divide him from himself, a self which he knows, and seeks continually to prove in language, is no monster at all.

The moment combines two affects, shame and disgust, which contradict each other, since shame is “linked with love and identification” while disgust is “linked with individuation and hate” (*AIC* 2:140). As Tomkins says, “Both affects are impediments to intimacy and communion, within the self and between the self and others” (*AIC* 2:140). Both involve a break in the interocular circuit. Yet here both are present in a moment of fascinated and unbroken looking, in contradiction to the functioning of the two affects. What is portrayed is the structure of autobiography, in which the self looks at the self and the self is subject and object at once. The moment is staged, one might say, in terms of a recognizable topos of literature, and an impossible literal relationship of contradiction becomes an acceptable and even unremarkable allegory, but one in which the mutuality of sympathy that the Creature first feels for the De Lacey becomes the theoretically more complex relationship that Adam Smith discusses in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.<sup>35</sup>

This moment has a complex relationship to sympathy. The correlation or analogy of ugliness and moral badness is of course ancient, but it was revived with subtlety by the English moral philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Shaftesbury, for instance, related the “natural beauty of figures” to the beauty of “actions”: “No sooner are actions viewed, no sooner the human affections and passions discerned (and they are most of them as soon discerned as felt) than straight an inward eye distinguishes and sees

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<sup>35</sup> There is no record in Mary Shelley’s journals that she read this work during the composition of the novel, but Smith is quoted at the beginning of Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

the fair and shapely, the amiable and admirable, apart from the deformed, the foul, the odious or the despicable.”<sup>36</sup> For Shaftesbury and others this raises questions about the naturalness or innateness of morality—a “moral sense”—which cannot be pursued here. But it is Adam Smith who articulates a theory of sympathy that perhaps can shed some light on the moment when an impossibly ugly creature can look upon itself. Smith distinguishes between affects which arouse compassion (i.e., putting oneself into the place of the other) and those which do not. In the latter category would be anger, for in seeing an angry man we sympathize more with those whom he is enraged at (and hence whom we may see as endangered) than with him (1.1.1.7).<sup>37</sup> Sympathy relies on propriety, because it is a social emotion that involves not only putting ourselves in the place of the person with whom we can feel sympathy but in putting ourselves in the place of other persons who would observe us in the position of the person whose position we are assuming. This social standard of sympathy is related by Smith both to Christian ideas of brotherly love and to the Stoic idea of the “commonwealth of nature.” Thus, “What befalls ourselves we should regard as what befalls our neighbor, or, what comes to the same thing, as our neighbor regards what befalls us” (3.3.11); and “it is the great precept of nature to love ourselves only as we love our neighbour, or what comes to the same thing, as our neighbour is capable of loving us” (1.1.5.5). Sympathy is quite limited by the idea of propriety: “That imaginary change of situation, upon which their sympathy is founded, is but momentary. The thought of their own safety, the thought that they

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<sup>36</sup> *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, quoted by Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1985 [1959]), 5:175.

<sup>37</sup> When Frankenstein attributes an affect to the Creature’s face, it is anger: “A fiendish rage animated him [i.e., the Creature] . . . ; his face was wrinkled into contortions too horrible for human eyes to behold (169).

themselves are not really the sufferers, continually intrudes itself upon them” (1.1.4.8). The passion of the sympathizing observer can never equal that of the suffering person observed, and so the sufferer “must flatten, if I may be allowed to say so, the sharpness of its natural tone, in order to reduce it to harmony and concord with the emotions of those who are about him” (1.1.4.8). For Smith, this means that the sufferer exchanges places with the sympathizer as much as the sympathizer changes places with the sufferer. And so the passion of the sufferer is reduced.

As Smith observes, if “a human creature” could grow up completely isolated, he would have no idea of his own character, feelings, and actions; he would not know any more “of the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. All these are objects which he cannot easily see, which naturally he does not look at, and with regard to which he is provided with no mirror which can present them to his view. Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before” (3.1.3). And Smith continues with the example of the face in his discussion of self-consciousness as socially determined:

Our first ideas of personal beauty and deformity, are drawn from the shape and appearance of others, not from our own. We soon become sensible, however, that others exercise the same criticism upon us. We are pleased when they approve of our figure, and are disobliged when they seem to be disgusted. . . . We examine our persons limb by limb, and by placing ourselves before a looking-glass, or by some expedient, endeavour, as much as possible, to view ourselves at the distance and with the eyes of other people. (3.1.4)

In the process of judging one’s own actions, one internalizes the observer and the observed, or judge and judged, so that “When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, . . . I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; . . . I, the examiner and judge, represent a

different character from that of the other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of” (3.1.6).

So it is that the social and the self-reflexive manage at once to create a “flatten[ing]” or conformity of affects along with a vision of impartial judgement. One could ask where the “self” now resides, since it seems that imagining one’s way into the minds of others—who are properly calm and collected, as well as impartial and just—means erasing the emotions and actions that offend propriety and decorum. In the case of the Creature, a being attempts to conform with the rules of sympathy (admitting that it is a monster), but in so doing violates the rules of sympathy, since being a monster is being so ugly that one can awaken no sympathy at all. To appeal to language, which will allow the Creature to evade his monstrosity and show his interior self, with all its benevolence, the Creature paradoxically wishes to use the primary means of intersubjectivity available to one whose face cannot be seen—language—to rise above subjectivity. Of course, this attempt at transcendence leads not to God, but to Frankenstein, creator and father, who conforms as well as anybody else to the rules of sympathy.<sup>38</sup>

We have seen that the watery image combines two affects that would seem to contradict each other. From Tomkins’s point of view, this is a picture of the mind itself as it attempts the formation of what he calls the “General Image.” The General Image involves four possibilities which strain against each other. These are “1) positive affect should be maximized; 2) negative affect should be minimized; 3) affect inhibition should be minimized; 4) power to maximize positive affect, to minimize negative affect and to minimize affect inhibition should be maximized” (*AIC* 2:262). Since Tomkins sees

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<sup>38</sup> On the relationship of the Creature’s face to sympathy, see Yousef, “The Monster in a Dark Room,” pp. 223-25.

human motivation in terms of affect, not of drives, the conflict of these basic desires, a conflict between the expression and suppression of affects, is what leads to a mind divided against itself. Writes Tomkins, “The human being will strive to minimize the experience of negative affect at the same time that he longs to express overtly the affect which grows stronger just because of his effort to suppress and minimize it” (*AIC* 2:269). As the Creature sees himself in the water, how can the General Image be realized, as two negative affects compete for representation?

We have arrived at an impasse. I have referred to the Creature’s looking into the water as an allegory of knowledge, which in the case of the intertexts used, refers back to the blockage of knowledge found in shame, the shame that in *Paradise Lost* blocks Adam and Eve’s eyes from ever seeing God again. The monstrosity being allegorized here is that of allegory itself, in which separation and isolation are constitutive and symptomatic of its temporal relationship to other allegories. As de Man writes in “The Rhetoric of Temporality,”

[I]t remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority.<sup>39</sup>

Such a situation is one, as de Man shows, of pathos, as “allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin” through its “temporal difference,” and “prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self” (207). In both shame and disgust, the self cannot allow the coalescence of self and non-self found in identification and in Smith’s

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<sup>39</sup> *Blindness and Insight*, p. 207.

formation of sympathy. The allegory of the watery image erases itself even as it establishes itself, leaving the Creature, as always, and ever more so, unseeable.

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The unspeakable and the unseeable would seem to be constituted by the barrier of knowledge, which is, as we have seen, presented in the case above as an allegory, a figure that covers and blocks what it professes to reveal. Thomas Dutoit has discussed the face of the Creature in terms of Levinas's idea of the face. As Dutoit describes it, "Levinas's articulation of the face posits an empirical face, the face insofar as it appears phenomenally, and the ethical face, the face insofar as it precedes phenomenological vision."<sup>40</sup> He continues: "[T]o see a face as a phenomenon is to see a face at least twice (to sustain a vision of it), which is the same as losing the 'access to the face.' The face first appears non-phenomally; when one sees it well enough to describe it, one no longer sees 'what is specifically the face' " (856). Unseeability can be linked therefore to the ethical problem of trying to represent what cannot or must not be represented. On the *Mer de Glace*, Frankenstein meets the Creature, who calls on his creator to "listen" to him, to allow him to deliver in language the full story of his experiences that will in some way explain the murder of William, and allow Frankenstein to "then, if you can, and if you will, destroy the work of your hands" (127). Frankenstein's reply includes a curse of his own hands: "Cursed (although I curse myself) be the hands that formed you!" (127). The synecdoche (hand for man) and the clear references to Psalm 90 and Exodus 33:20-23 point up the possibility that the hands do what the man does not intend and the moral

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Dutoit, "Re-specting the Face as the Moral (of) Fiction in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (*MLN* 109 [1994]: 847-71), p. 856.

danger of making images of that which cannot be seen.<sup>41</sup> But it is the relation of sight to the hand that covers eyes and blocks sight that here is relevant. Frankenstein continues, “Begone! relieve me from the sight of your detested form” (127) and the Creature obliges: “ ‘Thus I relieve thee, my creator,’ he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from with me violence; ‘thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion’ ” (127).

This pattern is reversed in the Creature’s account of how he came to kill little William: “I seized on the boy as he passed, and drew him towards me. As soon as he beheld my form, he placed his eyes before his hands, and uttered a shrill scream: I drew his hand [*sic*] forcibly from his face, and said, ‘Child, what is the meaning of this? I do not intend to hurt you; listen to me’ ” (167). As the boy struggles, the Creature “ ‘grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead at my feet’ ” (167). His hands have taught him murder, or as the Creature says, creation: “ ‘I gazed on my victim, . . . clapping my hands, I exclaimed, ‘I, too, can create desolation’ ” (167). Such passages raise any number of psychoanalytical issues, but perhaps their most important role is to provide a context for the very strange thing that the Creature says only a page away from the end of the book.

There Walton berates the Creature for a kind of selfishness: he feels no pity for Frankenstein and regrets only he is “withdrawn from your power” (243). The Creature’s

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<sup>41</sup> Dutoit points out that when Frankenstein sees the face of his creation and realizes that it is not beautiful (“Beautiful! Great God!”) he names this unnamed being “God.” The Creature covers Frankenstein’s eyes in the same way as God does Moses’s: “I will put thee in a clift on a rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.” See “Re-specting the Face,” pp. 858-9. Dutoit connects the many imperatives that Frankenstein listen to his creation to ethics in the form of Kant’s moral philosophy (pp. 860-68).

long reply is memorably eloquent and moving. In it, he calls attention to Frankenstein's body, and in what follows, it is not clear whether he addresses Frankenstein or Walton, though it does seem clear at first that "the deed" he speaks of is collectively the murders of William, Elizabeth Lavenza, and Henri Clerval:

There he lies, white and cold in death. You hate me; but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived, and long for the moment when they will meet my eyes, when it will haunt my thoughts, no more. (243)

Here "hands" and "heart," execution and imagination are contrasted, but in the last part of the last sentence the pronouns "they" and "it" begin to swerve away from their antecedents to such an extent that it is almost impossible to say what nouns they are referring back to. Are "they" his "hands"? Is "it" "the deed," "the heart," or "the imagination"? In the 1831 revisions, Shelley confirms a reading which connects this passage back to those I have excerpted above: "I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived, and long for the moment when *these hands* will meet my eyes, when *that imagination* will haunt my thoughts, no more" (351; my italics). Even the clarifications of the 1831 edition leave one wondering if "these hands" and "that imagination" are not Frankenstein's, and "the deed" the creation of the Creature. But this ambiguity, which is surely purposeful, and which simply reinforces the exchange of identities between creator and created throughout the book, is not the most striking thing about this passage. Instead, one is

forced to wonder what the phrase “when these hands will meet my eyes” means, and most significantly, whether “no more” qualifies the phrase or not.<sup>42</sup>

Hands that meet eyes may be, metaphorically, hands that are seen by eyes.<sup>43</sup> Literally, hands may meet eyes to wipe away tears, to hide the face in mourning or in shame, to close eyes when they are dead, to pull the eyes in hideous rage from their sockets, or to plunge pins into the eyes to literalize a formerly metaphoric or moral blindness and to prevent the eyes from seeing the polluted children who materialize one’s sin. The phrase may summon up redemptive sorrow, the gesture of farewell, the loyalty of Gloucester, the over-trust of Samson, the self-rending justice of Oedipus. These eyes and hands may also suggest a childhood game of peekaboo, or Piaget’s experiments of hiding toys from babies. And it may remind one, too, of the boy who played his little game of *fort* and *da*. In this context, the meeting of hand and eye may mean simply the blocking out of sight which allows “meeting” to occur between the Creature and human beings. If the blocking of sight in disgust is found on one side of these hands, on the other side is found shame. I quote Tomkins again:

The shame response is literally an ambivalent turning of the eyes away from the object toward the face, toward the self. It is an act of facial communication reduction in which excitement or enjoyment is only incompletely reduced. Therefore it is an act which is deeply ambivalent. This ambivalence is nowhere clearer than in the child who covers his face in the presence of the stranger, but who also peeks through his fingers so that he may look without being seen. (*AIC* 2:136)

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<sup>42</sup> The comma after “thoughts” would indicate that the two phrases are in apposition, and therefore both modified by “no more.” The ambiguity remains planted in the mind, however, and in part because of the strangeness of the idea of hands “meeting” eyes. Percy Shelley was responsible for reading the proofs, but if the comma is his, it was not removed by Mary Shelley in the 1831 edition.

<sup>43</sup> This common metaphor is used earlier in Frankenstein’s description of going to Ingolstadt: “At length the high white steeple of the town met my eyes” (75).

The covering of the eyes also covers the face. The gesture establishes as well a touch where there was only sight, a self-protective touch, in William's case, of the self by the self, and an aggressive yet protective touch in the case of the Creature and Frankenstein. The progression, chronologically, from William's hands (or hand) covering his eyes, to the Creature's covering Frankenstein's, to finally the Creature's hope that his hands (or someone else's—in a final act of dissolution) will “meet” his eyes (no more?)—this progression repeats a confusion of inside and outside, of sight and touch, where the immediate revelation of sight is contrasted to the narrative progression of language—the Creature's story—and where finally a gesture of shame intervenes and enables the “meet[ings]” it at the same time prevents.

What the Creature's encounter with William illustrates is the way psychoanalysis posits that an aggressive impulse emerges unconsciously: so the eye of the mind has not known what the hand has done, and the hand has a mind of its own. Whether or not this is a backward projection by the Creature that attempts to cover up the crime, the event is portrayed in terms of the difficulty of coordinating touch and sight in order to allow communication to occur: just as the child's hands must be removed from his eyes to allow the interocular communication of affect to occur, so must his voice, screaming execrations, be silenced in order for linguistic communication to take place (“ ‘listen to me’ ”). The language of exchanged looks is accommodated only by making the child silent and receptive. In this process, the violence of sight is transferred to the violence of touch: the Creature's looks kill through his fingers, and touch substitutes for sight.

One feels that this gesture of hands on eyes is at once melodramatic, laden with a history of stagecraft, and primitive and ritualistic. As sight is denied, speech may begin;

two senses are modulated, as in the tableau of the De Laceys, where musical sound arranged a visible scene so that sympathy could arise. What the moment of blindness involved here brings forward is the symbolic association of the eye with the penis or the mouth (*AIC* 2:157-9 and 2:172-74). There is a powerful taboo on *too much* looking that is related to a sexual taboo. In the case of the “primal scene,” Tomkins locates the danger for the child not in the punitiveness of the father (the “castration” that is threatened by the father in Freud’s view), but in the look of the *mother*.<sup>44</sup> In discussing *Oedipus Rex*, Tomkins writes, “Despite the fact that the son presumably sexually possesses the mother, if the punishment fit the crime, the crime was also looking at and being seen by the mother, since the retribution is blindness. The punishment is for the ocular rather than the genital response” (*AIC* 2:177). In covering the eyes, however, there is a symbolic confusion, for the hand now contacts the instrument of desire, the eyes, and the symbol of the instrument of desire’s fulfillment, the genitals.

The intervention of touch here can be related not only to the primal scene but also to the problem of self and self-knowledge which is found in the watery-mirror episode and its intertexts. In *Paradise Lost*, Eve spurns Adam’s advances and turns back to the watery image there, an image which she sees right after waking up and asking the

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<sup>44</sup> David Marshall makes much the same point in relation to the Creature: he connects Frankenstein’s scientific curiosity and his horror of a female monster with the primal scene. When the Creature comes to life and opens its “eye,” “Victor experiences the trauma of a primal scene as viewed from the perspective of the parent” (*Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, p. 223). “At the center of the primal scene in *Frankenstein* is a spectator peeping through a keyhole to see a shocking sight: the sight of speculative eyes that punish sympathy and speculation by presenting the mirror image that turns the spectator into a spectacle. This is the vision represented by the monster. The most horrifying aspect of his figure is not his deformity as much as the speculative eyes that represent vision itself” (226). The “spectator peeping through a keyhole” derives from Mary Shelley’s recollection of Polidori’s ghost story, which Marshall correctly observes replicates a child’s seeing the primal scene.

existential questions that the Creature also asks. The image which had been almost heavenly (the water seems like “another heaven”) now turns out to be Eve’s self, and returning to it means turning her back on being merely an “image” of Adam and a producer of still more images. Here she rejects the idea that she is partial—an image of Adam—or, as we discover in book 8, literally a part (a rib) of Adam, neither of which leaves her an independent being. She hopes to solve her partialness through being alone with herself, but she is fated to become whole only through becoming one flesh with Adam.<sup>45</sup>

In Gulliver’s case, he sees his image in water and looks away because it interferes with the process of identifying with the Houyhnhnms: he looks too much like a Yahoo. Gulliver’s predicament is similar to Eve’s, since he is not sure what he is: he looks similar to a Yahoo, but can speak and behave like a Houyhnhnm. His horror is most acute when a female Yahoo comes after him to try and mate with him, and below the surface of a horror of their flesh may also lie a horror of having a Yahoo-human child, or simply a Yahoo child, if Gulliver turns out to be one. Gulliver’s hatred of the Yahoos is of course always given in terms of physical disgust with their smell and their hairiness—their bodiliness, or what can be touched, in short.

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<sup>45</sup> Given the importance of the denial of touch in the case of Frankenstein and the Creature, it is interesting to see that touch is highlighted by Milton as an important sense in restoring the physical division between Adam and Eve. See Adam and Raphael’s discussion of this, *PL* 8:500-94. Adam describes his first meeting with Eve and their first sexual union: “transported I behold, / Transported touch” (8:529-30). Raphael takes this in a more literal, and perhaps in a coarser sense, and remarks near the end of his warning to Adam, “if the sense of touch whereby mankind / Is propagated seem such dear delight / Beyond all other, think the same vouchsafed / To cattle and each beast” (8:579-82). He may be reacting as well to the word “transport,” which is used by the Father ironically in observing Satan crossing Chaos: “Only begotten Son, sees thou / What rage transports our adversary” (3:80-81).

Both these intertexts play on the Narcissus story, which occurs in a book (book 3) of *Metamorphoses* notable for tales of destruction occasioned by seeing a god and violating a sexual taboo (Semele, Actaeon) and the story of Tiresias, who was changed into a woman after striking two mating snakes and blinded by Juno for confirming Jupiter's contention that women enjoy sex more than men. In the context of these dangerous sexual encounters, Narcissus spurns any sexual connection, a trait which can perhaps also be related to the fact that his mother, Liriope, was raped by the river god Cephisus ("while imprisoned in his waters").<sup>46</sup> Tiresias is asked if he will have a long life and replies, "If he ne'er know himself" ("si se non noverit"). The Creature's sight of himself in the water occurs in the context of his acquisition of language, Narcissus's story involves linguistic imitation and limitation in the form of Echo. Echo helps Jupiter escape from Juno when he is dallying with the nymphs by delaying Juno with her talkativeness. Juno punishes this by reducing Echo's speech so that "She merely repeats the concluding phrases of a speech and returns the words she hears," becoming a vocal equivalent to the mirroring water in which Narcissus sees himself. With Narcissus she repeats words that should bring the two together ("Come!" and "Let us meet"), but when "to help her own words she comes forth from the woods that she may throw her arms around the neck she longs to clasp," Narcissus "flees at her approach, and, fleeing, says, "Hands off! embrace me not! ("manus complexibus aufer!") May I die before I give you power o'er me!"

What this background points out is the danger of difference, which in the examples above is cast in the form of an other species (Gulliver) or an other sex (Eve and

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<sup>46</sup> See Jeffrey Berman, *Narcissism and the Novel* (New York: New York U P, 1990), pp. 5-6.

Narcissus) or an other kind of being (Semele and Actaeon). This is especially clear in the case of Narcissus, introduced as it is by a man who suffers the punishment of blindness for having seen things (including apparently, copulation) from the woman's point of view. The making of the Creature is a sexless moment of reproduction, a primal scene minus the woman, or where the woman is invisible. Apparently only friends can be touched, or the dead. The Creature's last entrance is framed by Frankenstein's death, a scene in which he says, "The forms of the beloved dead flit before me, and I hasten to their arms" (239).<sup>47</sup> And on the point of death, Frankenstein "pressed my [i.e., Walton's] hand feebly" (239). When Walton encounters the Creature, the words recall the night of the Creature's "birth": "Great God" (85); "Great God!" (240); "catastrophe" (85); "catastrophe" (240); "one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me" (86); and "one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy" (240).<sup>48</sup> No woman, no difference, stands between Frankenstein and the Creature now, but no union is possible, except in death. The outstretched hand, the possibility of touch and reconciliation is denied, as it is with Narcissus.

The hand emerges from all these contexts as an instrument of creation, of destruction, and of the blindness that allows language to begin the work of intersubjectivity. The alliance of creation (sex) and destruction (death) fits well enough into the chiasmic structures detected by psychoanalytic interpretations. The protective blindness, however, brought about by hands, which, while it can be seen in Oedipal

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<sup>47</sup> Recall Frankenstein's dream after bringing the Creature to life.

<sup>48</sup> Note that to Walton, the Creature is *not* proportionate ("uncouth and distorted in its proportions" [240]), but as with Frankenstein's perceptions, the Creature's "every feature and gesture seemed instigated by the wildest rage of some uncontrollable passion" (240).

terms, is awkward and striking because of the way it travels from William to Frankenstein and then to the Creature (“the moment when they [these hands] will meet my eyes, . . . no more”) in a phrase which can be interpreted literally or figuratively. If read literally, the Creature replicates a blindness that enables intersubjectivity; if read metaphorically, the Creature reads his own body as parts, which means that he reads it literally. The hand of a creature made of animal and body parts cannot be a synecdoche, nor can it be organically part of the embodiment of the “I,” since all of the Creature’s embodiment is artificially cut up and sewn together. The Creature’s hand is not given by nature as an instrument of the mind but artificially attached, a metonym of the mind. The relationship of mind or intention to action or effect is severed: when the Creature tries to deal with William, “I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead” (167).

## Chapter Four

Identification, the Oedipal Conflict, and Shame  
in *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*

Shame, or at least embarrassment, necessarily hangs like a shadow over any discussion of Keats's work. The critic must take account of not only the blatantly political roots of much of the criticism directed at Keats's poetry in his lifetime, but also of its centering on sexuality. One cannot escape Byron's remark in a letter of November 4, 1820: "The *Edinburgh* praises Jack Keats or Ketch, or whatever his names are: why his is the Onanism of Poetry,"<sup>1</sup> or his comments in a letter of November 9, 1820: "[S]uch writing is a sort of mental masturbation—he is always f—gg—g his *Imagination*. I don't mean he is *indecent*, but viciously soliciting his own ideas into a state, which is neither poetry nor any thing else but a Bedlam vision produced by raw pork and opium."<sup>2</sup> Keats can still embarrass his readers. One of the most sensitive treatments of how Keats embarrasses us (and how Byron's reaction does as well) is Christopher Ricks's *Keats and Embarrassment*. What Ricks shows, not surprisingly, given Keats's stoical reaction to the journalistic criticism that greeted *Hyperion*, is that Keats is quite a strong character:

Keats was especially sensitive to anything which threatened or discredited identity (his and others'), and he was especially audacious in believing that the healthy strength of a sense of identity depends paradoxically upon the risk and openness and not upon self-protection; depends upon risking

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<sup>1</sup> Leslie A. Marchand, "*Between Two Worlds*": *Byron's Letters and Journals* (Harvard UP, 1977), 7:217. After this comment Byron describes "the pleasure an Italian fiddler extracted out of being suspended daily by a Street Walker in Drury Lane" and his death when the woman leaves him hanging too long.

<sup>2</sup> "*Between Two Worlds*," 7:225.

the absence of identity rather than upon guarding the circumscription of one's identity."<sup>3</sup>

Ricks astutely points out that Keats has the necessary tact of a doctor (he was trained as a surgeon) who must look at nakedness more with generosity and sympathy than with prurience.<sup>4</sup> So it is that Keats can even include what is embarrassing to some readers ("slippery blisses") as if to test their reaction to what could be called awkward, adolescent, or even innocent. Marjorie Levinson goes further than Ricks and posits that Keats's acceptance of embarrassment (and here it is more proper to speak of shame) is shaped by his attempt as a lower middle-class poet to climb the Parnassus occupied not only by Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser, but by the lately respectable Wordsworth and by the aristocratic Byron and Shelley. Overcoming one's shame, in this reading, is part of appropriating the markers of authority. Keats is

the perverse son: the boy who appropriates the father's talent and preserves its virtue by keeping it alienated. He maintains this talent as the sign of the father: a dangerous supplement to the father's lawful and particular being, and to those properties which are continuous with his person (that is, qualities and expressions).<sup>5</sup>

For Levinson, Keats's avoidance of propriety is both an evasion of his middle-class identity (seen in its material, "real property" aspect, where goods are assembled to show class accomplishment) and a complete flaunting of it (as the Promethean thief of upper-class poetic property). Both critics point up the importance of identification in reading Keats, one in seeing him as a model for living (Ricks), the other seeing him as

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Ricks, *Keats and Embarrassment* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1974), p. 25. Ricks goes on to quote the "Negative Capability" letter.

<sup>4</sup> *Keats and Embarrassment*, pp. 9 and 27. In trying to extrapolate from Ricks I may have somewhat distorted the emphasis of his extraordinarily delicate observations.

<sup>5</sup> *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 200.

productively negotiating the Oedipal (and class) conflict that involves identification with the father or the powerful (Levinson).

Criticism of Keats that wishes to see his poetic career as a development from untested genius to poet of high seriousness (a view encouraged by the poet's own self-envisioning as expressed in his letters)<sup>6</sup> has long had as part of its project the establishment of *Hyperion* as an epic, or poem in the epic mode, in which the writer enters the poetic tradition to display his mastery of that tradition and through its heterocosm his mastery of more than merely poetic wisdom and knowledge.<sup>7</sup> When seen in psychoanalytic terms, this "mastery" is a variation on a boy's Oedipal development and the problem of whether the boy will identify with his father.<sup>8</sup> This critical effort (perhaps against its own will) has fully exposed the contradictions of the poem itself in

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<sup>6</sup> The biographical facts almost force a reading of Keats's work as a progressive development from "Johnny Keats" to "John Keats." Brian Wilkie, *Romantic Poets and Epic Tradition* (Madison, U of Wisconsin P, 1965), p. 145, notes that for critics one of the struggles found to make the poem an epic is part of a biographical reading of the poem: "*Hyperion* represents a climax of personally heroic effort by Keats." Because of this way of reading, speculation about what Keats might have done had he lived, is always on the margins of any reading, and sometimes central to it.

<sup>7</sup> On the idea of "heterocosm," see, for instance, Barbara Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton UP, 1985). The encyclopedic nature of epic—its inclusion of various genres, for instance—symbolizes the knowledge that distinguishes the epic poet. So in *Paradise Lost* Milton includes versions of the aubade, epithalamium, hymn, Shakespearean soliloquy of the tragic hero, domestic tragedy, Biblical epic, Classical epic, heptameron, etc. Epics also can demonstrate knowledge as well: the example for Keats would be the way *Paradise Lost* shows the poet's knowledge of theology, Biblical history, angelology, and astronomy.

<sup>8</sup> As Margery Levinson puts it, "'Hyperion' signified to Keats the direct inheritance of the father's talent. Keats approximates in that poem for the first time to the model of the good son, who solves his competition problems by identifying with (that is, assimilating) his rival: the normative, superego solution." But in *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats finds his own phallus: "He has, for the first time, something of his own to lose," and thus gives up the second poem from "castration anxiety." *Keats's Life of Allegory*, p. 220.

this regard. *Hyperion* lacks many markers of the epic—an invocation to the muse, a hero with epic trappings, etc.—though its plot (as far as it can be determined from the fragment) has at least in its background an epic struggle.<sup>9</sup> The poem is an epic mostly in that it actively engages with earlier epics,<sup>10</sup> a process that begins in the history of the form with Vergil’s integration in the *Aeneid* of the structures of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. As with Vergil, Keats has one author as his main model; but unlike Vergil, he has only one work to refer to, so that his poem reverses the tendency of the epic over time to broaden out and absorb (or take account of) every epic that has come before it (however “epic” material is defined by the poet’s encyclopedic reach).<sup>11</sup> In using the procedure of the epic mode while rejecting the heterocosmic potential of the very epic, *Paradise Lost*, he has chosen to address, Keats finds himself engaged, in formal structure at least, in an anti-epic.<sup>12</sup> The form of the work, as it adheres to that of Milton’s epic, contradicts the underlying procedure of the earlier poem while keeping its subject: the loss of innocence, a fall from grace—or what one could also describe metaphorically as the progression

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<sup>9</sup> Or at least a mythic struggle, the “war in heaven.” Geoffrey H. Hartman, “Spectral Symbolism and Authorial Self in Keats’s *Hyperion*,” in Hartman, *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1975), pp. 57-73, pp. 59-60.

<sup>10</sup> Epic is, as Brian Wilkie shows (*Romantic Poets and Epic Tradition*, pp. 10-15), a form (or tradition) that demands the overgoing of the old by the new poet while retaining the conventions of the form—a journey to the Underworld, the woman who stands in the way of the hero, the hero’s association with the divine—and the near-quotation of lines, modes, and situations from earlier epics. See also pp. 158 and 161.

<sup>11</sup> The description of the Titans (2:19-76) shows the influence of Dante, but otherwise it is fair to say that the chief influence on *Hyperion* is Milton.

<sup>12</sup> Alastair Fowler’s ideas of the “anti-” form extend Claudio Guillén’s idea of “counter-genre.” See Fowler’s *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Harvard UP, 1982), pp. 174-78.

from romance to epic.<sup>13</sup> While the characters of *Hyperion* discuss the progress of history and their own fall into it, they find themselves chained to the previous work they should be (since they are in an epic) overgoing.

As has been long noted, *Hyperion* follows *Paradise Lost* so closely in many respects that one can speak of identification as the controlling structural as well as psychological feature of the work.<sup>14</sup> Because the work's style and construction seem so determined by Milton's epic, the absence of any moments where Keats speaks *in propria persona* is noteworthy.<sup>15</sup> This omission may stem from the fact that after modelling the first two books of *Hyperion* so closely on the first two of *Paradise Lost*, to speak openly as poet at the beginning of book 3 would be to doom oneself forever to charges of hubris—or, to place oneself in the position of Milton's Satan to Milton's God. The invocation to book 3 of Milton's epic, no matter what one thinks of the rest of the book, cannot be emulated without placing the new poet explicitly in competition with the older one. For Keats to speak directly in the work would be to make clear his attitude toward Milton, whether as one who subjects himself to Milton, completes him, or transcends

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<sup>13</sup> The progress from romance to epic which Keats seems to be engaged in replicates the Vergilian progression as well: pastoral to georgic to epic. Hartman sees any "progress" within the *Hyperion* project as "never complete": "I do not want to give the impression that there is an absolute progress between the earlier and the later poem," even though "Keats, in the revised poem, chooses to bring himself (in Dante's manner) directly into the presence of the divine" ("Spectral Symbolism," p. 63).

<sup>14</sup> Hartman sees things differently: "[O]ne can speculate that Keats's 'plunge' or 'relapse' into mythic 'abstractions' through the 'fever' of poetry is a *counter-identification* which, at one and the same time, associates him deeply with his dying brother and translates the mortal facts into the sublimity and impersonality of myth" ("Spectral Symbolism," p. 62).

<sup>15</sup> The somewhat ceremonious series of imperatives at the beginning of book 3 ("O leave them, Muse! O leave them to their woes," etc. [3:3ff.]) is quite different in tone from Milton's at the beginning of book 3 of *Paradise Lost*, which is personal and confessional.

him. The omission cannot be counted as ignoring him, either. The absence of Keats's equivalent to the invocation in book 3 of *Paradise Lost* (along with the lack of an invocation at the poem's beginning) seems in itself to thematize repression. Since he has begun in *Hyperion* a series of possible allegorical substitutions (Saturn is Satan, Enceladus is Moloch, Oceanus is Belial) and analogies (Hyperion is to Apollo as Milton is to Keats),<sup>16</sup> the poem threatens to fall continuously into a series of such substitutions and analogies that turn on the Romantic use of repression as the key to reading *Paradise Lost*. So, if Saturn is Satan, and then Satan is Milton (his repressed, but therefore true and heroic self), then Keats may be Hyperion, the "epic" poet, and Apollo may be Leigh Hunt (Keats in *his* repressed but true self as the writer of romances). One can see that for Keats to appear at the beginning of book 3 would be for him to reveal explicitly whether he is playing Satan to Milton-as-God or Satan to Milton-as-Satan. The "hermeneutics of suspicion" at work here may begin with the Romantics' sense that Milton was allegorizing himself in Satan. But whereas the revolutionary Byron and Shelley (those naive readers) approved heartily of the masculine (but stylistically oppressive and

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<sup>16</sup> See the discussion of how analogy is used to structure certain readings of Romantic poems and an analysis of *The Fall of Hyperion* in that context in Joshua Wilner, *Feeding on Infinity: Readings in the Romantic Rhetoric of Internalization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 2000), pp. 13-26, esp. pp. 17-21.

oppressed) Miltonic Keats of *Hyperion*,<sup>17</sup> recent critics have rediscovered the power of the “effeminate” (but—or therefore—revolutionary) Satanic, Huntian Keats.<sup>18</sup>

The relationship of *Hyperion* to *Paradise Lost* is complicated further by the fact that Keats seems to be applying one of the methods Milton uses to structure *Paradise Lost* to read or revise that work. Milton’s epic depends on the reader’s working to compare elements within it to determine whether they are antithetical or complementary.<sup>19</sup> A few examples will illustrate this. Satan is in some sense another God (self-sufficient, at least as he views himself) and thus an anti-God. God is three persons, two of whom speak to each other in book 3 and can be said to double each other. Their conversation with themselves is reversed by Satan, who at all times is speaking only for himself (this is a more important distinction from God than the parodic trinity of Satan, Sin, and Death set up in book 2). It is his solipsism and isolation that mark Satan, but in effect these do not seem so different from the Father’s supreme alienation. And of course, Satan’s rebellion is always dependent on the “tyrant,” in the same way as slaves are slaves because there are masters (and *vice versa*). As “good” and “evil” need always to be read against each other in Milton’s work, Keats marks his epic as epic not by

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<sup>17</sup> Byron: “His fragment of *Hyperion* seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Aeschylus” (Rowland E. Prothero, ed., *The Works of Lord Byron. A New Revised and Enlarged Edition, with Illustrations. Letters and Journals* [London: 1898-1901], 4:491n).

<sup>18</sup> The implications of Byron’s attack on Keats as a masturbator of the imagination and the general association of Keats with effeminacy are covered most astutely by Levinson, *Keats’s Life of Allegory*, where its history is also recapitulated. An important contribution to the discussion of the relationship between effeminacy, class, and Keats’s politics can be found in Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1997), esp. chap. 8, “Lisping Sedition: *Poems*, *Endymion*, and the Poetics of Dissent.”

<sup>19</sup> Whether one will find God or Satan to be more heroic may depend on one’s allegiance to a belief system outside the poem.

including the entire epic tradition in his work (as does *Paradise Lost*) but instead by scattering allusions to *Paradise Lost* in his own work so as to render null their power to determine a stable reading. We see this in the treatment of Saturn, who, like Satan, is fallen, but who, in his first speech (1:95-134, where Thea's role plays off of Beëlzebub's), seems, unlike Satan, to have lost himself:

—I am gone  
 Away from my own bosom: I have left  
 My strong identity, my real self,  
 Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit  
 Here on this spot of earth. (1:112-16)

Saturn asks Thea if she has seen a kind of split-off or phantom Saturn (“A certain shape or shadow,” 1:122), and demands, “Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?” (1:134). This is the opposite of Satan's temper:

[T]hou profoundest Hell  
 Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings  
 A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.  
 The mind is its own place, and in it self  
 Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.  
 What matter where, if I be still the same,  
 And what I should be, all but less than he  
 Whom Thunder hath made greater? (*PL* 1:251-258)

Yet while he reverses Satan's stance, Saturn also reverses the Father's in *Paradise Lost*.

Saturn asks:

“But cannot I create?  
 Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth  
 Another world, another universe,  
 To overbear and crumble this to nought?” (1:141-44)

These lines play on the Father's in book 7 of *Paradise Lost*, where the Father says of the lessened population of heaven after the rebellion:

I can repair  
 That detriment, if such it be to lose

Self-lost, and in a moment will create  
Another world . . . (*PL* 7:153-55)

Saturn, who must be read in terms of the Father and Satan, is a weak version of both, and he cannot be read except in terms of both, just as both can only read in terms of each other in Milton's poem. Saturn's speech manages to ironize the Father's phrase, "self-lost," by reading it, one might say, from Satan's point of view—manifestly, by Romantic and modern standards, a "strong" reading. The phantom Saturn that Saturn speaks of to Thea is one "With wings or chariot fierce" (1:123)—combining the attributes of Satan (whose wings are prominently mentioned several times in *Paradise Lost*) on the one hand and the Son (the rider of "The Chariot of Paternal Deitie" [6:750]) on the other. The phantom also suggests the possible hero-savior Hyperion, who in turn suggests an anti-Son of God, not as one who puts off his godhead willingly in the *kenosis*, but one who unwillingly falls with Saturn.<sup>20</sup> Hyperion in his first speech says,

Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?  
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,  
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,  
This calm luxuriance of blissful light . . . (1:234-37)

The "light" here cannot help but remind one of the light hymned by Milton at the beginning of book 3 of *Paradise Lost*, which clearly refers to the Son.<sup>21</sup> Yet this speech (which also recalls Adam's plaint to Michael, "Must I thus leave thee Paradise?" [*PL* 11:269 ff.]) is further ironized by Coelus's speech to Hyperion:

"I saw him [Saturn] fall,  
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!  
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice

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<sup>20</sup> Saturn's phrase, "I am gone / Away from my own bosom" recalls the *kenosis*, as if Saturn's fall is to be read against the *kenosis* of the Son.

<sup>21</sup> The beginning of book 3 of *Paradise Lost* recalls John 1:1-5.

Found way from forth the thunders round his head.” (1:322-25)

Saturn becomes the Son of God (here “first-born” rather than “only begotten,” his “arms . . . spread” as in the crucifixion) and like Satan (chased from heaven “Thunder-struck” [PL 6:858]). And Hyperion, also a son of Coelus, is instructed by his father to do what his father cannot:

Yet do thou strive; as thou art capable,  
As thou canst move about, an evident God. (1:337-38).

The lines recall the Son of *Paradise Lost*, in whom “all his Father shon / Substantially express’d” (3:139-140),<sup>22</sup> who is the Father’s “word, . . . wisdom, and effectual might” (3:170), “in whose face invisible is beheld / Visibly, what by Deitie I [i.e., the Father] am” (7:681-82,) and who is the force by which the Father defeats Satan and creates the world.

The above examples show that while modelling his epic closely on Milton’s—and thus making the work a negative version of epic by denying its generic quality of expanding heterocosmically beyond its models and forebears—Keats also seems to be using his model to undo itself by a careful reading of the methods of *Paradise Lost* itself, a work in which the difficulties of dramatizing the Trinity seem often to make the Deity as solipsistic as Satan. One may say that Keats is dramatizing the reading that *Paradise Lost* seems to demand, one in which constant comparisons must be made between complementary antitypes and types (one the one hand, the Classical references balanced by Biblical references, and on the other, the Old Testament references complemented by

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<sup>22</sup> The phrase means that the persons of the Trinity have the same substance, and so are not different beings, but the connotations of “substantial” and “expressed” also make the phrase hover on the edge of the invisible, unknowable Father “expressed in substance, i.e. flesh.” This would be an “evident God.”

New Testament ones), or between antithetical originals and parodies (the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and the anti-Trinity of Satan, Sin, and Death). In applying the techniques *Paradise Lost* uses to read itself in constructing *Hyperion*, *Paradise Lost* ends up no longer being a reliable “key” to the work. Yet it is also the *only* “key” to the work possible if one is to read it *as epic*. The paradox here also applies to the identification between Keats and Milton. Reading the later work by the earlier one on which it is so closely based—in other words, reading Keats by Milton—ends up in detaching Keats from Milton the more one is identified with the other.<sup>23</sup>

The strains in reading *Hyperion* as epic are evident not only in tracing the ever-shifting substitutions and splittings involved in its intertextuality, but also in its style. The “naked and [G]recian manner” Keats chooses is grand indeed, but it is anything but Miltonic in effect. The authoritative stylistic analyses by de Selincourt and Bate show that Keats—probably the greatest craftsman in English poetry outside of Milton and Spenser—places almost all the markers of Milton’s style in the work while achieving a tone totally unlike Milton’s, mostly by end-stopping his lines and slowing the tempo to

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<sup>23</sup> The situation I describe is more paradoxical than that outlined by Nancy Moore Goslee in *Uriel’s Eye: Miltonic Stationing and Statuary in Blake, Keats, and Shelley* (n.p.: U of Alabama P, 1985), but Goslee’s application of the idea of “stationing” (a term from the vocabulary of the picturesque used by Keats in describing Milton) is relevant here. Of the two *Hyperion* poems, Blake’s *Milton*, and Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* she writes, “All of these poems as wholes of course reenact Milton’s poems, but the pattern they choose to follow most frequently, the mythic literalism of Satan’s fall, changes in the course of these poems from fall to willed descent. Through this conversion, the Saturn- or Satan-figure, made static by his fall, changes into or is replaced by one who deliberately stations himself in the same underworld or earthly vale. Through the conscious stationing he then sees himself as object—or better, sees both subject and object as aspects of himself” (p. 28).

something like the opposite of Milton's hurtling lines and propulsive rhythms.<sup>24</sup> The resistance to Milton that could be seen as engendering *The Fall of Hyperion* is already so strong in *Hyperion* itself that the identification at work is also placed into question. It is not puzzling, then, that *The Fall of Hyperion*, a poem that should (in the critical narrative of Keats's maturing from romance to epic)<sup>25</sup> release the poet from the unresolved Oedipal struggle of *Hyperion* (in other words, the poem that should allow the child of the romances to successfully navigate the Oedipal crisis to become the man of epic), is a poem that relies even more on the potentiality of identification, a psychological structure that is signalled in it by internalization. Hartman points out that internalization as part of the poet's consciousness is the poet's "burden" in the *Hyperion* project: "The fact that 'All deities reside in the Human Breast' (Blake) can lead to nightmare as well as enlightenment. . . . Keats feels the burden of authorship. He is not relieved but shamed

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<sup>24</sup> De Selincourt (*The Poems of John Keats*, 5th ed. [London: Methuen, 1926]) and Walter Jackson Bate (*The Stylistic Development of Keats* [New York: Humanities P, 1962 (1945)], pp. 66-91) both concentrate on the similarities of Keats's style here to Milton's, but the differences are greater in *effect* than the similarities. There is no room here to pursue this idea much further. As an example that may indicate the difference I mean here, one could compare Keats's "no stir of air was there" (*Endymion* 1.7) in which terminal *r*'s and the rhymes (or off-rhymes—hearing Keats's own particular Cockney pronunciation would be helpful) receive monotonous emphasis (x / x / x /) with Milton's "Then when the Dragon, put to second rout, / Came furious down to be reveng'd on men" (*PL* 4.3-4), where the monotony of "reveng'd on men" (x / x /) is offset by the spondee on the same assonance (and rhyme) in "Then when" (/ /), and the assonance in general forms "bookends" to two lines ("Then when . . . reveng'd on men") almost in a two-line epanalepsis. Keats in *Hyperion* is closer to Tennyson than to Milton. Levinson writes that *Hyperion* is not Miltonic—"it *is* Milton" (193), but such being is having: Keats's development is "a process where 'having' is equated with 'being' and where 'having' describes, paradoxically, a state of self-alienation—a parody, as it were, of genuine ownership and a corruption of *bona fide* 'being' " (*Keats's Life of Allegory*, p. 200). Keats can then possess Milton's style and signify both that he is Miltonic and alienated from the Miltonic at the same time.

<sup>25</sup> Though *The Fall of Hyperion* has some of the elements of the quest-romance, these are subsumed under an epic seriousness represented by the Dantesque elements in the work.

by the knowledge that the gods are born once more of him, that great poetry must survive, if at all, in a cockney's breast."<sup>26</sup>

As Joshua Wilner has shown, in *The Fall of Hyperion* “the precursor text—here the story of the fall—functions specifically as an allegory prescriptive of its own reading.”<sup>27</sup> This kind of Romantic reflexivity characterizes the structure of the reading called for by such texts: “What distinguishes self-reflexive, internalizing readings is the way they systematically condense a pervasive hermeneutic condition in a single moment of interpretative crisis” (20). A reading of *The Fall*, then, that finds its “single moment of interpretative crisis” in the unveiling of Moneta’s face will fall not accidentally into the reading prescribed by the intertexts at work here: Dante’s encounter with Beatrice, and Adam and Eve’s first impressions of their postlapsarian nakedness. This reading will then be directed on one level by analogy (the narrator is to Dante as Moneta is to Beatrice) and its analogous confusions (the narrator is to Adam as Moneta is to Eve) and on another level by the problem of how identification operates in the work. The path here is not one towards transcendence, though, as Wilner points out:

Forcing this moment of crisis does not resolve the interpretative difficulties, which are insuperable, but it does render them, like Kafka’s leopards in the temple, calculable in advance. The interference of functions that blocks access to the meaning of the text thus becomes contained within a narrative that moves from an “understanding” of the text—which is in fact a misunderstanding—via a pivotal moment of inscrutability to its own negative understanding of that inscrutability. (20-21)

If internalization can be seen as a trope of reading in *The Fall*, then the trope can perhaps be said to ride the definitional or developmental border that has (in the secondary

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<sup>26</sup> “Spectral Symbolism,” p. 68.

<sup>27</sup> *Feeding on Infinity*, p. 20.

process) identification both separating mind from object (establishing an inside and an outside) and bringing an outside object inside. The trope may recall the irony of Saturn and the Titans insofar as they resemble Satan and the fallen angels, since Satan is condemned to remain in Hell mostly by an act of imagination that is solipsistic: “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n.” Only by blindness to Heaven can Hell exist, and only by erasing Milton—the source of epic in *Hyperion*—could Saturn and the Titans be restored to poetic (that is, epic and Miltonic) power. The binaries at work in reading *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion* (Hyperion/Apollo; heaven/hell; Milton/Keats; past poem/present poem; good/evil) align easily enough with those of the Oedipal complex, where a child must, in the most austere version of this story, identify with someone male or someone female in order to achieve a normative, heterosexual complementarity. The Oedipal interest in *The Fall of Hyperion* comes not in erasure or blindness only—the symbolic threat of castration—but in the mutilation and disfigurement that allegorize the interrupted circuit between the two works.

Identification and the Oedipal are intertwined from the poem’s beginning. The Oedipal potentiality of *The Fall of Hyperion* is signalled by the question and response Keats poses (in a combination of an awkward “impersonal” construction and a searingly “personal” deictic):<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The phrase “this warm scribe my hand” that ends this passage gives rise to an extraordinary moment in John Middleton Murry’s *Keats and Shakespeare: A Study of Keats’ Poetic Life from 1816 to 1820* (London: Oxford UP, 1925), p. 172: “In that line I feel the actual presence of Keats with a vividness that is almost pain. These are my last words, it says, this is my hand writing them: watch. And I watch; I have watched these lines being written many times, till it seemed they were written on my brain.” Murry’s criticism re-inscribes the process of internalization that is typical of this poem. See

Who alive can say,  
 “Thou art no Poet; mayst not tell thy dreams?”  
 Since every man whose soul is not a clod  
 Hath visions and would speak, if he had lov’d,  
 And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.  
 Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse  
 Be poet’s or Fanatic’s will be known  
 When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave. (1:11-18)

The last line seems to have its origin in Hazlitt’s essay “On Shakespeare and Milton,”

where he moves from the subject of the earlier poet to the later poet this way:

Shakespeare discovers in his writings little religious enthusiasm, and an indifference to personal reputation; he had none of the bigotry of his age, and his political prejudices were not very strong. In these respects, as well as in every other, he formed a direct contrast to Milton. Milton’s works are a perpetual invocation to the Muses; a hymn to Fame. He had his thoughts constantly fixed on the contemplation of the Hebrew theocracy, and of a perfect commonwealth; and he seized the pen with a hand just warm from the touch of the ark of faith.<sup>29</sup>

Milton here is both poet and “fanatic” (Keats’s term can be seen now to be both religious and political), and the strength of his hand as it “seize[s] the pen” comes from the warmth of his religious inspiration—or authorization.<sup>30</sup> The seizing hand must remind the reader of Keats’s poem of Saturn’s Oedipally deprived one: “Degraded, cold, upon the sodden

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Joshua Wilner’s quotation of Derrida quoting Rousseau: “ ‘it is not on some scattered leaves that one should seek God’s law, but in the heart of man where his hand deigned to write it’ ” (*Feeding on Eternity*, p. 16). Ian Jack calls attention to the tradition of artists’ drawings of their own hands holding a brush or pencil. See his *Keats and the Mirror of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1967), pp. 226 and 289n8.

<sup>29</sup> P. P. Howes, ed., *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt* (New York: AMS P, 1967 [1930]), 5:44-68, p. 5:56.

<sup>30</sup> The Romantic association of the political rebel Milton and Satan is only touched on by Hazlitt here; later in the essay he discusses the council in Pandemonium: “There is a decidedly manly tone in the arguments and sentiments . . . an excellence which Milton probably borrowed from his own spirit of partisanship, or else his spirit of partisanship from the natural firmness and vigour of his own mind. In this respect Milton resembles Dante, (the only modern writer with whom he has any thing in common) and it is remarkable that Dante, as well as Milton, was a political partisan.”

ground / His [i.e., Saturn's] old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead, / Unsceptered" (1:322-4). Like Milton's, Keats's hand is warm, but a "scribe," a word that could include the role of religious prophet as a transcriber or instrument, one through whom God speaks, or something more neutral, perhaps a detached observer, a scientific recorder. If the "dead" hand of Saturn is the symbol or symptom of his Oedipal defeat by his son Jupiter,<sup>31</sup> the assurance that a clear answer as to the status of Keats—dreamer or fanatic—will be underwritten by death seems to posit Keats's own Oedipal defeat as inevitable. Or, if "dreamer" here is a metonymy for Shakespeare and "fanatic" for Milton, Keats's Oedipal struggle with Milton may mean choosing a different father—a version, perhaps, of the family romance.

If Keats's hand is an impartial scribe, it will not set itself up as a competitor: one can see at work Hazlitt's idea of Shakespeare as more "objective" than Milton. In these lines Keats seems to place the poet with Everyman and his "visions," which may, given the work's relationship to Hazlitt's essay, signal Shakespeare here: even the word "rehearse" may point to the playwright. Hazlitt uses the word "rehearsal" in his essay in emphasizing a kind of objective detachment in Shakespeare's development of characters that is both active and passive, an act in which the imagination summons up characters but then passively observes them:

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<sup>31</sup> In "Keats's Debt to Dante," Robert Gittings notes that "listless, dead" is a revision of "dead, supine," which recalls the punishment of the "violent against God" in Cary's translation of *Inferno*: "on the earth some lay supine." See *The Mask of Keats: A Study of Problems* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1956), pp. 5-44, 22. Levinson remarks that "Saturn's limp, unsceptered state signifies the cost of a healthy relation to the authorial alter ego: abandonment to the desire for full identification. To assimilate the Miltonic 'leaf', 'hand', or 'sceptre' in this fashion is, clearly, to lose that phallic virtue as an instrument of defense and display" (*Keats's Life of Allegory*, p. 205). On Saturn as a fallen Milton, see Paul Sherwin, "Dying into Life: Keats's Struggle with Milton in *Hyperion*," *PMLA* 93 (1978): 383-95, p. 390.

[A]ll the persons concerned must have been present in the poet's imagination, as at a kind of rehearsal; and whatever would have passed through their minds on the occasion, and have been observed by others, passed through his, and is made known to the reader. (5:48-9)

Shakespeare is both in the minds of his characters and outside them, and Hazlitt sees the text as determined by an imagined scene, where not only the outward appearance of the characters is considered (that is, clothing, expression, etc.), but where what we would call their interior is also thought into by the poet.<sup>32</sup> This is confirmed later by Hazlitt's use of the word "identify":

Each of his characters is as much itself, and as absolutely independent of the rest, as well as of the author, as if they were living persons, not fictions of the mind. The poet may be said, for the time, to identify himself with the character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to another, like the same soul successively animating different bodies. By an art like that of the ventriloquist, he throws his imagination out of himself, and makes every word appear to proceed from the mouth of the person in whose name it is given. (5:50)

Of course Hazlitt's lectures and essays famously helped shape Keats's ideas of the great playwright's objective "negative capability" and his personal, subjective vividness, but the analogous idea as Hazlitt develops it in "Shakespeare and Milton" is rich in

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<sup>32</sup> It should be pointed out that the passages under discussion here come after passages describing Shakespeare in terms familiar to us from Keats's discussions of "negative capability" (Hazlitt says of Shakespeare, "He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself" [5:47]) and eighteenth-century treatments of sympathy. Hazlitt's version at this point maintains Shakespeare's separateness from others (though with hints of a god-like status): "He was like the genius of humanity, changing places with all of us at pleasure, and playing with our purposes as with his own" (5:47). Hazlitt then moves into metaphor: "He had only to think of anything in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it" (5:48). The argument moves from openness (lack of ego—here a kind of mimetic capability) to sympathy (the ability to change places with someone) to "becoming" another person with all their surroundings. This last metaphor, however, seems to be just another version of sympathy. Sympathy does imply seeing things from someone else's viewpoint, but in the subsequent passages under discussion here, Hazlitt's terminology changes to the psychological and metaphors of the imagination which suggest delirium, not mimesis.

implications, and all these visualizations of Shakespeare's imagination depend on similes or supposition:

His characters are real beings of flesh and blood; they speak like men, not like authors. One might suppose that he had stood by at the time and overheard what passed. As in our dreams we hold conversations with ourselves, make remarks, or communicate intelligence, and have no idea of the answer which we shall receive, and which we ourselves make, till we hear it: so the dialogues in Shakspeare are carried on without any consciousness of what is to follow . . . (5:50)

Hazlitt's Shakespeare is a transcriber of reality, which has the same spontaneity and freedom of dreams—but solipsistic dreams where “we hold conversations with ourselves,” selves which know what answers they give to themselves only when they *hear* the answers, and not before. While arguing for the superiority of the older poets over the modern, Hazlitt manages nevertheless to give as much insularity and reflexivity (and as much deliriousness) to Shakespeare's imagination as that of Wordsworth.<sup>33</sup> The tradition of inspiration is maintained here in the form of spontaneity and unpredictability, so that what comes first—imagination or observation—is left unanswered.

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<sup>33</sup> Hazlitt's reference in the essay to “a modern school of poetry” that can “surround the meanest objects with the morbid feelings and devouring egotism of the writers' own minds” obviously refers to Wordsworth (“To me the meanest flower that blows . . .”). He writes of these poets, “To them the fall of gods or of great men is the same. . . . They are even debarred from the last poor, paltry consolation of an unmanly triumph over fallen greatness” (5:53). Hazlitt's ideas on identification here also plainly owe something to Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth writes, “However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious, that, while he describes and imitates passions, his situation is altogether slavish and mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs.” James Butler and Karen Green, eds., Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), p. 751.

Keats's letter of October 27, 1818 is one reaction to Hazlitt's formulations. In trying to address the same problem—an imagination that is a recorder of reality, a reality of its own making, and a reality that depends on the reality we think of as “out there” for its status as “real”—Keats famously postulates the “c[h]amelion poet” who has a “Character” only by not having a self and by disappearing: “It is a wretched thing to confess; but is a very fact that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical reason—how can it, when I have no nature?” Despite the coyness of “my identical reason” and “I have no nature,” Keats, as he is in the process of writing *Hyperion*, comes to the point of positing the poet as language itself, in the same letter where he sees himself coming to that place in the “Chamber of Maiden Thought” where “We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are in a Mist—We are now in that state—We feel the ‘burden of the Mystery.’ ” This state of being in a non-state (who are “we” by this time in the letter?) is expressed in *The Fall* in an “I” (the marker of an “identical reason”) that does not appear until the dream itself—signalled by “Methought”—is recorded.<sup>34</sup> The “dream now purposed to rehearse” is, in this peculiar and awkward impersonal phrase, rehearsed indeed—spoken, but also practiced (and therefore not yet in its final version) by characters on a stage—without a speaker and without a playwright. It is this background that makes the presence of an “authority figure” (for such she appears) like Moneta more striking, for she fulfills the role of Muse,

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<sup>34</sup> See Eleanor Cook, “ ‘Methought’ as Dream Formula in Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, and Others,” *MLN* 32 (1995): 34-46. Cook notes that “methought” is used in *Paradise Lost* for both true and false dreams, and its use in Keats must be read against Milton's. This “calls for a reading of *The Fall of Hyperion* that accommodates not just echoes of deceptive dreams but also echoes of true dreams. The dream-language, in other words, should be read as equivocal. Even as Keats is echoing Miltonic dreams and visions, he is questioning a Miltonic dialectic of true versus false dreams” (p. 42).

a *daimon* that Hazlitt associates with Milton, not with Shakespeare, unless that spontaneity or unknowableness or unpredictability in the dream state is his Muse (“As in our dreams we hold conversations with ourselves, make remarks, or communicate intelligence, and have no idea of the answer which we shall receive, and which we ourselves make, till we hear it”).

It is important to note that Keats is not abstracting his entire poetic theory from Hazlitt’s epistemology. Keats did read Hazlitt’s *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805), in which Hazlitt lays down the foundations of the ideas he works with in his literary criticism. I would submit, however, that the lectures on poetry have brought into focus different implications of Hazlitt’s ideas. The emphasis in the *Essay* is on how the process by which we imagine ourselves creates sympathy, an essentially social emotion achieved through identification over time (imagination is the faculty of addressing the future).<sup>35</sup> A person’s identity is only maintained by “projecting” into

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<sup>35</sup> Here are some instances:

By the same power of mind which enables him to conceive of a past sensation as about to be re-excited in the same being, namely, himself, he must be capable of transferring the same idea of pain to a different person. He *creates* the object, he pushes his ideas beyond the bounds of his memory and sense in the first instance, and he does no more in the second. (1:26-27)

The child seeing himself in danger of the fire does not think of his present and future self as two distinct beings, but as one and the same being: he as it were *projects* himself forward into the future, and identifies himself with his future being. (1:28)

The child does no doubt consider himself as the same being, or as directly and absolutely interested in his own welfare, as far as he can distinctly foresee the consequences of things to himself. But this very circumstance of his identifying himself with his future being, of feeling for this imaginary self as if it were incorporated with his actual substance, and

future time a being that one can “identify” with. One’s future self is an “object” which one “creates,” and the same imagination that allows other people to exist for us is that which allows ourselves to exist. One might say that the individual, in identifying with his future self, is sympathizing with himself, so that imagination is both humanizing and humane. The *Essay* has the clarity of philosophy; the lectures on the poets have the evocativeness of poetry, and in writing about Shakespeare Hazlitt has left behind the idea of an integral person imagined and identified with. Instead, he is dealing with “characters.” The result is uncanny, phantasmatic, even gothic. What goes on in other people’s minds goes on in the poet’s; the soul travels from body to body; overheard conversations are dreams in which we speak to ourselves; and what might be sympathy becomes the “art” of projecting one’s *voice*, not one’s self: “By an art like that of the ventriloquist, he throws his imagination out of himself, and makes every word appear to proceed from the mouth of the person in whose name it is given.” This is magic more than imagination, and if the imagination of the *Essay* is being referred to here, it is rendered metaphorically and exists in its own plane, independent of the *Essay*. Or perhaps it would be more pertinent to say that Hazlitt’s “identification” in the *Essay* is the kind in which a child identifies with one of its parents, while the “identification” in “Shakespeare and Milton” is the kind in which subject (inside thoughts) and object (outside world) are created (and then confused) by the child’s mind.

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weighed upon the pulses of his blood, is itself the strongest instance that can be given of the force of the imagination, which the advocates of the selfish hypothesis would represent as a faculty entirely powerless. (1:29)

(Howe, *Complete Works of William Hazlitt*.) Obviously the use of “project” is not the same here as in psychoanalysis, but it is related.

If Hazlitt does not name this voice of ours which we hear as Muse, Keats brings her directly (that is, thematically) into his poem as the “mother tongue.” Love itself, along with the nurturance of a maternal figure (taking the “mother tongue” as a metonymy for the mother who gives her child language),<sup>36</sup> is associated in the first lines of *The Fall of Hyperion* with the possibility that Everyman is also Everypoet. But the maternal figure of Moneta—insofar as she has motherly characteristics—is that of a difficult, challenging, and perhaps barren mother. Like many mothers, Moneta of course admonishes: that is, she warns, questions, corrects, and thereby teaches. The emphasis here is on the back-and-forth of teaching, as the opening encounter between the narrator and the veiled priestess shows. The structure of those questions and answers—defining categories and then further dividing them—is parodically logical and mysterious, and Moneta’s unveiled face itself simply continues the structure in demanding to be read. Attempting to parse the questions and answers of lines 147 to 210 yields only the circularity of more questions through a process of division and redefinition. Similarly, Moneta’s face seems dead, but is not; the face terrifies, but the eyes attract; the eyes are comforting, but apparently blind, and the blindness is paradoxically part of the comfort. The face’s structure is not so much dialectical as gnomic: the gaps between the elements are as important as the connections:

a wan face  
 Not pin’d by human sorrows, but bright blanch’d  
 By an immortal sickness which kills not;  
 It works a constant change, which happy death

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<sup>36</sup> “He [Keats] himself connects for us the spectral mother, the idea of nurture and a concept of language. . . . The link is made explicit through the notion of ‘mother tongue’ which opens *The Fall of Hyperion*. . . . Speech now appears as a natural fulfillment, the fruit of previous stages in the developing life of the affections” (Hartman, “Spectral Symbolism,” p. 72).

Can put no end to; deathwards progressing  
 To no death was that visage; it had pass'd  
 The lily and the snow; and beyond these  
 I must not think now, though I saw that face—  
 But for her eyes, I should have fled away.  
 They held me back, with a benignant light,  
 Soft mitigated by divinest lids  
 Half closed, and visionless entire they seem'd  
 Of all external things—they saw me not,  
 But in blank splendor beam'd like the mild moon  
 Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not  
 What eyes are upward cast. (1:256-71)

Moneta's white and impassive face has been compared to a statue's.<sup>37</sup> Its whiteness and impassivity resemble those of the statues and sphinxes of the French Parnassians. In discussing that later poetic movement, Barbara Johnson has written, "One begins to suspect all these cold, statuesque muses of being figures for the bad mother. Yet despite the pain and frustration they cause, these figures inspire admiration in those they reject. Is there something desirable about having a stone mother? Yes, if one wishes to be a stone child."<sup>38</sup> Johnson goes on to discuss the desire to become a "stone child" as the desire for "needlessness," a "reaction to the mother's failure to satisfy needs," and also in terms of Lacan's ideas of a child's development (747). A failure or distortion of the maternal is at work in Moneta. This is true partly because of the association of Moneta with Dante's Beatrice and Milton's Eve, both of whom are

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<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, Anne K. Mellor, "Keats's Face of Moneta: Sources and Meaning," *Keats-Shelley J* 25 (1976): 65-80. Mellor sees a major source for Moneta in the Athena Parthenos of Phidias. For Mellor, Moneta's face is "the icon of Wisdom itself. Gazing on this face, empathically uniting with it, the poet now fully comprehends the fusion of pain and beauty that alone makes life meaningful" (p. 77).

<sup>38</sup> Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989), p. 747. Aileen Ward's observation that Keats could have been thinking here of his mother's face in its winding sheet is apropos. See *John Keats: The Making of a Poet* (New York: Viking P, 1963), p. 340.

given the qualities of mothers and lovers. Nancy Moore Goslee has noticed that Moneta's face is a kind of *blazon*, and that she therefore fits (queerly) into the Petrarchan tradition.<sup>39</sup> Her face is immortal, as the Petrarchan poet wishes his beloved's to be; "it has passed / The lily and the snow," in a phrase that could be from a Shakespeare sonnet; it is frightening and powerful but comforting in much the same way the beloved's is; and like the Petrarchan beloved's, it is described in such a way that naturalism and myth come together as the light tone of the *carpe diem* topos blends with the seriousness of the *memento mori*. Clearly the Petrarchan tradition has been gothicized here (the lily is not balanced by a blushing rose),<sup>40</sup> and the beloved is merging—not surprisingly in a Romantic work—with the mother, just as Elizabeth Lavenza changes into the dead Caroline Frankenstein in Frankenstein's famous dream. As Geoffrey Hartman observes,

The living and troubled development of the *Hyperion* sequence will allow us to see gods become ghosts despite themselves, and a consciously modern and objective poet a shade nourishing their darkness like a dying flame. The *Fall of Hyperion* has a greater affinity to the gothic novel than to so-called Greek or epic objectivity.<sup>41</sup>

The possibilities for shame at a moment of revelation—the parting of the veils—in such a purgatorial work are many, but if Keats here is playing on the moment in Dante's *Purgatorio* where Beatrice reveals herself, he has carefully deleted the explicit shame. Keats's Moneta undoes her veil after she promises that the narrator will see "the

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<sup>39</sup> *Uriel's Eye: Miltonic Stationing and Statuary in Blake, Keats, and Shelley* (n.p.: U of Alabama P, 1985), pp. 119-20.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson notes of Gautier's "Symphonie en blanc majeur" that "Whiteness is loved as a refusal to submit, but the ultimate goal is the blush" (p. 746). Moneta will never blush. On the whiteness of faces in the gothic, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986), pp. 144-45.

<sup>41</sup> "Spectral Symbolism," p. 59.

scenes / Still swooning vivid through my globed brain” (1:244-45); her voice changes, “As near as an immortal’s sphered words / Could to a Mother’s soften” (1:249-50). Dante’s feelings upon realizing that Beatrice is the veiled woman also depend on the idea of a mother, but first a fatherly mother, Vergil:

. . . towards Virgil I  
 Turn’d me to leftward; panting, like a babe,  
 That flees for refuge to his mother’s breast. (*Purgatorio* 30:44-45)<sup>42</sup>

But Vergil, teacher and guide, has disappeared, and bereft of him, his “best-loved father,” “nor / All, our prime mother lost, avail’d to save / My undew’d cheeks from blur of soiling tears” (*Purgatorio* 30:52-54). Dante is abashed at the sight and words of Beatrice—second Eve as Christ is second Adam—when she sheds her veil, and he lowers his eyes, seeing his own image in the fountain there,

. . . Down fell mine eyes  
 On the clear fount; but there, myself espying,  
 Recoil’d, and sought the greensword; such a weight  
 Of shame was on my forehead. With a mien  
 Of that stern majesty, which doth surround  
 A mother’s presence to her awe-struck child,  
 She look’d; a flavour of such bitterness  
 Was mingled in her pity.

The shame of the penitent (see also 31:43 and 31:64) is like that of a child; in a pattern of conversion known since St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, it is also associated with seeing oneself.<sup>43</sup> Keats carefully avoids this, while making Moneta’s blindness, rather than her

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<sup>42</sup> I use the Cary translation (Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Henry Francis Cary [London: J. M. Dent, 1908]) in its final revision (1844). The line numbers refer to the original Italian text.

<sup>43</sup> See the way Augustine reacts to Ponticianus’s story about Saint Anthony: *Confessions*, trans. William Watts (1631), rev. trans. W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1912), bk. 8, sec. 7 (vol. 1, p. 439).

sight, powerful, attractive, and comforting. Here the “bad mother” is preferred to Dante’s motherly Vergil or motherly Beatrice:

But for her eyes I should have fled away.  
 They held me back with a benignant light,  
 Soft-mitigated by divinest lids  
 Half-closed, and visionless entire they seem’d  
 Of all external things—they saw me not,  
 But in blank splendour beam’d like the mild moon,  
 Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not  
 What eyes are upward cast. (1:264-71)

The narrator now is possessed by a greed to go into Moneta’s brain, to find “what high tragedy / In the dark secret Chambers of her skull / Was acting” (1:277-79). While this “tragedy” reminds one of the plays Hazlitt imagines “rehearsed” in Shakespeare’s brain (“scenes” in a “*globed* brain,” no less), the approach of the narrator here is very much like the Kleinian child who desires to burrow into, excavate, and eviscerate the mother, a being whose body contains feces, children, and the father’s penis. The child’s violent greed is cognate with Keats’s narrator’s:

As I had found  
 A grain of gold upon a mountain’s side,  
 And twing’d with avarice strain’d out my eyes  
 To search its sullen entrails rich with ore,  
 So at the view of sad Moneta’s brow  
 I ached to see what things the hollow brain  
 Behind enwombed: what high tragedy  
 In the dark secret Chambers of her skull  
 Was acting, that could give so dread a stress  
 To her cold lips, and fill with such a light  
 Her planetary eyes, and touch her voice  
 With such a sorrow— . . . (1:271-82)

It is startling to see Klein's elements ("gold" for feces; "things . . . enwombed" for the enwombed children; and a "high tragedy" for the poetic father's writerly phallus) here so clearly.<sup>44</sup>

The particular violence of this moment can be seen as harnessing a kind of psychic energy that comes from an earlier childhood position. The violence of the lines "Though I breathe death with them it will be life / To see them sprawl before me into

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<sup>44</sup> Klein finds a place in the Oedipal process where it seems that the punitive power of the father merges with that of the mother. This is of particular interest here because Moneta's female persona merges with the male figures of Milton and Shakespeare. Klein states:

In this early period of development the mother who takes away the child's faeces signifies also a mother who dismembers and castrates him. Not only by means of the anal frustrations which she inflicts does she pave the way for the castration complex: in terms of psychic reality she *is* also already the *castrator*.

This dread of the mother is so overwhelming because there is combined with it an intense dread of castration by the father. The destructive tendencies whose object is the womb are also directed with their full oral- and anal-sadistic intensity against the father's penis, which is supposed to be located there. It is upon his penis that the dread of castration by the father is focused in this phase. Thus the femininity phase is characterized by anxiety relating to the womb and the father's penis, and this anxiety subjects the boy to the tyranny of a super-ego which devours, dismembers and castrates and is formed from the image of father and mother alike.

Melanie Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict" (1928) in Juliet Mitchell, ed., *The Selected Melanie Klein* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), pp. 69-83, 74-75.

It must also be noted that "gold" here is related to the Golden Age (see 1:285) of Saturn and Apollo's "realms of gold." The same aggressive impulse that links the recapture of the Age of Gold by poetry (Apollo) with the Spanish conquest of Indian empires rich in gold is at work here in the "grain of gold" that triggers "avarice" to see what lies in Moneta's brain ("entrails rich with ore"). Apropos here is Keats's advice to Shelley, in which he compares serving Mammon with the "self concentration" or "selfishness" needed to be a poet: "You I am sure will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity and be more of an artist, and 'load every rift' of your subject with ore" (letter of August 16, 1820, in part quoting Spenser's Palace of Mammon [FQ 2.7.28]).

graves” (1:209-10), which end the disputed lines in which Moneta seems to put the narrator into the “dreamer tribe” rather than among poets, is striking, and it too suggests the violence of the Oedipal stage that Klein describes. This is not necessarily a regression in the Freudian sense, since in Klein’s view such positions of the psyche are always available. The hugeness of the gods in this poem, the strangely punitive tone of Moneta’s discussion with the narrator, and what seems like a tone of desperation in the narrator’s approach to Moneta all point to the way the narrator is cast into the role of a child, in much the same way Dante plays a child’s role vis-à-vis Vergil and Beatrice.

Perhaps this can also help us to understand the poem’s opening better. Everyman can be Everypoet if he “Hath visions and would speak, if he had lov’d, / And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.” The mother of the dream vision that follows is “our Mother Eve,” a nurturing mother whose prelapsarian meal-preparation is described by Milton, but also, of course, a destroying mother whose appetite condemned the whole human race to death. The whole issue of whether an Oedipal struggle is going to take place in this poem is introduced in ways that are both thematic and structural. The internalizations pointed out above continue to fold in upon themselves, for the “transparent juice” which the narrator drinks is the “parent of [his] theme,” and Adam and Eve are the “Grand Parents” (*PL* 1:29) of this garden and of *Paradise Lost*. The “arbour” the narrator turns to is clearly that of the most primal of primal scenes, the bower where Adam and Eve engage in prelapsarian sex.<sup>45</sup> What is most telling, though,

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<sup>45</sup> Beside the obvious connections in the description of arbour and bower, the narrator says, “Turning round, / I saw an arbour” (1:24-25). Compare the arrival of Adam and Eve at the bower: “Thus at their shady lodge arrived, both stood, / Both turned, . . .” (*PL* 4:720-21); and compare Adam and Eve retiring in the same bower: “Straight side by side were laid, nor turned I ween / Adam from his fair spouse” (*PL* 4:741-42).

in this section, is that what causes the narrator to drink of this juice is not his thirst, but the presence of the juice itself:

And appetite  
 More yearning than on earth I ever felt  
 Growing within, I ate deliciously;  
 And, after not long, thirsted, for thereby  
 Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice  
 Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took . . . (1:38-43).

This is indeed a “domineering potion” (1:54), since its mere presence seems to have occasioned the narrator’s drinking: “*for* thereby / Stood a cool vessel.” The addition of drink to food here—and a drink that seems to force itself on the drinker—moves the action away from the mythic and ethical eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge both to the classical food and drink of the gods and to a more basic “milk of Paradise,” that of the mother’s breast.<sup>46</sup>

Undoubtedly the path followed here has been instructive, but the destination may seem disappointing, since the “bad” mother’s role in the monomyth of the heroic quest was identified long ago.<sup>47</sup> Moneta has been pinned down by critics in various ways: she is said to be wisdom or God; she symbolizes or allegorizes an “abstraction,” the word

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<sup>46</sup> Compare this passage with 3:111-20 of *Hyperion*. Perhaps another example of the involution of this passage can be found in the narrator’s sinking down “Like a Silenus on an antique vase” (1:56), since Silenus, who is overwhelmed by wine, is also Bacchus’s foster-father (see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4). Silenus, who is captured by two youngsters in Vergil’s sixth Eclogue, is also possessed of cosmological knowledge—somewhat like the knowledge Moneta is going to give the narrator.

<sup>47</sup> See Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2nd ed. (Princeton UP, 1968), pp. 109-20). For Campbell, the “bad mother” is one form of the goddess the hero meets in the initiation of his quest.

Keats uses to point to what is higher, greater, or epic.<sup>48</sup> If she is an allegory, however, what is interesting about her is not only her extreme openness to interpretation—something she shares with Demogorgon and the Mariner’s albatross, of course—but also her mutilation. Her face is “deathwards progressing / To no death,” as if she were a manifestation of the version of *Sehnsucht* found in the Wandering Jew or Byron’s Manfred. The phrasing suggests further complications, however. Progress, as a stance characteristic of the Enlightenment, is certainly something Keats believed in, and “deathwards progressing / To no death” could be a positive statement, along the lines of “moving progressively through death to life,” or “dying into life,” as Apollo does in *Hyperion*. But this would be to take “no death” as “life.” Why then the paradoxical formulation? The logic-chopping found in the dialogue on how to define “poet” and “dreamer” in lines 147-210 is recapitulated here. “Dying into life” is a variation on the Christian idea of putting off the old person to become the new one; it is asceticism’s (or, in the case of Apollo, perhaps aestheticism’s) higher prize. But “deathwards progressing / To no death” means progressing towards death to something that isn’t death—and which may not be life. “No death” is not necessarily a logical category: it need not be

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<sup>48</sup> John Middleton Murry thinks Moneta’s face is “a great poet’s vision of God—but a godhead immanent in the changing and enduring reality of the world” (*Keats and Shakespeare*, p. 183). For Anne K. Mellor, Moneta’s face is “the icon of Wisdom itself. Gazing on this face, empathetically uniting with it, the poet now fully comprehends the fusion of pain and beauty that alone makes life meaningful” (“Keats’s Face of Moneta,” p. 77). (My disagreement with this reading is clear: empathy is precisely what is missing from the encounter.) For Harold Bloom, the extended simile describing Moneta’s face “fails grandly just as all High Romantic inside/outside metaphors fail, because in attempting to overcome a subject-object dualism it instead extends such a dualism” (*Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* [New Haven: Yale UP, 1976], p. 138). Stuart Sperry notes astutely that Moneta’s face can be compared to that of the suffering Christ, but that it draws more on Adam’s speech in *Paradise Lost* where death is “not one stroke,” being rather “endless misery,” and where “a living death” is to be feared (*PL* 10:788; 808-13).

eternal life, but the frustration of the progress, the wrong turn or swerve in any directionality—the fact that there is no immutable or stable relationship between origin and tendency. Yet this is not a conclusion that comes from trying to interpret “no death” only, since “deathwards progressing,” oxymoronic as it is, surely means “going to death,” so that “to” in the next line is already redundant.<sup>49</sup> The phrase goes beyond Keats’s wonderfully Shakespearian “the feel of not to feel it” (“In Drear-Nighted December”) or his Euphuistic description of Thea’s face: “How sorrowful, if sorrow had not made / Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty’s self” (*H* 1:34-35).<sup>50</sup> The passage also comments on Apollo’s awakening in *Hyperion*, where he says to Mnemosyne:

“Mute thou remainest—mute! yet I can read  
 A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:  
 Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.  
 Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,  
 Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,  
 Creations and destroyings, all at once  
 Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,  
 And deify me, as if some blithe wine  
 Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,  
 And so become immortal.”—Thus the God,  
 While his enkindled eyes, with level glance  
 Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept  
 Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne. (3:110-23)

We recall that Apollo now “die[s] into life,” but through a “commotion” that is “Most like the struggle at the gate of death; / Or liker still to one who should take leave / Of pale immortal death” (3:126-28). Most noteworthy here is not Apollo’s Christ-like resurrection, or approach to the gates of death like that of Eurydice, but the way Moneta reverses several elements of this description (which is signalled by the whiteness of

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<sup>49</sup> Frost plays this way with prepositions as well: “a pinnacle to heavenward” has much the same construction (“The Silken Tent”).

<sup>50</sup> Wilkie, p. 168.

Moneta's and Apollo's faces). Apollo will internalize Mnemosyne's knowledge; the narrator of *The Fall* will violently and Oedipally enter Moneta's brain. Apollo's eyes that "read" Mnemosyne's face seem to "trembl[e]" with light *or* cast light on Mnemosyne's face; Moneta's eyes "beam'd" with light that, like the moon's is reflected, the moon "who knows not / What eyes are upward cast." The narrator of *The Fall* too goes to the Muse for a "lesson," but the lesson in Moneta's case seems to be that the lesson is all in the subjective eye being comforted by the blindness of the nighttime, celestial, lunar eye. The eyes' "blank splendour," like the "Cold pastoral!" of "Ode on a Grecian Urn," is both repellent and attractive, ugly and beautiful.

Keats's use of the trope of unveiling reverses the trope so that the forgiving mother Beatrice becomes the inscrutable matrix Moneta and the healing shame (part of the penitential system) in Dante becomes the intense greed for knowledge in *The Fall*'s narrator. One character saves, the other tempts. Both versions, however, do depend on a desire for exposure. As Beatrice's face is exposed, so Dante's whole sinful life is exposed as well. Beatrice's and Dante's eyes are the instruments of transformation, in a pattern familiar from the *Vita Nuova* and the later Petrarchan tradition.<sup>51</sup> The trope of

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<sup>51</sup> A citation of the references to eyes in Dante's meeting with Beatrice in *Purgatorio* might include the following: "Towards me, across the stream, she bent her eyes" (30:64-66); "Observe me well. I am, in sooth, I am / Beatrice" (30:73); "These looks sometime upheld him; for I show'd / My youthful eyes, and led him by their light / In upright walking" (30:121-23); "'Spare not thy vision. We have station'd thee / Before the emeralds [i.e., Beatrice's eyes], whence love, erewhile, / Hath drawn his weapons on thee.' As they spake, / A thousand fervent wishes riveted / Mine eyes upon her beaming eyes" (31:115-20); "'Turn, Beatrice!' was their song: 'Oh! turn / Thy saintly sight on this thy faithful one, / Who, to behold thee, many a wearisome pace / Hath measured' " (31:131-4); "Mine eyes with such an eager coveting / Were bent to rid them of their ten years' thirst" (32:1-2); "Had I the skill / To pencil forth how closed the un pitying eyes / Slumbering, when Syrinx warbled, (eyes that paid / So dearly for their watching,)"

exposure cannot help then but replicate the affective structure of shame and the cognitive structure of truth-telling. As Beatrice leads Dante closer to heaven, the preoccupations of

*The Fall of Hyperion* are found:

So on she pass'd; and had not set, I ween,  
Her tenth step to the ground, when, with mine eyes,  
Her eyes encounter'd; and with visage mild,  
"So mend thy pace," she cried, "that if my words  
Address thee, thou mayst still be aptly placed  
To hear them." . . .

.....  
"Lady! what I have need of, that thou know'st;  
And what will suit my need." She answering thus:  
"Of fearfulness and shame, I will that thou  
Henceforth do rid thee; that thou speak no more  
As one who dreams." (33:19-33)

The end of *Purgatorio* includes Dante's drinking of the river Eunoe, as he takes in the water that also baptizes him (33:124-38). It is clear, however, that, as with the apparently limitless involutions of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, Keats's Romantic use of Dante will not include the transcendental signifier that undergirds Dante's own poem and allows it to end. The narrator of *The Fall* ends up inside the story that Moneta wishes to tell—and strangely, Moneta herself is there as well. It would seem then that being *inside* the story does not mean being *in* the story: the narrator is close to the action, but never an actor, and whether the story is dictated to the transcribing poet or experienced by him, it is equally imagined, as with Shakespeare's characters in Hazlitt's formulations. The assurance for Dante is that what he is seeing is real and will be fully confirmed (if it needs confirmation) in death; for Keats, death only assures that there will be (as for Shelley) an arbitrary end to the involutions of dream within dream within dream.

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(32:64-65); "Thus Beatrice: at whose feet inclined / Devout, at her behest, my thought and eyes / I, as she bade, directed" (32:106-108).

Dante's vision moves from the narcissism of lovers' eyes (which replicates the eyes of mother and child) to a shame (the breaking of the interocular circuit) healed (the restoration of the circuit), so that shame is overcome. In Keats's poem the time has not arrived for shame to be experienced openly and overcome. The question of whether the narrator is a dreamer or a poet is not yet officially decided, and a greedy desire is substituted for shame. Moneta's blindness must recall Milton's and the moment of repression at the beginning of book 3 of *Hyperion*. The Oedipal threat that blindness represents (eyes for genitals) here takes on new meaning, since Milton's blindness is specifically marked by him in the invocation to book 3 of *Paradise Lost* as the sign of heavenly approval and power. "Internal sight" is expressed in the internalization of the landscape of the Muses within the poet rather than the outside one. What Keats has added to this scheme is temporality, or its reverse, eternity, as Moneta's face progresses but never arrives. This allegory of mutilation, where temporal beginning and end reverse themselves, recalls Spenser's allegory of Despair, who tries to hang himself but cannot succeed "Till he should die his last, that is eternally" (*FQ* 1.9.54.9), where dying "eternally" means finally dying at the end of time—but also dying forever and never becoming dead.<sup>52</sup>

The gothic quality of Moneta's face and veil brings the level of language into dissonance with affect. As Eve Sedgwick points out, the faces in gothic novels "seem to be halfway toward becoming a language, a code, a limited system of differentials that

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<sup>52</sup> Mutilation in the form of castration underlies a desire that cannot find fulfillment, a desire that is thus figured as eternal.

could cast a broad net of reference and interrelation.”<sup>53</sup> This “becoming a language” has its psychological aspects,<sup>54</sup> but it could also describe the effect of allegory. Still, in the case of Moneta’s face, the affect involved here is one of disconnection, severing, and the urgency to read the face and re-establish (paradoxically) contact with the blind eyes of the Miltonic muse. Shame is operant here in its repression—the lack of any possibility that Moneta will blush, the lack of her condemning sight, the pushing of a narcissistic circuit of sight from mother and child back to an earlier stage where the world means what the mind wishes it to mean. The repression of shame means the repression of the emerging self that forms itself in noting the break in communication between mother and child and in trying to re-establish it. Moneta apparently can judge the narrator, but cannot see him; if her blindness signifies Milton, it would seem possible that the narrator still identifies with Milton and thus is performing his role in the Miltonic epic. Rather than transcending the Miltonic, the narrator finds himself *in* a Miltonic epic, playing the part of Hazlitt’s imaginative “objective” Shakespeare observing characters, overhearing them, and ultimately dreaming them—which, as we have seen, in Hazlitt’s essay means overhearing the self.

The repression of shame can also be seen to be an attempt to prevent its involvement in the structure of guilt, which is one of exchange and reparation—the structure of Dante’s encounter with Beatrice, where tears and shame undo sin under the category of “recognizing” sin. This structure is that of Adam and Eve’s discovery that

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<sup>53</sup> *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 158.

<sup>54</sup> Sedgwick points to Lacan’s “Imaginary, which originates in a ‘mirror stage’ and allows bipolar oppositions to be described psychologically in terms of fixation at the stage of ocular confrontation” (*Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 173n15).

they are naked after eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The narrator of *The Fall* begins with a similar desire to know, to understand his own status—fanatic, dreamer, poet. The poet's autobiographical poem must necessarily have as part of its function the establishment of its own authenticity, so it would seem that the writer's status as poet is already predetermined. The poem then is a kind of self-justification as much a self-revelation. It must necessarily remind one of the dangers of any autobiographical exercise in self-revelation. As Paul de Man writes of the Marion episode in Rousseau's *Confessions*,

The structure of desire as exposure rather than as possession explains why shame functions indeed, as it does in this text, as the most effective excuse, much more effectively than greed, or lust, or love. Promise is proleptic, but excuse is belated and always occurs after the crime; since the crime is exposure, the excuse consists in recapitulating the exposure in the guise of concealment. The excuse is a ruse which permits exposure in the name of hiding, not unlike Being, [which] in the later Heidegger, reveals itself by hiding. Or, put differently, shame used as excuse permits repression to function as revelation and thus to make pleasure and guilt interchangeable. Guilt is forgiven because it allows for the pleasure of revealing its repression. It follows that repression is in fact an excuse, one speech act among others.<sup>55</sup>

One can see that the repression of shame in *The Fall of Hyperion* is an analogue to the development of the imagination through privation, a scheme found in many Romantic works. A cognitive problem—the lack of any reason for the Mariner's killing of the albatross, the refusal of Astarte to place her relationship with Manfred into an interpersonal context of forgiveness, the obstinacy of Demorgogon in giving answers to Asia, the way the Simplon pass will not reveal to its climber when a crucial boundary has been crossed—such moments of privation are uneasily mapped onto the affective states

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<sup>55</sup> *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), p. 286.

involved in each case, yet the structure of the cognitive problem itself seems to line up with the structure of shame, in which the infant recognizes that something in the narcissistic circuit has changed. The change—the strangeness—triggers the reaction which brings about a sense of self, and a self that is thus isolated by definition. It may not be going too far to say that this shame-self is the origin of what psychoanalysts see as the origin of guilt, which is prohibition—the outside parental authority or then internalized superego. Without the affect of shame, how would prohibition ever be felt, for the superego goes well beyond the kind of good/bad behavioral training that is applied to animals. But if shame comes before the prohibition—that is, the feeling of inhibition precedes any cognition of prohibition or “right and wrong”—one might see the very idea of the prohibition as a repression of the self, the self that comes to life through shame. Shame involves of course not only a painful sense of the strange but also a painful sense that one is exposed, or seen, and yet the breaking of the interocular circuit between mother and child is precisely the cause of shame. The shame of being seen then seems to function as the repression of the shame of being a self. The first of these shames is then repressed by the idea of prohibition, which makes repression, as de Man writes, “function as revelation.” The analogues between Moneta’s unveiling and the exposure of Adam and Eve in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* may not be exact, but both rely on the ambiguity of seeing—in who is seeing what and what exactly is revealed. Moneta’s eyes are themselves a sign—they signal comfort through allowing the narrator to remain unseen:

They held me back with a benignant light,  
 Soft-mitigated by divinest lids  
 Half-closed, and visionless entire they seem’d  
 Of all external things—they saw me not,

But in blank splendour beam'd like the mild moon,  
 Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not  
 What eyes are upward cast.

These are the blind eyes (and the ethically suspect “blank splendour”) of innocence that exists by comforting itself narcissistically. When Adam and Eve rise up from their first postlapsarian sex,

and each the other viewing,  
 Soon found their eyes how opened, and their minds  
 How darkened; innocence, that as a veil  
 Had shadowed them from knowing ill, was gone,  
 Just confidence, and native righteousness,  
 And honour from about them, naked left  
 To guilty shame: he covered, but his robe  
 Uncovered more. (*PL* 9:1052-59)

Both innocence and shame are personifications and garments, here, one a veil, the other a robe. Fowler remarks of the last two lines, “The absent object mimes the absent covering.”<sup>56</sup> Does shame’s robe uncover more of Adam and Eve, more of sin, or more of something else? And is “he” here the personified shame or, possibly, Adam? There is never any real seeing of what is uncovered: there is no true nakedness. The minds of our “Grand Parents” are “darkened” only after the veil that “shadowed” them is lifted, and they are left “naked,” which means clothed by shame. I do not think it goes too far to say that in both the case of Moneta’s unveiling and this passage in *Paradise Lost*, nothing is revealed except that there is no self seen (as in shame). Yet both moments are elaborately staged unveilings, so both are moments of exposure where the self is repressed as shame is repressed.

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<sup>56</sup> Alastair Fowler, ed., John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1998), p. 531.

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