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The Romantic Posthuman and Posthumanities

Elizabeth Effinger, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Tilottama Rajan, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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THE ROMANTIC POSTHUMAN AND POSTHUMANITIES

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Elizabeth Effinger

Graduate Program in English

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the way Romantic-period philosophers, artists and writers were critically engaged with various Romantic-period disciplines, those branches of learning that were complexly enmeshed with the inhuman and putting increasing pressure on the concept of “the human.” Over the course of five chapters, this study pursues the problematic of “the human” across the borders of philosophy, where Immanuel Kant entertains extraterrestrials while organizing the new discipline of pragmatic anthropology; the early and late illuminated work of poet-engraver William Blake, which enables us to think the inhumanities within the human; the closet drama and poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, which think the inhumanity of life; and the fiction of Mary Shelley, as a thought experiment about the end of man and posthuman survival of man’s cultural achievements. “The Romantic Posthuman and Posthumanities” analyzes the human at its borders with the inhuman in Romantic literature. It examines the erosion of these borders through the way key disciplines (aesthetics, literature) were thematized in literary texts by Blake and the Shelleys. This thesis makes the case that a theoretical thinking about the end of man, of a humanism associated with man and his disciplinary formations, and a reflection on what comes after this end, all have their inception in Romantic thought.

Here, Romanticism is a sign of history for man’s fragilization, for a privileged conception of man and of a certain understanding of life, a counter-discourse to Enlightenment humanism. What emerges – and this is the real importance of this endeavour – is a more comprehensive portrait of the ways in which the human and a decidedly humanistic understanding of life in the long Romantic period were widely and complexly enmeshed with – to follow Blake – an “innumerable company” of inhumans, including ether, rocks, plants, infusoria, and animals. This study reflects on our contemporary lives within what is increasingly being called the “posthumanities,” and hopes that as we move towards this new humanities we will acknowledge and better understand our debt to Romantic thought, our model for a hybridized interdisciplinary thought wherein art and science, human and inhuman are frequently entwined.

Keywords

Romanticism, Posthumanities, Inhuman, Disciplines, Immanuel Kant, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Blake, Mary Shelley, Humanism, Posthumanism, British Romantic Literature, Anthropology, Aesthetics, Architecture, Golgonooza, Deconstruction.

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Conventions, standards, and abbreviations

All references to Kant's work cite the page number of an available English translation.

Wherever possible, these references (preceding the backslash) are followed by the volume and page number of the Prussian *Akademie* edition: *Immanuel Kants Schriften: Ausgabe der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902 –).

Where I call attention to a particular translation, I place the German from the Akademie edition in parentheses, immediately following the English translation. Any of my own translations will be indicated in a footnote, along with the citation from the Akademie edition. Similarly, any of my translations of Bonnet (chapter 1) are flagged in a footnote.

Thanks to Dr. Ann Gagné for her assistance in translating these passages.

All quotations will be cited in the text by line number (for the poetry) or page number (for the prose). Most references to Blake's illuminated work, visual art, and writing are taken from the William Blake Archive. References made to David V. Erdman's *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988, will be hereafter indicated by [E].

Introduction

...Sure a poet is a sage,
 A humanist, physician to all men.
 That I am none I feel, as vultures feel
 They are no birds when eagles are abroad.
 What am I then? Thou spakest of my tribe:
 What tribe? – Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion, A Dream* (l. 189-194)

From the “pensive” rodent in Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s “The Mouse’s Petition” (1773), William Wordsworth’s Leech Gatherer and Cumberland Beggar, the “slimy sea” of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* and its “thousand thousand slimy things [...] with legs,” Mary Shelley’s learned Creature, to John Keats’ serpent Lamia, or Isabella’s pot of basil that sprouts “thick, and green, and beautiful” from a severed head, and posthumanist vulture-poet from *The Fall of Hyperion* (which marks the epigraph to this study), Romantic literature teems with extraordinary inhuman figures. This study examines how Romantic philosophers, mixed-media artists, and writers – Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), William Blake (1757-1827), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and Mary Shelley (1797-1851) – participate in what Andrew Slade, in reference to Samuel Beckett, calls “the anamnesis of the human and inhuman” (54). What emerges throughout the long Romantic period is an increasing “assault on the category of the human” as writers recognize that “the human was never fully what Enlightenment philosophy claimed it to be” (54). Enlightenment philosophy, which sought to self-liberate man from superstition and the supernatural under the driving force of Reason, established man as both the means of self-liberation and the end: “The idea of Man, then, is at the origin of

Enlightenment as the final cause. It is the end and the aim of Enlightenment, and also its organizing principle” (54). This anamnesis or painful working-through of the human and inhuman registers itself in changes within the disciplines themselves.

Unsurprisingly, the concepts of the “human” and the “humanities” have long been entwined. As R.S. Crane observes in *The Idea of the Humanities* (1967), the modern expression of “the humanities” was first introduced in ancient Rome through Cicero and Quintilian’s rhetoric before becoming attached to the notion of “*humanitas*” through the “good arts” outlined by the grammarian Aulus Gellius. In his commonplace book *Attic Nights*, Gellius writes:

Those who have spoken Latin and have used the language correctly do not give the word *humanitas* the meaning which it is commonly thought to have, namely, what the Greeks called *philanthropia*, signifying a kind of friendly spirit and good-feeling towards all men without distinction; but they gave to *humanitas* about the force of the Greek *paideia*; that is, what we call *eruditionem institutionemque in bonas artes*, or ‘education and training in the good arts.’

Those who earnestly desire and seek after these are most highly humanized (*maximi humanissimi*). For the pursuit of that kind of knowledge, and the training given by it, have been granted to man alone of all the animals, and for that reason it is termed *humanitas*, or ‘humanity.’ (qtd. in Crane 23)

The “goodness” of these arts comes from the implication that “the men who pursue them and are trained in them are most humanized” (23). Gellius’ etymology of the “*humanitas*” makes explicit the collusion between the humanities as a pursuit and knowledge practice for humans rather than other animals. Indeed, this constitutive cleaving of the human

from the animal present in Gellius' *humanitas* is carried, as Elizabeth Grosz observes, throughout "the humanities as they developed from the nineteenth century onward" (*Becoming Undone* 12). The humanities have from their very beginning "cast man on the other side of the animals" (12). This Roman *humanitas* not only becomes the basis for the organization of the medieval *trivium* and *quadrivium*, but it also unfolds into the grounds for the various modern defences and apologies of the humanities in the writing of Sidney, Herder, Schiller, and Arnold.¹ Even Kant, in his anthropology lectures, concurs that "The humanities [*Humaniora*] are the arts and sciences which adorn a beautiful spirit from time to time, and are chiefly being well-read in the orators and poets" (*Lectures on Anthropology* 265/Ak25:760). Kant's "beautiful spirit" clearly bears the traces of the *humanitas*, as Kant explains: "Through the humanities I understand 1) eloquence, the art of enlivening ideas of the understanding through sensibility. 2) The art of poetry, the art of giving the play of sensibility unity through the understanding" (265/Ak25:760). Thus, as Crane says, "Throughout this long period the various statements of the humanities we have encountered have normally involved the assertion of some human, or 'more human,' end" (158). In short, the humanities have a long history of being bound to definitions of the human. What would happen, then, to the humanities if its central signifier, "the human," were decentred, dissolved, or even replaced by the inhuman? What would a humanities look like if it became unbound from the human? Enter: the posthumanities.

This study focuses on explorations and representations of the human and inhuman and their relationship in Romantic thought. My original claim is that in the span of the

¹ The *trivium*, the lower division, housed the branches of grammar, rhetoric, and logic; the *quadrivium*, the upper division, which one only gained access to through the successful ascension from the lower division, included arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

long Romantic period (c.1780-1830) the “human” as a concept becomes formally organized, re-organized and disorganized. These changes are also reflected in the disciplines themselves. Here, “disciplines” are understood in the general sense of “branches of learning (*disciplinae*).”² I argue that Romantic poetry and prose were also sites of critical intervention – of critique – into questions of disciplinary organization, such that we see in the poetry of Percy Shelley a critique of history and historiography, in the illuminated work of William Blake a dialogue on the arts and sciences, and in the fiction of Mary Shelley a sustained though overwhelmingly ignored commentary on the limits of the disciplines – art, literature, history, and music – in end times. What the following chapters will make clear is how Romantic writers were keenly invested not only in the question of the human, but also in the general economy of the disciplines, including questions over their sustainability.

One major claim of my project is that the Romantic period is an important cornerstone for contemporary discussions of what some are calling “the posthumanities,” a reimagined humanities driven by critical posthumanism, that is, a knowledge practice that no longer places man at the centre of discourse, and instead focuses on the matrices in which the human is complexly enmeshed with the inhuman. For Cary Wolfe, Editor of the acclaimed Posthumanities Series (Minnesota UP) – an important conduit for posthumanist work – “traditional humanism is no longer adequate to understand the human’s entangled, complex relations with animals, the environment, and technology”

² In *On the Transmission of Disciplines, or Christian Education* (1531), sixteenth-century Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives refers to “those branches of learning (*disciplinae*), by means of which we separate ourselves from the way of life and customs of animals and are restored to humanity” (qtd. in Crane 31).

(“Posthumanities”). But Romanticism continues to be an unacknowledged legislator of posthumanist thinking, perhaps due to a conservative understanding of the Romantic period. The endurance of an oversimplified, quasi-caricature of Romanticism as a period reified through a series of dualisms (Man/Nature, Imagination/Reason, Transcendental/Empirical) contributes to posthumanism’s seeming inhospitality to Romantic thought.

Arguably it is Romanticism’s overdetermined conflation with the ego, human consciousness, or a certain cerebral, egotistical subject that has contributed to the uneasy relationship between Romanticism and posthumanism. Hence Romanticism becomes the whipping boy for posthumanist theories that look to go beyond the individual, human subject, which all too easily becomes a metonym for the Romantic subject. But while this may be true of a *certain* Romanticism – one that relies heavily upon a Wordsworthian-inflected reading, caught up in what Jerome McGann has called the “Romantic ideology”³ – it flattens out the differences and counter-positions of numerous other Romantic writers, such as Blake and the Shelleys, those authors that form the bases of my chapters. As Timothy Morton suggests, “Romanticism doesn’t have to be about big beautiful souls meditating on big mountains” (“Here Comes Everything” 173). After all, many of posthumanism’s most beloved concepts and mechanisms are coterminous with Romantic processes. For example, the ways in which the Romantics were embedded or enmeshed within nature, an intimate economy of interior and exterior (rather than simply the privileging of the interior, which is how Romanticism has typically been read)

³ For Jerome McGann the “scholarship and criticism of Romanticism and its works are dominated by a Romantic ideology, by an uncritical absorption in Romanticism’s own self-representation” (*Romantic Ideology* 1).

resembles posthumanism's interest in feedback loops (Hayles) and second-order systems theory (Luhmann).

Thus the aim of this study is twofold: 1) to participate in the recent recuperation or formation of a counter-Romanticism (following the work of Ron Broglio, Jacques Khalip, and Denise Gigante), one that is attuned to the intimate enmeshment of interior *and* exterior forms and forces, and 2) to provide current and future discussions of posthumanism and the posthumanities with a genealogy or prehistory that it has largely overlooked. My chapters on Kant, Blake, and the Shelleys are aimed at exposing a Romantic thought that is engaged in the task of thinking the same important questions that now define the posthumanities. This project also recognizes itself as the germ of a larger project of assembling a Romantic literature attuned to the radical re-organization of man.

One way to reorient the (after)life of Romanticism is to think of it less in terms of our traditional literary periods – a way of thinking that is already fraught with indeterminacies as to when Romanticism actually occurs – and, instead, to think of Romanticism as a *problematic*, in the Foucauldian sense of the term.⁴ Such an approach has already been employed by Rob Mitchell and Ron Broglio in their Introduction to *Romanticism and the New Deleuze*. Peter Zima similarly concurs that “[c]onsidering the

⁴ In seeing Romanticism as a *problematic*, I am following Rob Mitchell and Ron Broglio, who discuss Romanticism as a problematic in their introduction to *Romanticism and the New Deleuze*. Peter Zima likewise suggests that “The unity of a problematic thus appears as being made up of a number of related problems situated at the centre of social debates during a certain period of time. The romantic period was dominated by the problems of industrialisation (in the first half of the 19th century), the validity of traditional values, national identity, the opposition between nature and civilisation and the problem of the subject, of the subject's unfulfilled desires. In the literary realm, each author offered different political, metaphysical, aesthetic and stylistic solutions. Any attempt to unify these solutions in order to construct an ideological, philosophical or aesthetic system is doomed to failure. The common denominator of all romantic texts seems to be the network of related problems some of which have been mentioned here” (14).

heterogeneity of romanticism, it seems more appropriate to define or rather construct it as a *problematic*: as a historical constellation of complementary problems and questions which each politician, philosopher and artist attempts to solve in a different way” (14). Expanding on Zima’s definition, my particular use of the term “problematic” is the name for the way a number of problems pertaining to the inhuman congeal around the sign of the human. Romanticism’s problematic is a constellation of problems concerning the inhuman that unsettle the ontology and epistemology of the human subject. What emerges in this period is a crisis-point: a profound unsettling of the human subject through the uncanny proximity of the inhuman, a problematic that gets taken up across a range of disciplines and by a variety of thinkers.

As a problematic, Romanticism is understood as the name for a series of formal and conceptual problems that share certain “family resemblances” – to borrow Wittgenstein’s term. And, because a problematic remains unbound to the historical moment it murmurs beneath, it is capable of re-emerging elsewhere in history (or in a history of thought). Thus, Romanticism as a problematic over the organization of man and his proximity to the inhuman returns in contemporary theories and figures of critical and popular posthumanism, which are also engaged in rethinking that which falls under the sign of the human.⁵

Historically, the Romantic period (c.1780-1830) marks an important moment in the problematic of the human/inhuman, due in large part to the rapid rate of scientific discoveries that increasingly revealed to man the extent to which he had always been

⁵ Popular posthumanism names the variety of thought that aligns the posthuman with the cyborg and monster, and is an image typically found in pop culture (hence the name, “popular” posthumanism). The Romantic predecessor for this strain is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

amongst an “innumerable company” – to use Blake’s words – of inhuman forms and forces (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, E566).⁶ In the 1780s, scientific discoveries in the area of physiological chemistry proliferated with the isolation of carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen by Berthollet and Lavoisier. Advances in natural history were made by Pennant’s *History of Quadrupeds* (1781). Space was being explored by Herschel’s discovery of Uranus (1781), the publication of Laplace’s *Laws of the Planetary System* (1788) and the Montgolfier brothers’ balloon ride (1783). At the same time that space and even outerspace were being explored, the deeper spaces, structures and contents of the Earth itself were also being unearthed. Bergman’s *Outline of Mineralogy* (1783) was published only a few years before M. H. Klaproth discovered uranium (1786), and the processes and movements of these inhuman forms and forces within the Earth would become measurable with Salsano’s invention of the seismograph (1785). Mont Blanc became more than a picturesque mountain as a site from which Horace de Saussure would record weather observations (1787), a year before Hutton published his seminal *New Theory of the Earth* (1788). The discovery of electromagnetism by Oersted in 1819 would lead to Faraday’s demonstration of the electromagnetic rotation (1821). From Galvani’s experiments in animal electricity, and the first steam-driven engines of

⁶ Timothy Morton also sees the Romantic period as “a decisive moment in the Anthropocene, when a layer of carbon is deposited by human industry throughout Earth’s top layer of crust” (“Enter the Nonhuman.” Web lecture). Morton considers us to be living in an age of “asymmetry,” where we now increasingly recognize our coexistence and enmeshment within larger nonhuman processes/forces (such as global warming, radiation). This asymmetry corresponds to a movement of having fallen, and is positioned against the Romantic period, which Morton sees as still poised on the edge of the abyss (he refers to the canonical Friedrich painting). From that standpoint of teetering on the edge of the Friedrich painting, we see the trajectory of Morton’s thought: we have now fallen from the heights of Romanticism into modernity, and as he puts it in a lecture, “we’ve now woken up inside of an object” – ‘object’ being his ubiquitous term for nonhuman entities including biosphere, climate, coffee cups, and nebulae (amongst others). In the Romantic period, “The inner infinite discovered in the Kantian sublime and in the poetry of Wordsworth ranges over the world of things like a ghost in search of a destination.”

England's cotton factories and mills, to Edward Jenner's smallpox vaccine (1796), the inhuman emerges as a site of intense potentiality, as a kind of ghost in the machine, and enters into increasingly intimate contact with the human to form what we might call, to use a phrase by Merleau-Ponty, a "strange kinship" (*Nature* 214) – a kinship based on new modes of human-animal intermingling, a relation which unsettles both figures, man and animal.⁷

New publications sprang up, including the *Botanical Magazine* (1787), Nicholson's *Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and the Arts* (1797), and the medical journal *The Lancet* (1823). New disciplines were established during the Romantic period, including anthropology (Platner, Kant, Herder), comparative anatomy (Cuvier, 1799), non-Euclidean geometry (Lobachevsky, 1826), comparative embryology (Von Baer, 1828), organic chemistry (Wohler, 1828). The period also saw the rise of "countersciences," like homeopathy (Hahnemann, 1810), and, as I argue in chapter 1, Kant's unique strain of anthropology. "Counterscience" is Foucault's word introduced in *The Order of Things* for a science that "would appear to traverse, animate, and disturb the whole constituted field of the human sciences" (381), a current that "flow[s] in the opposite direction [...] back to their epistemological basis, and that they ceaselessly 'unmake' that very man who is creating and re-creating his positivity in the human sciences" (379), a "relation that is strange, undefined, [...] and more fundamental than any relation of adjacency" (367).

⁷ Blake's "innumerable company" and Merleau-Ponty's "strange kinship" are key phrases for how I frame the Romantic problematic of the inhuman/human relation. Foucault similarly refers to the "insidious kinship" between man and the unthought in *The Order of Things* (326).

The establishment of the Linnean Society of London in 1788, the Royal Institution of Great Britain in 1800, and the Geological Society of London in 1807 contributed to the dissemination of scientific and geologic knowledge. The City Philosophical Society, founded in 1808 by John Tatum, “a mechanic, a manufacturer of silver table spoons and forks, and quite unlettered; yet in the possession of a naturally powerful and vigorous mind,” held meetings in Dorset Street on the subjects of “natural and experimental philosophy” (Pettigrew 10). The Society’s first lecture, given by a then sixteen-year-old Thomas Pettigrew, was on the subject of insanity, with subsequent topics including anatomy, physiology and natural history (10).⁸

This period also saw the development of what in the early nineteenth century came to be called Mechanics’ Institutes. First established in Edinburgh in the 1820s, the force behind the institutes was George Birkbeck, who as early as 1800 held free lectures on art and science for the public (working men), the content of which was often technical in nature – in the way that happens in colleges now. Birkbeck eventually established the London Mechanics’ Institute in 1824 (what would later become Birkbeck College). Thus, during the Romantic period the city of London became an important site of disciplinary change and resistance; it is here that a counter-institutional constellation formed amongst the Mechanics’ Institute and similar societies (including the Dissenting societies) – counter-institutions to the highly restricted universities of Oxford and Cambridge.⁹ These

⁸ In the “Autobiographical Sketch” that Thomas Joseph Pettigrew offers in his *Medical Portrait Gallery*, there is a brief description of the City Philosophical Society, and its influence as an early model for what would become the Philosophical Society of London (10). It is telling that the society’s inaugural lecture was on the subject of insanity; this further dramatizes the extent to which we may think of this as a counter-institution, founded here in a gesture of disorder (rather than order).

⁹ For a lively history of the Dissenting academies see Irene Parker’s *Dissenting Academies in England*, esp. chapter 2.

counter-organizations not only disseminated knowledge to a wider, less educated public; their membership was open to the formally unlearned as well: the City Society was founded by the unlearned John Tatum, while the largely self-trained Faraday also gave lectures at the Society. Furthermore, as I will show in chapter 4, these counter-institutions played an important role in Blake's imagination, and formed the radical model of new disciplinary organizations that underpinned his vision of what he first calls in *The Four Zoas* a "sweet science," and more fully develops in *Jerusalem*.

Yet at the same time as scientific knowledge was being increasingly disseminated, and thus acquiring a larger public, that knowledge was also closing itself off in various ways across Europe. In England, the Apothecaries Act of 1815 restricted medical practice to formally-trained doctors, legislation which inaugurated a national regulation of medicine. In addition to legislative boundaries, the ethical limits to certain discursive practices were also being defined, reflected in the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824, which was largely a response to the cruelty of vivisection and other animal experiments done in the name of scientific progress, and which ushered in the beginning of the animal rights discourse, followed two years later by the founding of the Royal Zoological Society.

In Germany, an astonishing number of universities were in the process of closing their doors. As Theodore Ziolkowski in *German Romanticism and Its Institutions* observes:

Public support became so weak that, during the Napoleonic era, twenty-two, or over half, of the universities in Germany did in fact disappear in what has been termed the 'mass death' of universities. Some had become so peripheral and small

that they simply disappeared (Rinteln, Dillingen, Helmstedt); others were suspended by Napoleon (Cologne, Mainz, Trier); still others were eventually incorporated with existing institutions (Altdorf with Erlangen, Wittenberg with Halle, Frankfurt an der Oder with Breslau). (228)

Thus, within the short span of the Romantic period, there was a vast acceleration and proliferation of new institutions and organizations and the sudden dissolution of others. As Ziolkowski notes, “The ideal university, which had existed in the imagination of the Jena Romantics and been realized for a few fleeting months in the pristine *universitas literaria* of Berlin, now became a memory that lived on only in the memoirs, the poems, the novels of those who had briefly experienced it” (308). Indeed, this melancholic memory of Romantic institutions figures in Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* and forms the basis of chapter 5.

Within this history of the long Romantic period, three constellations of the problematic of man emerge: the formal organization of man, and his subsequent reorganization or disorganization. The key questions for us here include: How do the different disciplines organize, reorganize or even disorganize man? How are disciplinary changes written on the human body? Does thinking about man’s organization produce the desire for the re-organ-ization of man, the failure of which produces the nihilistic disorganization of man? Are the changes in discursive formations of the disciplines themselves symptoms of the working-through of the human? The human is organized across a variety of disciplines and fields. In the late-eighteenth century, the birth of anthropology (with Kant and Herder) as a formal discipline marks the moment whereby man becomes the object of study (and simultaneously the subject who studies). It is

fitting that Foucault, who goes on to think the disciplines in *The Order of Things*, first began his career with a doctoral thesis (1961) on Kant's *Anthropology*, which functions as a precursor to *The Order of Things*. Underpinning the poetry and illuminated work of William Blake, is the visionary re-organ-ization of the human – a mode of critique aimed at the rigid, despotic organizations of man, a critique that is staged through the dislocated movements and postures of various figures, a dismantling or a literal re-organ-ization of the human body. In the novels of Mary Shelley, it is the failure of attempts to organize and re-organize the human that produce a scene of the human's dissolution, or disorganization. Here, Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* offer a critique of Romantic disciplinarity itself, and can be read as dark conjectures on the legacy or (after)life of Romanticism itself.

This project is divided into five chapters that loosely fall into three sections, one concentrating on the organization of man and his disciplines, one on the re-organization of man and those disciplines, and one on the dis-organization of man and those disciplines, each as it is represented in Romantic thought. Each of these movements or forms of organization (organization, reorganization, and disorganization) is inflected by changes to the disciplines themselves. For each of the Romantic writers and thinkers I examine, there is in their work the collusion between the inhuman and formal problems over the structure and (un)sustainability of the disciplines as they were developing during the long Romantic period. While studies of the long Romantic period have frequently examined the limits of traditional humanism, they have traditionally done so on the

grounds of race and gender.¹⁰ Furthermore, what does not exist to my knowledge is a single-study examination that addresses the changes in disciplines *as represented in the literature* of the period. By focusing on how Romantic literature tarrys with the disciplines, I aim to offer a cluster of Romantic writers as keenly invested in formal questions of disciplinarity. Following from that, I suggest that Romantic literature itself occupies a unique space in which to “unwork” the parameters of these structures, or in Derrida’s phrase the “laws” of these “genres.”¹¹

The inhuman (via the supernatural) is also a defining feature of the Gothic, evident in such studies as Fred Botting’s *Limits of Horror*, Scott Brewster’s *Inhuman Reflections*, Judith Halberstam’s *Skin Shows*, and Terry Castle’s *The Female Thermometer*, to name but a few. Nevertheless, this study sidesteps Gothic texts and their “machinery,” Horace Walpole’s term for the “inventions” or devices in Gothic fiction such as ghosts and goblins, sighing portraits and bleeding statues (6). As enthralling and as widespread as these inhumans are in Gothic literature of the Romantic period, I set them aside for the sake of exploring the inhuman outside of a discourse whose “principal engine” (4), as Walpole puts it in his Preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), is terror. Instead, I am interested in a particular figuration of the inhuman, whereby the inhuman appears as a spur to thought, as a kind of intellectual goad. Hence, I turn to the less conventional sites of the inhuman, in texts that seem to be explicitly tarrying with what it means to be human. Furthermore, apart from brief discussions in

¹⁰ See, for example, Felicity Nussbaum’s *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century*.

¹¹ I refer here to Derrida’s essay “The Law of Genre.” Here he singles out Romanticism as a “mixing” of genres (224-5).

chapter 1 regarding Kant's tenuous relationship with physiological anthropology, and a more substantial consideration in chapter 3 regarding the role of parturitive science in Blake's *The Book of Thel*, this project does not treat in detail the rising scientific disciplines that foregrounded the importance of the inhuman, such as physiology (which treats inhuman "forces" shared by human and inhuman bodies alike) and geology, terrain recently mapped by Richard Sha and Noah Heringman, respectively. Nor does this project examine the intersection between the disciplines, what we can call Romantic interdisciplinarity, and how the literature of the period addresses this hybridization (both thematically and formally). These important projects await further study but are beyond my scope here.

Instead, I am generally focused on the Romantics' "idea of the humanities," to borrow R.S. Crane's phrase. Here, my target is man and his disciplines, the various forms and permutations they take in the period, and how aesthetics – in Alexander Baumgarten's sense of "beautiful thinking" – undergirds these discussions. I begin with Kant, for whom all of philosophy is organized around one question: "what is the human?" This question whispers throughout Kant's anthropological work, which, I argue, operates as a "general anthropology" in Bataille's sense of general economy that includes the elements a system might otherwise expel. One particularly disruptive element of Kant's anthropology, one that greatly troubles the anthropological project from within, is the appearance of the inhuman, or what David Clark calls "aliens." Kant, of course, isn't the first thinker to creatively speculate on what comes after man; indeed, French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Robinet (1735-1820) in *De la nature* (1761-8) and Swiss naturalist Charles Bonnet in *Contemplation de la nature* (1764) and *La palingénésie*

philosophique (1770) offer conjectural remarks on where the great Chain of Being might extend.¹² However, where discourses of improvement in the Enlightenment posit an end of history in the *anthropos* (in man and in civil society), Kant is more Romantic in not closing things off in that way, and is different from his precursors by touching upon the darker side of what may lie beyond man. I say that Kant only touches upon this to emphasize the fleeting encounter he has with such thoughts, which while never sustained for too long or explored in great depth nevertheless find themselves appearing amidst anthropological considerations. Put otherwise: whenever Kant presses his anthropological thoughts about man, about humanity, a figure of the inhuman appears. In confronting the question of “what is man” Kant turns away since, as Clark puts it, in “the mirror of Kant’s anthropological imaginary [...] aliens are always closer than they appear” (204). Thus, without going as far as some critics who find a mad, bad, Byronic Kant (cf. Lewis Feuer), I follow those (cf. Tilottama Rajan, David Clark) for whom Kant is a proto-Romantic thinker.

A word now on my terminology: my use of the capacious term “inhuman” designates those entities that come before and after man, but also disfigured humans, and animals. Helping to frame my reading of the Romantics’ attentiveness to the inhuman is Jean-François Lyotard’s concept of the inhuman, first introduced in his 1991 book of the same title. In *The Inhuman*, Lyotard, who is perhaps Kant’s best reader and critical for making Kant a “sign of history,” asks: “what if human beings, in humanism’s sense,

¹² Charles Bonnet (1720-1793), a Genevan natural philosopher, infamously conducted early experiments on parthenogenesis, or asexual reproduction, in aphids, and in invertebrate regeneration. Later he adopted many tenets of Leibnizian philosophy, and his work has been read as the attempt to materialize Leibniz’s metaphysics through experimental proof. For a detailed account of the Bonnet-Leibniz relationship, see Olivier Rieppel’s essay “The Reception of Leibniz’s Philosophy in the Writings of Charles Bonnet (1720-1793)”.

were in the process of, constrained into, becoming inhuman [...] what if what is ‘proper’ to humankind were to be inhabited by the inhuman?” (2). The term “inhuman” is dicephalic in Lyotard’s usage, and these two different modes of the inhuman together produce “the conflict of inhumanities” (5) – a nod, no doubt, to Kant’s “conflict of the faculties.” The first sense of the term is wholly negative, as in the “inhumanity of the system which is currently being consolidated under the name of development (among others)” (2). The second sense of “inhuman” – and the one that is of interest in my reading of Kant and Percy Shelley – is “the infinitely secret one of which the soul is hostage [...] of a mind haunted by a familiar and unknown guest which is agitating it, sending it delirious but also making it think – if one claims to exclude it, if one doesn’t give it an outlet, one aggravates it” (2). Kant’s inhuman, the name for those entities other than man, spans the gamut from the microscopic (the germ) to the macroscopic (the extraterrestrial), and operates in this second sense of Lyotard’s definition. Kant’s inhuman is an imaginative trigger, something that scratches at thought but that is ultimately a kind of painful pleasure, a generative suffering (or what Jean-Luc Nancy, following Hegel, might call the suffering or restlessness of the negative). Indeed, the “conflict of the inhumanities” spawns what Lyotard sees as the only “politics” left: resistance to the first inhuman by means of the second inhuman (7).

Lyotard frames this scratching, haunting, or murmuring of an uncanny guest (“a familiar and unknown” – *unheimlich*) within the mind through the mode of a thought-experiment about the end of humanity. He considers how philosophy will be possible after solar annihilation, an imminent event that will occur in “4.5 billion years” (8), a mathematically sublime concept and yet “the sole serious question to face humanity

today” (9). Lyotard’s solar catastrophe extends a line of thought from Kant’s new world after destruction – where the “globe (having once been dissolved into chaos, but now being organized and regenerating) were to bring forth, by revolutions of the earth, differently organized creatures, which, in turn, gave place to others after their destruction” (*Opus* 66-7/Ak21:214-5) – and Foucault’s prediction of the end of man in *The Order of Things*, who will disappear “like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” (387). Solar death is the absolute limit; it “implies an irreparably exclusive disjunction between death and thought: if there’s death, then there’s no thought. Negation without remainder. No self to make sense of it. Pure event. Disaster” (Lyotard *Inhuman* 11). Lyotard sees the problem of the technological sciences as that of “how to make thought without a body possible. A thought that continues to exist after the death of the human body” (13-4). Lyotard takes up this issue of solar death as a limit-case, a means through which to demonstrate the way in which a thought or problematic gnaws at thinking. This imminent event, this “negation without remainder” that will spare no Lionel Verney, the surviving narrator of the apocalyptic plague in Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man*, scratches at our mind, forcing us also to think the impermanence of thought and the utter fragility of man’s accomplishments, thoughts that cling to the backs of man’s pursuits of immortality.

Part of this inhuman dimension of thought – what Foucault calls the “unthought” – is that it functions as both an obstacle and a condition for thought. It is through this dark labour that change occurs; it becomes the means by which we can resist systematized thought (resistance to the first sense of the inhuman). Lyotard’s question of whether thought can survive without a body is really the question of what is embodied in

thought itself, most notably that inhuman dimension, that agent in thought that causes pain and suffering, much like the figure of Demogorgon in Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and the germ of pain that accompanies the seed of reason within man. Indeed, pain becomes a defining feature of Kant's framing of the human in his anthropology, just as it is for humanity in *Prometheus Unbound*, a topic I will later treat in greater detail. Like Deleuze's observation that "Creation takes place in choked passages" (*Negotiations* 133), the inhuman – the anguish "of a mind haunted by a familiar and unknown guest which is agitating it, sending it delirious but also making it think" (Lyotard *Inhuman* 2) – foregrounds the pain and suffering of thinking. Lyotard's description is worth quoting at length:

The pain of thinking isn't a symptom coming from outside to inscribe itself on the mind instead of in its true place. It is thought itself resolving to be irresolute, deciding to be patient, wanting not to want, wanting, precisely, not to produce a meaning in place of what *must* be signified [...] the mode according to which what doesn't yet exist, a word, a phrase, a colour, *will emerge*. So that the suffering of thinking is a suffering of time, of what happens [...] If this suffering is the mark of true thought, it's because we think in the already-thought, in the inscribed. And because it's difficult to leave something hanging in abeyance or take it up again in a different way so what hasn't been thought yet can emerge and what *should be* inscribed *will be* [...] The unthought hurts because we're comfortable in what's already thought. And thinking, which is accepting this discomfort, is also, to put it bluntly, an attempt to have done with it [...] As there is no end, this hope is illusory. So: the unthought would have to make your

machines uncomfortable, the uninscribed that remains to be inscribed would have to make their memory suffer. (Lyotard 19-20)

Pursuing this unsettling figure of the inhuman, the unthought, leads me in chapter 1 throughout vast stretches of Kant's anthropological writings, right to the posthumously published *Opus Postumum* – a text that Kant intended to be a physics that would ground his metaphysics, but that slips into speculative discussions on the open-endedness of humanity and the coming of “differently organized creatures, which, in turn, [give] place to others after their destruction” (*Opus* 66-7/21:214-5). The consequences of the inclusion of the inhuman in Kant's anthropological writings – a large range of texts to be outlined in chapter 1 – affect the very shape of the discipline Kant is organizing. Hence, Kant's anthropology undersells itself; “pragmatic anthropology,” as he calls it, is a limiting definition of the discipline, an attempt to discipline what in actuality operates like a counter-science or what I want to call a “general anthropology,” terms to be defined in chapter 1.

Growing out of the anthropological discourse of Kant, chapter 2 surveys the figure of the inhuman in the drama and poetry of Percy Shelley. Here, the figure of the inhuman via the character of Demogorgon in *Prometheus Unbound* operates like Lyotard's definition of the inhuman, as a spur to thought. The inhuman, depicted here as something shadowy and not quite understood, is nonetheless represented as a liberatory force, the condition of possibility for affecting change or revolution. Yet in *The Triumph of Life* the inhuman takes on a different affect, figured by the character Rousseau who is initially mistaken for an old root, and who represents the ossification of thought, what in Blake's terms comes to embody “mind-forg'd manacles” (“London” l.8). But unlike

Percy's idealistic description of poetry in *The Defence* as both the root and stamen, Rousseau in being mistaken for a root represents the shrivelling of man's specialness, capable of becoming part of the landscape like Albion's sons who are condensed "into solid rocks with cruelty and abhorrence" (*Jerusalem* 19:26). Ultimately, what *The Triumph of Life* presents us with is a negative anthropology – a dark hyperextension from Kant's general anthropology.

Chapters 3 and 4 analyze the manifold representations of the human-inhuman relationship in the illuminated poetry of William Blake. Perhaps more than any other author here examined, Blake has the deepest engagement with Kant's question, *Was ist der Mensch?* This engagement, uniquely taken up in both image and text, bookends Blake's oeuvre; we find it in his earliest published illuminated work, *The Book of Thel*, which is the focus of chapter 3, as well as in *Jerusalem*, his *magnum opus* and focus of chapter 4. These frequently overlooked texts operate as important sites where Blake is rethinking not only what it means to be human but also human institutions and their disciplinary extensions.¹³ My deconstructive reading moves against the traditional aesthetic grounds on which Blake has overwhelmingly been read.

First, I read the figure of Thel and her inhuman companions through the lens of eighteenth-century parturitive science. Not only is Blake here questioning the origins of man; he is also more speculatively exploring the potentiality of a kind of pre-human, or intrauterine life. He is exploring something like Emmanuel Levinas' notion of an

¹³ There are only a handful of monographs on *Jerusalem*: Joseph Hartley Wicksteed's *William Blake's Jerusalem*; Morton Paley's *The Continuing City: William Blake's Jerusalem*; Minna Doskow's *William Blake's Jerusalem: Structure and Meaning in Poetry and Picture*; Joanne Witke's *William Blake's Epic: Imagination Unbound*; and most recently Susan Sklar's *Blake's Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre: Entering the Divine Body*.

existence before existents.¹⁴ Taking the mole as my starting-point, chapter 3 reads *Thel* alongside contemporary artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger's theory of a *matrixial borderspace*, the shared space created by co-emerging subjectivities, where self and other – or human and inhuman – develop in “a continual readjustment of distances, a continual negotiation of separateness and distance” (“Woman-Other-Thing” 12).¹⁵ The aim of this chapter is twofold: first, to demonstrate how *Thel* is a model of this expanded subjectivity, and second, to show how within the space of the poem it offers an account of the intrauterine experience, that mysterious existence gestured at and immediately foreclosed in Freud's account of the uncanny.¹⁶ In its capacity as a space of multiplicity (of one to become more-than-one), the figure of the matrix enables us to understand the processes of pre-subjective and intersubjective formation between *Thel*, the Lily, Cloud, Clod of Clay, Worm and the Vales of Har as encounters, as co-creating shared spaces. They suggest how Blake's feminine – at least in the curious case of *Thel* – can appeal to contemporary post-Lacanian models of subjectivity. Concentrating on the shared space within *Thel* invites us to reconsider *Thel*'s “own grave plot” and how her coming-into-being occurs not through a severing with the m/Other – the castrating paradigm of traditional psychoanalysis – but through mutually occupied thresholds, the shared points

¹⁴ In *Existence and Existents*, Levinas separates an anonymous existence, the *il y a*, which we cease to know upon becoming some-*one* who exists: “Existence is not synonymous with the relationship with a world; it is antecedent to the world” (21). The existent is the subject of being, “that which exists” (17).

¹⁵ This phrase ‘in, of, and from the feminine’ was first used by M. Catherine de Zegher in *Inside the Visible*. It persists predominately in the work of art historian and theorist, Griselda Pollock. See her essay “Moments and Temporalities of the Avant-Garde ‘in, of, and from the feminine’.”

¹⁶ This tantalizing and yet immediately foreclosed experience (that of being in the womb) is listed by Freud as an experience of the uncanny: “And yet psycho-analysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all, but was qualified by a certain lasciviousness – the phantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence” (“The Uncanny” 244).

of contact between “several co-affecting partial-subjectivities that are never entirely fused or totally lost” (Pollock “Femininity” 3).¹⁷

Finally, the chapter considers the value of Ettinger’s model of subjectivity as encounter in light of recent recuperations of *Thel* as a figure for ecocriticism (cf. Hutchings and Morton), and suggests that this subjectivity – much like *The Book of Thel* itself – offers a much more complex set of relations than the existing vocabulary of ecocritique permits. Read through attunements, transferences and transformations, the spectral figure of the mole that haunts the margins of *Thel* functions as the hinge on which the poem operates, enabling us to read it both as a poem about the unborn (here, ‘mole’ in the parturitive sense), and also as a poem about natural history – both of which, through this pivotal invocation of the mole, expose the potentiality of the (dis)order of things.

A brief interchapter exploring Blake’s *Lyca* poems tunnels between chapters 3 and 4. In the *Lyca* poems, originally published in *Songs of Innocence* (1789), the same year as *The Book of Thel* (1789), an uncannily similar scenario presents itself: a solitary young girl encounters a series of inhuman animals/actors. In the first poem, “The Little Girl Lost,” the young girl *Lyca* wanders away from her parents and (willingly or not) joins the company of wild animals, which includes lions, tigers, leopards, and wolves. In the second poem, “The Little Girl Found,” *Lyca*’s parents desperately search for her, only to be met by the wild animals, in a transformative, perhaps consoling, encounter, after which they appear to have come to terms with their loss. What is lost in the traditional readings of the poems is the intimate linkage between the inhuman and human, an

¹⁷ There is resonance here with the “part-objects” in Kleinian psychoanalysis.

important detail best addressed in Peter Heymans' recent attention to the "sublime traffic" in Blake's poetry between the self and other, which highlights "the fragility and mutability of the human subject" (13), this traffic being a Deleuzian "two-way movement that affects the animal and the human alike, and that provokes both humanizations and animalizations" (13). Like Percy Shelley's repeated return to overlapping narratives of history in *Prometheus Unbound*, Blake's Lyca poems are a working-through of an earlier, unsolved problematic in *Thel* over the human/inhuman relationship.

Chapter 4 pursues Blake's most radical re-organization of the human and extended discussion of art and science in *Jerusalem*, an expansive text that was the product of an intellectual labour nearly two decades in the making (1804-20). Infamously described by Vincent de Luca as a "wall of words" (218), an apt characterization of its dense visual-textual layout, *Jerusalem* is a text that suffocates us with its fullness. This affect of "suffocating fullness," my description, inspired from Levinas' description of existence, is the name for our experience with this text so swarming with life. *Jerusalem* is of interest for the ways in which it most fully represents Blake's critique of "the human" and the "humanities." Through an analysis of Blake's commentary on "the human," as well as the figures of the animal-headed "humans" (the androgynous eagle-headed figure and the swan-woman), we see that *Jerusalem* is a Romantic text complexly engaged in a critique of the human as well as a critique of what Giorgio Agamben calls the "anthropological machine." There is substantial potentiality here within these animal-headed figures insofar as they remain largely ignored in critical scholarship, despite being some of the most magnetic images in *Jerusalem*.

While the first half of this chapter examines Blake's ubiquitous "human," and considers the posthuman potentiality within *Jerusalem*, taking as its startingpoint the under-examined animal-human figures, the second half of this chapter follows up on the deconstructive architecture of Golgonooza and the implications of such an architecture for both man and his disciplines (or the ontological and epistemological stakes in this architecture). Blake's *Jerusalem*, in all of its suffocating fullness, makes us, more than any other text apart from *Thel*, think about just how much we are in what Blake elsewhere calls "an innumerable company" (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, E566). We find that Blake's "human" is not a subject with discrete boundaries; it is a categorical determination that sluices outside and under any understanding we may have of a single, solitary thing called "the human." The term becomes, in light of Blake's proposition that "everything is an attempt / to be human," simultaneously hyperextended and evacuated, making Blake's human appear radically different from the humanist subject at the center of all knowledge. "Human" becomes a mucous membrane that slides over everything in the world. While this act may be initially found as merely foregrounding the human subject – making the human not only at the center of the cosmos but narcissistically making the inhuman *human* – this event also serves to evacuate the ontological boundaries and privilege of "the human." Similarly, the discursive supports – the various disciplines, mechanisms or apparatuses – undergirding the traditional category of "the human" are rendered suspect. Now, beyond the humanistic Blake of M.H. Abrams and John Beer – a humanism that colludes with "beautiful thinking" (tending towards unity, balance and order) – Blake's human resonates with Deleuze and Guatarri's claim that "In

truth, there are only inhumanities, humans are made exclusively of inhumanities, but very different ones, of very different natures and speeds” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 190).

Sidestepping what is arguably Romanticism’s most recognizable inhuman, the Creature in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, chapter 5 dedicates itself to a lengthy analysis of Shelley’s *The Last Man*, an incredibly relevant novel to the posthumanities. I consider how the novel’s disciplines, specifically literature and music, are emphatically drained out of the text – along with the majority of its humans – only to reach a variable tipping point and come limping back. Here, the driving question of Shelley’s disciplinary thought is, like Lyotard’s question in *The Inhuman* (“Can thought can go on without a body?”) – Can the humanities go on without the human? Shelley’s novel through its representations of literature and music actively ‘unworks’ the disciplines and their function along with its *anthropos* in the ‘order of things.’ The arts that reappear towards the end of *The Last Man* mark Shelley’s speculative thought towards what it might mean for literature and music to survive beyond the human and what forms they might take. As I will argue, this novel operates as an unworking of the idealism of aesthetics (as the art of thinking beautifully), a critique of the sustainability of both man and his cultural achievements. Here, through the disciplines of literature and music, the novel registers a movement towards subtraction, a paring down of the disciplines towards what I will call their point or germ of minimal existence. This subtractive gesture is not, however, nihilistic; disciplinary decreation becomes the condition of possibility for renewal. The limping back in mangled form of literature and music renders the novel a site of both dis-ease and of potential for dismantling institutions and disciplines. Shelley’s *Last Man* is a thought-experiment about the recalcitrance of a discipline, of arriving at or finding the stubborn

germ of poetry, literature, music – an ineradicable germ that might survive on into perpetuity.

The conclusion considers what shadows “The Romantic Posthuman and Posthumanities” might cast forward into our futures. This deconstructive “history of ideas” on the ways in which man and his disciplines are organized, reorganized and disorganized offers some closing remarks on what it might mean for the posthumanities finally to acknowledge its Romantic debt.

Chapter 1

1 From Man to “Differently Organized Creatures”: Kant’s Anthropology as Counterscience

This winter I am giving, for the second time, a lecture course on *Anthropologie*, a subject that I now intend to make into a proper academic discipline. But my plan is quite unique.

– Kant to Marcus Herz, 1773 (*Correspondence* 141/Ak10:145)

1.1 Introduction

Traditionally, Kant scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on the critical philosophy. Within the past decade studies on Kant’s other work – notably his late work – have led to a gradual shift in focus towards the limits or margins of his thought, including his precritical writings, those texts that John Zammito describes as the ones where Kant’s “compass wobbled wildly from the telos of the critical philosophy we have ever since enshrined” (*Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* 5). Indeed, following the attentive readings by Peter Fenves, David Clark, John Zammito, and Alix Cohen, new strands have emerged in Kant, including a “late Kant,” and what Karl Vorländer calls an “altogether different Kant”(158). It is this strand which I seek to take up, in order to disrupt this tidy parcelling out of either an early or a late, speculative Kant. In what follows, I argue – against the grain of these recent Kant studies – that Kant, raising the question of what man is and answering it in a certain way that places strict limits around man in the first two *Critiques*, then also foresees a certain Foucauldian end of man in the *Opus Postumum*. In doing so, I position myself against Zammito’s reading of Kant in two

ways: First, I disagree that Kant, having been interested in anthropology early in his career, regrettably puts it behind him, only to return to it in his very late work so as to secure its subordinate place in relation to the *Critiques*. Instead, I insist that Kant maintains his anthropological interests throughout his work, beginning with the earliest *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* [*Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels*] (1755). As this essay's subtitle reveals, *Essay on the Constitution and Mechanical Origin of the Entire Universe, Treated in Accordance with Newtonian Principles*, Kant's aim is to "discover the systematic factor which ties together the great members of the created realm in the whole extent of infinity" (81/Ak1:221). However, Kant dips into discussions of "the inhabitants of the various planets" (82/Ak1:349) as part of his discussion on thinking about the correlation between planetary location and the density of bodies and how this affects thought:

The stuff, out of which the inhabitants of different planets as well as the animals and plants on them, are built, should in general be lighter and of finer kind, and the elasticity of the fibers together with the principal disposition of their build should be all the more perfect, the farther they stand from the sun. (189/Ak1:358; Kant's emphasis)

While the *Universal Natural History* intends to take up "general laws of motion" (92/Ak1:246), it ventures into discussions of human nature and other topics that fall under anthropology. The version of the history of the universe that this text ultimately offers is closer to what Derrida calls *mondialisation*, that process of understanding the history of the *monde* [a world] that is open to what Victor Li calls "the event that cannot be calculated, programmed, or predicted in advance" (142). This idea of the *monde*,

developed by Derrida and Nancy, is unlike “globalization,” which imposes a liberal humanist narrative predicated on the symbolic figure of a globe with its spherical harmony and completeness.

Anthropological interests, in the above sense, murmur beneath the critical philosophy and extend as far as the posthumously published *Opus Postumum* – a text that Kant intended to be a physics that would ground his metaphysics, but that slips into speculative discussions on the open-endedness of humanity and the coming of “differently organized creatures, which, in turn, [give] place to others after their destruction” (*Opus* 66-7/Ak21:214-5). I offer that the diverse domains and texts in Kant’s anthropological corpus include: those concerned with speculative science, as found in the *Opus Postumum*; cosmological and human history, such as in *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* [*Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*], *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* [*Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*] and *Conflict of the Faculties* [*Streit der Fakultäten*]; anthropology as the study of society, as in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* [*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*] and his anthropology lectures [*Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*]; and Kant’s essays on race, biology, and theories of nature, including *Determination of the Concept of a Human Race* [*Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace*], *Of the Different Races of Human Beings* [*Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen*] and his lectures on geography [*Physische Geographie*] and pedagogy [*Pädagogik*]. Kant’s anthropological interests are not limited to his lecture course or to the text that grew out of them, *The Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Nevertheless, the lectures in anthropology published in

1798 did introduce the distinction between pragmatic anthropology, defined as that which is concerned with what man ought to make of himself, and physiological anthropology, which is concerned with what nature makes of man (*Lectures on Anthropology* 48/Ak 25:470).¹⁸ I argue, however, that Kant's anthropology is not what it claims to be; it is not the purported pragmatic discipline but is closer, in places, to a physiological anthropology, evident in its curious inclusion of highly speculative topics such as aliens, or the ages best suited for writing poetry or studying science (to name but two examples). I want to suggest that "pragmatic anthropology," as Kant coins his preferred brand, is a limiting definition of the discipline, an attempt to discipline what in actuality operates like a counterscience or what I want to call a "general anthropology," terms which I will now unfold.

To see how the diverse domains across these texts fall under Kant's anthropology requires a revised notion of anthropology itself, as a *general anthropology* – in Georges Bataille's sense of the term "general," wherein a "general economy" includes what is typically expelled from a system or discourse, as is done in a "restricted economy."¹⁹ Recognizing how some of Kant's work actually is physiological anthropology helps us get beyond the limiting pragmatic definition of anthropology. This framing of Kant's anthropology as a general economy brings me to my second point of disagreement with John Zammit – and what is perhaps my most original contribution – namely, over what anthropology is to Kant. For Zammito, Kant's emergent anthropology is only a

¹⁸ The first instance of "pragmatic anthropology" appears in the *Lecture of the Winter Semester 1775-1776 based on the transcriptions Friedländer*, in Kant's *Lectures on Anthropology*, ed. Wood and Loudon.

¹⁹ Bataille takes this up in *The Accursed Share*.

“discipline” in the sense of a discursive formation, or a “focus of questioning” like the “research programme” of Imre Lakatos or the “paradigm” of Thomas Kuhn (4). Against Zammito, I suggest that anthropology in Kant’s usage, as a subject he lectured on at the University of Königsberg for over two decades, is a *discipline* in Foucault’s definition in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* as that which “constitut[es] bodies of knowledge and organiz[es] them for institutional transmission” (178-9). Furthermore, I argue that for Kant anthropology is not a human science, as Zammito and Cohen suggest, but operates more closely to a “counterscience,” Foucault’s term for a science that “would appear to traverse, animate, and disturb the whole constituted field of the human sciences” (*The Order of Things* 381), a current that “flow[s] in the opposite direction [...] back to their epistemological basis, and that [...] ceaselessly ‘unmake[s]’ that very man who is creating and re-creating his positivity in the human sciences” (379). A counterscience relates to the human sciences in a “relation that is strange, undefined, [...] and more fundamental than any relation of adjacency” (367). To disrupt the metaphor that Alix Cohen uses to describe Kant’s anthropology, that is of a “map-making venture” that shows “how we can reach [our] destination” (106-7), anthropology read as a counterscience is a venture of creating folds and infolds so as to disrupt the ability to “find” man.²⁰

²⁰ Anthropology operates like a counterscience in Foucault’s *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology*, even though he hasn’t invented the term “counterscience” yet.

1.2 Kant's Anthropology and the Question of the Human

“What is man?” This question is the driving force of Kant’s anthropological project. It is, as well, the question undergirding all of philosophy, as Kant states in his *Logic*:

The field of philosophy in this cosmopolitan [*weltbürgerlichen*] meaning may be summed up in the following questions:

1. What can I know?
2. What ought I to do?
3. What may I hope?
4. What is man? [*Was ist der Mensch?*]

The first question is answered by *metaphysics*, the second by *morality*, the third by *religion*, and the fourth by *anthropology*. At bottom all this could be reckoned to be anthropology, because the first three questions are related to the last. (28-9/Ak9:25)

Anthropology thus holds an important place among the other disciplines, operating in Kant’s thought as a larger disciplinary container for all these questions about man.²¹

Thus, fundamental for Kant’s vision of a world philosophy is the question of the human and what we may see as its disciplinary arm, the complementary project of anthropology.

Well before the publication of his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), an outgrowth of his popular anthropology lectures [*Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*] given at the University of Königsberg for over two decades (1772-96),

²¹ Foucault in his *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology* describes Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* as a foundation for the human sciences, and describes it as the inverse of the *Critiques*.

anthropological interests emerge in Kant's work as early as his *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755). In this mystical essay, Kant expresses his teleological concern over man's unfinished nature and the difficulty in answering the question of what the human is:

It is not even known to us what the human currently is, even though consciousness and the senses should instruct us; much less how we will be able to speculate on what it should one day become! Nevertheless, the human soul's curiosity for knowledge snatches impatiently at this object, from which it is distanced, and aims at shedding some light amidst such obscure knowledge.
(Ak1:366)²²

Over the following decades Kant continues to snatch impatiently at this object of enquiry (the human) both in his critical philosophy and in his empirical investigations into physical geography and anthropology, the latter of which was an outgrowth of the former.²³ Thus, during the same period that Kant was writing the three *Critiques* he was

²² Es ist uns nicht einmal recht bekannt, was der Mensch anjetzt wirklich ist, ob uns gleich das Bewußtsein und die Sinne hievon belehren sollten; wie viel weniger werden wir errathen können, was er dereinst werden soll! Dennoch schnappt die Wißbegierde der menschlichen Seele sehr begierig nach diesem von ihr so entfernten Gegenstande und strebt, in solchem dunkeln Erkenntnisse einiges Licht zu bekommen. (Ak 1:366). My translation.

²³ I do not take up Kant's geography here. I intend to do so in a future project. Alix Cohen in *Kant and the Human Sciences* explains that both physical geography and anthropology are *pragmatic* disciplines for Kant insofar as they provide useful knowledge for being in the world. Where they differ, however, "is in the object they study. The object of pragmatic anthropology is the human being considered as a free rational being, whilst physical geography studies him as one 'thing' on earth, independently of his intentionality" (63). Robert Loudon, however, argues that these disciplines collapse in on each other, such that "no bright, clear line" can be drawn between them: "The most we can say is something like the following: in the geography lectures, human beings are treated primarily...as 'things in the world' that are 'products belonging to the play of nature' (Anth 7:120), whereas in the anthropology lectures, the human being is considered primarily...as 'a citizen of the world' (7:120) who is 'a free-acting being' (7:119)" (*Kant's Human Being* 128).

continuously lecturing on the newly emerging discipline of anthropology, a convergence that is frequently overlooked in Kant scholarship in favour of calving away a cerebral, crystalline Kant of the *Critiques* from the more speculative and disorganized Kant of the anthropological writings. This desire to inoculate Kant against his unruly anthropological work persists in the most recent scholarship, such as when Alix Cohen writes: “The benefit of this reading is that, by distinguishing between two essential dimensions of Kant’s system, the transcendental and the pragmatic, the former is preserved from any ‘empirical contamination’ by the latter” (145). Similarly, John Zammito relegates the anthropological interests of Kant to the limited sphere of the pre-critical writings, which he suggests Kant necessarily terminates because of his understanding and subsequent dismissal of anthropology as a popular philosophy [*Popularphilosophie*] – a project that his once-prized student and later-day rival Herder continues. By focusing on the “shadow” of Kant’s critical system, by examining the wobbly parts of his work prior to 1770, prior to Kant’s finding his proper philosophical legs and making the “critical turn,” Zammito inadvertently contains the anthropological interests, which renders the over two-decade long lecture course and subsequent publication of *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) a blind spot in his argument. Because Zammito conceives of anthropology in such a restricted way, he in effect contains it. Hence, contrary to Cohen and Zammito, who both parcel out the empirical from a transcendental Kant, or a precritical anthropological popular philosophy from the monumental critical system of the *Critiques*, I focus on the pervasive and contaminating gnawing of anthropological interests in the lecture course as well as in Kant’s published writings during this period, such as his *Review of Moscati* (1771) and his essay *Of the Different*

Races of Human Beings (1775); these publications reveal, as Susan Shell argues, that “anthropological concerns, during this crucial period of Kant’s intellectual formation, were close to the center of his thinking” (“Kant’s ‘True Economy’” 195), rendering it impossible to think of Kant’s transcendental thinking as occurring in a space-time set apart from the empirical. Where the three *Critiques* take up the question of man’s cognition and the seemingly limitless powers of the mind, the anthropological lectures unwork this framing of man, not least when Kant remarks on the impossibility of knowing our species:²⁴

The highest species concept may be that of a *terrestrial* rational being; however, we shall not be able to name its character because we have no knowledge of *non-terrestrial* rational beings that would enable us to indicate their characteristic property and so to characterize this terrestrial being among rational beings in general. – It seems, therefore, that the problem of indicating the character of the human species is absolutely insoluble, because the solution would have to be made through experience by means of the comparison of two *species* of rational being, but experience does not offer us this. (*Anthropology* 225)

Not only does Kant’s discussion of man detour through the inhuman, but the very ability to know man is precariously twinned to the (in)ability to know the inhuman. This curious

²⁴ Although Allen Wood suggests that despite the uncertainty over the human that Kant periodically voices throughout the duration of his early to late work, the human is never truly at risk of categorical or ontological contamination, he contradictorily admits that “Kant also thinks it is *impossible* to define what is peculiar to the human species. For, he says, this species is only one possible variant of rational nature, yet we are acquainted with no other variants with which to compare it and arrive at specific differentia. . . . Whatever we say about human nature, its predispositions and its propensities, can have only a provisional character” (“Kant and the Problem of Human Nature” 47).

remark in the final pages of Kant's *Anthropology* unsettles the text's earlier claims about man, while simultaneously opening up man and anthropology to the inhuman, to the possibility of something other than human.

Where Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), typically called the first *Critique*, develops his theoretical philosophy (theory of knowledge and science) by examining the necessary (*a priori*) conditions of theoretical experience, the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), the second *Critique*, is the cornerstone of his practical philosophy (ethics, politics, religion), and considers the necessary conditions of moral experience. The *Critique of Judgment* (1790), the third *Critique*, takes up the necessary conditions for the experience of aesthetic phenomena and judgments of taste. This concern for *a priori* conditions is how the human is supposedly severed from the nonhuman, with whom we share the empirical, *a posteriori* elements. "In Kant's view," notes T. K. Seung, "we can elevate our existence beyond the brute animal condition by transforming the *a posteriori* elements into rational experience through the *a priori* elements" (vii). Together, by examining the theoretical, practical, and aesthetic experiences of man, and showing how man is bounded off from the nonhuman by understanding, reason, and judgment, the first two *Critiques* place certain limits around man. The third *Critique*, however, breaches the limits set up by the previous two, a line of thought that we find in the Kant of Lyotard or Deleuze. Indeed, as Deleuze suggests, in the *Critique of Judgment* we find a "deeply romantic Kant" and the "foundation of Romanticism" (*Kant's Critical Philosophy* xi-xii). In Deleuze's framing of the architectonic of the three *Critiques*, Kant first privileges the understanding, and its governing role over imagination and reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* he privileges reason. But in the *Critique of*

Judgment, Kant reveals how the faculties “are capable of relationships which are free and *unregulated*, where each goes to its own limit and nevertheless shows the possibility of some sort of harmony with the others” (Deleuze *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* xi-xii). In Deleuze’s reading, Kant’s exploration of the Sublime in the third *Critique* becomes a way to articulate the shattered subject, and bursts open the limits that the first two *Critiques* posited:

it [the Sublime] brings the various faculties into play in such a way that they struggle against one another, the one pushing the other towards its maximum or limit, the other reacting by pushing the first towards an inspiration which it would not have had alone [...] It is a terrible struggle between imagination and reason, and also between understanding and the inner sense [...] It is a tempest in the depths of a chasm opened up in the subject. The faculties confront one another, each stretched to its own limit, and find their accord in a fundamental discord: a discordant accord is the great discovery of the *Critique of Judgment*, the final Kantian reversal. (xii-xiii)

Unlike the first two *Critiques* – though closer in spirit to the “Romantic” Kant, that is, the Kant interested in the discord of the subject that Deleuze finds in the third *Critique* – the anthropological writings move in the opposite direction, running against their definition of the human. Like the Foucauldian counterscience, Kant’s anthropological discourse stands in an intimate proximity to them, clamouring beneath them in a relation that is more haunting than simple adjacency. The “obscure knowledge” surrounding the human that Kant first remarks on in *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* remains shadowy throughout his subsequent work, including the *Anthropology*, the

Logic, and the *Opus Postumum*, such that he never does adequately answer the fundamental question of anthropology: what is man? Put differently, Kant's anthropological interests produce a common signature of unsettledness as they unwork the stability of the concept of man and its disciplinary extensions.

1.3 What is Anthropology?

Scathingly described in Friedrich Schleiermacher's review in the *Athenäum* as a collection of "trivial matters [...] of the most peculiar confusion" (qtd. in Kuehn "Introduction" x), Kant's *Anthropology* is a curious mixture of observations on topics as diverse as boredom, eating alone, distraction, pain, aging, the arts and sciences, "*non-terrestrial* rational beings" (*Anthropology* 225), and even material that he acknowledges does not belong under anthropology. As eclectic as the text itself, so too is Kant's understanding of anthropology. Indeed, as I want to suggest, the heterogeneity of Kant's *Anthropology* actually contaminates his desire to delimit a pragmatic anthropology as separate from other anthropologies, such as physiological anthropology. Upon closer examination of what pragmatic anthropology is in theory and what it is in practice – or, to put it in Godwin's terms, to compare the text's moral (what it intends to do) and its tendency (what it actually does)²⁵ – we see how the unruly text of the *Anthropology* transforms Kant's so-called pragmatic anthropology against his intention into a general anthropology that includes those physiological elements he claims it must exclude.

Kant envisions pragmatic anthropology operating on a global scale, and intends it to stand apart from the "local anthropology" that remains grounded in the geo-temporal

²⁵ In his essay "Of Choice in Reading," Godwin distinguishes between the moral and the tendency of a text, and privileges the latter term.

particulars of a group of human beings. As a “general knowledge of the world” [*Weltkenntniß*] that provides the grounds for localized knowledge (*Lectures on Anthropology* 262/Ak25:734), pragmatic anthropology is a study not “of human beings but of human nature” (48/Ak25:471). Pragmatic anthropology as the study of what man “can and should make of himself” (*Anthropology* 3/Ak7:119) purports to distinguish itself from other early forms of anthropology, such as physiological anthropology, which studies “what *nature* makes of the human being” (*Anthropology* 3/Ak7:119). Kant had strong feelings about physiological anthropology, which he expressed in his *Anthropology* but also in private. In 1772, the same year Kant began teaching his anthropology course, German physician Ernst Platner (1744-1818) published his *Anthropology for Physicians and Philosophers*, a seminal work of physiological anthropology which Kant dismissed in a 1773 letter to his student Marcus Herz as “eternally futile inquiries as to the manner in which bodily organs are connected with thought” (*Correspondence* 141/10:145). As Christoph Wulf observes, pragmatic anthropology calls attention to the fact that “in order to survive, human beings, unlike animals, are forced to lead their lives in various different historical and cultural environments and to design themselves” (2). While Kant’s pragmatic anthropology differs from physiological anthropology, it is different again from the comparative anthropology of Johann Gottfried Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt, which emphasizes the cultural and historical nature of anthropology with its focus on the comparative characteristics of societies, cultures, and individuals, and is marked by the ideological drive towards finding the ideal man and by the ambitions of *Bildung*.

Implicit in Kant's pragmatic anthropology are both the responsibility and obligation of the human being to reach his full humanity, something that can only be actualized through various processes of enculturation: "A human being can become human only through education. He is nothing but what education makes of him" (qtd. in Wood 41). Kant's belief in the humanizing power of education resonates with the thinking of other philosophers of his time, such as Godwin, who writes in his 1797 essay, "Of an Early Taste for Reading," that "Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms" (31). Enabling this capacity to become human, however, is the latent germ of reason within man that fundamentally distinguishes him from animals, his "old comrades" as Kant elsewhere calls them ("Review of Moscati" 81/Ak2:425). While Kant shares the Rousseauvian ideal of humanity's inevitable goal of self-perfection, he is hesitant about the outcome, much like the ending of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* with the fragility of the newly realized Promethean Age hanging in the balance. Not only is the human merely the creature *capable* of becoming rational (it is not a given), there is lodged within him a darker, painful "seed of *discord*" (*Anthropology* 226/Ak7:322) that propels human activity: "Nature itself has arranged things so that pain creeps in, uninvited, between pleasant sensations that entertain the senses, and so makes life interesting" (57/Ak7:164).

Pragmatic anthropology is also envisioned as a generalized "knowledge of the world" [*Weltkenntniß*], a knowledge that is gained through experience and interaction with others, and it is set against scholastic knowledge, the latter of which involves a more peripheral, superficial knowing *of* the world. To put it in Blakean terms, it is the difference between the mole's localized knowledge of the pit, and the eagle's distanced

perception of it (*The Book of Thel*). As Kant writes, “the expressions ‘to *know* the world’ and ‘to *have* the world’ are rather far from each other in their meaning, since one only *understands* the play that one has watched, while the other has *participated* in it” (4/Ak7:120). Indeed, Kant’s metaphor of the stage, in which the spectator has either passively watched or actively participated in a play, to frame the difference between a *Weltkenntniß* and a scholastic knowledge, finds a similar expression in the role of a closet drama, or a drama to be performed in the imagination, as in Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, wherein one must participate more intimately as all the drama unfolds within one’s own imagination. For both thinkers, new organizations of knowledge – pragmatic anthropology for Kant, and mental drama for Shelley – are formal solutions for accessing a more intimate knowledge of humanity.

Kant’s pragmatic anthropology is imagined to combine both experiential, pragmatic “real-world” knowledge and simultaneously to apply it to the entirety of the human species:

Such an anthropology, considered as *knowledge of the world*, which must come after our *schooling*, is actually not yet called *pragmatic* when it contains an extensive knowledge of *things* in the world, for example, animals, plants, and minerals from various lands and climates, but only when it contains knowledge of the human being as a *citizen of the world*. (*Anthropology* 4/Ak 7:120)

In addition to being a *Weltkenntniß*, anthropology is imagined by Kant as something accessible and useful to the public:

An anthropology written from a pragmatic point of view that is systematically designed and yet popular (through reference to examples which can be found by

every reader) yields an advantage for the reading public: the completeness of the headings under which this or that observed human quality of practical relevance can be subsumed offers readers many occasions and invitations to make each particular into a theme of its own, so as to place it in the appropriate category. (5-6/Ak7:121-122)

Thus, anthropology for Kant is a hydra-headed science. Unlike scholastic philosophy, which has only watched the play, anthropology “has *participated* in it” (4/Ak7:120) – and it is an actor that plays at least four roles. It is a *Weltphilosophie* that is 1) a knowledge of the world as cosmos (as different from “local anthropology”), 2) knowledge of the world (of man as citizen), 3) a *praxis* (experience of the world) and 4) a popular philosophy (accessible to the public). Kant’s ubiquitous variety of anthropology is what I call a *general anthropology*, that is, an anthropology that retains its waste or those elements that it would otherwise expel.

1.4 The Tendency of Kant’s Anthropology

The *Anthropology* is thus a heterogeneous text that exceeds Kant’s attempt to contain it within his definition of pragmatic anthropology. Indeed, where pragmatic anthropology intends to limit anthropology, to carve away the interests of physiological anthropology, namely the connection between the body and cognition, the text of the *Anthropology* itself constantly exceeds this definition. Although *The Anthropology* argues that it is concerned with the pragmatic and not physiological, with what the human (not nature) makes of man, its detours into topics on Nature’s organization of man betray any such clean divisions. For example, Kant indulges in some remarks on “*nature’s end* [...] in establishing womankind”:

When nature entrusted to woman's womb its dearest pledge, namely the species, in the fetus by which the race is to propagate and perpetuate itself, nature was frightened so to speak about the preservation of the species and so implanted this *fear* [...] in woman's nature; through which weakness this sex rightfully demands male protection for itself. (*Anthropology* 207)

Kant detours into precisely the very physiological work – the collusion between fear and the body – with which pragmatic anthropology ought not to deal. Beyond his bizarre remarks on the constitution of women, who, as David Clark notes, are just one group of rational beings that Kant abjects as alien in this text – along with children, the insane, the mob, non-Europeans, and non-Christian Europeans – Kant also ventures into deeper discussions that take up physiological concerns.²⁶

For instance, in the section of the *Anthropology* titled “On the Faculty of Desire,” Kant delves into the affects of anger, shame, disgust and boredom and related sensory experiences of shuddering and shivering. Affects, says Kant, “are generally diseased occurrences (symptoms)” that, following from English physician John Brown's (1735-1788) *Elementa Medicinae* (1780), can be divided into “*sthenic* affects, which come from strength, and *asthenic* affects, which come from weakness” (154). Like his dismissive comment on the naturally inferior design of women's bodies and minds quoted above, Kant indulges in heavy gendering of the acts of laughing and weeping:

²⁶ This is a term he uses in its full valence: “Aliens” for Clark includes, of course, those extraterrestrials that Kant names late in the *Anthropology*, but also those figures, such as children and the insane, that Kant treats as sub-human or alien. Despite the importance of Clark's essay, I disagree with his observation that Kant's references to aliens in the *Anthropology* are “the last instance of an off-world interest” (202), since Kant does make another reference to aliens in his later *Opus Postumum*.

Laughing is *masculine*, weeping on the other hand is *feminine* (with men it is *effeminate*). And when tears glisten in a man's eyes, it is only his *being moved* to tears that can be forgiven, and this only if it comes from magnanimous but powerless sympathy with others' suffering, without letting the tears fall in drops, and still less if he accompanies them with sobs, thereby making a disgusting music. (*Anthropology* 154, emphasis original)

The crying or sobbing man who dares produce such a "disgusting music" violates what is acceptable under the categories of masculinity and femininity within affect, which itself is already, as Kant calls it, a "diseased occurrence."

His observations on anger, and prescription for how to deal with an angry person, also reveal a Kant deeply engrossed with the connection between bodies and psyches:

If a person comes into your room in anger in order to say harsh words to you in fierce indignation, politely ask him to sit down; if you succeed in this, his scolding will already be milder, since the comfort of sitting is a relaxation that is not really compatible with the threatening gestures and screaming that can be used when standing. (150)

While such practical anger management advice is certainly *useful*, and by this justification is consistent with one of Kant's definitions of pragmatic anthropology as a discipline that will be useful for students beyond the parameters of the classroom, it again shows us a Kant committed to thinking about the ways in which the body orients thinking, or about how the phenomenological affects the psychic.

Kant returns to such a careful thinking about the body and its physiological response to certain thoughts when he considers the cases of shuddering and shivering:

they are not themselves affects because they are only momentary, transitory, and leave no trace of themselves behind: the *shuddering* that comes over children when they listen at night to their nurses' ghost stories is like this. – *Shivering*, as if one were being doused with cold water (as in a rainstorm), also belongs here. Not the perception of danger, but the mere thought of danger – though one knows that none is present – produces this sensation, which, when it is merely a moment of fright and not an outbreak of it, seems not to be disagreeable. (163)

Indeed, even the example Kant uses to describe man's unhappiness is symptomatic of his physiological thinking: "the unhappy man groans in his chains, which he nevertheless cannot break away from because they have already grown together with his limbs, so to speak" (166). Like the example of the unhappy man groaning in his chains – an overdetermined Romantic image evoking Rousseau's man, Shelley's Prometheus, or Blake's Urizen – Kant finds himself similarly bound to physiological concerns from which his anthropological thinking cannot break away.

Kant also digresses into general discussions over the merits of poetry over rhetoric, a subtopic that falls under his discussion of "The feeling of pleasure and displeasure." He begins by attempting to justify this line of thinking on the grounds that these "speaking arts" are "aimed at a frame of mind whereby the mind is directly aroused to activity, and thus they have their place in a *pragmatic* anthropology, where one tries to know the human being according to what can be made of him" (143). Quickly, however, poetry is expanded to include whatever "product" has been "composed with spirit and taste"; whatever may be "presented directly to the senses by means of the eyes or ears"; and can diversely include "the arts of painting, horticulture, and architecture, as well as

the arts of music and verse” (144). Poetry is understood by Kant in the most general way, which, I argue, is a displaced image for his general system of anthropology. Kant not only values poetry over rhetoric for its musicality, “a sound that is pleasant in itself, which mere speech is not,” but values poets over musicians themselves: “among poets there are not so many shallow minds (minds unfit for business) as there are among musicians, because poets also speak to the understanding, but musicians speak only to the senses” (145). Most unusual, however, are Kant’s final comments in this section on poetry, which again reintroduce physiological concerns: “In old age the *poetic vein* drives up, at a time when the sciences still promise good health and activity in work to a good mind. This is probably so because beauty is a *blossom*, whereas science is the *fruit*” (146, italics original).²⁷ Kant relates the “originality and novelty” required in poetry with the “agility” of the younger body; poetry, “except in matters of *caustic* wit, in epigrams and *xenia*, where poetry is at the same time more serious than playful” is for the virile youth (147).²⁸ In addition to these heterogeneous observations about the collusion between bodies of poets and musicians, poetry and rhetoric, which truly carve winding detours throughout the *Anthropology*, it is the final inclusion of nonterrestrial beings within the text’s closing pages that marks Kant’s nascent discipline of anthropology as a profoundly fragile organization of knowledge about man. As Clark astutely observes, this late turn in the text to the figures of the nonterrestrial beings repeats a narrative strategy from his earlier essay, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, which while being

²⁷ Contrast this with Shelley’s definition of poetry in *A Defence of Poetry* as both “the root and blossom of all other systems of thought” (1175).

²⁸ As the footnote in the *Anthropology* explains: “*Xenia* – in Greek, presents to guest or strangers. In German literature, a kind of satirical epigram first introduced by Schiller and Goethe” (147, fn. 35)

“a treatise on the physics of planetary bodies [...] concludes by morphing into a reflection on the nature of ‘man’ in the form a supplemental ‘phantasy’ about beings living on other worlds. In early as well as late Kant, it seems, wherever there is anthropological discourse, so too are there thoughts about aliens” (255).

Arguably, what we find in the *Anthropology* – and this appears to be implied by Clark’s rhetoric – is consistent with what Peter Fenves calls a “late Kant,” a designation for the later, more speculative work of Kant that takes up the thesis of “radical evil” and puts forward the idea that humans cannot claim possession of the earth. Although Fenves does not consider the *Anthropology* under this banner, granting such primary status instead to the *Critique of Judgment* and *Opus Postumum* among other texts, Clark seemingly does. While the *Anthropology* cannot be chronologically considered “late” because it is the culmination of a twenty-year long lecture course, Clark’s reading articulates a spirit or tone in the text that is consistent with Fenves’ portrait of the “late Kant.” Hence, Clark’s reading importantly reveals a speculative side to Kant that cannot be neatly contained, as in Fenves’ ordering. While I differ from Clark who, I argue, not only misjudges the *Anthropology* as “the last instance of an off-world interest” (202) – thereby overlooking the later reference in the *Opus Postumum* (which Fenves does treat at length) – I follow his attentive reading of the ways in which aliens, or nonhumans, populate his anthropological writings. To push Clark’s reading a step further, however, we can recognize how the presence of the nonterrestrial being is one heterogeneous element (among others) that contributes to the problematization of Kant’s conception of the discipline of anthropology and renders it a general economy.

Recognizing a general anthropology in Kant, and the wide range of texts that may be included within this discipline, necessarily challenges the isolated and marginal place that scholars such as Zammito see Kant as finally assigning to anthropology. According to Zammito,

Kant created the “critical philosophy” at the cost of forsaking the “science” of anthropology. He sought to *relegate* it – not *promote* it – to the “pragmatic.” This is doubly ironic, since for the broader Enlightenment, the pragmatic was the greatest consideration, while for the critical Kant it was not only subordinate to, but perhaps even *negligible for*, the “primacy of practical reason.” (*Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* 348, emphasis original)

For Zammito, Kant publishes the *Anthropology* as a way of closing the book, of putting to rest, or burying the anthropological discourse beneath the all-important critical philosophy – a gesture Zammito himself appears eager to repeat. For him, to again put it in Godwinian terms, the moral and the tendency of Kant’s pragmatic anthropology are one and the same; Kant’s anthropology is all too pragmatic. The pragmatic is intended to be demoted and relegated beneath practical reason, which is the type of reasoning that is speculative and is concerned with *how* we think about what to do and not with doing it. And yet, when Kant delves into speculative discussions about nonterrestrial rational beings and how their existence helps frame our understanding of our position in the order of things, he engages in a mode of thought that closely resembles practical reason. Pragmatic anthropology, as a discipline of civil society rather than of philosophy, is concerned with what to do – with what man ought to make of himself, how he ought to exist or behave in civil society – in a similar way that Kant’s essay on *Perpetual Peace* is

an exercise of practical reason, that is, an exercise in how to think about the problem of perpetual peace, and not with actually implementing it. While Zammito ignores the continuities between anthropology and practical reason, I argue that Kant's anthropology has more in common with practical reason than is traditionally acknowledged, and that these discourses are linked by what G. Felicitas Munzel calls their shared "strategy and means by which man realizes his true vocation as a citizen of the moral world order" (Svare 135). Kant does not publish the *Anthropology* as a way of repressing its importance within his critical system; he publishes it as a line of thought that has never gone away, a murmuring or gnawing that, in Shelley's words, is like a "burning atom of inextinguishable thought" (*Defence* 1173).

Ultimately, Kant envisions his new discipline of pragmatic anthropology in a manner consistent with the tenets of liberal humanism, such as the belief in the notion of "the freely self-determining individual" (Baldick 102-3) and the value of non-specialized or "versatile" learning, as Northrop Frye calls education in the service of "a comprehensive social vision" (*The Critical Path* 62). Yet revealed in the ways his anthropology plays out, the ways in which his system includes the materials it desires to expel, Kant's anthropology is much more than simply what the freely self-determining liberal humanist man desires to make of himself. Instead, it is also about what nature has made of man, the ways in which geography, climate, and planetary location, not to mention age, gender and physiological factors affect man and his experience of the world – all those elements that Kant sought to expel.

1.5 What is the Human?

Kant's writings on evolution mirror the anthropological writings in both expanding the possibilities for man and being tentative about them. Where the first two *Critiques* limit rather than open up the possibilities for man, and by delimiting him also ground certain certitudes about him, these other writings – which are really a subset within his general anthropology, I argue – open up these limits and in the process expose man to what is beyond or outside him. As a subset within what I am calling his “general anthropology,” Kant's evolutionary work falls in line with what we might think of as physiological anthropology, understood in the Romantic sense of physiology as the study of forces (and not simply limited to the human body).²⁹ Hence, another way of understanding Kant's “general anthropology” is to see how the full valence of the term “physiology” operates within his thinking about human nature. Kant is interested in the forces within but also beyond the human body that affect man, forces that, taken together, bear on what man is able to make of himself in the world.

Kant, like many other German philosophers of the eighteenth century, participated in the lively evolutionary discourse of the day. Theories of preformation understood the individual to be merely capable of unfolding from a pre-given form. Epigenesis, which harks back to Aristotle, is the theory of continual developmental change over time in increasing complexity within an individual organism via some guiding force or *élan vital*. Whereas epigenesis postulates that the future individual comes into being during ontogenesis (the developmental process), palingenesis finds the future individual as

²⁹ For an extended treatment of Romanticism's interest in physiology, see Richard C. Sha's essay “Romantic Physiology and the Work of Romantic Imagination: Hypothesis and Speculation in Science and Coleridge.”

already encased within the zygote, ovum or sperm. Palingenesis is the theory of rebirth and regeneration first introduced by Charles Bonnet (1720-1793) in *Palingénésie philosophique, ou idées sur l'état future des etres vivants* (1770). Growing out of preformationism, palingenesis denotes the successive unfolding of a preformed structure within an individual organism, the continuous return of a “germ of restitution” that survives the body and physical catastrophes. Palingenesis is a unique model of biological development that stands as a constitutive midpoint between the dominant forms of preformation and epigenesis, and between Enlightenment and Romantic epistemes. Palingenesis – Greek for “return” or “rebirth” – is a theory grounded in the indivisibility and indestructibility of “germs of restitution” [*germes de restitution*] akin to Leibnizian monads (qtd. in Duchesneau 296).³⁰ Building on Tilottama Rajan’s interpretation of Bonnet’s palingenesis not as a theory of *emboitement* but as a theory of “life” – that is, as a theory concerned with potentiality rather than progress – I offer that such a form of palingenesis occupies an underprivileged place in Kant’s thought.³¹ Indeed, as a theory that is closer to epigenesis than to preformation, palingenesis offers a way of explaining the significant ambivalences and discontinuities in Kant’s use of epigenesis. However, the real pertinence here is what Kant’s engagement with preformation, palingenesis, and epigenesis exemplifies: namely, a speculative wavering on a bio-physiological debate in which are embedded fundamental questions about the origins and ends of man, questions

³⁰ For François Duchesneau, Bonnet’s theory grows out of Leibniz in three ways: “the analogical resort to infinitesimals, the appeal to a priori intellection beyond mere imagination, and the conception of a world of organized beings in serial *emboitement* or envelopment in the least germs” (292). Tilottama Rajan compares Bonnet’s germ to the Deleuzian concept (“Spirit’s Psychoanalysis” 191).

³¹ I suggest that Kant is not as dismissive of palingenesis as is traditionally understood (cf. Williams). Instead, Kant remains drawn to palingenesis, and his epigenesis is a palingenesis-inflected epigenesis.

that are finally unanswerable, but that breach the security and complacency of making the human and the *anthropos* the culmination of history.

While I will not microscopically examine epigenesis and palingenesis on a scientific level, I will suggest that one consequence of this hybridity, the overlap or grafting between these theories, is the formation of a particularly sublime political imaginary. As such, it is my interest here to examine how palingenesis differs from epigenesis in terms of representing a different bio-political imaginary.³² As a theory of evolution, predicated on a transcendently imbued regulative function that continually brings back all developmental force within itself, palingenesis offers the idea that there is some governing germ bringing about order to what without it would appear like potentially limitless growth or vitality, a monstrous surplus of life. Palingenesis' defining feature is its emphasis on potentiality; it is a theory of the potentiality of something *to come* or *to return* on both an individual and collective level. Palingenesis operates in the long Romantic period's imaginary as a sublime model of socio-political change, a developmental model whose prophetic movement carries a force that cannot be seen and promises the potentiality of the coming of a future from behind, beyond our vision and our control.

Recasting Kant in light of his palingenetic features affects how we read his complicated understanding of human progress. While Kant wants to see a continuous,

³² The political imaginary is different from biopolitics. In referring to the bio-political imaginary, I am drawing on the Lacanian sense of "Imaginary" as one of the central ways in which humans structure their experience (the others are the Real and the Symbolic). The Imaginary implies the illusion of a body as coherent or whole; the political imaginary implies the illusory image of the political body – in this case, the body of the *anthropos* – as ever-progressing (epigenesis) or as having the potential to be disrupted (palingenesis).

gradual transition in terms of political reform and human progress, such a progressive model is nevertheless troubled from within: betrayed via a rhetoric of return, references to past revolutions and the potential for future catastrophes and the possibility of the coming of a species which will inherit the earth. As such, we can see that within Kant's talk of human progress there remains a dark germ of doubt. As a result, Kant's epigenesis is haunted by and host to the germ of palingenesis – a discourse marked more by *potentiality* than by progress. I suggest that palingenesis partially garners its sublime affectivity from the role that force plays in this model of development. Building on the Leibnizian theory of force (monads as centres of force), palingenesis, as a theory conceptually arriving from the past, from behind – as one germ tracing back to another, and so on – appears as a strong force from the past, strong enough to unfold the germs throughout all time. Palingenesis, as a kind of unfolding or “taking from behind” – to borrow Deleuze's description of the history of philosophy – disrupts the teleology of human progress, of the forward-oriented movement of man and the *anthropos*.

1.6 Kant and Epigenesis

While today scientists no longer cling to the theories of epigenesis or preformation as they originally existed, instead choosing an amalgamation of both, during the long Romantic period divisions existed between these developmental models.³³ While epigenesis can be traced back to the biological thought of Aristotle in *On the Generation of Animals*, the term and theory of “epigenesis” was introduced by William Harvey in his

³³ Helmut Müller-Sievers notes that “preformation and epigenesis, are nowadays dominant in different fields of investigation. Molecular biology seeks to decipher the preformed text of heredity, whereas embryology allows for epigenetic freedom in morphogenesis” (24).

Disputations Touching the Generation of Animals (1651) where he describes the epigenetic development of a chick:

an animal which is procreated by epigenesis draws in the material and at the same time prepares and concocts and uses it; at the same time that the material is formed, it grows [...] The formative power of the chick takes the material to itself and prepares it, rather than finds it ready prepared, and the chick seems less to be made or given increase by another than by its own self. (204)

The epigenesist view maintains the development of new biological material within the individual organism. According to Helmut Müller-Sievers, under the banner of epigenesis “organisms generate themselves successively under the guidance of a formative drive”

(3). Karen Detlefsen similarly notes that epigenesis creates form out of formlessness:

matter that seemed previously to be homogenous, undifferentiated, noncomplex, unorganized, and nonunified becomes heterogeneous, differentiated, complex, organized, and unified into a living, functional individual. The form not only develops anew but is actually brought into existence as this process continues, and the process is often considered one of *self*-development, even self-creation. (235-6)

The rise in popularity of the epigenetic model of development during the long Romantic period was due to the notion of self-creation inherent within epigenesis, a notion especially valued in German Idealism. As Müller-Sievers observes, “The concept of epigenesis has been, since its inception, polemic; it allows philosophical and literary discourses to account for their own origin without recourse to extraneous causes” (4). For Thomas Pfau, the “most decisive *product* of evolutionary, especially variational

processes is an understanding of their own, implicit *auto-telic* quality – that is, their quest for progressively more sophisticated states of self-awareness and self-description” (“Of Ends and Endings” 235). Upon first glance, it appears that Kant maps easily onto this epigenetic schematic. However, if Kant is indeed employing a Romantic, organicist perspective that favours the open-endedness and perpetual change within development, then his speculative thoughts about a mysterious species to come, and his attraction to darker thoughts about the repetition of cataclysmic geophysical upheaval – an affinity he shares with Bonnet – become problematic.

Kant’s relationship to epigenesis is tenuous, and scholars widely disagree over its importance in his thinking, and in Romantic thought more generally. As Zammito rightly suggests, “more work must be done to clarify the idea of epigenesis in that epoch” of the long Romantic period (*Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, 307).³⁴ For Müller-Sievers, Kant’s use of epigenesis is solely rhetorical, “nothing more, but also nothing less, than an analogy” (13).³⁵ Indeed, Kant himself, in *The One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1762), remarks on the incomprehensibility of Buffon and Maupertuis’s epigenesis:

The internal forms of Buffon and the elements of organic matter which conjoin themselves in a succession according to their recollections of the laws of desire and aversion, according to Maupertuis, are either as totally incomprehensible as

³⁴ Kant’s relationship to epigenesis is the focus of many essays by Zammito. See also “Kant’s Persistent Ambivalence toward Epigenesis, 1764-1790”; “Kant’s Early Views on Epigenesis: The Role of Maupertuis”; and “‘This Inscrutable Principle of an Original Organization’: Epigenesis and ‘Looseness of Fit’ in Kant’s Philosophy of Science’.”

³⁵ This claim oversimplifies the conceptual slippage within the model of epigenesis and within Kant’s own usage of the term.

the things themselves or else they are entirely arbitrarily conceived. [...] Has the ability of a yeast to reproduce its own kind yet been made understandable mechanically? Nevertheless one does not, for this reason, resort to a supernatural cause. (143/Ak2:115)

For Zammito, who teases out the nuances and changes in Kant's long and intricate engagement with epigenesis, Kant's variety is a well-tempered epigenesis compared to the more radical version of it ushered in by Caspar Friedrich Wolff and enthusiastically adopted by Herder ("Kant's Early Views" 345-7). We find such a restricted form of epigenesis in the ways that Kant clings to the fixity of species but allows for species variation due to environmental effects. The act of having one foot in preformation and the other in epigenesis reveals not only Kant's attentiveness to physiology, but is also symptomatic of his inability to answer the driving question of his anthropology: what is the human. Kant's motivation for straddling these theories is, in Zammito's reading, to reinforce limits:

[Kant] held to these doctrines because the alternative would be to allow that environmental factors could cause the strictly genetic nature of the species to alter [...] External factors could be occasions, but not direct causes of changes which could be inherited through generation. [...] Therefore, it had to be possible to establish an account of their variation, a "natural history," that would indicate the original natural endowment of the species and explain its actualization in variety over time in different environments. (*Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* 304)

In 1775, the same year that Kant published *Of the Different Races of Human Beings* – his first effort at defining the variations within the human species³⁶ – German physiologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) published *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind* [*De generis humani varietate nativa*], strongly influenced by Haller and Leibniz.³⁷ Both Kant and Blumenbach, Zammito notes, “subscribed to the notion of ‘preformation,’ even as they sought to modulate it in the direction of epigenesis. Their shared objectives were to uphold the differentiation between man and animals and to explain the different races of man from the basis of the unity of the species [...] This was a moral-political, as much as a physical-anthropological, stance” (*Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* 304).³⁸ Thus, in the mid-1770s – the foundational years of the anthropology lectures – Kant’s theory of organismic development is profoundly

³⁶ While race is not an aspect of the anthropology that I treat at any length, Kant’s discussions of race are generally offensive. For a discussion of this, see Mark Larrimore’s essay “Sublime Waste: Kant on the Destiny of the Races.”

³⁷ Zammito writes: “Haller and Bonnet insisted that the germs – *Keime* in German – for all organisms were preformed but that they had within them the capacity for *growth* and even, within starkly circumscribed limits, for *adaptation*. This was a far harder form of preformation, and, at the level of the *species*, it persisted even into the early forms of *epigenetic theory* in Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Immanuel Kant” (*Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* 304-5).

³⁸ By 1781, Blumenbach has definitively given up preformation for epigenesis. As Robert Richards notes, in the preface to Blumenbach’s tract *Über den Bildungstrieb und das Zeugungsgeschäfte* (‘On the Formative Force and the Operations of Reproduction,’ 1781) we find the confession of “his earlier mistaken endorsement of evolution, made while still green; and with a detailed counterproposal, he sought to shrive himself of that youthful error. He now argued for epigenesis and against evolution” (17-8). In this small tract Blumenbach introduces his idea of the *Bildungstrieb* (formative drive), an inherent impulse embedded within an organism that drives it towards self-development. *Bildungstrieb* was a concept that Kant greatly admired, important for his concept of organic purpose, and in August of 1790, shortly after the publication of the *Critique of Judgment*, he wrote to Blumenbach to praise his “excellent work” that “unite[s] two principles – the physical-mechanical and the sheerly teleological mode of explanation of organized nature” (qtd. in Richards 11). While Blumenbach’s *Bildungstrieb* was one theory of force or drive swirling about in the late eighteenth century (along with *Lebenskraft*), it differed from the other forces, as Richards notes, in “its comprehensive architectonic character: it directed the formation of anatomical structures and the operations of physiological processes of the organism so that various parts would come into existence and function interactively to achieve the ends of the species” (“Kant and Blumenbach” 19).

unsettled. Indeed, there is a parallel between his modulating theory of development – stuck midway between preformation and epigenesis – and his unique strain of anthropology that was developing at the same time, which similarly straddles disciplinary boundaries (between the pragmatic and the physiological).

1.7 Kant and Palingenesis

If epigenesis allows Kant to think about how the organism – or the human – can change gradually, in increasing complexity, but always within certain limits, the theory of palingenesis allows for a darker unfolding of this thought. Kant entertains such murkier thoughts throughout the *Anthropology* and his anthropological discourse at large. In fact, Goethe remarked in his letter to Schiller, December 19, 1798, that Kant's *Anthropology* was a depressing read:

Kant's *Anthropology* is a very valuable book for me, and will be even more so in the future if I enjoy it in repeatedly smaller doses; for in its entirety, as it stands, it is not refreshing. From this point of view the human being always appears in a pathological condition. (qtd. in Kant *Anthropology, History, and Education* 3, n.5)

Kant's palingenesis directly links him to Bonnet, for whom palingenesis is both a theory of the potency of germs and of potentiality, and, as François Duchesneau notes, “a cosmogony which supposes a serial linking of global transformations or revolutions affecting the composition of our world in its successive states” (296). In *La Palingénésie philosophique*, a text whose echoes can be heard throughout Kant's anthropology, Bonnet writes of the interdependence among beings, a way of being that is especially critical for human progress, as it can only be achieved through the succession of beings:

The existence and particular determinations of each being are always in relation to the existence and determination of corresponding or neighboring beings. The present has been determined by the past, the subsequent by the antecedent. The present determines the future. The *universal* harmony is in this way the *result* of all the *particular* harmonies of *coexisting* and *successive* beings. (qtd. in Duchesneau 296)

This physiological theory understands the force of germs as unfolding throughout time and across species-boundaries. Palingenesis diverges from other theories of preformation and pre-existence insofar as it allows for developmental changes to occur; despite being frequently (mis)aligned with the theory of encasement or *emboitement*, palingenesis is not static. Bonnet insists that he has not decided on whether his germ theory proceeds via encasement or dissemination: “*Je n’ai pas décidé entre l’hypothèse de l’emboitement et celle de la dissemination des Germes*” (*Palingénésie* 84; 156) [I have not decided between the theory of encasement and the dissemination of germs].³⁹ As Arthur McCalla explains:

Bonnet’s philosophical palingenesis, then, proposes a series of resurrections understood as successive unfoldings of the germ of restitution. Though these serial rebirths do not in themselves secure Bonnet’s theory from the charge of stasis, because rebirth in a preformationist universe is mere replications, Bonnet’s palingenetic series does entail a sort of development because the world in which it play itself out undergoes change. Bonnet posits a series of ‘revolutions of the globe,’ or physical catastrophes. Indeed, Bonnet suggests that the Creation

³⁹ My translation.

account in Genesis records not the original creation but only the most recent of the numerous revolutions to which our planet has been subjected. The bodies of all living creatures are destroyed in the periodic catastrophes; yet the germs of restitution of each species survive, and the various species reappear when the earth is again habitable. Species, however, do not reappear exactly as they were in pre-catastrophic times because the world has changed, and species must correspond to the world they inhabit. Bonnet expects the present earth and the appearance of its denizens to be so changed as to be unrecognizable after the next catastrophe. (423)

However it is Tilottama Rajan's description of palingenesis as a theory of potentiality that best articulates what is at stake in this theory. While Bonnet's belief that all germs are existent from the beginning is in accordance with preformation, his particular variation on preformation, as Rajan observes, "is not determinism so much as a way of ensuring that no germ of possibility, however undeveloped, is ever lost" ("Spirit's Psychoanalysis" 190). Bonnet himself speaks of the immense storehouse of nature wherein nothing is lost and instead retains potentiality:

chacun de ces Germes renferme un autre Germe impérissable, qui ne se développera que dans l'Etat futur de notre Planete. Rien ne se perd dans les immense Magasins de la Nature; tout y a son employ, sa fin et la meilleure fin possible. (157)

[each of these Germs contains another imperishable Germ, which will develop only in the future State of our Planet. Nothing is lost in the immense Stores of Nature; all there has its function, its end and the best possible end.]⁴⁰

Bonnet describes the process of germs passing and growing through one another via an infinite process of composition and decomposition:

On demandera encore, que deviant ce Germe impérissable, lorsque l'Animal meurt et que le Corps grossier tombe en poudre? Je ne pense pas qu'il soit fort difficile de répondre à cette question. Des Germes indestructibles peuvent être dispersés sans inconvénient dans tous les Corps particuliers qui nous environnent. Ils peuvent séjourner dans tel ou tel Corps jusqu'au moment de sa décomposition; passer ensuite sans la moindre altération dans un autre Corps, de celui-ci dans un troisième, etc. Je conçois, avec la plus grande facilité, que le Germe d'un Éléphant peut se loger d'abord dans une molécule de terre, passer de là dans le bouton d'un fruit, de celui-ci, dans la cuisse d'une Mitre etc. Il ne faut pas que l'Imagination qui veut tout peindre et tout palper entreprenne de juger des choses qui sont uniquement du ressort de la Raison et qui ne peuvent être aperçues que par un Oeil philosophique. (157)

[We will ask again, what becomes of the imperishable Germ once the Animal dies and the crude Body turns to dust? I do not think it is very difficult to answer this question. Indestructible Germs can be dispersed without inconvenience into all the particular Bodies which surround us. They can reside in such or such a Body until the moment of its decomposition; then pass without the least alteration into

⁴⁰ My translation.

another Body, from this body into a third, etc. I conceive, with the greatest ease, that the Germ of an Elephant can reside first in a molecule of the earth, pass from there into the bud [*bouton*] of a fruit, from here into the thigh of a Mite, etc. We need more than Imagination, which, wanting to paint all and palpitate all, undertakes to judge things which are uniquely the spring of Reason and which can only be apprehended by a philosophical eye.]⁴¹

The process of germinal palingenesis – its migration across beings, infinite divisibility and yet inexhaustibility – applies to a particular stratum or immediate time of organisms, while also being intertwined with environmental, geophysical catastrophes. Not only do the germs survive the multiple catastrophic revolutions of the globe, but they are themselves altered by this process. It is this feature of environmental affectivity or adaptability that reveals even more flexibility within Bonnet's palingenesis, and firmly distinguishes it from preformation. Bonnet writes:

Je le répète; notre Monde peut avoir subi bien d'autres revolutions avant celle à laquelle il doit son Etat actuel. Le Règne organique pourroit donc avoir subi une suite de revolutions paralleles, et avoir conservé constamment cette sorte d'unité, qui fait de chaque Espece un Tout unique, et toujours subsistant; mais appelé à revêtir de periods en periods de nouvelles forms ou de nouvelles modalites. Ces revolutions multipliées auront modifié de plus en plus la forme et la structure primitives des Etres organisés, comme elles auront changé de plus en plus la structure extérieure et intérieure du Globe. (189)

⁴¹ My translation.

[I repeat; our World could have suffered many other revolutions before the revolution to which we owe its current state. The organic Kingdom could have undergone a succession of parallel revolutions, and have constantly preserved this sort of unity, which makes of each Species a unique Whole, and always remains; but called to assume from time to time new forms or new modalities. These multiplied revolutions would have modified more and more the shape and the primitive structure of organized Beings, as they would have changed more and more the external and internal structure of the Earth.]⁴²

Bonnet's vision of a catastrophe-spotted history of revolutions operating in tandem ("parallel revolutions") that intermittently brings about "new forms or new modalities" is an image both of external and internal change affecting the "primitive structure" of beings along with the Earth's geophysics. Bonnet's theory has changed the structure of thinking itself. As Rajan suggests:

Bonnet was convinced of the germinal importance of empirical science for the more speculative fields of philosophy, psychology, history and religion. His system of germs has profound implications for the structure and migration of ideas and is, in combination with Leibniz's monadology, the germ of the Deleuzian "concept" as infinitely divisible into and generative of further concepts. ("Spirit's Psychoanalysis" 191)

In Kant's thought, the germ of Bonnet's thinking is revealed at various junctures (ideal educational change, problematic political change, and the positive development of one's

⁴² My translation.

character).⁴³ Like Bonnet, who brought empirical science into other disciplines, Kant performs a similar gesture with his general anthropology that spreads insidiously beyond the lecture course.

1.8 Palingenetic Consequences for the *Anthropos*

Kant's contact with Bonnet's theory of change has implications for how Kant thinks about the past. Palingenesis is not only a theory of biology but a theory of history, of both the individual's biological and potentially his psychological history. Whereas certain forms of preformation (*emboitement*) understood one's past as static, according to Kris Pangburn, palingenetic theorists saw one's personal history as "constantly resurfacing to shape his present existence" (198). The continual return of one's history – the notion that the past is never quite past – has far-reaching implications for one's sense of self, as well as the role of memory in shaping history and historiography, both of which concern Kant in the *Anthropology* – concerns that also resonated with other Romantic thinkers.⁴⁴ For example, in the central discussion of the importance of Character, Kant suggests that one only acquires one's character later in life, in his fortieth year.

The most important revolution from within the human being is 'his exit from his self-incurred immaturity.' Before this revolution he let others think for him and merely imitated others or allowed them to guide him by leading-strings. Now he

⁴³ While the term "palingenesis" appears several times throughout Kant's writings, other cognates of palingenesis, terms such as "germ" [*Keime*], are much more common. See Howard Williams "Metamorphosis or Palingenesis" (703, fn.21).

⁴⁴ Constantin Iordachi suggests "Romantic discourses on palingenesis were part and parcel of a more general religious revival following from the French Revolution [...] For Romantics, metempsychosis was a form of social solidarity, since it envisioned redemption and spiritual regeneration as pertaining to the community and not simply to the individual" (324-5).

ventures to advance, though still shakily, with his own feet on the ground of experience. (*Anthropology* 124)

This personal revolution from within hinges upon an intellectual act of bravery: of beginning “still shakily” to think on one’s own. The process is one of *acquisition* and it proceeds through the accumulation of maxims, those “precepts or general policies that we have learned from others or from books, and that we choose to adopt as principles to live by” (Kuehn, *Kant* 145). The self-willed moral rebirth occurs suddenly through the radical adoption of some kind of principle. This self-knowledge that one acquires only later in life is what prompts the self to undergo a kind of personal palingenesis:

One may also assume that the grounding of character is like a kind of rebirth, a certain solemnity of making a vow to oneself; which makes the resolution and the moment when this transformation took place unforgettable to him, like the beginning of a new epoch. – Education, examples, and teaching generally cannot bring about this firmness and persistence in principles *gradually*, but only, as it were, by an explosion which happens one time as a result of weariness at the unstable condition of instinct. Perhaps there are only a few who have attempted this revolution before the age of thirty, and fewer still who have firmly established it before they are forty. (*Anthropology* 194/7:294).

One finally achieves his character, which is to say comes to know himself, when all maxims of the past present themselves again, a return that is more an explosion, “like the beginning of a new epoch” within the individual.

Palingenesis implies an image of history moving along in a *downward* motion, of history being passed down, and of change occurring from the “top to the bottom” – but

also the threat of retrogressive, *backward* motion, possible by potential catastrophic geo-physical events that, having already occurred numerous times in the earth's history, could return humankind to an earlier stage of development. In the essay "An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?" in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant finds things progressing from top to bottom (167), a movement that proceeds by, what he calls, humanity's "negative wisdom" (169) whereby man is after much struggle eventually compelled to renounce war and enter into a peaceful constitution (169). Like the tumultuous co-existence of evolutionary theories within Kant's thought, in this essay Kant examines multiple shapes for the philosophy of history. Here, he offers three movements for history: 1) "continual retrogression toward wickedness"; 2) "perpetual progression toward improvement"; and 3) "eternal stagnation," or "eternal oscillation" which he says in "matters of morality is not possible" (145).⁴⁵ Kant clearly has his doubts about the certainty of historical continuity:

Even if we felt that the human race, considered as a whole, was to be conceived as progressing and proceeding forward for however long a time, still no one can guarantee that now, this very moment, with regard to the physical disposition of our species, the epoch of its decline would not be liable to occur; and inversely, if it is moving backwards, and in an accelerated fall into baseness, a person may not despair even then of encountering a juncture (*punctum flexus contrarii*) where the moral predisposition in our race would be able to turn anew toward the better.

(149)

⁴⁵ Of this third form of history, Kant writes: "a perpetually changing upward tendency and an equally frequent and profound relapse (an eternal oscillation, as it were) amounts to nothing more than if the subject had remained in the same place, standing still" ("An Old Question" 145).

Kant sounds like Bonnet for whom earth and its beings are both subject to and subjects constituted by repeated cataclysms. Twice within this essay Kant, deploying biological rhetoric, refers to the potential botched character of the French Revolution, speaking tentatively of how it “may succeed or miscarry” (153).⁴⁶ Still, he finds the “mode of thinking of the [French Revolution’s] spectators” (153) to be a germ of progress – even if this progress is marginal and, evident as when Kant underwhelmingly claims, “I predict its progress toward the better which, from now on, turns out to be *no longer completely retrogressive*” (159, my emphasis).⁴⁷ Yet again, Kant immediately follows this optimistic suggestion with a markedly darker one, as he promptly allows for the failure of progress. Acknowledging the potential for a retrogressive movement, he writes:

But even if the end viewed in connection with this event should not now be attained, even if the revolution or reform of a national constitution should finally miscarry, or, after some time had elapsed, everything should relapse into its former rut (as politicians now predict), that philosophical prophecy still would lose nothing of its force. For that event is too important, too much interwoven with the interest of humanity, and its influence too widely propagated in all areas of the world to not be recalled on any favourable occasion by the nations which would then be roused to a repetition of new efforts of this kind. (159)

Kant – sounding very much like Bonnet here – foresees the germ of change, this “philosophical prophecy,” as indestructible, and despite the numerous failings and

⁴⁶ Kant writes: “The revolution of a gifted people which we have seen unfolding in our day may succeed or miscarry; it may be filled with misery and atrocities to the point that a sensible man, were he boldly to hope to execute it successfully the second time, would never resolve to make the experiment at such cost” (“An Old Question” 153). For his other reference to the “miscarriage” of the revolution, see p. 159.

⁴⁷ “No longer completely regressive” is hardly a vote of confidence for the progress of the human race!

botched efforts at realizing it, it continues intact. What Kant is getting at here about the “philosophical prophecy [that] still would lose nothing of its force” is akin to what Percy Bysshe Shelley says in the final lines of *Prometheus Unbound* about the germinal survival of hope: “to hope till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates” (IV.573-4). For both thinkers, it is important that a germ survives, as this germ will become the condition of possibility for future change.

Kant understands the human to have followed similar evolutionary processes to those in other “organic beings” – even though he wavers on what those processes are, and at times on even being able to speculate on them. For example, in his essay “On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy” (1788), Kant refuses to speculate about the original cause of the organism’s organization. He says:

I myself derive all organization from *organic beings* (through generation) and all later forms (of this kind of natural things) from laws of the gradual development of *original predispositions*, which were to be found in the organization of its phylum. Such development can often be seen in the transplantings of plants. How this phylum itself *came about*, this problem lies entirely beyond the limits of all physics possible to human beings, within which I believed that I had to hold myself. (214 /Ak 8:179)

While here Kant neglects to clearly delimit his position, leaving this original organization unelaborated, in his essay *Of the Different Races of Human Beings* (1775) he describes how environmental factors can affect the “germs” [*Keime*] or “natural predispositions” [*natürliche Anlagen*] that are inherent within the organism (89/Ak 2:434). Adopting a kind of preformationist rhetoric, Kant suggests that the capability or potentiality for

change and adaptation is somehow already latent within the organic body, which allows for certain races to adapt to certain climates:

Chance or the universal mechanical laws could not produce such agreements.

Therefore we must consider such occasional unfoldings as *preformed*

[*vorgebildet*]. Yet even where nothing purposive shows itself, the mere faculty to

propagate its adopted character is already proof enough that a particular germ or

natural predisposition for it was to be found in the organic creature. For outer

things can well be occasioning causes but not producing ones of what is inherited

necessarily and regenerates. As little as chance or physical-mechanical causes can

produce an organic body, just as little will they add something to its generative

power, i.e., bring about something that propagates itself, if it concerns a special

shape or relation of the parts. (89-90 / Ak 2:435)

Here, as Holly Wilson explains, Kant asserts that “the human being can adjust to any different environment, because it has many different germs in it that can be unfolded out of it” (15), a point resonant with Shelley’s political and poetic idealism wherein “the future is contained within the present as the plant within the seed” (*A Defence of Poetry* 1168). Indeed, the collusion between germs and positive change is constantly appealed to in Shelley’s numerous definitions of poetry in *A Defence of Poetry* as “the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially” (1173), or as the “germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time” (1169).⁴⁸ The survival of both the human, for Kant, and poetry, for

⁴⁸ Political and poetic idealism are yoked together in Shelley’s thought: “the future is contained within the present as the plant within the seed; and equality, diversity, unity, contrast, mutual dependence, become the principles alone capable of affording the motives according to which the will of a social being is determined to action” (*A Defence* 1168). This sentiment is made most forcefully at the end of the *Defence*

Shelley, hinges on the rhetoric of the germ, which operates in both thinkers as – to borrow yet another of Shelley’s ever-fermenting definitions of poetry – “a burning atom of inextinguishable thought” (1173).

The human’s physiological ability to adapt suggests the existence of a multitude of germs latent within the human body, “planted by providence, which providence intends to unfold in human history” (16). Kant writes that the human being

was destined for all climates and for every soil; consequently, various germs and natural predispositions had to lie ready in him to be on occasion either unfolded [*ausgewickelt*] or restrained [*zuruckgehalten*], so that he would become suited to his place in the world and over the course of the generations would appear to be as if it were native to and made for that place. [...] Here I only note that *air* and *sun* appear to be those causes which most deeply influence the generative power and produce an enduring development of the germs and predispositions, i.e., are able to establish [*grunden*] a race. (*Of the Different Races* 89-90/Ak 2:435-6)

Germs [*Keime*] are again the force of change in Kant’s second essay on the history of the human species, *Determination of the Concept of a Human Race* (1785):

the germs which were originally placed in the phylum of the human species for the generation of the races must have developed already in most ancient times according to the needs of the climate, if the residence there lasted a long time; and

when Shelley writes: “The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is Poetry” (1178).

after one of these predispositions was developed in a people, it extinguished all the others entirely. (158/Ak 8:105)

Here germs, while hereditary, also have the potentiality of adapting to their environment, which leaves Kant in the middle ground between the two dominant evolutionary theories of *preformation*, the idea that an organism develops from a pre-existing miniature version of itself, and *epigenesis*, the developmental process whereby the organism unfolds in increasingly complex development. As Susan Shell in *The Embodiment of Reason* writes:

Kant urges a third alternative: an account that reconciles a single origin with invariably inherited differences by appealing to the idea of an original, invariably inherited germ whose various *potentia* are differentially actualized. Without the assumption of such a germ, imagination threatens to give birth to monsters, either figuratively, in the brain of the researcher, or literally, in the germ of the maternally susceptible fetus. (196)

Even though Kant admits the potentiality of the germ itself to have a dark side or to be a bad seed capable of monstrous unfoldings, such as when “The germ of madness develops together with the germ of reproduction, so that this too is hereditary” (*Anthropology* 111), he is attracted to the idea of the fixity of a relatively stable germ because it polices or regulates the body and imagination. Indeed, Kant’s anxiety over the difficulty to balance the body and mind is perhaps its clearest in his reflections on his own failing health. In a letter to Christian Garve, the seventy-five-year-old Kant, who is at work on the *Opus Postumum*, admits to a “head cold” he had over a year earlier that has caused his “present state of disorganization,” which has rendered him “less that of a scholar than that of a vegetable” (*Correspondence* 552/Ak12:257). And, as the chaotic quality of the *Opus*

Postumum suggests, Kant's "disorganized" mind does, in fact, produce a monstrous textual body, or a "hideous progeny" in Mary Shelley's well-known phrase.

Despite Kant's extensive interest in germs – elements common to all organic beings – and the allowance of their potential darker side, and his acknowledgment of a limited evolutionary capability of the organism, he remains heavily invested in what John Zammito describes as "species fixity and the radical discrimination of humans from the rest of the animal kingdom" (306):

The very idea of emergence or evolution in our sense *frightened* him. Nothing was more important to him, metaphysically or methodologically, than to police the boundaries between the organic and the inorganic, and, again, between man and animal. (306-7, emphasis in original)

Despite the fear over the instability of the boundaries of life – organic/inorganic, human/animal – Kant slips easily, and not altogether infrequently, into discussions of the unruly nature of germs (an inheritance from Bonnet), and of nonterrestrial beings. These inhuman figures are spurs to thought. Kant's inability to give up the ghost of palingenesis, an especially tumultuous model of evolution, contributes to the unsettled quality of his thinking about man.

1.9 The Dark Side of Life: Pain

Evolution isn't a smooth process; it is unpredictable, contingent, troubling yet also promissory to Kant's interest in pain, an interest that grows throughout the course of his lectures on anthropology. Kant's responsiveness to the physiological and psychic dimensions of pain distinguishes him from other Enlightenment thinkers, and enables us

to find a Gothic Kant – to go perhaps a shade darker than Deleuze’s “Romantic” Kant.⁴⁹ Pain is another concept that appears in Kant’s anthropological writings, as a way to police the fragile boundary between the human and its others. Adopting the Italian philosopher, economist, and historiographer Pietro Verri’s (1728-1797) theory that in life pain overrules pleasure, Kant comes to privilege the power of pain in existence, a feature that is inextricably bound to the questions and project of anthropology.

Susan Shell suggests that during 1777, at the same time as Kant was lecturing on anthropology, he was exposed to a German translation of Verri’s *Discourse on the Nature of Pleasure and Pain* (1773). This exposure, suggests Shell, significantly alters his outlook on the role of pain and pleasure in human existence, marking a shift away from Rousseau as the primary influence towards Verri:

Verri showed to Kant’s satisfaction both that human life involves more pain than pleasure, and why it must be so: we are moved to act, not by the anticipation of pleasure, but by pains both blatant and “ineffable,” as Verri has it, reminiscent of Lockean “unease.” Kant claimed to find in Verri what Kant called “the true economy of human nature.” Pain, on his new understanding, is the natural goad by which man is prompted to develop his inborn talents and abilities before reason is ready to take over. (“Kant’s ‘True Economy’” 195)

Kant, following Verri, offers an image of pain avoidance as a kind of organic germ, as a kind of pre-Freudian concept of “drive.” It is in the *Pillau* lectures (1777-1778) – so

⁴⁹ Kant’s relationship to the Gothic tradition is treated most extensively by Marshall Brown. In his essay “A Philosophical View of the Gothic Novel” he writes: “Kant’s imagination, like that of a gothic novelist, is haunted at its edges by a mysterious world beyond the limitations of understanding” (281). See also Brown’s *A Gothic Text* (2005).

named after the student who transcribed this series of anthropology lectures – that Kant first introduces his Verri-inspired outlook that “a preponderance of pain over enjoyment is a necessary condition of human life,” an outlook that Kant will maintain and that becomes evident in his increasing emphasis on the value of work (Shell “Kant’s True Economy” 213).⁵⁰ For Kant, “Man is naturally driven forward, not by his anticipation of future rest, but by present pain” (Shell 214). In fact, it is pain itself that is the harbinger of progress; pain, Kant says, drives us to “propose something new” (qtd. in Shell 215). Indeed, the way pain brings us into proposing something new brings Kant to the limits of man, as he again speculatively gestures toward how it might be with “creatures on other planets”:

When we direct our eyes to the course of things, we find a drive in us that compels us at each moment to go out of our condition. We are forced to this by a goad, a driving spring, through which all men (as animals) are set in activity: man is always troubled in thought [...] He [...] lives always in a future time, and cannot linger in the present [...] Man thus finds himself in constant pain, and this is the spur to activity in human nature. [However it may be with creatures on other planets] our lot is so constituted that nothing endures with us but pain. (qtd. in Shell *Kant and the Limits of Autonomy* 116)

These thoughts over how “it may be with creatures on other planets” enter at the time when Kant appears disgusted with humans. Indeed, he speaks dismissively of humans in

⁵⁰ Shell in “Kant’s ‘True Economy’” notes that in the anthropology lectures prior to 1777, the figure of influence is Rousseau, while in the lectures after 1777, such as *Pillau* and *Menschenkunde*, the figure is Verri. “This new mood is deepened in the *Meschenkunde* lectures of 1781-2, which discuss at length Count Verri’s claims (Shell 214).

the *Anthropology* observing that pain is an “incentive to activity” within the human, since “being satiated produces that disgusting state that makes life itself a burden for the spoiled human being” (*Anthropology* 133). Kant recognizes that “Enjoyment is the feeling of promotion of life,” pain the “hindrance of life” and existence itself “a continuous play of the antagonism of both” (126). Pain is the goad to human activity, and hence the harbinger of the future:

To feel one’s life, to enjoy oneself, is thus nothing more than to feel oneself continuously driven to leave the present state (which must therefore be a pain that recurs just as often as the present). This also explains the oppressive, even frightening arduousness of boredom for everyone who is attentive to his life and to time (cultivated human beings). This pressure or impulse to leave every point of time we are in and pass over into the following one is accelerating and can grow until a man makes the resolution to end his life; for the luxurious person has tried every form of enjoyment, and no enjoyment is new to him any longer. [...] The void of sensations we perceive in ourselves arouses a horror (*horror vacui*) and, as it were, the presentiment of a slow death which is regarded as more painful than when fate suddenly cuts the thread of life. (128-9)

This point is echoed in *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (1786), where Kant says that the

faculty of not enjoying merely the present moment of life but of making present to oneself the coming, often very distant time, is the most decisive mark of the human advantage of preparing himself to pursue distant ends in accordance with

his vocation, – but also simultaneously it is the most inexhaustible source of cares and worries which the uncertain future incites. (167/8:113)

Read symptomatically, thoughts toward the “uncertain future,” which include throughout Kant’s work the future coming of differently organized creatures, emerge at the point of dissatisfaction with the present. If, as Kant suggests, man is driven “to leave every point of time we are in and pass over into the following one,” it is not surprising that man will be driven to extend this dissatisfaction to himself, to man as a concept causing the philosopher to think what is beyond him, and to think what it might mean to “pass over into the following one.” Kant’s pain in thinking about man produces the desire within his thought to escape him, which is how aliens or “differently organized creatures” – those speculative inhuman entities that are beyond the human – continue to wash ashore into his anthropological writings (*Opus* 67/21:214).

Pain also becomes the ground on which theories of the human species get organized. In his 1771 review of *Moscatti’s On the Corporeally Essential Differences between the Structure of Animals and Humans*, Kant names a variety of inflictions as the human’s burden to carry in exchange for being an upright bipedal endowed with the faculty of reason:

Dr. *Moscatti* proves that the upright gate of the human being is contrived and against nature; that he is indeed built to maintain himself and move about in this position; but that, if he makes this his necessity and constant habit, discomforts and maladies result which demonstrate sufficiently that he was enticed by reason and imitation to deviate from the first, animal set-up. Inside the human being is not built differently from all animals that stand on four feet. Now if he stands up,

then his intestines, especially the fetus in pregnant persons, come into a downward hanging situation and a half-inverted position. [...] being constantly continued it causes malformations and a good number of maladies.[...] From this we see the following: the first foresight of nature was that the human being as an animal be preserved *for himself and his kind*; and for that the position which is most suited to his internal build, the situation of the fetus and the preservation in dangers is the *four-footed* one; but that there also has been placed in him a germ of reason through which, if the latter develops, he is destined *for society*, and by means of which he assumes permanently the most suitable position for society, viz., the *two-footed* one. Thereby he gains, on one side, infinitely much over the animals, but he also has to live with the discomforts which result for him from the fact that he has raised his head so proudly above his old comrades. (79-81/2:423-5, original emphasis)

For Kant, the human necessarily accepts a whole host of painful afflictions as the consequence for raising himself above his animal “comrades.” Thus, the growth and development of reason is accompanied for Kant by pain, deformities and illnesses, calamities that Kant himself knew all too well: he was physically plagued by poor eyesight, headaches, hypochondria, sleeplessness, and late in life racked by the ever increasing loss of memory and what may have been dementia.⁵¹ For Kant, pain is the midwife of reason, the burden human beings must shoulder as a consequence of their germ of reason. As Shell writes: “Heart palpitations, narrow-breastedness, and hypochondria are all consequences, according to this analysis, of a gait unnatural from

⁵¹ On the aging Kant and his illness see Kuehn’s *Kant: A Biography*, esp. 413-422.

the perspective of our animal survival, but appropriate to the development of the seed of reason” (*Embodiment of Reason* 275). If Kant desires to police the boundary between man and animal or organic and inorganic, he elsewhere passes beyond that boundary between man and that which may lie beyond it when he frequently though cryptically gestures at the inhuman in his anthropological writings.⁵²

1.10 “Different species (race)”

This general anthropology rears its head in the *Opus Postumum*, Kant’s final, unpublished work, which has a similar patchwork quality to the *Anthropology*.⁵³ In addition to offering a preliminary outline of a new philosophical project intended to ground his metaphysics, titled the *Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science to Physics*, it also includes wide-ranging discussions on the substance of ether, the nature of God, human morality, the smallpox epidemic, and even a “different species (race)” that will inherit the earth. The *Opus*, published posthumously, is arguably the least understood text within Kant’s oeuvre. To date there is only one book-length study of this text, despite the fact that Kant himself identified it as his “chief work” (OP 22:754).⁵⁴ Most studies that treat the *Opus* measure it against the terms that Kant himself

⁵² Kant is primarily concerned with the inhuman entities that reside in future time-space, and hence beyond man, in his anthropological writings. While he refers to “many ancient organic beings, no longer alive on the surface of the earth” that may have “preceded the existence of man” (*Opus* 66-7), these thoughts are oriented towards the future, towards those beings “still in prospect” (ibid).

⁵³ Eckart Förster notes that “[a]lthough the manuscript is virtually complete, Kant did not live to edit it” (“Fichte, Beck and Schelling” 146).

⁵⁴ This sole study is Eckart Förster’s *Kant’s Final Synthesis*. Possible reasons for this text’s neglect within Kant studies include the text’s complicated history. For a comprehensive explanation of this see the Introduction in the Cambridge Edition of the *Opus*. Kuno Fischer in his *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* (1860) damaged the early reception of the *Opus* by dismissing it as a product of Kant’s senility, bearing the “marks of decrepitude.” Further reasons for the *Opus*’s neglect might include the usual critical bias towards

outlines, that is, the way in which this work will bridge the “gap” left in the critical philosophy. In a letter to Christian Garve, 21 September 1798 – the same letter cited above – Kant writes:

I see before me the unpaid bill of my uncompleted philosophy, even while I am aware that philosophy, both as regards its means and its ends, is capable of completion. It is a pain like that of Tantalus though not a hopeless pain. The project on which I am now working concerns the “Transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics.” It must be completed, or else a gap will remain in the critical philosophy. (*Correspondence* 551/Ak12:257)⁵⁵

Setting aside this text’s connection to the critical philosophy, however, allows us to consider its even more undervalued relation to the anthropological project. In considering the importance of ether as the condition of experience, Kant is again deeply enmeshed in physiological thinking, as he takes up the states, forces and movements of matter, such as dissolution, repulsion, attraction, cohesion, gravity, density, and fluidity. Here, as in the *Anthropology*, Kant thinks the human through physiology, and here again, as in the *Anthropology*, Kant ventures into thinking the inhuman, as he advances the notion that “human beings, as rational beings, exist for the sake of other human beings of a different species (race)” (*Opus* 21:214). Although Kant’s discussion of this species-to-come is

privileging the critical philosophy, rather than his “post-Critical” work (that is, anything after the third *Critique*).

⁵⁵ Kant repeats this sentiment a month later in a letter to Johann Kieseewetter (*Correspondence* 553-4/12: 258-9).

overwhelmingly marked by silence, he does consider that the arrival of these “differently organized creatures” (67/21:214) would occur suddenly in a catastrophic, geo-physical rupture:

if our globe (having once been dissolved into chaos, but now being organized and regenerating) were to bring forth, by revolutions of the earth, differently organized creatures, which, in turn, gave place to others after their destruction, organic nature could be conceived in terms of a sequence of different world-epochs, reproducing themselves in different forms, and our earth as an organically formed body – not one formed merely mechanically. How many such revolutions (including, certainly, many ancient organic beings, no longer alive on the surface of the earth) preceded the existence of man, and how many (accompanying, perhaps, a more perfect organization) are still in prospect, is hidden from our inquiring gaze – for, according to Camper, not a single example of a human being is to be found in the depth of the earth. (*Opus* 66-7/21:214-5)

These massive revolutions of the earth that bring about new world-epochs and with them the possibility of “differently organized creatures” are capable in Kant’s mind of having occurred in the past and of occurring again in the future. In this speculative moment, Kant recalls Charles Bonnet’s description of the earth’s revolutions – “parallel revolutions” that intermittently bring about “new forms or new modalities” (189). As we will see in the next chapter, Kant’s speculations here on the earth’s long history of geophysical revolutions, and what “more perfect organization” might come as a result of such natural upheaval, find a parallel in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s political idealism and his representation of socio-political revolution through similar geological disturbances, such

as volcanos and earthquakes. In this vein, Michelle Geric convincingly reads *Prometheus Unbound* through Huttonian geology, finding the mysterious Demogorgon to be a figure for “the slow, restorative power of internal heat [that] figures Shelley’s concept of a gradual ideological revolution” (35).

Although Kant looks towards the future, it is not without a glance back at pre-human revolutions, or the sense that the past figures into the present: previous states of dissolution give way to organization and regeneration. Thus it is not enough to suggest, as Howard Williams does, that the difference between epigenesis and palingenesis is the difference between going “forward to the new, rather than back to the old” (701). Going forward necessarily involves the past; the old gives birth to the new, and Bonnet’s theory of evolution known as *palingenesis* – the successive unfolding of a preformed structure within an individual organism, the continuous return of a “germ of restitution” that survives the body and physical catastrophes – encapsulates this process with its infinitely reconstituting and recombining germs. Peter Fenves in *Late Kant* suggests that Kant’s claim of the species race to come defaces current humanity: “By making a place for another kind of human being, human beings make themselves into their own remnant” (172). This notion that the species to come turns existing humanity into a remnant or remainder of sorts is consistent with Kant’s other splintered accounts of the self, including the “multi-coloured, diverse self,” and the self who suffers from *vesania* [*Aberwitz*], or systematic madness – splintered subjectivities that recall Lyotard’s definition of the inhuman as that which is at the heart of the human (qtd. in Fenves 172). The “multi-colored, diverse self” is not one, as Fenves writes:

it is not *a* self, the self-same self, on the basis of which manifolds can be ordered, counted, and classified. Yet it is not altogether self-less either. The “multicolored, diverse self” is distracted, not chaotic. And in the last years of his life Kant “himself” admits that he suffers from a constitutive distraction. (172-3)

Like Keats’ “chameleon poet,” who “has no Identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other Body,” Kant’s multicoloured, diverse self seems to cohere in a perpetually divided or distracted state, one that also recalls a self that is continually being called away from within yet which displaces the very coherency of such a stable container as a “self” (Letter to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818). In the *Anthropology* – a text that is itself multicoloured (in Kant’s sense of distracted) – Kant also lists the “deranged” mental state of *vesania*, or “systematic” madness, which occurs when “the soul is transferred” to “a totally different standpoint [...] from which it sees all objects differently” (110), a state that shares an affinity with the definition of Romantic sympathy, that imaginative capacity that Shelley describes in the *Defence of Poetry* as the ability to “put [oneself] in the place of another and of many others” (1171).⁵⁶ Other Romantic instantiations of this Kantian *vesania* or Romantic sympathy range from Blake’s poet, who participates within the pulsation of an artery (*Milton*), to Keats’ poet “continually in for – and filling some other Body,” including the inhuman. Like *vesania*, there is a darker side to sympathy, since it requires, as David Marshall notes, “a self-forgetting that threatens the concept of a stable identity and blurs the boundaries that

⁵⁶ *Vesania* is also “the sickness of a deranged reason” examples of which Kant gives as “imagining that he conceives the inconceivable. – The invention of the squaring of the circle, of perpetual motion, the unveiling of the supersensible forces of nature, and the comprehension of the mystery of the Trinity are in his power” (*Anthropology* 110).

define and differentiate both self and other” (qtd. in Zimmerman 29-30). Thus, Kant’s palimpsest of splintered selves – the figure of the multicoloured diverse self, the vesania-plagued self, and the human-remnant – culled from the pages of his anthropological writings, creates an opening in Kant’s thought for a disruptive inhuman within the human, and reveals the extent to which his work opens onto the Romantic interest in the dissolution of the human. As Fenves notes, “by admitting an internal difference from itself, [the self-divided self] makes way for another law of the earth” (173).

Why does Kant turn to these strange bodies? They are a problematic in Foucault’s sense of the term, as “taking an object in a field of discourse or social practice [...] as a symptom of conflict or ambiguity between several ways of imaginatively structuring a social field” (Hengehold 9). Kant’s post-human figure (in its various guises) is a problematic object that introduces a strange cavern into anthropology – the space where the human is supposed to be the object of study – that allows for the germinal thought of what might lie beyond the species. Like Bataille’s general economy, in which one also includes what is typically expelled from a system or discourse, Kant’s anthropological interests contaminate the discipline of anthropology itself (as it is understood as being the study of the *anthropos*). Unlike Laura Hengehold who suggests that “bodies compensate for the persistence of fractures and discontinuities in Kant’s image of thought” (15), I argue that Kant’s strange bodies – those so frequently found in his anthropological writings rather than the critical philosophy – hang suspended in his thought, functioning like unworkable thoughts/figures. We recall how Kant, when during one of his lectures on anthropology, became distracted by a student’s broken tooth, strange bodies appeared, becoming signposts of something resistant to thought. Bodies in Kant, and especially in

his anthropological thinking, are (made) strange; they are held in the distance, and cryptically imagined to be something other than human. The body as an unworkable figure in Kant's thought reaches its culmination in the *Opus Postumum* in the figure of the "species (race)" to come, which Kant cryptically describes as "stand[ing] at a higher level of humanity, either simultaneously (as, for instance, Americans and Europeans) or sequentially" (66/21:214). While Kant offers few details as to what this superior species will be, it follows from his line of thinking that "One species is made for the other (the goose for the fox, the stage for the wolf)" (66/21:213). Sounding very sci-fi, Kant mysteriously suggests the human is made for a species to come, a point he will leave suspended within the *Opus*. This "higher level" species is a shadowy figure that cannot be easily incorporated into Kant's thought – it is the remainder that remains.

1.11 Conclusion

Like Velazquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) where despite the luminous Infanta Margarita at the center of the painting, something other than the human sits in the foreground of the painting, staring back at the viewer – in Kant's anthropological writings something beyond the human stares back. However, in what reads like a candid moment in the *Anthropology*, Kant insightfully articulates what is at stake in these blind spots:

We often play with obscure representations, and have an interest in throwing them in the shade before the power of the imagination, when they are liked or disliked. However, more often we ourselves are a play of obscure representations, and our understanding is unable to save itself from the absurdities into which they have placed it, even though it recognizes them as illusions. (25/Ak7:136)

Kant's reflection on our attraction to "obscure representations" that includes ourselves recalls the example in his essay "What is Orientation in Thinking?" (1786) of being disoriented in the dark; both are counterpoints to Enlightenment thought. Kant also suggests that humans are themselves aggregates of these stubborn, albeit phantasmatic, representations: "we are often enough the play of obscure representations that are reluctant to vanish even when understanding illuminates them" (*Anthropology* 25). Like Foucault's description of man as a "strange empirico-transcendental doublet, since he is a being such that knowledge will be attained in him of what renders all knowledge possible" (*OT* 318), Kant's anthropology acknowledges man as both the subject and object of knowledge. Tethered to man as this strange doublet is something equally insidious: the unthought. Indeed, Kant's turn toward thoughts of what lies beyond the human make sense when read alongside Foucault's description of man's relationship to the unthought.

Man has not been able to describe himself as a configuration in the episteme without thought at the same time discovering, both in itself and outside itself, at its borders yet also in its very warp and woof, an element of darkness, an apparently inert density in which it is embedded, an unthought which it contains entirely, yet in which it is also caught. The unthought (whatever name we give it) is not lodged in man like a shrivelled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality. This obscure space so readily interpreted as an abyssal region in man's nature, or as a uniquely impregnable fortress in his history, is

linked to him in an entirely different way; it is both exterior to him and indispensable to him: in one sense, the shadow cast by man as he emerged in the field of knowledge; in another, the blind stain by which it is possible to know him. (*OT* 326)

Kant's post-humans – the “rational beings on other planets” who might think aloud and who are found in the *Anthropology* (237), and the “future species (race)” of “differently organized creatures” in the *Opus Postumum* – are the shadows cast by man as he emerges in his anthropological field of inquiry, just as Demogorgon is twinned with the dawn of a precariously redeemed humanity in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. These post-humans that are tethered to Kant's inquiry into the human threaten not only man's place within the order of things, but also put pressure on the discipline of anthropology itself. For this reason, and because of the way anthropological interests smolder beneath Kant's philosophy, this early discipline of anthropology operates closer to a “counterscience” rather than a human science, as it tends to be categorized – as in Alix Cohen's *Kant and the Human Sciences* and John Zammito's *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*.

Hopefully, it is evident by now that Kant's anthropology is a discipline unlike our own. While Zammito, I think, exaggerates the extent to which it “did not have the professional, institutional, or methodological parameters that are so essential to our notion of disciplinarity” (3), it is fair to say that Kant's anthropology was not the kind we find taught in our universities today. At present, anthropology is parcelled out into tidy subdivisions, all of which cling to a collective self-identity of the discipline as the study of humanity (never tarrying with Kant's question of what is man). Modern-day anthropology is more or less in keeping with Thomas Hylland Eriksen's succinct

definition of it as “the comparative study of culture and society, with a focus on local life” (*What is Anthropology?* 9). Arguably, the biggest disciplinary difference between the contemporary discipline of anthropology and Kant’s is the way recent anthropology is dogged by what Justin Stagl calls the “ideology of fieldwork,” the notion that fieldwork is essential to the discipline’s self-identity (qtd. in Jebens 17).⁵⁷

Yet as different as Kant’s anthropology was from anthropology today, it was also adrift among other Romantic figurations of anthropology. For example, Wordsworth, argues Alan Bewell in *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment*, co-opted certain practices or methodologies from Enlightenment anthropology (cf. observation – that mechanism within fieldwork) as a way of talking about human origins in his poetry. Bewell outlines in Wordsworth a “*domestic* anthropology, which seeks to give a ‘substance and life’ to a specific way of life that he knew was disappearing” (31), which is a far tamer creature than Kant’s general anthropology, the latter of which is entirely absent from Bewell’s historical framework.⁵⁸ In fact, this silence in Bewell’s study is symptomatic of a silence in the discipline itself that George Stocking calls the “virtual neglect, within the Anglophone sphere, of the Germanic roots of cultural anthropology” (4).

⁵⁷ Luke Eric Lassiter defines anthropology as “the study of human beings in all of their biological and cultural complexities, both past and present” (3). We also can’t dismiss Kant’s anthropological contributions, as they still frequently appear in anthropology texts intended for classroom study. For example, Michael M. J. Fischer’s *Anthropological Futures* includes a sustained discussion of Kant’s anthropology (ix-xxiv).

⁵⁸ Bewell only twice refers to Kant’s critical philosophy in passing (16, 27). He is not concerned with anthropology as a discipline itself. Instead, he draws on the work of Rousseau, Joseph François Lafitau, and French anthropologist Joseph-Marie Degérando (20-3) with the aim of mapping out how Wordsworth thinks about man’s transition from nature to culture. Key institutions marking this transition, Bewell notes, are “language, poetry, myth, religion, death, and property” (45). Bewell’s reading of anthropology is also highly aestheticized in the manner that I am critical of in this study, as I will explain further in the next chapter.

In summation, the human being in Kant's anthropological, empirical accounts is a strange composite – an organism that like other organic beings has germs or natural predispositions inherent within him, which unfold and are capable of limited adaptability to its environment, but who is also unlike his “old [animal] comrades” by virtue of his capability to become rational (“Review of Moscati” 81/Ak2:425). At the same time, Kant's “species (race)” is a thought towards futurity, toward something beyond the human, which necessarily unsettles the boundaries of the human, or as Peter Fenves puts it, turns the human into a remnant-figure like Mary Shelley's Lionel Verney, the narrator and sole human survivor of her novel *The Last Man*. Although Kant wants to preserve the human, he acknowledges in his anthropological writings how the inhuman, in its various guises, puts pressure on this concept. Kant's allowance for something beyond man, and the ways in which this allowance undermines the certainty of man himself, ultimately cleaves his question *what is the human?* into *what is beyond the human?*

At certain points Kant treats the limits of man as an opportunity to create an opening so as to think about what different creatures or species might come after man. As we will see in the next chapter, Kant finds a comrade in Shelley – at least initially. Like Kant, Shelley is engaged in an anamnesis of the inhuman/human relationship. While Kant looks forward to what lays beyond man, to the future extraterrestrials, Shelley looks backward to what lies behind or beneath man and his thin history. As we will see in our reading of *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley imagines a kind of pre-humanity buried deep in the earth's strata. However, where the inhuman creates openings in Kant's thought, it does so in non-threatening ways, which we cannot say of Shelley. Indeed, the Shelley we will encounter in chapter 2 is an anxious thinker, who enables us to read in his closet

drama and poetry a “negative anthropology” in all senses of that phrase. Not only is man defined by what he is not, but we end, in *The Triumph of Life*, with a non-redemptive view of history, where we are left with no man.

Like the gaps between the teeth of a “beloved” or “of someone who is directly in front of us” that Kant finds so distracting (*Anthropology* 20), strange bodies populate Kant’s anthropological thought to reveal the precariousness of the human and the way in which it can slip out of the order of things. Anthropology and the question of the human irritate Kant’s system from within, and stand as a threshold onto something else. In doing so, Kant’s anthropological writings allow us to read these as counterscientific texts that take up an unfinished project of thinking the unthought – the inhuman of the human. Kant’s *Anthropology*, because of its strange stratifications and stubborn attachments to the inhuman, unworks the limits his critical philosophy places around man. Indeed, this multicoloured – in the Kantian sense of *distracted* – text constitutes what Deleuze calls, in reference to Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge*, an “archaeology-poem” that is a text “made up of multiple registers” (*Foucault* 18).

Chapter 2

2 Percy Shelley and the “dark scheme of things”

Romanticism doesn't have to be about big beautiful souls meditating on big mountains.

– Timothy Morton, “Here Comes Everything” (173)

Doomsday is at our doorstep. – Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties* (145)

Man and the unthought are, at the archeological level, contemporaries.

– Foucault, *The Order of Things* (326)

2.1 Introduction

Just as Timothy Morton has observed that nonhumans appear in Romanticism precisely where they shouldn't, the previous chapter examined how “differently organized creatures” and “future species (race)” populate Kant's anthropological discourse, which ought to be the study of man and the *anthropos*. Arguably, one might see how Kant's general anthropology and his attraction to the inhuman sets the stage for a similarly strange appearance of the inhuman within the thought of Percy Shelley, ranging from the closet drama *Prometheus Unbound* to his final poem *The Triumph of Life*, which even mentions Kant as a “sage” (236-7). Indeed, Shelley's sympathies with Kantian philosophy are well-documented in Romantic studies, even though, as Hugh Roberts notes, “we cannot say with any certainty” whether or not Shelley read Kant (304).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Christoph Bode, for example, reads Shelley's “Mont Blanc” as an explicit example of the Kantian sublime. James Bieri refers to Hogg's observation that Shelley ordered a Latin translation of the *Critique of*

While, arguably, the inhuman holds a curious place for all the Romantics and Gothics, it carries in Shelley's thought an especially Kantian flavour insofar as it becomes a figure through which to think both the moral-ethical and anthropological dimensions of man. For Shelley, as for Kant, the question of what man ought to do (a question that is always in the service of improvement directed towards an ideological revolution) colludes with, and brings us to the question of, the *anthropos* and the question of what is man – twinned questions that are not enmeshed for other Romantics, such as Byron, who does not share the same moral-ethical commitments as Shelley. The inhuman in Shelley's poetry and drama becomes an important quilting point for thinking these questions of man. In the writings of both Kant and Shelley, the figure of something beyond man (post-human) or something other than man (inhuman) operates like Foucault's unthought. In both thinkers, the inhuman opens up man and functions as a spur to thought. Just as I examined the Kant not of the *Critiques* but the anthropology, the Shelley I pursue in this chapter is not the unflaggingly idealistic Shelley, Matthew Arnold's "beautiful *and ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain" (*Essays* 408). Instead, I follow the Shelley attuned to the "dark scheme of things finishing in unfruitful death" (*Letters* I. 419), who sees the human complexly enmeshed with the inhuman.⁶⁰

Pure Reason in 1813, but never studied Kant. In the same footnote, Bieri also records that Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley believed that Kant would have had a major impact on Percy, had he lived (718, n.13).

⁶⁰ Letter to Mary Godwin, 4 November 1814.

2.2 Shelley's Inhuman

The final stanza in Percy Shelley's poem "The Sensitive Plant," published in 1820 in the same collection as *Prometheus Unbound*, concludes with an observation on the inhumanity of such concepts of "love, and beauty, and delight" for which "There is no death nor change: their might / Exceeds our organs, which endure / No Light, being themselves obscure" (Part Third. 134-7). Shelley's interest in the limits of man and what lies beyond those limits – in that which in "their might / Exceeds our organs" (Part Third. 135-6) – radically unanchors the human subject, a thought he vertiginously pursues in *Prometheus Unbound* through the inhuman Demogorgon.

Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), as its subtitle suggests, is a "Lyrical Drama in Four Acts," or what some critics have variably described as a psycho-drama or a closet drama.⁶¹ In the Preface to the play, Shelley explains the principal reason for his reworking of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, a Greek play that he found problematic for the way it ultimately reconciled "the Champion [Prometheus] with the Oppressor [Jupiter/Jupiter] of mankind" (1102). Interestingly, many studies of Shelley's play repeat the same Aeschylean gesture by reconciling the play's dissonant elements. Traditionally, *Prometheus Unbound* has been read in humanist terms, in keeping with Earl Wassermann's description of the typical Shelleyan poem as generative, proceeding in a manner "somewhat akin to embryological growth" (471). Michael O'Neill reads the play as fundamentally concerned with the redemption of humanity and as a "corrective

⁶¹ William Hildebrand describes *Prometheus Unbound* as "a closet drama in far more than the usual sense of an inherently unperformable play prescribed for the sympathetic eyes of the solitary reader. It is, rather, a 'closet' drama in the etymological sense of a symbolic acting out of private or hidden psychic experiences" (60).

reimagining of the [French] Revolution” (913). Similarly, Cian Duffy understands *Prometheus Unbound* as Shelley’s defence “against Byron’s dangerous Promethean politics of defiance” and the historical pessimism of his *Childe Harold* (163). Richard Isomaki emphasizes the play’s “necessary reciprocity of love” (669), a reading that also frames *Prometheus Unbound* in terms of a positive prophecy, not unlike Jessica Quillin’s reading of the play’s reliance on musical form as emblematic of its message of the “lyrical harmonization of the universe” (“An assiduous frequenter” 20).

Against these harmonizing, highly aestheticized readings of *Prometheus Unbound*, I focus on those disruptive elements that cannot be smoothly integrated and that as such complicate our understanding of the poem’s idealism. In fact, one can read the character of Asia herself as an intratextual figure for such humanist readings, one which Demogorgon disfigures. I argue that *Prometheus Unbound* stages the germ of something darker in Shelley’s vision of humanity and human progress and history that his later poem *Triumph of Life* will more fully unfold. Following from this we can read *Prometheus Unbound* as a general anthropology, my term – developed in the previous chapter – for Kant’s anthropology that contains the elements that might otherwise be expelled. Indeed, the very setting with which Shelley’s play opens, the “Black, wintry, dead” (I.21) mountaintop in the Indian Caucasus where Prometheus is chained, facilitates this anthropological framing. For as Nigel Leask reminds us, the Indian Caucasus – a large mountain range that geographically divides Europe and Asia – was identified by Western anthropologists as the birthplace of the “Caucasian” races, a term coined by

Blumenbach (*British Romantic Writers and the East* 143).⁶² Thus Shelley's lyrical drama is adamantly bound to the anthropological discourse of his day.

Like Kant's anthropological discourse, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is similarly concerned with the origins and ends of man, a future (human) species, and with the very question that Kant asks in *The Conflict of the Faculties* as to whether the human race is progressing. Furthermore, where Kant's anthropological thinking tries to be evolutionary in form and is haunted by the palingenetic, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is deeply troubled by the different models of change, a tension formally embodied by its overwhelmingly disconnected structure. As Tilottama Rajan notes, the play is "conspicuously constructed from parts between which there are significant gaps [...] the first three acts are equally unconnected, each being dominated by different characters" (*Romantic Narrative* 75). What becomes apparent throughout the mental drama is that Shelley wants to read history in terms of a preformationist predictability that would guarantee the coming of the Promethean age, an evolutionary model implied by the play's germinal imagery. For example, in Act II, Scene I, Panthea tells Asia about her dream where "the flower-infolding buds / Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree" (II.I.136-7), a dream that in turn causes Asia's mind to become infolded: "As you speak, your words / Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep / With shapes" (II.I.142-4). Just as the dream about the "flower-infolding buds" ultimately brings the prophetic sisters to the Cave of Demogorgon, and hence structurally serves to unfold the narrative, the

⁶² Nahoko Miyamoto Alvey in *Strange Truths in Undiscovered Lands: Shelley's Poetic Development and Romantic Geography* (2009) notes that Blumenbach first used the new classification "Caucasian" in the third edition of his *On the Natural Variety of Mankind*, published in 1795 (112, fn.5). In chapter 4 of her book, Alvey treats the East/West hybridization of setting in *Prometheus Unbound*.

play's loftiest ideal of Hope is initially described as being protected in a germinal structure: "legioned hopes / ...sleep within folded Elysian flowers" (II.IV. 59-60).⁶³

Furthermore, Shelley's positive view of this predictable theory of evolution or change is outlined in *A Defence*, where preformationist descriptions of poetry abound: it is "the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially" (1173), and the "germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time" (1169).⁶⁴ Like Kant's *Anthropology*, which is a troubled text – divided as it is, in Godwinian terms, between its "moral" or intention and its "tendency" – Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is rife with internal tension: it desires a reassuring vision of humanity unfolding into its best possible state (Godwin's definition of "perfectability"), yet it cannot achieve this because, in fact, the text reveals, via the disfiguration of Asia within Demogorgon's Cave, that history is more paligenetically evolutionary and hence open to the unforeseen.⁶⁵

Shelley's Demogorgon operates in the same vein as the inhuman in Kant's anthropological writings, that is, as Lyotard's second definition of the inhuman, as a shadowy other that becomes a spur to thought, a move that extends a long tradition of

⁶³ These "legioned hopes" are different from the place of Hope that Demogorgon describes at the end of the play, where the task is now "to hope till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates" (IV.573-4). The representation of Hope's wreckage at the end of the play can be read as the dissolution of the predictable, preformationist model of history. Hope at the end of the play is not like hope in Act II, Scene IV, where it still slumbers infolded within flowers; it is, rather, outside of this protective shell and must create from its wreckage.

⁶⁴ Political and poetic idealism are yoked together in Shelley's thought: "the future is contained within the present as the plant within the seed; and equality, diversity, unity, contrast, mutual dependence, become the principles alone capable of affording the motives according to which the will of a social being is determined to action" (*A Defence of Poetry* 1168). This sentiment is made most forcefully at the end of the *Defence* when Shelley writes: "The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is Poetry" (1178).

⁶⁵ Godwin defines the moral as "that ethical sentence to the illustration of which the work may most aptly be applied," and the tendency as "the actual effect...produce[d] upon the reader, and cannot be completely ascertained but by the experiment" ("Of Choice in Reading" 136).

readings that understand Demogorgon as the source of the drama's energy or narrative drive. Most recently, Michelle Geric reads Demogorgon through Huttonian geology as a figure for "the slow, restorative power of internal heat [that] figures Shelley's concept of a gradual ideological revolution" (35). Leaving aside such a rich scientific lens through which to read Demogorgon, we can recognize in Shelley's drama the figuration of a more fundamental (rather than elemental) philosophical force of the inhuman – a figure that imaginatively returns in various guises throughout his poetry and prose. Demogorgon, like Kant's and Lyotard's inhuman, is both an obstacle and driving force for thought; he (or it) is the condition of possibility that enables and limits change, which in the case of the drama is frequently read as political or ideological change. Unlike his other dramas, such as *The Cenci*, a play concerned with the pestilent family unit, it is significant that Shelley situates *Prometheus Unbound*, with its spirits, phantasms, voices and echoes, and anthropomorphic speakers (cf. Earth and Ocean), in the same inhuman realm that Kant argues is necessary to think the human. Just as the inhuman is necessary for thinking the human in Kant's anthropology, and repeatedly presents itself as an obstacle and spur for thought, so too does the inhuman Demogorgon enable and disable a certain thinking about man in Shelley's mental drama.

2.3 Shelley's Inhuman: Demogorgon

In Shelley's text, the figure of Demogorgon – that "tremendous gloom" (I.I.207) – operates like Kant's extraterrestrial, as a figure for the inhuman, the unthought dimension of thought. As Asia descends into Demogorgon's Cave – a rich figure for the imagination that Percy and Mary Shelley both appeal to throughout their work, for instance in Cythna's cave in Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* (1817), the cave in Mary Shelley's

Valperga, and the Sybil's cave in *The Last Man* – she does so in the pursuit of answers to her question “who rains down / Evil”? (II.IV.100-1).⁶⁶ Like Kant, Asia takes up the moral question of man to get to the anthropological one. Demogorgon's answers are cryptic: three times he simply answers “He reigns” to Asia's questions. Like the unthought, Demogorgon's answers do not produce a meaning but instead prompt Asia to offer a lengthy yet disjunctive history of the power relationships between “Heaven and Earth,” “Light and Love” and Saturn and Prometheus (II.IV.34-6).

In what is arguably a partial rewriting of Prometheus' catalogue of the arts in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* (620-738/ 445-508),⁶⁷ Asia's history recounted in Act II of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* also describes the genesis of the arts and sciences, which began as gifts from Prometheus:

He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song... (II.IV.72-76)

⁶⁶ Shelley refers to the mind in his poem *Mont Blanc* as the “still cave of the witch Poesy” (44, *CP* Vol.3:83). Canto Seventh of Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* is Cythna's account of her rape and imprisonment in a cave near the edge of the sea. The cave is also a site of self-knowledge. See especially lines 3100-3114 (*CP* Vol.3: 248). Another watery cave is found in the “ocean-cave” into which Euthanasia is lost in Mary Shelley's *Valperga*. Euthanasia also speaks of an “inner cave [...] that Poetry and Imagination live” (366). See also Tilottama Rajan's helpful footnote for other readings of the cave (*Valperga* 366, fn22). Oriane Smith, following Rajan, observes that “*The Last Man* begins where *Valperga* ends, with the narrator's discovery of another water-logged cave/grave and her discovery of the scattered prophecies of another, more famous sibyl” (*Romantic Women Writers* 212).

⁶⁷ The first numbers refer to the line numbers from the English translation; the second numbers, following the backslash, refer to the Greek text. One substantial difference between the two texts' catalogue of the arts and sciences is that in Aeschylus' version Prometheus proudly takes credit for violently domesticating animals to suit man's needs and desires: “I was the first to put brute beasts / under the yoke” and “Horses I broke and harnessed / to the chariot shaft / so that they loved their reins, they showed off / the pride and wealth of their owners” (668-675).

In Asia's creation story, speech is the germ from which thinking and science follow.⁶⁸ The seemingly sudden transition from thinking to science, however, can be explained in terms of a continued account of the power couples. Like Heaven and Earth, or Light and Love, Asia's intellectual history compares thought and science, and describes a scene where the two reverberate harmoniously. Asia describes science as if it were in a kind of infancy: one that involves the acts of striking and shaking, but not with enough force to cause thrones to fall. Science seemingly doesn't (yet) have the force of thought itself; it doesn't have the power to be "the measure of the universe" (II.IV.73). Hence, science contains within it the germ to become revolutionary but also despotic. In the ambiguity of "[strike] the thrones of earth and / heaven" (II.IV.74-5), the text plays with the revolutionary potential of it (after all, it is a gift from Prometheus), and its symbolic alignment with the tyrant Jupiter (the Roman equivalent of Zeus).⁶⁹ While science is represented here in a tyrannical gesture of striking, an act that symbolically aligns science with the force of Zeus/Jupiter, Asia's account of science becomes a kind of tuning-fork, a discipline that involves striking and shaking, from which emerges the "harmonious mind / Poured [...] forth in all-prophetic song" (II.IV.75-6), and we see the generative qualities akin to what Blake outlines in his concept of a "sweet science" which will arrive with the departure of the "dark Religions" (*The Four Zoas* ix: 855). Asia's speech reveals how the genesis of man was tightly bound with a healthy balancing of art and science, similar to

⁶⁸ In Aeschylus' text, speech is not one of Prometheus' gifts; rather, he gives humans "NUMBER" (661) and LETTERS" (664); medicinal knowledge of drugs and the mystical powers of prophecy ("the many ways men might see into the future") [703-4]; what we might consider "weird science," like how to read the claws of birds and colours of gall bladders to predict good fortune (710-722); and fire, and the minerals of copper, iron, silver, and gold (728-734).

⁶⁹ In Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* the tyrant is Zeus not Jupiter. I do not examine Shelley's conversion of the original Greek mythology into a Roman one.

what Blake writes in *Jerusalem* over how “The Primeval State of Man was Wisdom, Art, and Science” (*Jerusalem* 3). Indeed, Asia’s description of the early history of the arts and science, those gifts of Prometheus, are not unlike Blake’s account of how “Imagination, Art & Science, & all Intellectual Gifts [are] all the Gifts of the Holy Ghost” (*LJ*, 604) – a topic we will return to at greater length in chapter 4. And yet, as these gifts develop, so too does something darker, as Asia recounts how Prometheus “told the hidden power of herbs and springs, / And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep” (II.IV.85-6). Disease and death grow emanation-like from the body of medical knowledge, a synecdoche for how science is described as having the potential to unseat or usurp power.

In effect, Asia’s speech mobilizes what Shelley in the play’s Preface identifies as his task of producing “a systematical history [...] of the genuine elements of human society” (1104). Yet in the same way that dreamwork transforms, distills, and mutates the dream content into cryptic symbols, the Cave of Demogorgon (Act II, Scene IV) is a murky, shadowy place where language obfuscates meaning. Asia’s query over the Evil that “rains down” finds a distorted echo in Demogorgon’s hollow answer “He reigns,” as the associative play between “raining” and “reigning” subtly encodes sovereign power as an inhuman (and seemingly naturalized) force. Ultimately, what we learn in the Cave comes not from Demogorgon but from Asia, who is a figure for Intellectual Beauty, like Emily in *Epipsychidion* and the female “shape all light” in *The Triumph of Life*, and whose thought unravels after her encounter with Demogorgon, the “mighty darkness” (II.IV.3). What Asia reveals, following her interaction with Demogorgon, is her inability to say where history is going. While watching the speeding chariots of “immortal Hours,”

Asia admits she can “see no shapes but the keen stars” (II.IV.134).⁷⁰ Furthermore, when the spirit “with a dreadful countenance” (II.IV.142) actually responds to her question in a loquaciousness quite unlike Demogorgon, Asia still cannot understand: she replies, “What meanest thou?” and “Thus I am answered: strange!” even after Panthea’s attempted translation of the spirit (II.IV.149, 155). Indeed, Asia’s ultimate leap into the “dark chariot” with the “ghastly charioteer” who waits for her (II.IV. 143-4) represents the failure of a predictable future for man, and instead marks the need for a leap of faith. Asia’s tour in the car takes her on a voyage through a universal history in which she passes “Manhood’s dark and tossing waves / And Youth’s smooth ocean...” and arrives at a place “Peopled by shapes too bright to see” (II.V.99-100, 108). Asia’s tour, filled as it is with light, love, and melody (II.V.72-110), never leaves a kind of preformationist narrative of man.

Indeed, Asia’s account is in keeping with the discipline of universal history, which aims at a comprehensive, aestheticized view of human history that fits every part, from the beginning of time to the present date, into a complete whole. While universal history has a longer history than we will rehearse here, it is enough to know that it enjoyed a certain celebrity in the long Romantic period, not only in the philosophy of Hegel and Kant, but also in the large “universal history” mural paintings of James Barry, Eugène Delacroix, Paul Chenavard, and Gustave Courbet. Universal history dovetailed

⁷⁰ A similar scene is staged in the recent film *Prometheus* by Ridley Scott (2012), where Asia’s difficult task of narration in Act II is repeated by the cyborg named David, who, while exploring a rocky cave (reminiscent of Demogorgon’s Cave) is able to see the spirits of extinct creatures run past him but cannot see from what or whom they run. Scott’s film draws not only on Shelley’s play but also on William Blake’s images, especially in his renderings of the creatures’ bodies. For a discussion of this, see Jason Whittaker’s forthcoming essay in *Embodiments of Horror: William Blake’s Gothic Sensibility*, a special issue of *Gothic Studies* (ed. Christopher Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger).

with painting to create what Daniel Guernsey identifies as “an art of ideas [...] didactic in intent and which incorporates a complex assemblage of historical personages in a unified composition” (2). Of course, these artists hyper-aestheticized what was already an aesthetic discourse. These universal history paintings, large mural programmes that appeared in “institutions committed to progress,” whether “commercial, industrial, legislative or civic” (2), are intensities that make visible the aesthetic underpinning of universal history and their host institutions. We could easily include many of Blake’s texts under this banner, particularly those that draw on biblical narratives and personages, and in doing so plug into this ideology of universal history. Yet as we will see in chapter 4, *Jerusalem*, like Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* (via the figure of Asia), is tenuously engaged with universal history – at times seeming to reach toward this system of universal history and at other times rendering this universal history impossible. Indeed, where Asia withdraws from the narrative, we see a deeper, increasingly frenzied engagement with history in Blake’s *Jerusalem* though the collusion of Blake’s own wild mythology and the chaotically rewritten British myths and legends.⁷¹

Kant’s *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (1784) is a universal history that attempted to contain everything, to include within its historiography an account of all events across all times and nations. Asia’s narrative and her expulsion from the play itself mark the failure of universal history to contain its subjects. We witness the letting go of the ideology of universal history – that is, the idea that a history

⁷¹ Andrew Lincoln, speaking of *The Four Zoas*, notes that “As well as considering the relationship between the British and Hebraic traditions, Blake also turned to the traditional British history as presented by Geoffrey of Monmouth, by Spenser, and by Milton in his *History of England*. This, of course, was precisely the kind of history that the Enlightenment had dismissed as absurd fantasy: rooted in folklore and legend, rich in imaginary acts, devoid of historical reasoning” (286).

of humankind can be understood as unified, whole, and harmonious. We are confronted more forcefully with this problem of history's narration in the trip through human history taken by Cain with Lucifer in Act II of Byron's closet drama *Cain* (1821). Cain, upset over human finitude, travels through the abyss of space where he is exposed to the earth's deep history of death and catastrophe, and even encounters the spirits of extinct species like the mammoth. But where Cain's return to Earth leaves him further despondent and frustrated, Asia's return sees her abruptly but lovingly reunited with Prometheus before unceremoniously disappearing in Act III, Scene IV with the final words: "Listen; look!" (III.IV.97).

While we might argue that the voyage scene in *Cain* is a darkening or critical rewriting of Asia's highly aestheticized trip in *Prometheus Unbound*, there is already an intratextual figure of critique within Shelley's play. The Spirit of the Hour that enters immediately following Asia's exit introduces a new narrative of a darker universal history; he recalls for Prometheus and company the transformations he witnessed when "the mighty change" occurred as he wandered "Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind" (III.IV.129, 127). His narration of history – more attuned to human history than Asia's universal history – and its difference from Asia's story, introduces another loose thread in the play's misshapen history.

But this historical narrative will be overwritten, even overshadowed, by another history. Act IV introduces the darkest earth history, as the Spirit of the Earth goes further back in geological time to tell of the deep history of fallen civilizations that strangely lie underneath the initial strata of minerals, as a result of a catastrophe. The passage is worth quoting at length:

The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the Earth grew over
Was mortal but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works and uncouth skeletons,
Their status, homes, and fanes; prodigious shapes
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard black deep; and over these
The anatomies of unknown winged things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags; – and over these
The jagged alligator and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores
And weed-overgrown continents of Earth
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapt Deluge round it like a cloak, and they
Yelled, gaspt and were abolished; or some God
Whose throne was in a Comet, past, and cried –
'Be not!' – and like my words they were not more. (IV.296-318)

Shelley's description here of the "hard black deep" history of the earth, a Gothic description he will return to in the closing stanzas of *The Triumph of Life*, draws heavily on contemporary accounts of a catastrophe-ridden earth. James Parkinson's *Organic Remains of a Former World* (1804-11) posited that the earth had undergone five, divinely-guided formative stages, each corresponding to a day in Genesis (Parkinson 3:449-53). Georges Cuvier's *Essay on the Theory of the Earth* (1813) looked to explain the fossil evidence of creatures no longer alive on the earth as evidence of extinction, part of the earth's history of successive epochs of catastrophes or revolutions. However, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* troubles a strictly Cuvierian understanding of earth history. Whereas Cuvier imagines these massive extinction events as having occurred prior to the birth of humanity, which is how he explains the absence of human fossils within the earth, Shelley tunnels mole-like into the deep history of the earth and curiously places man alongside and even beneath the inhuman. "Shelley," notes Nahoko Miyamoto Alvey, "reverses the history of the earth by placing [...] the remains of the earliest civilization formed by some extinct intelligent race, at the very first period of the earth" (140).

As we have seen in chapter 1, where Kant repeatedly finds himself thinking what lies beyond man either in a future space or in the antediluvian past, Shelley is frequently drawn towards thinking the limits of man. Indeed, *Prometheus Unbound* might be Shelley's most radical thought-experiment about what it might mean to understand humanity as already having undergone extinction. By burying a humanity amidst and beneath the strata of inorganic "junk" – to use Thierry Bardini's term for what is useless but can always be repurposed – Shelley not only suggests that humans can (and indeed

already have) come to an end, but also, as part of the promise of the Promethean age, can become unbound and potentially return as a new humanity. Put differently, Shelley's rewriting of earth's history *implies* without certainty – as it never actually follows through on this vision – that humanity could, just like the fishes, alligators, monarch beasts and slimy shores, potentially be “recycled,” as it were, out of the “melancholy ruins / Of cancelled cycles” (IV.288-9).

From the universal history first given in Asia's account, to the history of the *anthropos* given by the Spirit of the Hour, to the earth history told by the Spirit of the Earth, *Prometheus Unbound* depicts the overlapping narratives of history as being clawed down from the cosmos into the dark hard depths of the earth. History descends into a world unknown to man, recalling the Magus Zoroaster's world “underneath the grave, where do inhabit / The shadows of all forms that think and live” (I.97-8). The downward motion, recalling Demogorgon's dethroning of Jupiter, is perhaps a critique of the tyranny of history, of the failure of one master narrative. The burrowing of history into depths below depths sees the disintegration of the larger models of historiography, like a fuselage breaking up as it plummets into the earth. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, this descent through the different historiographical strata moves the play from the “molar” to the “molecular.”⁷² That is, from the large-scale, macro-properties of a body (i.e. sedimentary rock) to its minute-scale micro-properties (i.e. stones) – a movement the play's geological imagery follows moving from Prometheus' mountainside in Act I to the subterranean depths of the “hard black deep” in Act IV (IV.302). The potentiality of what

⁷² In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari give the example of sediment becoming sedimentary rock as the process through which the “molecular” (flows, volatile units) becomes “molar” (a compound) (40-1).

lies beneath is a gesture repeated in the Motto to Blake's *Book of Thel*, the focus of chapter 3, where particular or localized knowledge (symbolized by the mole) is privileged over that arrived at from a distance (symbolized by the eagle).

Returning to an especially troubling scene, Asia's sudden disappearance from the narrative is a gesture that both recalls and further compounds the difficulty in how to interpret history. As Rajan observes, Asia's account of history includes overlapping, discrepant narratives: "Asia at first postulates a Saturnian age, followed by the Jovian age [...] The logical conclusion to this dialectic would be the Promethean age," and yet her narration is "rambling and is less a history than a chronicle, a series of episodes linked by 'ands'" that "only gropes towards a causal or teleological understanding of history" (*Romantic Narrative* 78-9). Asia's seemingly haphazard narration fails to culminate in any satisfying or insightful conclusion. Asia – to quote Rajan again – "cannot bring [her story] to a conclusion and returns to questioning Demogorgon. The play then performatively produces its conclusion, through a deliberate act of positing in which it binds its unnamed forms into a particular history" (79). Hence, the act of unbinding implied in the play's title is associated also with the unkempt history narrated by Asia, an entanglement that, coupled with the play's hemorrhaged structure of four disconnected acts, renders it impossible to maintain faith in history's progress.

In a Thel-like act of abdication, Asia's leap into the dark chariot (II.V), which finds a displaced image in her disappearing leap outside the play (III.IV), is a gesture of wild resignation, of giving up the long history of misreading history. For leaping retroactively scatters her disjunctive history of man and the cosmos, leaving them even more fragmentary and impossible to read. While Rajan reads *Prometheus Unbound* as

resembling *St. Irvyne*, as “an assemblage that finally disassembles itself” (49), Asia’s scattered history more closely anticipates the half-forgotten languages scrawled on the scattered leaves in the long abandoned Sibyl’s Cave – the scene with which Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* opens. Demogorgon’s Cave becomes a traumatic but also generative site where a predictable history is disfigured, the exit from which must be a leap into the unknown. Hence, history in *Prometheus Unbound* – considered as a Universal Natural History of the Heavens (Kant) – is palingenetic: it is the unpredictable rebirth of a traumatic kernel that is a germ of the future.

Returning to this figure that mobilizes Asia’s thought, Demogorgon conditions thought but is suppressed, giving way to ever brighter, more cerebral figures. Indeed, the appearance of Demogorgon is not unlike the suppression of the inhuman in Kant’s critical work. Despite the ways in which Demogorgon literally entwines himself with Jupiter (“twisted in inextricable fight” [III.I.73]) as he pulls him off the throne, he also figurally binds himself with Asia in the manner that thought is twinned with its unthought. Just as Panthea necessarily mediates between Prometheus and Asia through the mystical process of reading dreams, Demogorgon is an agent who activates or mobilizes change. Demogorgon dethrones Jupiter in the same way that the second sense of the inhuman resists the first negative inhuman:

Descend, and follow me down the abyss.

I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn’s child;

Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together

Henceforth in darkness. (III.I.53-6)

We can read Demogorgon's answer "He reigns" as a cryptic confession, as he sits on an "ebon throne" (II.IV.1) "Filling the seat of power" (II.IV.4). While Demogorgon responds "God" or "Merciful God" (II.IV.8-18) to Asia's first four questions, he answers "He reigns" to her fifth question – here quoted at length:

And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things,
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood;
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell? (II.IV.19-28)

Demogorgon causes "every thought within the mind of man" to "Sway and drag heavily." As that "familiar and unknown guest which is agitating it, sending it delirious but also making it think" (Lyotard 2), he cannot comfort Asia by "Utter[ing] his name" (II.IV.29); as the spur to thought he makes thinking difficult. Asia, a figure for Intellectual Beauty, butts up against Demogorgon, a figure for the unthought. Like the Lady in "The Sensitive Plant" who carries "all killing insects and gnawing worms, / And things of obscene and unlovely forms" into "the rough woods far aloof" (Part Second. 41-2, 44), Asia similarly tends towards "Harmonizing this earth" (II.V.96). Indeed, the play's liberatory deep ecology – predicted in Shelley's Preface to the play where the "cloud of mind is

discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored” (1103) – repeatedly encounters its limitations in the inhuman Demogorgon – “A mighty darkness,” an amorphous “awful shape” (III.I.52) who represents the inhuman dimension, the unknown that limits change. Demogorgon’s final speech speaks of limits: “Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance, / These are the seals of that most firm assurance / Which bars the pit over Destruction’s strength” (IV.562-4). Yet these seals are already breachable, as Demogorgon offers “spells” by which to defend against the snake potentially released by Eternity’s “infirm hand” (IV.565). The spells are all within the realm of the moral-ethical: to suffer woes, forgive wrongs, defy power, to love, hope and not to change, falter or repent (IV. 570-6).

Demogorgon – Shelley’s most notable addition to the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus – operates within the play as an internal limit, quite literally pulling on the reigns of power or “system,” the latter being a problematic word Shelley carries with in the play’s Preface.⁷³ The pivotal role of Demogorgon in binding and unbinding the flows of thought and ideological change – “pivotal” because he governs the movement of change within the text – operates in the same insidious way from within the system as Kantian germs, germs that are the enabling mechanism within the human organism that, through their flows of folding and unfolding, make it possible for the human to adapt to its environment. Furthermore, a defining feature of the processes of unbinding and

⁷³ In the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley strangely states that he doesn’t consider his poetry “in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life” (1104), before speculating on whether he will “live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society” (1104).

binding in which Demogorgon participates, like the darker side of the Kantian germ, is what we might call a *general economy of pain* – that is, an economy whereby pain and suffering of mind and body are necessary for positive change.

2.4 Sound in *Prometheus Unbound*

Deeply connected with the character Demogorgon is another inhuman element: sound.

Echoing throughout *Prometheus Unbound* is the uncanny figure of inhuman sound.

Indeed, the epigraph by Cicero to the play's Preface stages the importance of sound:

“Audisne haec amphiarae, sub terram abdite?” [“Do you hear this, O Amphiarus, concealed under the Earth?”]. The epigraph signals to us the need to listen for something, for the ambiguous “this” that is “concealed under the Earth,” requiring us to press our ears to the page or to the ground. This call to be vigilant about listening is a prescriptive thought that Shelley's poem “To a Sky-lark,” published in the same year as *Prometheus Unbound*, echoes in its final line: “The world should listen then – as I am listening now” (105). Yet much like the ambiguous epigraph – “Do you hear *this*” (my emphasis) – it is difficult to discern exactly who or what we hear within the text.

The play contains a large number of voices, most of which are not listed as *dramatis personae* but that nonetheless (over)populate the text, and contribute to what Linda Brigham calls its “semiotic overabundance, a chaos of plenitude” (31). Acts I and IV bookend the drama with eleven and fourteen different voices, respectively.⁷⁴ As the

⁷⁴ Act I contains: First Voice (from the Mountains); Second Voice (from the Springs); Third Voice (from the Air); Fourth Voice (from the Whirlwinds); First Echo; Second Echo; Chorus; Semichorus I; Semichorus II; Chorus of Spirits; Chorus. Act II contains: Dream; Echoes; Semichorus I of Spirits; Semichorus II; Voice in the air singing. Act IV contains: Voice of Unseen Spirits; Semichorus of Hours; Semichorus II; Semichorus I; Chorus; Chorus of Spirits; Chorus of Spirits and Hours; A Voice from

epigraph to the Preface establishes the need to listen, Act I introduces the drama's ever-increasing sonority through its dizzying series of voices (from the mountains, springs, air, and whirlwinds), echoes, choruses and semichoruses. The soundscape of the drama becomes most vertiginous in the final Act IV where disembodied, inhuman voices – including those that are unseen (what Michel Chion would call “acousmatic”) and “confused” (IV.543) – seep in from all directions, producing a chaotic hymn that tempestuously marks the advent of the Promethean age and the dénouement of the drama.⁷⁵ Indeed, much of the narrative's overall momentum derives from mysterious, acousmatic sounds to which the speakers frequently refer, yet which we have a sense of only through their frustratingly shadowy descriptions. As the exchange between Ione and Panthea articulates, there is a gap between the text's uncanny sound and the ability of the characters' words to adequately describe it. Distinguishing between sound and language, Ione and Panthea hear “a sense of words upon mine ear” and “an universal sound like words” (IV.517-8). This metaphorical semblance of their “sense of” and “sound like” words establishes that they hear not words but, to modify Foucault's phrase, something on the order of words.

Hence, the overwhelming question becomes: Why is *Prometheus Unbound* scored throughout with such sound? One reason why Shelley privileges sound and its correlative acts of listening and hearing over the other senses, such as sight, might be for the ways in

Above; A Voice from Beneath; A Confused Voice; A Voice; All. Note: These “voices” as I am calling them are in addition to the cast of *dramatis personae*.

⁷⁵ Compare here the hymn in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*.

which sound represents what cannot be seen, that which evades or escapes a certain legibility. As examined in the previous section, Shelley's play stages the difficulty of reading or interpreting history through Asia. Ultimately, the representation of inhuman, uncanny sound becomes another obstacle for thought, symbolic of the obfuscation of meaning and the failure of universal harmony. Sound is also distinguished in the play from music, and is importantly connected with Demogorgon. Indeed, I want to suggest that Demogorgon, who creates an uncanny echo-effect within the play, especially through his interaction with Asia, isn't really a "character," but a catachresis for what evades the grasp of the senses. In fact, part of the power of inhuman sound, associated as it is with Demogorgon who is underground, might come from Shelley's own experience climbing Mount Vesuvius on 16 December 1818 – a trek he made at the same time that he was drafting *Prometheus Unbound*.⁷⁶ Most captivating in Shelley's description of his experience is the long rumbling sound of the recently erupted volcano: "the single summit of Vesuvius [was] rolling forth volumes of thick white smoke," and its "subterranean thunder" and "distant deep peals seemed to shake the very air & light of day which interpenetrated our frames with the sullen & tremendous sound" (*Letters* II.73).

Sound in *Prometheus Unbound* initially appears to be a harmonizing and transformative force. Sound for Shelley holds a restorative, transformative power – a feature that dovetails with what Jessica Quillin in *Shelley and the Musico-poetics of Romanticism* finds in Shelley's poetry to be a fusion of music and poetry, an indicator of his interest in "the expressive potentialities of a poetry that is charged with music" (2).

⁷⁶ Alvey notes that *Prometheus Unbound* "was begun in September 1818 and finished late in 1819" (109).

In Act IV, sound is the mechanism through which the other disciplines are transformed. A chorus of spirits “of the human mind / Wrapped in sweet sounds” (IV. 81-2) describe their awakening:

From the temples high
 Of Man’s ear and eye,
 Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
 From the murmurings
 Of the unsealed springs

Where Science bedews her Daedal wings. (IV.111-116)

The Earth narrates Man’s intellectual transformation, noting the seismic change within him that “With earthquake shock and swiftness making / shiver / Thought’s stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever” (IV. 378-80). Man, who was once a “many-sided mirror, / Which could distort to many a shape of error” (IV.383-4), is changed by love. Man’s strength slumbers or lies latent within his aesthetic pursuits, such as sculpture and painting: “All things confess his strength. Through the / cold mass / Of marble and of colour his dreams pass” (IV.413-5), the arts which Prometheus gave to man. As Asia recounts in her minor intellectual history of man, Prometheus gave man speech, which in turn created thought. Science “struck the thrones of earth and / heaven, / Which shook, but fell not” – the failure of which enabled “the harmonious mind” to pour “itself forth in all-prophetic song” (II.IV.72-77). After music came sculpture, in which “marble grew divine” (II.IV.82), followed by medicine, “the hidden power of herbs and springs” (II.IV.85). All these disciplines are the “alleviations” that Prometheus gave to man (II.IV.98).

Sounds reside in innumerable places within the drama. One transformative sound comes from Ocean's "mystic shell" (III.III.70) filled with "lulled music sleeping" (III.III.73); it is a sound "at once both sweet and strange" (III.III.75). The shell's "mighty music" (III.III.81), loosened by the breath of the Spirit of the Hour, warms the "withered, old, and icy frame" (III.III.88) of the Earth. Various characters describe a transformative sound – as the Spirit of the Earth explains:

there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
 The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
 Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
 A long, long sound, as it would never end:
 And all the inhabitants leaped suddenly
 Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
 Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
 The music pealed along. (III.IV.54-61)

The transformative power of sound registers both as a call-to-change, but also as a force that produces dramatic ontological changes. In one of the play's most enigmatic changes, Asia's otherworldly transfiguration arrives by "Some good change/ ...working in the elements" (II.V.18-9), by those "sounds i' the air which speak the / love / Of all articulate beings" (II.III.35-7). Asia even dissolves into the soundscape itself: "I float down, around, / Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound" (II.III.83-4) – before disappearing from the narrative with the imperative "Listen; look!" (III.IV.98). This image of the sea of sound that Asia descends into reappears in Act III, Scene II, when Ocean sits reclining near the shore, called home by the "loud deep" (III.II.41). Upon hearing the sound of

waves, Ocean remarks “It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm. / Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell” (III.II.48-9). Ocean’s reunion with the “unpastured sea” is a model of closure, reflecting the potentiality of voice (the inhuman sound of waves) to mobilize the harmonious coming-into-balance of the world. Hence, this text seems to suggest that for Shelley ideological, political change is conditioned by a new epistemology: change cannot be seen but only indirectly heard. To be sure, if we take the poem on its own grounds, we approach the standard reading of Romanticism, wherein nature (including its sounds) is different from but nevertheless supportive of man, a “natural supernaturalism.” However, the difference between sound and music must not be overlooked, for one hears them in different ways, just as philosopher Mladen Dolar in *A Voice and Nothing More* notes that “one usually hears the meaning and overhears the voice” (4). Moreover, it is music (not sound) that is a discipline, which, to repeat a point made earlier, refers to “those branches of learning (*disciplinae*), by means of which we separate ourselves from the way of life and customs of animals and are restored to humanity” (qtd. in Crane 31). It is to these key differences between music and sound that we now turn.

Indeed, by focusing on the play’s uncanny topology of sounds, we can see sound not unlike the way Dolar sees voice – that is, voice not as “the vehicle of meaning; the voice as the source of aesthetic admiration” but as “an object voice [...] as a blind spot in the call and as a disturbance of aesthetic appreciation” (4). In the section that follows, I will argue that this is precisely what sound does in *Prometheus Unbound*. While we may be called to listen, and while this may be the action required for change, the play’s sound can deliver no such meaning because of the uncanniness of the sounds themselves. As we will see, sound, rather than operating as the vehicle of meaning, like the chariot that will

bring us into the Promethean Age, threatens, in many interesting ways, to become – in Dolan’s phrase – “a voice and nothing more,” a recalcitrant or dis-integrative sound that does not deliver meaning, that is not a beautiful sound, and that cannot be harmoniously absorbed into the play’s narrative. In effect, then, sound increases dissonance, and is a disruptive element that extends symptomatically from Demogorgon. With the indirection of sound in mind, we can see how the play’s water that craves equilibrium is the same water, turned in a different direction, of the “poisonous waters which flow from death through life” (*A Defence* 1176), those darker waters that flow through Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* and into the heart of modernity’s darkness (cf. Arnold’s Atlantic Ocean in *Dover Beach*, Nietzsche’s Dionysian in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Conrad’s Thames and unnamed African river in *Heart of Darkness*). We will come back to this water in chapter 5.

We turn now to the resemblances between soundscapes and disciplinary origins in *Prometheus Unbound* and Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*. The depiction of man and his disciplines, specifically the arts, are uncannily alike; both texts feature a kind of catalogue of the arts. Yet Mary’s novel is the darker working-through of Percy’s unfinished and more idealistic (and imperialistic), closeted project of reassuming man’s “empire o’er the disentangled doom” (IV.568-9); hers is the dark unraveling of his lyric germ, which is the origin that survives. Hers is the disorganization of what Percy tries to reorganize. This is to say that Percy develops something from a germ, but that structure is always fragile and threatening to fall back into a molecular state. Conversely, in Mary Shelley’s deconstruction, a germ survives but with palingenetic potential. Whereas sound or voice at least initially appears to be the condition of possibility for redemptive change

within *Prometheus Unbound*, in Mary Shelley's novel sound only works to the opposite effect and affect; sound tortures the characters, functioning as sonorous globules of memory that inevitably render the protagonist Lionel Verney and his few surviving friends melancholic. Sound – for Mary Shelley – crystallizes the unspeakable, the unnameable; it succeeds because words fail to adequately represent the sublimity of the horrific experience of extinction, of witnessing the disaster. Unlike Mary Shelley's *Last Man*, in which sound is intensely painful and bound to the affects of horror and painful memory, in Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* sound functions closer to Hegel's definition of the Idea – as something which hasn't quite found its adequate embodiment but that nonetheless pushes itself forth. Perhaps like that mysterious something that “borders closely on enthusiasm” (153/Ak7:85) that Kant in *The Conflict of the Faculties* recognizes in the spectators of the French Revolution, positive revolutionary change in *Prometheus Unbound* is quite literally figured as a sound (not words but a certain “something”) that has the capability of producing movement beyond “the melancholy ruins / Of cancelled cycles” (IV.288-9). Yet some of the transformative power of music is lost by virtue of the troubling presence of uncanny sound, of those inhuman sounds cannot be assimilated or that cannot ultimately resolve into harmony.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ In the *Defence* Shelley distinguishes between melody and harmony: “But there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody, alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them. It is as if the lyre could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound; even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre” (1167-8).

2.5 An Unharmonious Key Change

The first vexing sound we encounter in *Prometheus Unbound* is the painful moaning of the tortured Prometheus. Prometheus's raging soliloquy in Act I not only describes his experience of "pain, pain ever, for ever!" (I.23, 30), a pain that is both physical and psychic, it also foregrounds the play's reliance on a flow of strange sounds. The germ of Prometheus' long-term pain and suffering is a traumatized memory, the painful remembering of a forgetting, specifically the forgetting of the very curse that binds him to the side of the mountain. Witnessing his suffering are mountains with "many-voiced Echoes" (I.60), springs that "vibrated to hear" (I.63), whirlwinds "hung mute" (I.68), and loud thunder. Thus his inhuman company amplifies the soundtrack of his suffering. Prometheus, who desires knowledge of the curse that binds him to the "wall of eagle-baffling mountain, / Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb, / Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life" (I.20-22), has a largely silent, inhuman audience that listens. Prometheus hears auspicious sounds: "I heard a sound of voices: not the voice / Which I gave forth" (I.112-3), and more unsettling ones like "an awful whisper [...] scarce like sound: it tingles through the frame" (I.133-4), "inorganic voice" (I.136), and "melancholy Voice" (I.153) – sounds which turn out to be from his mother, Earth, who has become estranged after the three thousand years of silence imposed on her by the Curse. Indeed, the first exchange between Prometheus and the Earth establishes the tension between the acts of listening (to a strange sound) and the act of interpretation or understanding. The revelation that Earth speaks "the language of the dead" (I.138), a tongue known "Only to

those who die” (I.150), produces in Prometheus an intense psychic experience that recalls the phenomenon of vertigo:⁷⁸

Obscurely through my brain, like
 shadows dim,
 Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
 Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
 Yet ‘tis not pleasure. (I.146-150)

Prompted by hearing strange voices, Prometheus’s vertiginous experience of those “awful thoughts” like “shadows dim” uncannily recalls the rhetoric of Demogorgon, an “Awful shape” (III.I.18), who is “shapeless,” having “neither limb, / Nor form, nor outline” (II.IV.61-2). This displaced image of Demogorgon in Prometheus’ shadowy thoughts renders him less a particular character and more amorphous like a psychic state – like the inhuman (in Kant and Lyotard) that brings suffering and discomfort to thought.

What unfolds in the dialogue between Prometheus and the Earth is the knowledge of the Curse and the noxious affect of its utterance. The Curse is a vexing speech act; as William Hildebrand notes, it is “harsh, grating, cacophonous, and painful to the ear; it is the expression of hate, disunion: of inner disharmony rather than of inner harmony. The whole harmonious man would not curse” (31). The curse breeds pestilence: Prometheus “breathes” (I.59) the curse on Jupiter, an act of exhalation that Earth repeats: her “breath, was stained / With the contagion of a mother’s hate” (I.177-8). The play’s bad breath unfolds like the darker side of Kant’s germ, wherein a “germ of madness develops

⁷⁸ I argue that Prometheus’ experience is closer to vertigo than what William Hildebrand describes as “the death seizure of an orgasm unalloyed with pleasure” (7).

together with the germ of reproduction, so that this too is hereditary” (*Anthropology* 111). Earth strategically uses the tongues – a secret language – to avoid Jupiter’s wrath, and will only help Prometheus “recall” the Curse – an overdetermined word connoting both the acts of remembering and revoking⁷⁹ – through the highly ventriloquized figure of a ghost, the Phantasm of Jupiter. The “frail and empty” (I.241) Phantasm arrives accompanied by the sound of “whirlwind underground” (I.231) and is a “shape [...] awful like the sound” (I.234) – a description that uncannily foreshadows that of Demogorgon. The Phantasm, a “Tremendous Image” (I.246), is overdetermined; initially, it materializes as belonging to Jupiter before morphing into Prometheus’ own image – an act that embodies the very nature of a phantasm. Phantasms, according to Foucault,

must be allowed to function at the limits of bodies; against bodies, because they stick to bodies and protrude from them, but also because they touch them, cut them, break them into sections, regionalize them, and multiply their surfaces; and equally, outside of bodies, because they function between bodies according to laws of proximity, torsion, and variable distance – laws of which they remain ignorant. Phantasms do not extend organisms into an imaginary domain; they topologize the materiality of the body. (“*Theatrum Philosophicum*” 169-70)

The Phantasm’s act of shape shifting is a displaced image for the way the Curse itself moves in its contagious, pestilent-like “breathings” from Prometheus to the Earth like the carcinogenic power of a bad family romance – an echo, arguably, from Shelley’s other

⁷⁹ According to Frederick Pottle, Prometheus ultimately “recalls” the Curse in both senses of remembering and revoking (qtd. in Hildebrand 56).

drama, *The Cenci* (1819), published only one year before *Prometheus Unbound*.⁸⁰ Just as Prometheus' lines are broken by the caesura "yet speak: Oh, speak!" (I.261) – the imperative for the Phantasm to utter the Curse – the Phantasm reveals the dividedness of Prometheus. Beyond being physically broken apart by the "crawling glaciers" that pierce his skin, he is psychically divided; he cannot access his memory of the Curse, and he is bound to a darkness that he shares with Jupiter. Prometheus' "strange kinship" – to use a phrase from Merleau-Ponty – with Jupiter is evident in how the Phantasm brokers their bodies. The suffering of Prometheus' psychic division comes at the hands of the unthought, what Foucault calls "the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality" (*OT* 326), whose presence, this "familiar and unknown guest" as Lyotard explains, secretly takes the soul hostage by inciting Promethean suffering within the mind (Lyotard 2). The Phantasm and the flow of strange inhuman sounds – figures that are all masks or displaced images that set the stage for the real agent of change, Demogorgon – agitate Prometheus' mind, "sending it delirious but also making it think" (Lyotard 2). Like Lyotard's inhuman, where "if one claims to exclude it, if one doesn't give it an outlet, one aggravates it" (2), the suppression of the inhuman Demogorgon, as dramatized by the location of Demogorgon's Cave as beneath the play's dramatic action, works to further intensify or aggravate him, akin to how the suppression of the inhuman in Kant's critical work produces a displaced intensification of it in his anthropological writings.

⁸⁰ Compare the relationship between Prometheus and Earth to that of Beatrice and her father Count Francesco Cenci.

Other acoustic dislocations in *Prometheus Unbound* include the disorienting echoes. For example, in Act I voices are heard to echo “your defence lies fallen and / vanquishèd!” (I.310-311); “Lies fallen and vanquishèd!” (I.312); and “Fallen and vanquishèd!” (I.313). Yet these echoes increase the disorientation within the play, as they fall short of truly echoing or repeating the speech. This feature appeals to a defining feature from Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, where, as John Herington notes, the three phrases “release from sorrows,” “freedom from agony” and “end of toils” are loosely repeated twenty-one times in the 1,093 line Greek text (304). However, where these phrases act as leitmotifs that tie Aeschylus’ play together, the half-dissolved echoes in Shelley’s play create a jarred effect both internally and intertextually against Aeschylus’ original. Indeed, the echoes are precisely those “disruptive ‘anomalies’” that Derrida in “The Law of Genre” notes are “engendered [...] by repetition” (220).⁸¹

Thus while sound throughout *Prometheus Unbound* seemingly works toward unifying and harmonizing all of existence, the final Act IV, which as Hildebrand observes was added after its initial draft, functions as a darker conclusion; this final movement ends in what he dubs “a minor key” with Demogorgon’s infamous soliloquy (267).⁸² Not only do the soliloquies of Prometheus and Demogorgon bookend Acts I and IV, respectively, but Demogorgon’s speech (Act IV) also serves as a rejoinder to Prometheus’s speech in Act I. In speaking of the “narrow verge of crag-like agony”

⁸¹ Derrida’s essay “The Law of Genre” begins with a similar distorted echo as Shelley’s play: “Genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix genres. I repeat: genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix them” (217).

⁸² Hildebrand writes: “Some six months after completing it and telling Peacock that the play was ‘finished,’ he was at work on another act. If his subject had been simply the unbinding of Prometheus, the drama would have ended with the first scene of Act III. The unbinding of Prometheus is, however, only the first, or causal, aspect of the subject; the second, or consequential, aspect is the effect of the unbinding on man and the universe” (197).

(IV.560) – the suffering or “dread endurance” (IV.559) of Love from which it “springs / And folds over the world its healing wings” (IV. 560-1) – Demogorgon evokes the suffering of Prometheus in Act I. Yet if this is the day when Love, or Prometheus, is unbound, the security of such a day is immediately annihilated in being radically undermined by the very contingency of Demogorgon’s “strong words” that “*may never pass away*” (IV.553, my emphasis). Demogorgon’s words remind us of what Koselleck calls the difference between “a history as it takes place and its linguistic facilitation. No speech act is itself the action that it helps prepare, trigger, and enact” (*The Practice of Conceptual History* 25). Thus the Promethean Age – that is, the liberation of man and the universe to be “great and joyous, beautiful and free” (IV.577) – is not without the reminder of its potential undoing.

The disjunctive sense of Demogorgon’s words, and the fragile harmony with which the play ends, is further amplified by what we might call Act IV’s “formal problem”; that is, it straddles two verse styles. According to Hildebrand, “only 153 of the 578 lines in Act IV are in blank verse” (198) – a feature he explains by way of the Act’s musicality. By adding the fourth Act, the play slips out of its more problematic blank verse of Act III (the original ending), and more appropriately – in Hildebrand’s reading – brings us to the supposed celebratory “emotional pitch” of Act IV’s events. However, against Hildebrand’s reading, I suggest that this works to the opposite effect: the celebratory pitch becomes strikingly dissonant when read against the fragile ending. Demogorgon’s cautionary soliloquy ends the drama in a pitch reminiscent of an *evaded cadence*, a hallmark of eighteenth-century music wherein one voice does not resolve as

expected.⁸³ Unlike a perfect cadence that is symbolic of harmony and closure, the evaded cadence produces an unresolved sound. Thus we are left in the final moments of the drama not with the “lulling cadences” from Enitharmon’s Loom (*Milton* 4:7), but in profound uncertainty over the liberation of man, a precarious freedom that threatens to collapse again with the fading of these words – words, which as the origin of the play makes clear are capable of being lost or forgotten.

2.6 The Inhuman in *The Triumph of Life*

“out of such crooked wood as the human being is made, nothing entirely straight can be fabricated”

– Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (113/Ak8:23)

While the Shelley of *Prometheus Unbound* is a thinker interested in the “operations of the human mind” (Preface 1102), that “uncommunicated lightning” of the mind (1103), there is also a Shelley who is remarkably interested in the life of inhuman things, an interest that began in *Prometheus Unbound*. *The Triumph of Life* (1824), a poem published posthumously, carries with the minute or minor processes that constitute this thing called “Life” – a category/concept that, as the poem suggests, extends well beyond the boundaries of the human. While the poem is largely centered on Rousseau, there is another side of the poem that is concerned with the stranger, slimmer figures of “Life,” – those “flock of vampire-bats” (484), “restless apes” (493), elves, vultures, and worms – that cast a shadow over the human life within the poem. We might say that this poem is

⁸³ As musicologist Janet Schmalfeldt notes, the evaded cadence was a staple of mid- to late-eighteenth-century music, used for “highlighting the soloist’s secondary-key cadential area within the aria and the concerto, in general for extending and invigorating secondary-key materials” (1).

concerned not only with the various philosophical and political systems that attempt to define or conceptualize “life” but that it also attempts to offer its own answer – namely, of a life that has no human at the center. In what follows, I consider these inhuman figures within the poem as the text’s thought toward “becoming-imperceptible,” not unlike Kant’s consideration of the organism as an assemblage of unfolding germs, as a thought-experiment about the limits of man, the *anthropos*, and man’s crowning cultural achievements of poetry and literature. Ultimately, what Shelley in *The Triumph of Life* offers us is a negative anthropology, that is an anthropology that no longer looks to ask that fundamental question of Kant’s *Anthropology – Was ist der Mensch?* – because the question cannot be answered positively. Man, in negative anthropology – a branch developed by Günther Anders among others (cf. Simmel, Horkheimer, Sartre) – is more bleakly and deconstructively marked by what he is not.⁸⁴ The premise of negative anthropology is that man is not special and does not have a natural world. This “worldlessness,” according to Anders is ultimately our “anthropological deficit” that our efforts at building a culture attempt to paper over (qtd. van Dijk 29). Anders, who in *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* [The Antiquatedness of the Human Being], imagined himself as a kind of “forward turned historian” [*vorwärts gekehrte Historiker*] – a reversal of Friedrich Schlegel’s description of historians as “backward turned prophets” [*rückwärts gekehrte Propheten*] – is of special interest for us in light our reading of

⁸⁴ In 1929-30, Günther Anders – pupil of Heidegger and Husserl, once-husband of Hannah Arendt, and cousin of Walter Benjamin – delivered two papers at the Kant Society in Hamburg and Frankfurt that outlined this darker form of anthropology, which postulates that human beings can only be known by what they are not. Humanity, for Anders, is marked by a *Prometheische Scham* [“Promethean shame”] grounded in the discrepancy between our ability to produce and our ability to imagine.

Shelley, not only for the ways in which both thinkers are interested in rethinking man, and human history across time, but also for the ways in which both thinkers are drawn to the figure of Prometheus (2.429).

2.7 The Dawning of the Inhuman

With their descriptions of the sun springing forth and the “mask / Of darkness” falling from the “awakened Earth” (3-4), the opening stanzas of *The Triumph* read like an extended scene of the dawning Promethean Age with which *Prometheus Unbound* ends. Timothy Morton, following Paul de Man’s attentive reading of the sun, suggests the *Triumph*’s “strange beginning [...] is a poetics of disaster, literally a dis-astron” because of “the sun’s weirdly sudden rising” (“Romantic Disaster Ecology” paragraph 21). This apocalyptic, or disastrous image is at odds with the rest of the pastoral descriptions of the scene, which unfolds as the speaker, whom I am calling “Shelley” the character – like “Blake” within *Milton* – slips into a “strange trance” (29) or a “waking dream” (42) while lying underneath a chestnut tree. The first twenty lines of *The Triumph* describe a glowingly pastoral scene: flowers are gently “kissed” by the day, opening themselves up – along with the entirety of the “Continent, / Isle, Ocean” (15-6) – to the “smiling air” (14) – a sweetness further supplemented by the poem’s *terza rima* rhyme scheme, a three-line pattern that harmoniously interlocks the stanzas. However, this sweet scene quickly over-ripens, and the tenor of this landscape changes upon “Shelley’s” first words: “But I,” (21). This pause introduces a fold into the poem, foregrounding the difference of the speaker from this pastoral scene, while the rest of the line creates another fold, one inwards, by the cryptic confession of the speaker’s “thoughts which must remain untold” (21). What are these thoughts? And if they must remain untold, what are the thoughts –

the lines that follow – that are actually told? This statement hangs suspended throughout the entirety of the poem, while also creating a fold within the poem as “Shelley” admits there are thoughts which not must be told, the inverse of Prometheus’ Curse which must be recalled in order to break it. “Shelley’s” narration of his monstrous vision (beginning on line 40) of the “great stream / Of people” (44-5), a swarming multitude “Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam” (46) that appears as “one mighty torrent” (53), is abruptly punctuated by the intrusive utterance of the word “Life” by Rousseau (179): a short answer to Shelley’s question about the scene before him, which is reminiscent of Demogorgon’s “He reigns.” Rousseau in turn strangely appears like an Arcimboldo painting in the form of “an old root” growing “To strange distortion out of the hill side” (182-3).⁸⁵ “Shelley’s” response to the old root Rousseau, whose ghastly appearance is signified by “Shelley’s” parenthetical aside, “(O Heaven have mercy on such wretchedness)” (181), is not unlike that of Antoine Roquentin in Sartre’s *Nausea* who becomes nauseated at the sight of the bloated roots of a chestnut tree. Rousseau is greatly disfigured and grows out of the landscape in a description recalling the image of Urizen on the frontispiece to Blake’s *The [First] Book of Urizen*: what is initially thought to be grass is actually his “thin discoloured hair” (186) which partially covers his face in an attempt to hide the holes where eyes “Were or had been” (188). Rousseau’s ghastly embodiment in the form of a root is a symbolic palimpsest of his image throughout the history of the long Romantic period, as Orrin Wang convincingly suggests:

⁸⁵ Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526-1593) was an Italian Mannerist painter best known for his creative portraits that used a composite of objects, such as fruit, flowers, and books, in such an arrangement that rendered them like the subject. For his most recognizable work, see *The Jurist* (1566), *The Librarian* (1566), and *Vertumnus* (1590-1).

The absence of Rousseau's eyes further mocks the Enlightenment and French Revolutionary claims of a clear, visible system of truth [...] as a root he is the Latin *radix*, the radical all Europe and England knew. Political radical, nature child, parody of the nature child, monstrous phallus, misunderstood public figure and Enlightenment dupe – these are *all* various statues of Rousseau from the various ideological camps that Shelley has packed into a single image. (644)

This decomposing Rousseau – a flickering signifier of an overdetermined Romantic history – is a weary interlocutor and dares “Shelley” to participate in life: “If thou canst forbear / To join the dance, which I had well forborne” (188-9), just as the Bard does to Milton in Blake's *Milton*.

“Shelley” witnesses the “sad pageantry” (176) of intellectual history, of the “Wise, / The great, the unforgotten” (208-9) philosophers and leaders – Voltaire, King Frederic II of Prussia, Kant, Catherine the Great, Leopold II of Austria, Plato, Aristotle and Alexander the Great, Francis Bacon, Caesar, and Popes Gregory and John – who are chained to the chariot of life, and who could not escape death, that limit of human life, which Rousseau calls the “mutiny within” (214).⁸⁶ In lamenting man's finitude, understood as the body turning against itself, Rousseau recalls a similar complaint made by Kant in his *Anthropology* over the way in which human progress is always interrupted by man's finite lifespan. Kant laments:

What a mass of knowledge, what discoveries of new methods would now be on hand if an Archimedes, a Newton, or a Lavoisier with their diligence and talent

⁸⁶ Shelley's manuscript indicates “mutiny,” however, as Donald Reiman notes in *Shelley's 'The Triumph of Life': A Critical Study*, “Although *SN* was the first edition to correct ‘mystery’ to ‘mutiny’ a Bodleian assistant pointed out the error in the catalogue to a 1958 exhibit” (165).

had been favored by nature with a hundred years of continuous life without decrease of vitality! But the progress of the species is always only fragmentary (according to time) and offers no guarantee against regression, with which it is always threatened by intervening revolutionary barbarism. (231/7:326)

We can read this “revolutionary barbarism” in the sense of war, which is what Kant certainly means in “An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?” in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, where he names “war” as that which “constantly retards this advancement [of progress]” (169); or we can understand this “barbarism” to be internal, like Shelley’s “mutiny within” (*Triumph* 214). After all, Kant identifies the human species as the only one that must collectively work towards achieving its vocation: “with all other animals left to themselves, each individual reaches its complete vocation; however, with the human being only the *species*, at best, reaches it; so that the human race can work its way up to its vocation only through *progress* in a series of innumerable many generations” (*Anthropology* 228/7:324). The progress of the human species – of what Shelley in *The Triumph of Life* calls “thought’s empire over thought” (211) – is difficult and painful, and proceeds through “actively struggling” (*Anthropology* 230/7:325). “Shelley” learns that those great names of scientific, cultural, political, and philosophical advancement are names that the “fresh world thinks already old” (238). These “Figures ever new” that “Rise on the bubble” (248-9) recall Kant’s observation that

The drive to acquire science, as a form of culture that ennobles humanity, has altogether no proportion to the life span of the species. The scholar, when he has advanced in culture to the point where he himself can broaden the field, is called

away by death, and his place is taken by the mere beginner who, shortly before the end of his life, after he too has just taken one step forward, in turn relinquishes his place to another. (230-1)

New names may “rise on the bubble,” but like the effervescent substance they are fragile and subject to changing shape, like the way “Rousseau” comes to be the lugubrious name for “political radical, nature child, parody of the nature child, monstrous phallus, misunderstood public figure and Enlightenment dupe” (Wang 644). Rousseau’s intellectual history, in a vein similar to Asia’s disjunctive history of celestial and mythological power-couples in *Prometheus Unbound*, continues till he begins (again) at his own history (308), which begins as a sleep under a mountain, finding an uncanny parallel with the origins of “Shelley’s” own visionary experience, which begins by falling into a waking dream under a chestnut tree. However, the history that Rousseau recounts is marked by less violence than Asia’s. As Paul de Man notes, in this “non-epic, non-religious poem” there is “no room for the tragedy of defeat or of victory among next-of-kin, or among gods and men. The previous occupants of the narrative space are expelled by decree, by the sheer power of utterance, and consequently at once forgotten” (“Shelley Disfigured” 63). Gone are the overlapping, competing narratives of history that, as we saw in the previous section, defined *Prometheus Unbound*; the three historical narratives of Asia’s disorderly universal history, the human history of the Spirit of the Hour, and the earth history of the Spirit of the Earth, have given way in *The Triumph of Life* to a more intensified history of life.

Nevertheless, *The Triumph of Life* carries over the importance of sound from *Prometheus Unbound*. Utterance is repeatedly figured as a disruptive force, not only with

the interruptive word “Life” blurted out by Rousseau, but by unanswered questions rephrased in different registers throughout the narrative: “what is this? / Whose shape is that within the car? And why?” (177-8); ““Whence camest thou? and whither goest thou? / How did thy course begin,’ I said, ‘and why?’” (296-7); and ““Shew whence I came, and where I am, and why”” (398). These questions recall Kant’s questions in the *Logic*: What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope? What is man? These questions also find an even closer family resemblance in the Creature’s questions in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: “Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?” (131). These restlessly reworked questions ultimately provide *The Triumph of Life* with its own “operating instructions” – to borrow Susan Sklar’s observation about Blake’s *Jerusalem* (“In the Mouth of a True Orator” 837); they are, as de Man observes, “characteristic of the interpretive labor associated with romanticism” (39-40). The disruptive nature of utterance within the poem is perhaps most noticeable in terms of the interpretive difficulty in parsing out the respective speakers – a difficulty only exacerbated in the original manuscript, which contains no quotation marks, making the speaking parts between “Shelley” and Rousseau nearly indistinguishable.⁸⁷ But where “Shelley” encounters the rotting Rousseau, Rousseau encounters a vision of beauty, like Kant’s philosophically transcendent, mysterious “shape all light” (352): a female form that de Man reads as nothing more than the “figure for the figurality of all signification” (“Shelley Disfigured” 62). This figure commands Rousseau to drink from her glass of

⁸⁷ The facsimile of Shelley’s original manuscript can be found in Percy Bysshe Shelley, “*The Triumph of Life: A Facsimile of Shelley’s Holograph Draft*.” The quotation marks were added by Mary Shelley in order to assemble a reading text, a feature sustained in Reiman’s edition. For an extended discussion of the differences made by the omission of the quotation marks in Shelley’s original manuscript, see Tilottama Rajan’s *Supplement of Reading*.

Nepenthe, a drug, also referred to in *Prometheus Unbound*, which induces forgetfulness and removes sorrow. Upon drinking, Rousseau's "brain become as sand" (405), which "half erase[s]" his idyllic perception of the world around him that enables him to see the fading light glimmering "forever sought, forever lost" (431). The waning of this light gives way to a second burst of vision: the "cold bright car" (434) – an act recalling Panthea's double dream sequence in *Prometheus Unbound*.

Rousseau describes his immersion into the "thickest billows of the living storm" (466), the plumes from the chariot and its captives, a dark place populated with monstrous figures – flocks of vampire-bats, phantoms, vultures, worms, falcons, swarms of gnats and flies, and "old anatomies [...] hatching their bare brood" (500-1) – figures that demonstrate themselves to be the players in history's "horrible concert," to use Godwin's phrase (*Mandeville* Vol.1, 19-20). Like Godwin's Mandeville, for whom history, or, more accurately the painful remembrance of it, plagues him in the form of "a thousand hideous visions" from the entirety of his existence (Vol.2, 144), the final scene of *The Triumph* quickly descends, like a chariot speeding downhill, into a palimpsest of inhuman and imaginary bodies that thicken the space of the poem. The swarm of figures recalls the dark anthropology of Kant, or the dark archeology of *Prometheus Unbound*, where Earth's "hard, black deep" is jammed with the "monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons" of fishes, serpents, "jaggèd alligator," "monarch beasts," and the "anatomies of unknown wingèd things" (*PU* IV.299-311). This scene also resonates with John Keats' *Endymion* (1817): "skeletons of man, / Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan, / And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw / Of nameless monster" (III, 133-36).

The ever-congealing history in *The Triumph of Life* is also an archeology of Enlightenment knowledge, a dense unearthing of its preeminent thinkers (Voltaire and Rousseau) as well as its minor subjects: the “gnats and flies as thick as mist” that cling to “lawyers, statesmen, priest and theorist” (508-10), which, as Tilottama Rajan notes, are emblematic of the “life of infusoria and germs that was increasingly preoccupying the sciences” (“The Work of the Negative” 37). And yet, the density of this history, as narrated by Rousseau, stands in sharp contrast to “Shelley’s” grasp of history, which, as Rajan observes, resonates with Godwin’s notion of a “general history,” that is a history that studies “the causes that operate universally upon masses of men” without “descending so much as to name one of those individuals.” Individual history concerns itself with the “varying character of individuals” and the connections we make with their “subtle peculiarities” (qtd. in Rajan 34). This individual history that concerns Rousseau is a fleshier history, and one not concerned with the “truth” – Godwin’s name for the mere facts. As Godwin explains in his essay “Of History and Romance” (1797):

That history which comes nearest to truth, is the mere chronicle of facts, places and dates. But this is in reality no history. He that knows only on what day the Bastille was taken and on what spot Louis XVI perished, knows nothing. He professes *the mere skeleton of history*. The muscles, the articulations, every thing in which the life emphatically resides, is absent. (367-8, my emphasis)

“Shelley,” in describing merely the general shape of the crowd and without identifying any of the passing figures by name, attends to “the mere skeleton of history”; Rousseau, on the other hand, is able to probe the “subtle peculiarities” of those involved, revealing his appeal to an individual history. The attention to history’s skeleton recalls the limited

knowledge that physiological and comparative anthropologies have of man, concerned as they are with merely the effects of nature on him, of “what *nature* makes of the human being” (*Anthropology* 3 Ak7:119), or only with his characteristics as a larger formation (societies, cultures). This skeletal knowledge, or in Godwinian terms this “general history,” gives way to the more intimate knowledge – “The muscles, the articulations, every thing in which the life emphatically resides” (“Of History and Romance” 367-8) – with which individual history, like pragmatic anthropology, operates. The poem stages the tension within Romantic historiography and the emergent discipline of anthropology, namely the tension between understanding man at a distance or an intimate proximity. The poem’s “lunatic spectacle of history,” as Joel Faflak aptly describes it, replicates “the period’s nearly psychotic balance between maddening rigidity and barely controlled madness” (75).

Rousseau’s plunge into history’s thick trail “whose airs too soon deform” (468) is also his encounter with the inhumanity of life itself, of a life that has no human at the centre of it, recalling the ending of *Alastor*, which similarly abjects the poet from the world:

.....Heartless things
 Are done and said i’ the world, and many worms
 And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
 From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
 In vesper low or joyous orison,
 Lifts still its solemn voice: – but thou art fled – (690-5, *SPP* 86)

Life, as Rousseau describes it, is marked by the rhetoric of absence. The Earth's "inmost covers" grow "dense with shadows," while "The earth was grey with phantoms, and the air / Was peopled with dim forms" (480-3). Beauty slowly disappears, curling up like dead autumnal leaves, as the poem unfolds the entropic processes of aging or decomposition. Included in the decomposition of the "form of all" (437) is not only beauty or the long day, among the other disfigured bodies, but language itself. As the poem approaches the final two stanzas, the dialogue between Rousseau and "Shelley" – a relationship much like that of Blake and Milton, or Urizen and Los – is punctuated by ellipses, a formal feature that decelerates the poem's narrative drive and forces the reader to hang suspended on the question "'Then, what is Life?' I said..." (544). While Mary Shelley's edition of the poem in 1824 closes the poem with this line 544, and substitutes *said* for *cried*, the original manuscript continues on. The consequence of continuing on is the dynamic tension produced with the ellipsis of line 544: the reader, who is lingering in the suspended space of the question "What is Life?," a deceleration caused by the ellipsis, is trampled by the rest of the line as it rolls on, conflating the poetic "feet" of the *terza rima* with the multitudinous feet of the "great crowd" (527). The jarring affect of the ellipsis coupled with the continued line is further heightened in the final stanza: "And answered... 'Happy those for whom the fold / Of' (547-8). This final ellipsis, which constrains the poem's momentum, which had briefly resumed with the "car which now had rolled / Onward" (545-6), deceptively prepares us for what might have been a cadence-like ending. However, there are no grand pronouncements, no momentous observations, no epic insights into what Life is; instead, the poem ends *in media res*, in the middle of Rousseau's answer, which approaches the absurdist given the way that it

seemingly bears no apparent connection to the question itself. Rousseau cannot answer “Shelley’s” very Kantian question *What is Life?* For both thinkers, the question of man and the *anthropos* leads them into muteness.

The broken-off line, along with the ellipses, the latter of which function as suspensions within the syntax and rhythm of the line, bring thought to its limit. The ellipses in *The Triumph of Life* introduce within the text a *tear*, in both senses of the term, as the hole or rupture produced in something when pulled apart forcefully, and as the drop secreted from one’s eye when crying.⁸⁸ The ellipses function as a *tear* in the sense of a hole or gap in the poem’s fabric; they introduce a decelerating pull in the act of reading that disorients and leaves us groping about like one in a dark room, to use Kant’s example in his essay “What is Orientation in Thinking?” We lose our hermeneutic footing in the yawning gap of the three dots, a puncture into the feet of the poetic line that renders the body of the text vulnerable to its outside, akin to the way Blake’s left foot is penetrated by the falling Milton. The ambiguity over this tear within the poem, as represented by the ellipses, comes as a result of the unsettled tone of the word *said*. For Percy Shelley’s original manuscript uses the word *said*, which is decidedly less melancholic than Mary’s editorial change of *said* to *cried*. These terms are charged with different affects or intensities: *said* is neutral, suggestive perhaps of one who is aware of the question’s rhetorical quality, who is capable of existing in a state of Keatsian negative

⁸⁸ In “Living On,” Derrida reads *The Triumph of Life* alongside Blanchot’s *L’arrêt de mort*, and suggests these texts infold into one another. While Derrida discusses Rousseau in his essay “...That Dangerous Supplement...” in *Of Grammatology*, and examines Shelley’s *Triumph of Life* in his essay “Living On,” he overlooks the collusion of Rousseau and the ellipses in Shelley’s poem.

capability, while *cried* insinuates that the speaker is one who bitterly rails against the inability to know Life.

The tenacious purchase of this inconclusive ending is the suggestion that life has no human at the center of it – just as the car itself has no human shape within it – and similarly that no human accomplishment, no great thinker, and no part of language or poetic form can stop the car from rolling onward. The ending here looks forward to the bleak outlook of modernity, to the “alternation of sad human ineffectualness with vast inhuman cycles of activity” that Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus feels while reading Shelley’s poem “To the Moon.”⁸⁹ What Shelley’s *Triumph of Life* offers us is a negative anthropology, which, as Paul van Dijk notes, is a study of man that “renounces every attempt to define the essence of the person” (30). The poem moves us toward an ever-increasing entropic process of decay in which man is (dis)figured by his lack of specialness, an absence that Günther Anders calls man’s “anthropological deficit” (“The Unworldliness of the Human Being”). The formal problem of *The Triumph of Life* of how to represent the inhumanity of life itself succeeds in its failure; it “triumphs” in representing the failure of the speaking subject, and of language to grasp it; and, by extension, the failure of man’s cultural accomplishments, such as lyric poetry, to adequately describe life. Hence the poem ultimately stages the failure of poetry, not unlike the failure of literature in Mary Shelley’s *Last Man*, as we will see in chapter 5. And like Blake’s *The Book of Thel*, with its dislocated Motto, and *Jerusalem*, with its gouged out parts, – the poems that chapters 3 and 4 read as critiques of aesthetics –

⁸⁹ In James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) Stephen reads (and misquotes) Shelley’s fragmentary poem “To the Moon” (84).

Shelley's *Triumph of Life* also formally foregrounds its resistance to being read.⁹⁰ While, indeed, this is de Man's point in his famous reading of the disfiguration of the *Triumph's* manuscript, I want to briefly call attention to the poem's disrupted *terza rima*.

For given how the poem's final stanza ends mid-stanza, one and a half lines into a three-line *terza rima* – a lyric form known for its melodic quality, owing to its origins in Italian troubadour tradition and made famous by Dante – the poem ends without harmonious resolution, a variation on and amplification of the evaded cadence that also marks Demogorgon's final lines in *Prometheus Unbound*.⁹¹ And just as Shelley tunnels through history to embed man deep within the layers of inhuman remains in Act IV of *Prometheus Unbound*, he again plunges humanity deep within the inhuman thickness of a tumultuous history in *The Triumph of Life*. As we have seen in both texts, Shelley's positioning of the human and his history disfigures what Anders calls “anthropocentric megalomania,” his term for the ways in which we understand the human as singularly opposite to thousands of different animal species (van Dijk 32). Such an act also threatens the idealism of the disciplines of history and of poetry – an Enlightenment hangover – and enables them to be thought of as entities, like man, capable of becoming “jammed” in the “hard black deep” of geological substrata (*PU* IV.302). Taken as a metaphor for thought itself, the disrupted *terza rima* symbolizes the failure of aesthetics,

⁹⁰ Karen Swann in “Blake's *Jerusalem*: Friendship with Albion” notes that *Jerusalem's* “prefatory ‘To the Public,’ includes multiple gaps in its text that come from Blake having gouged out words and whole passages from the copper plate before printing it: the page thus flags what would have been an irreducible inaccessibility before modern scholarly reconstructions, its missing lines only legible as signs of authorial disappointment and collapse, of punishing or self-punishing rage, and as insults to the interest a reader might bring to the work” (540).

⁹¹ Shelley writes “the superstructure of English literature is based upon the materials of Italian invention” (*A Defence* 1173). This speaks again to the image of overlapping narratives and layering of human/inhuman figures in both texts.

that is, the failure of beautiful thinking in Alexander Baumgarten's sense of the term. We will come back to this in the next chapter.

If *The Triumph of Life* abruptly ends mid-sentence, mid-utterance, how can the experience of the inhumanity of life or the experience of life be phrased? The poem carries with the interminable labour of witnessing the disaster, Blanchot's phrase for the analogous task set forth by Lyotard in *The Differend* over how to represent the death camps; in both cases, the writing of such an event, which would require the survival of one who witnessed it, which because of the absolutist nature of the death camp makes this a categorical violation.⁹² How can one describe what is beyond the limit of thought? I would argue, however, that more than simply reminding us of the inhumanity of life, *The Triumph of Life* also stages the failure of a particular mode of thinking that privileges the human subject, and hence operates as a response to Enlightenment thinking and its unflagging faith in man and his scientific and cultural achievements.

2.8 The Triumph of the Inhuman: Darkening the Enlightenment

The purchase of this poem, driven by its "innumerable company" of inhumans (to look ahead to Blake), is how to account for the failure of Enlightenment and revolutionary humanism, figured in the "shape all light," the dawn of a new era, the fall of which is symbolized by the great tumultuous train from the chariot. While throughout this study I define humanism as the study of man as being *special*, it is worth parsing out two historical versions of this line of thinking. Enlightenment humanism, to recast a point

⁹² See esp. pages 3-31.

made in the introduction, championed man (not God) as the means and ends of knowledge. Placing man at the centre of the cosmos lent increasing importance to the power of man's thinking mind; indeed, the driving project of the Enlightenment *philosophes* was the assemblage of man's totalized knowledge (cf. encyclopedias). Developing out of and alongside this humanism was the idea that (each) man's individual mind was the catalyst of any great project, including political transformation. The goal, embodied by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), was to build a new man (on the grounds of greater self-knowledge), the condition of possibility for building a new and improved nation.⁹³ But if Enlightenment humanism, in its most radical forms, mechanized man into something of a physical thinking-machine – best represented by Julien Offray de la Mettrie's *Man a Machine* (1748) – revolutionary humanism, in seeing the mind as the true battleground for political transformation, perhaps fell into primitive figurations of man (cf. Rousseau). Nevertheless, the idealism of both humanisms was profoundly troubled by the failure of the French Revolution, and the Reign of Terror produced in its aftermath.⁹⁴

While this is the brief but familiar account of the French Revolution and its failings, what is less acknowledged – and yet especially interesting in light of our reading of Shelley's *Triumph of Life* – is the way that the Terror, with its public displays of

⁹³ The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was adopted 26 August 1789.

⁹⁴ Helen Maria Williams' *Letters Written in France* (1790) is an eye-witness account, written in twenty-six letters, that recounts the horrors and sublimity of the French Revolution. The Terror was the name for the violent and tyrannical years in France following the French Revolution, what Donald Greer calls "a nightmare of guillotines and firing squads" (3). Greer notes that "during the eighteen-month period from March, 1793, to August, 1794" men and women were executed "in virtue of the repressive laws and policies adopted by the Convention" (4). While there are innumerable fine studies on the French Revolution and the Terror, I call attention to Donald Greer's *The Incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution* (1966), which is interesting for its statistical analysis of the deaths, and, specifically, for the information on the deaths from across the "vocations" or disciplines. See esp. "Table V" (154-160).

beheadings, also mobilized a confrontation with death that the Enlightenment had sought to banish. Antoine de Baecque notes that “all the funeral practices fashioned by the Enlightenment, tended to distance corpses from the living” (10). Thus, man during the Terror viscerally confronts his “unspecialness,” his own literal and symbolic de-facement. The ghastly body of Rousseau in *The Triumph of Life* stages, one might argue, the post-Revolution period’s confrontation with this loss.

The challenge that the figure Rousseau bequeaths to “Shelley” is how to re-think the conditions of possibility for future change, how to open up a new channel for thought and escape what Blake in his anti-deist tract *There Is No Natural Religion* (1788) calls “the same dull round over again” (E3), his name for the grinding motion of thought when it lacks the germ of creativity, or what he calls “the Poetic or Prophetic character” (3). “Shelley’s” challenge in *The Triumph of Life* might be to mobilize the poetic mode of thinking so as to escape this grinding industry of thought in a way that does not simply repeat the errors of those leading figures of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought, those “spoilers spoiled, Voltaire, / Frederic, and Kant, Catherine and Leopold” (236-7). The dark plume is intellectual history itself with which “Shelley,” who ultimately stands as a synecdoche for Romantic thinkers at large, must grapple; he must do so without either repeating, and thus falling into step with that “ghastly dance” or that same “dull round,” or merely remembering, an act which itself alone offers no movement forward, functioning as an indulgent dwelling in the past. Indeed, it is the same challenge to face Kant in “An Old Question Raised Again”: how to think about human progress against the stagnating examples of its history. Finding a new line of thinking, a new way out of the ossified shapes of human history, is the challenge for “Shelley” to deal with the

root of a thinking that extends from Rousseau; indeed, the challenge is that of poetry, as Shelley articulates it in *A Defence* when he calls poetry “at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought” (1175).

Gone is the Rousseau of the second *Discourse*, who champions the transparency of human beings and the peaceful, golden age of humanity. Cast against the darkness of this procession of history (a kind of blinding light) is Rousseau’s belief in the ideal of transparency, where faces are not masks that deceptively conceal feelings but are mirrors of souls, collapsing any distance between the appearance of things and how they truly are. If we read Rousseau’s physical defacement, described early in the poem, in conjunction with his intensive Urizenic or Los-like labouring with history’s dark trail billowing behind the chariot, described late in the poem, we arrive at a composite vision of Rousseau who has been violated. For Rousseau’s “thin discoloured hair, / And [...] the holes it vainly sought to hide / Were or had been eyes” (186-8) are the result of the deforming “airs” of the storm, and the poem ends by returning to the disfigured face of Rousseau: “the cripple cast / His eye upon the car which now had rolled / Onward, as if that look must be the last,” (544-6). In carefully parsing these three lines, it is not clear whether it is the car that rolls onward, or if it is the cripple Rousseau’s eye itself. Given the earlier uncertainty over Rousseau’s eyes, it is not a stretch to see Shelley returning to the site of Rousseau’s eyes – or rather, eye. Indeed, the singular “eye” that takes a last look does so because Rousseau is now figured as cyclopean whose “eye” rolls on. This detail is interesting in light of Shelley’s treatment elsewhere of the Cyclops.

In 1819, Shelley completed a translation of Euripides's satyr play *The Cyclops*.⁹⁵

Without rehearsing it here, one detail from Euripides play is worth mentioning: when Odysseus burns out the Cyclops' eye, the Cyclops cries out "No man blinded me." As the Greek word for "no man" or "nobody" is *mētis*, which is also the word for "craft" or "art," what the Cyclops announces is that art has blinded him.⁹⁶ To bring this back to Shelley's *Triumph of Life*, the poem's final description of a cyclopean Rousseau, whose eye "rolled / Onward" having taken its last look, further emphasizes the way in which, like Euripides' play, art – or more specifically, poetry – has failed.⁹⁷ Of course, we need not go as far back as Euripides to hear the resonance between the cyclopean and (de)formations of knowledge. After all, Kant dismissed in his *Logic* certain forms of knowledge, like "mere poly-history" that doesn't follow "definite limits," as "cyclopean learning which lacks one eye – the eye of philosophy" (50). These malformed bodies, Kant continues, can seemingly be produced in any number of disciplines: "a cyclops of mathematics, history, natural history, philology, and languages is a learned man who is great in all these fields but takes philosophy to be dispensable" (*Logic* 50). Shelley's Rousseau, then, is a curious reversal of Kant's cyclops, an example of a philosophy (or a

⁹⁵ Thomas Jefferson Hogg in *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* reports that while at Oxford Shelley used to carry around a pocket edition of Euripides "without interpretation or notes" (85).

⁹⁶ For a history of the term *mētis* and its relationship in Greek literature to the poet's art see Kathryn Sullivan Kruger's *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production*, esp. chapter 3.

⁹⁷ Of course, the counter-argument could be made that as Rousseau's interrupted speech is an act of refusal. That is, unlike the Cyclops who announces it, Rousseau resists naming art or poetry as that which has blinded him. But such a redemptive reading would be to bring the poem back under the values of aesthetics: wholeness, harmony, and integrity.

Shelleyan sense of poetry) that has become cyclopean, victim of what Shelley describes in *A Defence* as the “moths of just history” that “eat out the poetry of it” (1170).⁹⁸

Indeed, the ever-darkening defacement of Rousseau violently suggests the failure of Rousseau’s beloved ideal of transparency, or the failure of faces to be, in Blake’s terms, “cleansed doors of perception.” What we have in *The Triumph of Life* is a figure for a thought that is petrified and gnawed at, a hyper-image or palimpsest of the many versions of Rousseau, revealing how “thought’s empire over thought” (211) is also connected to what Fabre d’Églantine (1750-1794), a seminal politician of the French Revolution, called the “hold [*empire*] of images” (qtd. in Huet 107).⁹⁹ The thickness of this poem’s imagery, which appeals to a dark baroque aesthetic of folding that is formally complimented by the interlocking *terza rima*, renders transparency impossible. Here, Shelley offers a similarly “obscure knowledge” of man that Kant describes in his *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (Ak1:366). The poem’s texture stages its formal problem of how to undertake an anamnesis, that painful process of

⁹⁸ I am using “poetry” here in the Shelleyan sense, as a potentiality found in multiple disciplines:

But Poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance and architecture and statuary and painting: they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion. (*A Defence of Poetry* 1169).

I return to this idea in chapter 4. Further reason for reading Rousseau as a Shelleyan Poet comes from Thomas McFarland in *Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau*, who notes that “the raptures of Shelley [...] were elicited by that work [*The New Héloïse*], not by the *Social Contract* or the *Confessions*” (50). Cyclopean also evokes the encyclopedia, but that is not our focus here.

⁹⁹ Fabre d’Églantine was a French dramatist, poet and politician of the French Revolution. He played an influential role in the Jacobin attempted abolition of France’s Gregorian calendar and was responsible for inventing the new names of the months in the French Republican calendar. See George Gordon Andrews’ essay “Making the Revolutionary Calendar.” More recently, Susan Maslan considers the work of d’Églantine as part of her examination of the relationship between theater and France’s new democracy in *Revolutionary Acts*. See esp. chapter 2.

rewriting or working-through the past (Lyotard), in such “dark times” – to invoke Hannah Arendt’s famous description of modernity.¹⁰⁰ The most the poem offers is that the poetic *might* be the solution, given that it ends without any indication that history’s cycle has been cancelled. The unfinished ending offers us the potentiality that something has changed but without the security of seeing it actualized. Rousseau’s unfinished answer hangs suspended in *The Triumph of Life* as a synecdoche for a certain Romantic response to the Enlightenment, the latter of which is embodied in that “cold light, whose airs too soon deform” (468). This ending – with its broken *terza rima* and appeal to an evaded cadence, its accelerating disfiguration of its figures, and thickening population with inhuman entities – can no longer bear the burden of a humanism, or support the highly idealized and emblematic figures for such a thought. Recalling nearly all the same tyrannical figures from *Queen Mab*, where “War is the statesman’s game, the priest’s delight / The lawyer’s jest, the hired assassin’s trade” (Canto IV.168, *CP* 2.192), the inclusion in *Triumph of Life* of the lawyer, statesman, priest and theorist, those prominent figures in Enlightenment thought that function as a sign of its history, or what Faflak calls “history’s subjects” recast “as cultural types” (“Difficult Education” 72), can no longer be accounted for without the swarm of “small gnats and flies” that now cast shadows over their brows, displaced images for history’s poetry-hungry moths (*A Defence*

¹⁰⁰ A future paper will treat in greater detail the ways in which Arendt can be read alongside Shelley’s *Triumph of Life*. Arendt’s critique of modernity’s darkness – its optimism and artificial light – is met by her call to find “holy sparks” of genuine hope. Methodologically, she proceeds through Benjaminian “thought trains” which finds a displaced image in the “living storm” of the multitude trailing behind the chariot, which I read as an image for intellectual history. For an attentive reading of Arendt’s metaphor of “dark times” see Ronald C. Arnett’s *Communication Ethics in Dark Times*.

1170).¹⁰¹ Where *The Triumph of Life* begins with the blinding light of the sun, it terminates in the darkness of history, in the representation of a life that has no human at the centre of it, opening up a moment in Romantic history by prefiguring what French historian Jules Michelet in *History of the French Revolution* (1847) would come to say, two decades after Shelley's poem, of the lifespan of the French Revolution: "Day dawned in 1789; next, the morn arose shrouded in storms; then, a dark, total eclipse" (246). What triumphs at the end of *The Triumph of Life* is the inhuman that "lives on." Like Kant's anthropology with its "differently organized creatures" to-come that turn existing humanity into a remainder, Shelley's inhuman in *The Triumph of Life* feeds off the remainder of man and gnaws poetry out of history – here, a metaphor for the failure of aesthetics in Baumgarten's sense of the term, as the gnawing away of a beautiful thinking. Shelley's poem "closes" by staging the impossible project of arriving at the end of anamnesis, impossible because it is an interminable process; the abrupt ending of the poem's last line holds us in suspension rather than achieving aesthetic closure.

¹⁰¹ For a brief history of the role of lawyers in the Enlightenment see Sean Patrick Donlan's essay "Law and Lawyers in Edmund Burke's Scottish Enlightenment." Romanticism responds to Enlightenment jurisprudence. As Michael Macovski in his introduction to *Romanticism and the Law* observes, the Romantic period is a "legal watershed within late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century history. [...] As legal strictures blur, collapse, and metamorphose, we come to realize that what marks the juridical terrain of the Romantic era is the shifting sand of defined criminalization: the radical redefinition of legal dissent, legal ownership, and legal publication during this period" (§1).

Chapter 3

3 Speculative Life: The Unborn in Blake's *The Book of Thel*

As we saw in chapter 2, universal history is a humanistic discipline that attempts to contain all aspects of human history into a coherent narrative. While universal history was one, popular way of telling a harmonious story of humanity, it wasn't the only one: painting, as we touched on briefly in the previous chapter, also tells stories. Yet while large "universal history" mural paintings shared the same goal of universal history, they ultimately made visible another humanistic discipline: aesthetics. We turn now to the painter-poet-engraver William Blake, whose work, beginning with his earliest illuminated texts, problematizes both universal history and aesthetics.

3.1 Introduction

The Book of Thel (1789) is Blake's first illuminated book, published the same year as *Songs of Innocence*. Despite its being a short work, consisting of only nine plates, Blake would reproduce numerous versions of it over the span of a few decades, each version done in different colouring, and some versions following different ordering of plates. *The Book of Thel*, as the title suggests, centers on the eponymous character Thel, a young woman who leaves her mother and sisters on a search for knowledge about herself and life. Thel encounters a series of inhuman entities – a cloud, flower, worm – who each, in turn, offer muddled, riddle-like explanations of their contributions to the world. These inhumans appear to increase Thel's uncertainty over who she is and what her place is in

this order of things. Thel becomes increasingly unsettled throughout the poem; her unease begins when she encounters the worm or possible child (it is unclear), and it culminates when she encounters the disembodied voice coming from the ground. Just as we saw in the previous chapter through the disruptive voice of Demogorgon in *Prometheus Unbound*, this mysterious underground voice in *The Book of Thel* asks a series of questions about the nature of the senses or the openness of the body. This voice is the most cryptic figure in the poem, and its line of questioning appears to be the cause of Thel's sudden flight back to the Vales of Har, the scene with which the poem concludes.

Traditional readings of *The Book of Thel* have been undergirded by aesthetics, which is to say by a mode of harmonious thought, recalling its origins as a theory of beautiful thinking. Before aesthetics became the name for a theory of art, for our perceptions, judgments, or experiences of art, its roots were as a theory of cognition or sensory knowledge. The term derives from the Greek *aisthesis*, meaning “sensation by the senses.” Indeed, some of the most familiar aesthetic concepts, such as the beautiful and sublime, taste, genius, disinterestedness and *Bildung* (German for “education” and “formation”), are underpinned by a common substrate that harks back to the term's roots: harmony.¹⁰²

Beginning with its formal inception in 1735 with Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's (1714-62) *Aesthetica*, which properly established aesthetics as a new philosophical discipline, aesthetics was imagined as a mode of “beautiful thinking,” of

¹⁰² While I see harmony as the concept underpinning this lineage of aesthetics, Jacques Rancière similarly sees aesthetics as always being linked with “consensus.” See his *Aesthetics and Discontents*.

organizing material in terms of a cohesive, balanced logic, which would in turn provide reason or higher level logic with an ordered architectonic.¹⁰³ As Baumgarten defines it in his *Aesthetica*:

Aesthetics (theory of the liberal arts, inferior cognition, art of beautiful thinking, art of reasoning by analogy) is the science of sensitive cognition.

[*Aesthetica (theoria liberalum atrium, gnoseologia inferior, ars pulchre cogitandi, ars analogi rationis) est scientia cognitionis sensitivae.*] (*Aesthetica*, section 1) (qtd. in Wenzel 6)

Baumgarten's aesthetics is, as Kai Hammermeister explains, a "theory of sensibility as a gnoseological faculty, that is, a faculty that produces a certain type of knowledge" (*The German Aesthetic Tradition* 4), or as Ernst Cassirer more directly puts it, a theory of "sensitive knowledge" (340). "Sensitive" here is not to be understood in the light of the eighteenth-century discourse of sensibility, but appeals to Leibniz's treatment of sensation or perception – a sensory knowledge in a very practical sense. In other words, aesthetics for Baumgarten is a related form of cognition, one that lies outside of the formal heading of rational logic but belongs under the same roof. Aesthetics, to use his metaphor, is "logic's younger sister" (qtd. in Haferkamp 67), or "logic without thorns" (qtd. in Barnouw 78).¹⁰⁴ In short, aesthetics was a kind of helpmate that first arranged things beautifully so that logic could then come and further build on this harmonized

¹⁰³In his essay "What Aesthetics Can Mean," Jacques Rancière disagrees about Baumgarten as the inauguration of aesthetics: "The aesthetic regime of thought did not begin with the book by Baumgarten that invented aesthetics as an enlarged poetics. It began with Kant's little note challenging that invention" (18).

¹⁰⁴Such gendering continues when Baumgarten in §517 of his *Metaphysica* describes aesthetics as a kind of midwife, as it is responsible for sensuous ideas, those beautiful or confused perceptions that, unlike distinct ones, are "pregnant" (qtd. in Barnouw 77). Baumgarten reuses this phrase from a fellow philosopher Bouhours.

presentation of material, an association that remains in more recent descriptions of aesthetics as “a poor stepsister to other main fields of philosophical inquiry” (Urmson and Rée 3).

Hence Baumgarten’s aesthetics was an extension of the rationalist metaphysics of Christian Wolff and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, intended to strengthen “the rationalist system by including neglected elements that should ultimately serve to further the cause of rational cognition” (Hammermeister 7). These “neglected elements” were not imagined to be outside or different from logic, but merely its unrecognized substrate. Building on Wolff’s branches of sense, memory and imagination, Baumgarten added what Jeffrey Barnouw calls “a wealth of new rubrics” (78), including “*acumen*, the ability to make fine discriminations of things depending on awareness of their characteristics (*notae*), balanced by *ingenium*, an ability to see similarities in disparate things. Together these two constitute *perspicacia*” (78). Above all, aesthetics begins as a form of beautiful or refined thinking; it works by seeing differences and similarities in *balance*, a value threaded throughout various eighteenth-century discourses. It appears in the work of painter and engraver William Hogarth (1697-1764) who championed *discordia concors* or “composed variety” (*Analysis of Beauty* 28), and in Francis Hutcheson’s moral philosophy, which defined beauty as “a compound Ratio of Uniformity and Variety” (*An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* 17). Furthermore, the balancing of logic cultivated in Baumgarten’s aesthetics also branched into the more recognizable discourses of the long Romantic period – despite being libelously called “fruitless” by Kant in a footnote to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (66fn).

While Kant diverged from Baumgarten by cleaving aesthetics from cognition, he retained the harmonizing imperative implicit in Baumgarten's aesthetics. This is clear when Kant in the third *Critique* discusses the power of aesthetic judgment as a harmonizing of the faculties.¹⁰⁵ Bridging the aesthetics of both Baumgarten and Kant is Schiller, for whom Beauty is the way man approaches Freedom, and the way to achieve internal completion and wholeness. In Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, aesthetics as a form of harmonization becomes explicitly linked with an educating and cultivating function, and becomes a full-blown humanism tethered to the pursuit of man's perfection. Developing out of Schiller's aesthetic education is the aesthetic humanism of Matthew Arnold, who understood culture as the harbinger of human perfectibility, perfection which is to be achieved internally "in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality [...] in the harmonious expansion of those gifts of thought and feeling" (*Culture and Anarchy* 47). While Arnold represented the apex of an aesthetics twinned with the drive towards human perfection, the New Critics of the twentieth century continued the harmonizing tendency that undergirded aesthetics from the very beginning. With their focus on close, self-contained readings of the detailed texture of a poem through its use of literary devices, especially irony and paradox, the New Critics (cf. Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, and John Crowe Ransom) mobilized aesthetics as a mode of harmonized thought insofar

¹⁰⁵ While Baumgarten holds aesthetics as a supplementary form of cognition ("inferior cognition"), Kant sees aesthetics as entirely divorced from cognition. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, he writes: "In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but it is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective" (89/Ak5:203).

as they developed a methodology that preserved the poem as an orderly system that ultimately reconciled its seemingly antagonistic elements. Moreover, with W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley's dismissal of the various fallacies that supposedly relied too much on the author's intentions (intentional fallacy) or on the reader's experiences (affective fallacy),¹⁰⁶ the New Critics treated the literary work as a "well-wrought urn" – to use Brooks' famous phrase (21) – or as a "precious object" (Ransom 216).¹⁰⁷ This marked a clear extension of the smoothening or streamlining work that Matthew Arnold said is necessary of the "great men of culture" (70). Terry Eagleton sums it up best in his observation that for the New Critics the poem "must be plucked free of the wreckage of history and hoisted into a sublime space above it" (*Literary Theory* 44). Hence, with numerous points of overlap, the New Critics can be fitted within the trajectory of an aesthetics that is a mode of beautiful thinking, a mode of thinking that, while dead, continues to enjoy an afterlife – especially, it appears, in Blake studies.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Wimsatt and Beardsley, in *The Verbal Icon*, describe the "intentional fallacy" as the confusion of the poem itself with the author who produced it. The "affective fallacy" is the confusion of what the poem does, the emotional effect it has on the reader, with what it is. In stripping criticism of these "fallacies," the New Critics isolated and insulated the literary work from outside threats. This hygienic response has been analyzed through the New Critics' relationship with a southern conservative tradition. As Mark Malvasi in *The Unregenerate South* writes, for Ransom "The poem provided an organic model of reality, sheltering men from the analytical incursions of science that impaired their ability to recall the original fecundity of the world out of which poetry itself was born" (26). For an interesting framing of New Criticism as a response to World War II, see Mark Jancovich's *The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism*, esp. chapter 10.

¹⁰⁷ Ransom discusses the "precious object" at length in his essay "Poetry: II, The Final Cause." In addition to the poem, Ransom's definition of "precious objects" includes those objects that are "beyond price" (216). His examples – in a heterogeneous catalogue that also resounds in the rhetorical style of Object Oriented Ontology philosophies – of precious objects include: father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, one's own house, 'view', terrain, town, natural objects 'at large', sun, moon, sky, sea, mountain, forest, river, plain, one's nation, church, God, business, 'causes', and institutions (216). An important difference is that a precious object is "loved" unlike an ordinary object which is "used" (217). I believe there is important future work to be done on the currently unmarked collusion between the aesthetics and rhetoric of New Criticism and Object-Oriented-Ontology.

¹⁰⁸ Frank Lentricchia makes this point in *After the New Criticism* when he writes that New Criticism "is dead in the way an imposing and repressive father-figure is dead" (xiii).

It is this sense of aesthetics as a form of harmonization that organizes material in terms of a cohesive, balanced, beautiful logical whole that permeates Blake criticism, in the cases of both *The Book of Thel* and *Jerusalem*, the two texts that form the basis of chapters 3 and 4, respectively. In *The Book of Thel* evidence of this typical aesthetic ideology is found in readings that smooth out the poem's *aporiai* (cf. the floating Motto, the monologues of the inhumans, and the puzzling ending) to arrive at a cohesive, harmonious vision of the poem, but also in those readings that treat Thel as an object of beauty.¹⁰⁹ From her beautiful appearance to her unique position outside the natural order of things (like an object of art among objects of nature), the poem seemingly invites discussions of Thel's use-value, or in Kantian terms her "purposiveness." After all, Thel appears to be the only character in the poem who does not know her productive place in the order of things, suspecting herself only "to be at death the food of worms" (5/3/3:25).

I argue that as we saw in the previous chapter with Shelley's *Triumph of Life*, the radical implication of *The Book of Thel* is of the potential meaninglessness of life, of a life that does not have a human subject at the centre of it. However, this posthumanist potentiality is continuously undermined by critical readings of Blake's poem that are invested in the cultivation of a certain humanistic Blake, and accomplish this goal by working to fit the parts into a coherent system. In the case of Thel, this means working to show her harmonious place within nature. Even more adventurous, recent readings of *The Book of Thel* reinforce the aesthetic grounds on which Thel and her poem have been and continue to be read.

¹⁰⁹ To name but two critics who read *The Book of Thel* aesthetically: Anne Mellor's "Blake's Designs for *The Book of Thel: An Affirmation of Innocence*" and Harold Bloom's *Blake's Apocalypse* (51-62).

For instance, Richard Sha reads Thel's "functionlessness" as a synonym for perversity, as part of his larger argument about Romanticism's non-reproductive, non-ends or purpose-driven aesthetics. While Sha seemingly positions Thel outside the harmonizing imperative of aesthetics through his emphasis on "perversity," he ultimately disciplines Thel when he observes that even functionlessness has a function for the Romantics who "link aesthetic apprehension with freedom, connect purposiveness/perversity to liberation and yet, in so doing, grant even sexual perversity a purpose" (143). For Helen Bruder, this text teaches us about the (non)place of woman within Nature, while for Kevin Hutchings it offers us an ethical view of living in community with Nature. Describing Thel's environment, Hutchings in *Imagining Nature: Blake's Environmental Poetics* writes: "In such a relational universe, the very identity of *each* living thing is infinitely deferred in context, allowing no space or moment in which the entity may crystallize as a stable 'being' on a hierarchical chain. This is the profound 'ecological' insight at the heart of *The Book of Thel*" (89).¹¹⁰ In Hutchings' deep ecological reading, premised on an ontology of becoming, "Har's natural economy epitomizes a highly ethical mode of mutual coexistence" (90).

Conversely, unbridgeable divisions exist between Thel and the inhumans in Timothy Morton's reading of the poem. In *Ecology Without Nature*, Morton describes

¹¹⁰ Such a reading recalls Bloom and Frye, who, as Tilottama Rajan points out, "ignored the unbridgeable difference between humans and plants that nineteenth-century philosophy of science from Hegel onwards marked in making individuality – selfhood in Hegel's term – and death the factors distinguishing animal from vegetable organisms" ("The Gender of Los(s)" 201). While this may be the case for Hegel, it was not the case for Erasmus Darwin, whose influence on Blake is more clearly evident. However, Rajan does admit that this difference is confronted in *The Book of Thel* via Thel's existential conversation with the worm and the ending which "forces us up against a double bind: the impossibility of going back to the vales of Har, but, given the sheer obscenity of experience in the poem's climax, the impossibility of going forward and of models of *Bildung* that require us to do so" (201). One might see Thel as a proto-Beckettian figure, akin to the unnameable who can't go on, and who must go on.

Thel as a “young girl who does not know her place in life. She lives a pastoral existence in a blissful idyllic landscape, but is somehow afflicted with melancholy sadness” (155-6). She is a “figure for ecocritique. Her melancholia is an ethical act of absolute refusal, a series of *no*’s that finally erupt in a bloodcurdling scream [...] Thel is a sentimental figure who is nevertheless critical of her ideological world” (156-7). Morton’s notion of “dark ecology” critiques the way ecocriticism typically frames the human-inhuman relationship through terms like lightness, interconnectedness and love; “dark ecology” defines it in terms of being estranged and uncomfortable. It is a critical effort to think ecology without some preconceived notion of what Nature is; it is a call to defamiliarize Nature, to see it as “deformed into something deceptive, something queer,” something ultimately un-natural (156-7). While Morton rightly observes how *The Book of Thel* stages the aestheticization of Nature through the trickster-type characters of the flower, cloud, and clod of clay, he is nevertheless guilty of his own aestheticization of Thel. Like Baumgarten’s “logic without thorns,” Morton’s reading performs a similar dethorning. In his brash reduction of Thel as a melancholic young girl who is “all dressed up with nowhere to go” (156), and who lets out a “bloodcurdling scream” (156), Morton embellishes the poem’s actual description of Thel. In fact, all that the text says of this moment is that “The Virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek. / Fled back unhindered till she came into the vales of Har” (*The Book of Thel* 6:21-2). Thus even in Morton’s reading he disciplines *The Book of Thel* when he makes this text a reflection of our contemporary selves, or, in a tone reminiscent of Kant’s pragmatic anthropology, a reflection of how we *ought* to be in our relationship with ecology. Across all of these readings, Thel is didactically framed as a figure that teaches us something about

ourselves, recalling Marc Redfield's observation that aesthetics promises to bring us "into touch [...] with the promise of humanity itself" ("Aesthetics, Theory" 230).

Where the criticism is guilty of clinging to and perpetuating models of aesthetics, the poem itself thematizes aestheticization through the highly aestheticized descriptions of numerous figures of the cloud and flower, juxtaposed against its unaesthetic figures, such as the mole and the worm. From her "soft voice" as gentle as the morning dew to her physical appearance, Thel is described in the most minimal detail as wearing a "white veil" (7/5/5:7). In fact, the most detailed description of her is given to us by Thel herself, at the beginning of the poem in a series of similes:

Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud.

Like a reflection in a glass. like shadows in the water.

Like dreams of infants. like a smile upon an infants face.

Like the doves voice, like transient day, like music in the air... (3/1/1:10-14)

Yet this extensive, metaphorical appeal to figures and modes of murky representation and unstable images (like Lacanian "floating" or Haylesian "flickering" signifiers) troubles any reading of Thel that looks to her as an image of beauty, a traditional pastoral vision of a virginal shepherdess. Thel's excessively slippery self-description is challenged by the "natural" entities she encounters, a gesture repeated by those readings that understand Thel as an intact subject. A similar tension arises in the disjunction between the poem's vignette-like structure – recalling *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (1793) – and the fact that it is a "book" of Thel, an attempt to unify its separate episodes. Given Thel's shadowy existence based on this highly figural self-description and the minimal physical description, a feature juxtaposed against the lavish descriptions of the other entities

within the poem, any attempt to mobilize her as a representative of a moral or ethical position (cf. Hutchings and Morton) is problematic and can only do so only by papering over these indeterminacies foregrounded early in the poem.

3.2 The Mole and the Motto

Another textual instability within *The Book of Thel* is the marginal yet prescient figure of the mole that appears only in the text's margin, namely, in the Motto, which shifts locations within various copies (copies N and O end with the motto). By rearing its head at various points in the copies, it functions like a mole creating furrows within the text, creating hermeneutic upheaval.¹¹¹ The Motto's mole-like movement not only flags the poem's incompleteness, but heightens its effect of being haunted by a spectral inhuman presence that we never formally encounter within the poem's internal pantheon of players. Structurally, the Motto consists of two couplets that perplexingly ask after two different epistemologies:

Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?

Or wilt thou go ask the Mole:

Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?

Or Love in a golden bowl? (i: 2-5, E3)

¹¹¹ The Motto has been taken up by critics who place varying degrees of importance on the dis-locations of the motto. Tilottama Rajan, in *The Supplement of Reading*, reads the Motto as internally ambiguous, so that its location at either the beginning or end of the text doesn't settle anything. Richard Sha, in *Perverse Romanticism*, suggests that the effect of the motto appearing at the onset is nothing short of the silencing of Thel, whereas the existence of the motto at the outset allows for Thel to have the last word; the motto, at the end, is understood as an extension of Thel's ventriloquist voice. While Sha puts this observation into service of the discourse of sexuality, the two positions of the motto reflecting the positions of innocence and experience, respectively (her ignorance vs knowledge of sexuality and sexual pleasure), we can extend his observations to see them speaking, more generally, to the ungrounded or dislocated quality of the text. See esp. Chapter 5 in Sha's *Perverse Romanticism* (2009).

The Motto is internally ambiguous, a feature that further compounds the poem's unsettledness; it is, as Tilottama Rajan notes, "the site of a resistance to any attempt to fit it into the system" (*Supplement* 243). While the riddle-like Motto does not resolve any of the poem's internal tensions, it does introduce the spectral presence of the mole and with it the figure of a liminal life – an idea that haunts the poem. For Thel's "strange kinship" with the mole intensifies the extent to which her place in the natural order of things cannot be represented. The mole operates as a distinctive site of knowledge: unlike the eagle who can only know the pit from a distance, the mole has the specificity and particularity of perception.

Blake's mole also creates intertextual furrows, recalling the vengeful "old mole" in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the term Hamlet uses to describe the ghostly voice of Hamlet's father coming from the grave: "Well said, old mole. Canst work i'th'earth so fast? / A worthy pioneer!" (I.V.170-1). The restless, hectoring voice of his father's ghost drives Hamlet's pursuit of revenge, like the goading voice from the ground in the final lines of *The Book of Thel*.¹¹² For just as Hegel in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* insists on the need to listen to the mole, "to give ear to its urgency – *when the mole that is within forces its way on*" (553, my emphasis), Blake's mole calls us to attend to the ways in

¹¹² The provocative voice of Shakespeare's "old mole" is later taken up in a positive light by Hegel in the section on "Recent German Philosophy" of *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* to describe the progress of Spirit: "Spirit often seems to have forgotten and lost itself, but inwardly opposed to itself, it is inwardly working ever forward (as when Hamlet says of the ghost of his father, "Well said, old mole! Canst work i'th'earth so fast? / A worthy pioner!") until grown strong in itself it bursts asunder the crust of the earth which divided it from the sun, its Notion, so that the earth crumbles away" (546-7).

which the inhuman, like Kant's "differently organized creatures" or Shelley's Demogorgon, scratches at the root of this text, spurring on intellectual activity.¹¹³

The mole is important for its unique activity of creating underground tunnels, which we might read as an apt metaphor for the deconstructive work of critique – despite the fact that Kant in *The Critique of Pure Reason* seemingly imagines his critical philosophy as repairing the damaging mole-like work of metaphysics:

we must occupy ourselves now with a less resplendent yet still meritorious task, namely, we must level the ground and make it firm enough for those majestic edifices of ethicality. For in this ground we find all kinds of mole tunnels which reason has dug in its confident but futile search for treasure and which make such construction precarious. (qtd. in Krell 171)

Yet as we saw in chapter 1 with the disconnect between the intention of Kant's pragmatic anthropology and its actual tendency towards a general anthropology, there is a gap between the "levelling" that Kant imagines his critical work to be doing and the mole tunnels it (as a critique) actually digs. Similarly for Blake, *The Book of Thel* not only contains mole tunnels but creates them within his corpus, since the poem cannot be harmoniously integrated within his larger cosmos. Here, the text's structural unsettledness, in conjunction with its reference to the mole, contributes to our understanding of the poem as staging the idea of a life that has no "me" at the center of it.

¹¹³ Marx uses the mole as a figure for the Revolution: "In the signs that bewilder the middle class, the aristocracy and the poor prophets of regression, we do recognize our brave friend, Robin Goodfellow, the old mole that can work in the earth so fast, that worthy pioneer – the Revolution" (Speech at anniversary of the People's Paper, 1856). For an excellent examination of the mole in the history of philosophy see David Farrell Krell's essay "The Mole: Philosophic Burrowings in Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche."

3.3 Moles and the Unborn in Science and Psychoanalysis

Further compounding the unsettling presence of the mole is the way in which the mole operated across the Romantic disciplines of biology (zoology) and parturitive science. Indeed, there is a long tradition of interpreting Thel and her text in parturitive terms. For Northrop Frye, she is “an embryo in the world of the unborn” (*Fearful Symmetry* 233), while for Germaine Greer and S. Foster Damon, respectively, the poem is a “baffled quest for pregnancy” (82) and “an elegy to the Blakes’ dead daughter, their only offspring” (*William Blake* 401).¹¹⁴ I want to suggest that by reading *The Book of Thel* as a speculative exploration of intrauterine existence, we see Blake articulating what traditional psychoanalysis forecloses but also what eighteenth-century medicine approaches as an ontological curiosity. Both *The Book of Thel* and the intrauterine are overdetermined sites of Romantic gender trouble. As Gerda Norvig closely observes, *The Book of Thel* is a palimpsest of “intertexts” that may “bear on” without ever fully “penetrat[ing] Thel” (259). Similarly, the uterine was a contentious site in the early Romantic period. As Tristanne Connolly, following Jeannette Herrle-Fanning, observes, “in the 1790s [...] men had effectively taken over the management of childbirth” (“Anna Barbauld’s” 224).¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Tristanne Connolly finds no such evidence among the death records (*William Blake and the Body* 107-8).

¹¹⁵ *The Book of Thel* can be a metaphor for the male encroachment on a field of female knowledge, such that Thel, on the threshold between two worldviews, is representative of the larger discursive drama within Romantic science. Not only does the late eighteenth-century gender trouble over the management of parturition mirror Thel’s trouble within her narrative, especially if we read her as the unborn, it further reflects, as Helen Bruder makes clear, Blakean criticism’s own patriarchal management of Thel (38-54).

Furthermore, Blake's familiarity with the fields of medicine and anatomy lends support to our reading of Thel as a figure of the unborn.¹¹⁶ According to German historian, Barbara Duden, prior to 1799, the year when Frankfurt anatomist Samuel Thomas Soemmerring published the *Icones Embryonum Humanorum*, the first illustration of the different developmental stages of the unborn, intrauterine growth was not understood as the fetal subject, but rather as either a fully formed child yet to be born, or as a potentially monstrous thing, suggestive of the eighteenth century's belief in the "polymorphous potency of the womb" (14). Marking the important ideological difference between how the eighteenth century understood the unborn and how we now interpellate it as the "fetal subject," Duden notes how the earlier period understood this entity and the womb as more open to anomaly and ontological deformations: "What we today perceive as an abortion, a 'miscarriage,' or the premature birth of a fetus, then, in the eighteenth century, could be perceived as emitting bad blood, the birth of a mole, a moon-calf, as 'cleansing' of the womb, or as healthy flux against unhealthy stoppage" (16).

The history of moles, as abnormal growths within the uterus, goes back to Hippocrates and Pliny among others, and was treated exclusively for the first time in Jan Baptist van Lamsweerde's *Historia Naturalis Molarum Uteri* (1687), which included highly imaginative images of moles (see Figure 1).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ For a decisive account see Tristanne Connolly's *William Blake and the Body* and Stefanie Engelstein's *Anxious Anatomy: The Conception of the Human Form in Literary and Naturalist Discourse*.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed account see F. J. Taussig's 'The History of Mole Pregnancy', *Medical Library and Historical Journal*, 5.4 (1907): 250-259.

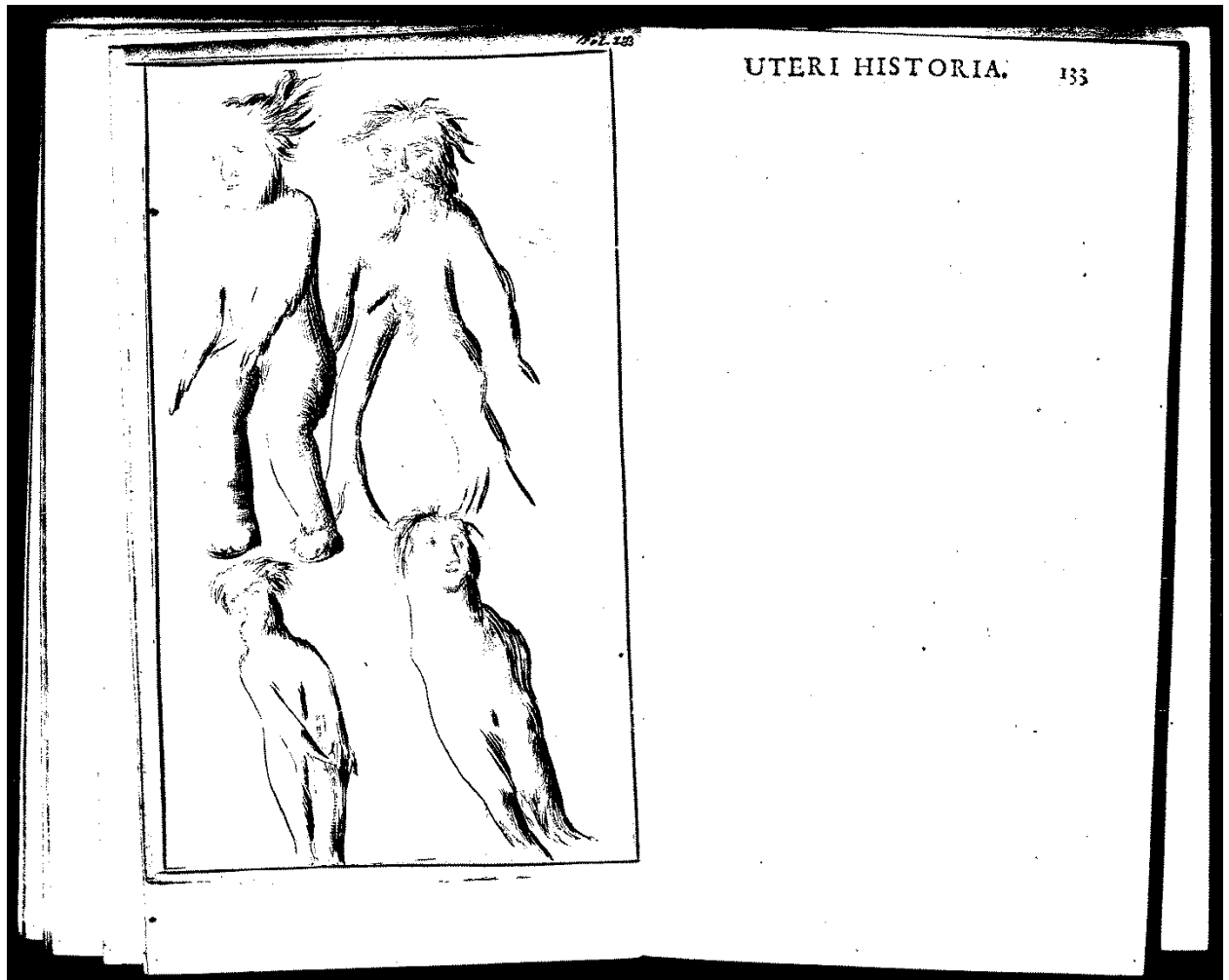


Figure 1. Lamsweerde, Jan Baptist van. *Historia Naturalis Molarum Uteri* (1687). EEBO. Image 84

Closer to Blake's time, John Aitken in *Principles of Midwifery* (1784) identified moles or "false conceptions" as "the formation of a rude flesh-like mass in the uterus," that resulted from a "jumble or alteration in the original conception of the foetus" (28) – to say nothing of the moles in the various accounts of natural history of the time (cf. William Smellie's *The Philosophy of Natural History* [1791]).¹¹⁸ Thus we might see the

¹¹⁸ William Smellie (1740-1795), the Scottish natural historian and compiler of the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768-71), colourfully writes: "In their dark abodes they enjoy the placid habits of repose and solitude, the art of securing themselves from injury, of almost instantaneously making an

reference to the mole in Thel's Motto as Blake's specific engagement with the medical discourse surrounding the unborn that radically destabilizes Thel's ontology and that of those she encounters – a relation the ambiguous illustrations themselves seem to suggest (a matter to which I will return).

Parturition also redefines the space of the poem as a feminine space dramatized by the vales of Har, which are separate from the phallic thought that lies just outside of Thel's environment (the refusal of which marks the ending of the poem). In a similar manner to the intrauterine which is foreclosed in traditional psychoanalysis, so too is *The Book of Thel* within Blake's corpus insofar as Thel never reappears in any of his other texts.¹¹⁹ While identifying *The Book of Thel* as an account of the intrauterine encounter necessarily involves a certain return to Freud – since he first named the “intrauterine” as an experience of the uncanny – my reading is decidedly not Freudian, since, as I would want to suggest, reading Blake in this light is too restrictive if one wants to think his feminine dimension.¹²⁰ Instead, I follow Norvig's suggestive reading of Thel as “a figure

asylum or habitation, and of procuring a plentiful subsistence without the necessity of going abroad. They shut up the entrance of their retreats, and seldom leave them, unless compelled by the admission of water, or when their mansions are demolished by art” (1.319).

¹¹⁹ Some critics make the case that Thel is sublimated through other female characters. Magnus Ankarsjö compares the childlike innocence of Thel to Lyca of the *Songs*, and sees Thel as a lesser developed female than Oothoon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion (William Blake and Gender 5)*. Tilottama Rajan tracks a more general genealogy between Blake's females: “Blake's females at the level of the image-figure are correlated with a profound crisis at a more archeological level where gender forms part of a matrix from which the very space of literature is generated” (“The Gender of Los(s)” 204). The Blake Concordance shows that Thel does not appear in any other of Blake's texts.

¹²⁰ This is not to discount Freudian readings of Blake. Brenda Webster in *Blake's Prophetic Psychology* finds that “[o]f the available psychologies, Freudian psychoanalysis seems the most productive for studying Blake,” noting that “The psychoanalytic emphasis on Oedipal conflict and motives of ‘love and Jealousy’ is in many respects similar to Blake's own” (4). Noting thematic differences between the early and late Blake, Webster marks the entire Blakean oeuvre as part of a psychoanalytical “working-through” (*Durcharbeitung*) of Blake's own Oedipal drama: “Gradually, through the medium of his work, he forced

for theory,” and extend it by insisting Thel is a figure for a particular post-Lacanian feminist theory.¹²¹ In *The Book of Thel*, the feminine and its signifying matrix operate outside the castration paradigm, so dramatized in the “northern bar” (6:1, E6) and the “land unknown” (6:2, E6) on which Thel borders. As each of the poem’s sections read like short programmatic studies on relation, or what Rajan calls “perspectival segments” (*Supplement* 240), just one dimension of the poem’s larger “borderline fashion” (Norvig 261), we can find in Blake’s poem an intense interrogation of a subjectivity formed through encounters, or what Bracha Ettinger calls “matrixial subjectivity.”

3.4 Bracha Ettinger’s Matrixial Borderspace

Ettinger’s theory of subjectivity hinges upon her careful philological recuperation of “matrix” – which refers to both an object (the womb) and a subjectivizing process. The matrixial functions as a counter-philosophy to traditional psychoanalysis in light of its reworking of “the feminine,” an element typically set against the masculine, or as the place of birth and death. For Rosi Braidotti, the concept of the matrix transforms the pregnant body into a complex prenatal/maternal space wherein dichotomous self/other relations are displaced, supplemented instead by a “generative in-between” so modeled

himself or was drawn into earlier and earlier life-stages in his efforts to resolve his Oedipal dilemma. Father-and-son conflict is the most pervasive of his themes” (8). Nevertheless, Webster’s argument holds for the various points of convergence between Freud and Blake via instances of primal scenes and phallic women and the Oedipal Complex. Webster reads *The Book of Thel* as a text centered on the psychological concern of familial relations, specifically between parent and child (which ultimately fails to acknowledge the nonhuman entities).

¹²¹ Norvig suggests “if we credit Blake with the Lacanian insight that all human subjectivity as constructed in Western culture is paradigmatically based on the signifying pattern of feminine sexuality, we can perhaps better understand his interest in exploring questions of identity and identification through the personification of female desire” (263).

on the placenta or fetus, these “maternal-feminine, anti-essentialist yet vitalistic figurations” that “suggest a model of porosity, fluidity, multiple interconnections and symbolic interrelation, a transversal subjectivity” (122-3). Subjectivity as encounter emphasizes the fluid jointness and encounters of evolving together. In the shared encounter one becomes partialized, fragilized, a partial-subject; the result is an ever-flowing subjectivity recalling something of a Deleuzian nomadic subjectivity. This subjectivity as encounter is also a process of metamorphosis, or what Ettinger calls *metramorphosis*:

the process of change in borderlines and thresholds between being and absence, memory and oblivion, *I* and *non-I*, a process of transgression and fading away.

[...] Through this process the limits, borderlines, and thresholds conceived are constantly transgressed or dissolved, thus allowing the creation of new ones.

(“Matrix and Metramorphosis” 200)

Instead of castrating cuts there are fadings, partial-disappearances and re-appearances: an economy of subjectivity that appeals to concepts of hauntings, traces, and indelible psychic stains. These processes occur along what Ettinger calls a *borderspace*, since they “are subject to a perpetual retuning and rehonng, and are thus never stabilized as a cut, split, or division” (Pollock “Femininity” 19). Such a concept of a borderspace is evident between Thel and the poem’s other entities insofar as the process of subjectivization fluidly moves through a series of connects and disconnects, a slow moving process of “perpetual retuning and rehonng” as if the process of subjectivization works here like psychic “antennae,” a process of carefully feeling out points of contact and minor

resonances; it is a process recalling the mole in Thel's Motto.¹²² Such a hermeneutics of retuning and rehonoring takes us beyond the traditional psychoanalytical focus on vision and alternatively offers "acoustic, sonorous, and tactile potentialities that themselves move beyond the limits of bodies and the boundaries between inside and outside, suggesting wavelengths and frequencies that resonate and come into and move out of connection without ever being completely held or lost" (Pollock "Femininity" 20). Thel, like the mole, moves through the vales of Har in a constant process of reattunement with the others. From the "self-effacing" Lilly (Hutchings 97), the "lowly" Clay (5:1, E5) to the dissolving Cloud, what *The Book of Thel* presents us with is a picture of a community that coheres in its incoherence. For given that each entity is in the process of dispossession (including Thel though she struggles with the process), and each is co-implicated in one another's process or "natural economy" (to use Hutchings' phrase), the poem presents an order of things that coexists via co-dispossession. For instance, while Thel initially finds a sympathetic identification with the Cloud, saying "I am like thee," her claim at the end of their encounter of how she is unlike the Cloud suggests not the complete disidentification between the two, but rather speaks to the coextensive processes of co-emerging and co-fading that inform subjectivity as encounter, or matrixial subjectivity. Thel even describes herself in such transitive terms: "like a watry bow [...] parting cloud [...] reflection in a glass, like shadows in the water [...] a smile [...] doves voice [...] transient day [...] music in the air" (1:8-11, E3). When Thel suggests that she lives to "be at death the food of worms" (3:23, E5) the worm is called out of its

¹²² Ettinger speaks of the "erotic antennae" of the psyche as the traces that persist from the intrauterine experience. See *The Matrixial Borderspace*, pp. 56,100,117,138,167.

“lowly bed” (3:28, E5) to encounter Thel, an encounter that seems to present the most ontological trouble: “Art thou a Worm? [...] art thou but a Worm? I see thee like an infant [...] Is this a Worm?” (4:2-5, E5). To be sure, the matrixial economy with its subjectivity based in co-existence, co-emergence and co-fading, when read alongside the encounters within *The Book of Thel*, complements ecocritical readings of this poem (cf. Hutchings and Morton), dovetailing especially with Kevin Hutchings’s reading that “Har’s natural economy epitomizes a highly ethical mode of mutual coexistence” (90). And yet, to insist on the co-existent nature of things in this poem does not necessarily imply the image of nature that Brian Wilkie finds: “the pastel Disneyland Thel seems to live in” (64). Hence despite its “cartoonish watercolour illustrations” (Morton 155) what *The Book of Thel* attempts to articulate is resonant with the darker, more complex aspect of Ettinger’s expansive subjectivity, namely, that co-existence is not synonymous with happiness and rather is uncomfortably open to the traumas of others. The implication of the repeated dictum of “we live not for ourselves” (4:10, E5) is not that we live *for* others but rather that we live *with* others, and it is this subtle difference that shifts our reading of the text’s self-sacrificial message towards one that emphasizes co-existence.¹²³ In fact, it is this co-existence that becomes impossible to avoid. The “voice of sorrow” from the hollow pit in

¹²³ My reading of *The Book of Thel* as containing a model of co-existence is a counter-reading to that of David Worrall, who suggests “Thel’s refusals are a rejection of her co-option into such a [Swedenborgian] community and, implicitly, a rejection of the entire colonization project” (17) and to that of Helen Bruder, who emphasizes the sharp divisions between subjects and who sees the Cloud’s “hypocritical male philosophy” in highly gendered terms, as seducing the Clod of Clay “into a role of slavery and self-annihilation” (50-1). Bruder takes issue with “triumphalist reading[s]” because they are “premised upon the belief that Har is a liberating environment, or at the very least a place amenable to sexually and socially radical ideas [...] For the striking fact about *The Book of Thel* is that it offers no alternative to the conventional and stereotypical feminine roles it so astutely caricatures” (53). Stereotypical feminine roles are not synonymous with “the feminine” in a psychoanalytic context, the latter of which is my focus here. While *The Book of Thel* may not posit an affirmative alternative, its matrixial space is amenable to the potentiality of thought, like Kant’s general anthropology.

its series of questions seems troubled by the very *openness* of the partial-subject (“Why cannot the Ear be closed?”[6:11, E6]). Ear opened, eyelids stored, tongue “impress’d with honey from every wind” (6:16, E6), ear like “a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in” (6:17, E6) and nostril “wide inhaling” (6:18, E6), the voice announces the impossibility of not being-with the other. It is through the processes of co-emerging and co-fading that Thel, as a fragilized partial-subject, endures.

3.5 The Ending: Decision or Deferral? The Book of Thel and Self-Fragilization

Regardless whether *The Book of Thel* presents us with a possible image of the subject who is attuned to the world and all that it contains, the ending of this poem throws into question such a utopian vision by showing the radical alterity of the world, as represented in the “land unknown” (6:2, E6) – a site that while acoustic, and with its own kind of vitality, or “life,” is foreclosed to Thel, revealing the illusoriness of being “attuned” with the world.¹²⁴ The ending calls into question the poem’s earlier model of transsubjectivity, a critical move that works to a number of ends. Not only does the poem’s break gesture towards an epistemological uncertainty in Blake’s own thought on nature, it functions also as an ironic undercutting of Thel’s previous conversations, a violent folding back upon itself whereby nature is no longer hospitable and instead is dark and frightening in its vast unknowability. Hence, if Thel sees a seemingly well-structured order of things in her encounters with the poem’s natural entities, her encounter with the “land unknown” that is shown to her at the end of the poem works to

¹²⁴ Ettinger’s theory also resonates with Martin Heidegger’s theory of “attunement” (cf. *Being and Time*) as well as Daniel Stern’s theory of “affect attunement” between mother and child (cf. *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*).

radically disrupt the plausibility or actuality of this worldview. It is as if the poem shows two visions of nature “at work,” and it seems that Blake is underscoring this idea of work, especially as it is contrasted against Thel’s lack of labour (one can see it as a question of her “use-value”). The first vision of nature appears as if Thel conceptualizes these objects (partial subjects) of nature as if they were neatly laid out on the table in Foucault’s *The Order of Things* with each figure perceived as having its function and occupying its proper place in the world.¹²⁵ However, this schematization of nature is then troubled by the act of lifting the bar – a move akin to looking beneath the table (an act which then ushers in the second view of nature) – to see the unruliness of nature, or in Lacanian terms, the Real. Thel’s encounter with the ground is a repetition of her previous encounters with the partial-subjects of nature (the Lilly, Clay, Worm, Cloud) – the four figures recalled in the four senses evoked by the “voice of sorrow” (hearing, sight, taste and smell [6:11-18]) – as if they are re-presented in a darker, more horrifying (de)construction.

For just as Demogorgon disorients Asia’s narrative of history’s progress (thereby initiating her exit from the play) and dampens the dawning Promethean Age in his closing soliloquy, the disturbing experience with the “unsettled” ground extinguishes Thel’s hope of finding her place in the system of nature. Like Demogorgon, who is also a catachresis, *The Book of Thel*’s uncanny murmuring ground is a porous threshold or border that seems to raise more questions for the reader than even it asks of Thel. For

¹²⁵ In the Preface to *The Order of Things* Foucault writes, “I use that word ‘table’ in two superimposed senses: the nickel-plated, rubbery table swathed in white, glittering beneath a glass sun devouring all shadow [...] and also a table, a *tabula*, that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and their differences – the table upon which, since the beginning of time, language has intersected space” (xviii-xi).

instance, is this ground Thel's grave? Is the voice hers, or the voice of another? Is her shriek out of frustration? Disavowal? Surprise? As a character resistant to characterization, Thel is an unwilling player in Blake's cosmos whose flight back to the vales of Har appears to be also an act of withdrawal from his larger oeuvre.

Understood in Kantian terms, what Thel witnesses is the transformation of nature as it moves from its phenomenality towards its noumenality; nature moves from the phenomenon, as recognized in the particular manifestations of the Lilly, the Clod of Clay, the Worm and the Cloud, to the noumenon, as represented in the troubling ground, the "land unknown." Read in these terms, Thel's shriek is suggestive of the unsettling possibilities of the noumenon, and her turning away at the end of the poem dramatizes a similar gesture found repeatedly in Kant.¹²⁶ One such place, and with a certain purchase for our reading of Thel, is Kant's description of the thought of the end of things, as found in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*:

This thought has something horrifying about it because it leads us as it were to the edge of an abyss: for anyone who sinks into it no return is possible [...] and yet there is something attractive there too: for one cannot cease turning his terrified gaze back to it again and again [...] It is frighteningly *sublime* partly because it is obscure, for the imagination works harder in darkness than it does in bright light. Yet in the end it must also be woven in a wondrous way into universal human reason, because it is encountered among all reasoning peoples at all times, clothed in one way or another. (195/Ak8:327, emphasis in original)

¹²⁶ For a discussion of this gesture see Rei Terada's *Looking Away*.

Kant's description here of the ceaseless turning of one's "terrified gaze back to it again and again" suggests the way in which we are nearly pathologically engaged in repetitive acts of turning away and turning back to a horrifying thought. Indeed, this is a defining gesture of Kant's general anthropology, where discussions of the *anthropos* give way to forays on aliens and future species that will inherit the planet. If the subject in Kant, who can also be a metonym for the reader of *Thel*, is engaged in this act of turning away/back, we might ask the question, *Does Thel herself look back?* Although both *Thel* and Kant are found in the act of looking away, it is uncertain whether *Thel* ever looks back, since Blake does not illustrate *Thel's* flight. We might ask how the unrepresentability of this scene critiques the representation of nature that the poem previously offers. Following from this, what is the purchase of the image the final plate *does* offer, in lieu of *Thel's* flight? For, at the bottom of the plate (copy D, object 8, E6) there appears what could be three figures of the unborn riding a serpent; it is an image that again gestures toward what is really the polymorphous *perversity* of the womb.¹²⁷ Although the most obvious instance of unrepresentability is in that final scene of *Thel's* flight, *The Book of Thel* suffers throughout with an unstable economy of images. Frequently, on numerous plates, it is unclear which character referred to in the text corresponds with which illustrated figure on the corresponding plate.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, it is perhaps the unworking of this final scene in *The Book of Thel* that keeps us fascinated, returning critically (or

¹²⁷ A very similar image is found on plate 11 of Blake's *America, a Prophecy* (1793).

¹²⁸ This character confusion begins with the frontispiece, where we are given a multitude of female figures in both the foreground and background of the plate. This forces the reader to ask, *Who and where is Thel?* The confusion continues on plates 4/2/2 in the encounter between the Lilly and *Thel*; plate 7/5/5 in the encounter between the matron clay, *Thel* and the worm; and plate 8/6/6 with the three figures on the serpent. The similar colourings of the characters makes for slippery subject positions and instead allows us to read them as interchangeable and intimately (l)inked to one another.

compulsively) to this minor early work of Blake's – a text that like Kant's anthropological writings is teeming with inhumans at the most unlikely of moments. The unsettling ending of *The Book of Thel* and unrepresentability of it appeals to us for how, as Kant says, “the imagination works harder in darkness than it does in bright light” (*Religion* 195/Ak8:327).

3.6 Conclusion

If seen through the model of transsubjective relations, Thel's refusal might be understood as her choice of a pluralistic model, a choice for a partial-existence or a co-existence rather than full selfhood. Thel is like the unborn who chooses not to be born into full selfhood so that she may continue to co-exist in a matrixial space, a womb-like space of interconnectedness with others. This partial, and hence fragile, existence is also the rejection of a system that demands her sacrifice, a decision made to preserve her life-in-jointness, her partial-subjecthood over full selfhood. This non-sacrifice but partial disappearance is a key movement within matrixial space where what “this vulnerability implies is not a sacrifice of myself in a disappearing for the sake of the Other, but rather a partial disappearing to allow jointness” (*Matrixial Borderspace* 145). This vulnerability can be understood as a self-fragilizing gesture that allows the co-existence of the inhuman others. Thus, Thel's decision is to choose a model that privileges partial-disappearing and partial-selfhood instead of a sacrificial move into the world of experience, embodiment, full subjectivity, and phallic thought that forecloses the feminine dimension of the matrix. We might say that Thel makes her decision not (only) for herself but for a way of being-with-in the world that shows how, in Ettinger's words,

“we participate in the traumatic events of the other” and “discover our part in events whose source is not ‘my’-self” (155).

Finally, if we are to recognize Thel as the face of theory, we ought to symptomatically recognize the “looseness of fit” – to use Kant scholar Gerd Buchdahl’s phrase – of so many readings of Thel as a result of a theory that fails to account for the richness of Blake’s feminine, and (finally) see her as the face of a non-Oedipal feminine theory, that “nomadic image of thinking” that Rosi Braidotti says, “has a female face that points in several contradictory directions at once” (*Transpositions* 115). What Thel comes to know, and what the ultimate purchase of *The Book of Thel* is, is the very confrontation of Life, of “a life that may not have ‘me’ or any ‘human’ at the centre” (*Transpositions* 40). If Thel is unborn, as the poem’s spectre of the mole hauntingly suggests, her encounters with the cloud, flower, and worm can be read as taking place within the womb, making these encounters the materialization of a kind of intrauterine phantasy *avant la lettre*, a reading supported by what Duden diagnoses as the eighteenth century’s belief in the “polymorphous potency of the womb.” *The Book of Thel*’s intrauterine encounter becomes a model for thinking our co-existences with(in) one another, a model whose potentiality extends beyond Blake and Romanticism to posthumanist theory today. This contentious poem, and first illuminated work of Blake’s, remains as “immensely important” today as Helen Bruder claimed over a decade ago (38), not only in light of theory’s turn towards ecology or “Life,” (and Blake’s important place in this thought), but also for thinking, more generally, another “land unknown,” that is to say, those complex models of subjectivity that exceed our traditional categories of thought.

3.7 Interchapter: “The Little Girl Lost” and “The Little Girl Found”

While Thel never returns in any of Blake’s subsequent work, the problematic of the poem does. In the Lyca poems, “The Little Girl Lost” and “The Little Girl Found,” originally published in *Songs of Innocence* (1789), the same year as *The Book of Thel*, an uncannily similar scenario presents itself: a solitary young girl encounters a series of inhuman actors. In the first poem, “The Little Girl Lost,” the young girl Lyca wanders away from her parents and (willingly or not) joins the company of wild animals, which includes lions, tigers, leopards, and wolves. In the second poem, “The Little Girl Found,” Lyca’s parents desperately search for her, only to be met by the wild animals, in a transformative, perhaps consoling, encounter, after which they appear to have come to terms with their loss.

While explicit comparisons between Thel and Lyca have been drawn, such as Robert Gleckner’s reading of Lyca as a younger Thel, or Magnus Ankarsjö’s comparison of their shared childlike innocence, the greatest similarity between these poems is the way they both traditionally have been read as marking the passage from innocence to experience. Grevel Lindop suggests the Lyca poems “present a transition between [...] the spontaneous, imaginative Innocence of childhood and the more complex and mature (but also more dangerous) adult state of Experience” (38). Henry Trout inversely reads Lyca as moving from experience to “the beginning of Higher Innocence” (41). Like *The Book of Thel*, the Lyca poems are frequently framed as a sexual awakening, such as the violent “rape of experience” that Gleckner sees Lyca as undergoing at the hands of the

lion (223).¹²⁹ Moving away from the hypersexualized readings of the Lyca poems – a similar challenge with *The Book of Thel* – requires attending to the inhumans and the particular force they have on the human. Hence, this brief interchapter focuses on the inhuman in the Lyca poems, as it is here where we see Blake continuing to redress the human-inhuman relationship, a scene that amounts to a working-through of the human and the various inhuman forces that make up the human. Like *The Book of Thel*, the Lyca poems gesture toward the ways in which the inhuman is entwined with Blake’s project of thinking a new mode of being – a project he will return to again in *Jerusalem*.

Typically, the animals in the Lyca poems have been read in terms of their symbolism, allegorical status, and even their violent sexual agency. However, the Lyca poems also articulate the intimate linkage between the human and inhuman, an important detail only recently attended to in Peter Heymans’ reading of the “sublime traffic” in Blake’s poetry between the human self and animal other, which highlights “the fragility and mutability of the human subject” (13). For Heymans, the Lyca poems model a “two-way movement that affects the animal and the human alike, and that provokes both humanizations and animalizations” (13). In Heymans’ Deleuzian reading, “Blake’s poetics of becoming” stakes out

a zone of indiscernibility where both man and woman, human and animal are stripped of their identity and species. It is not just that humans become animals and that animals become humans, but more that the signifier of species loses its

¹²⁹ The tendency to read the Lyca poems in this way stems, perhaps, from the presence of another companion poem within *Songs of Innocence and Experience* entitled “A Little GIRL Lost,” which explicitly chronicles a the sexual encounter between a “youthful pair” of lovers when the “Parents were afar” since “Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime” (E51:5). Whereas this poem clearly foregrounds sexuality, in the Lyca poems it is never so clear. Conceptually, there is less shared between these “little girl” poems than there is between “A Little GIRL Lost” and “A Little BOY Lost.”

stable significance and becomes, as Deleuze and Guattari would put it, undone.

(19)

Yet Heymans' argument misses an opportunity to think the collusion between Lyca and Thel, and their mutual representation of a figure that, like Shelley's Asia in *Prometheus Unbound*, is engaged in the act of withdrawal from existence to nonexistence. I want to suggest that the Lyca poems re-articulate *The Book of Thel* insofar as human life is composed of inhuman forces. Read in this light, we can read the enigmatic endings of both the Lyca poems and *The Book of Thel* less as an issue of the sacrificial move into the world of experience or female sexuality, and instead – to hark back to Bracha Ettinger's theory of matrixial subjectivity, discussed earlier – as the partial-disappearance that enables the existence of someone or something else.

The withdrawal of the human subject is the setting aside of man's "specialness," a gesture that opens up the human to forces that are not its own, already signified by Lyca's name. Although Stuart Peterfreund suggests Lyca is derived from the Greek *laikas*, meaning harlot (136), her name also means "wolf," from the Greek *λύκος* (*lykos*), or the *lycaon*, the name for a wild dog or wolf-like animal included in Cuvier's *The Animal Kingdom* (1824-1835). Hence this etymology establishes a strange kinship between Lyca and the poems' other wildcats, like the leopards, tigers, wolves, and the "kingly lion" (E34:38). Where Thel encounters five inhuman figures – the worm, lily, clod of clay, cloud, and the voice of sorrow – Lyca encounters four "beasts of prey": the lion, leopard, tiger and wolf. Thel's inhumans respond to her incessant questioning with riddle-like answers; Lyca's animals are – with the exception of the lion, late in "The Little Girl Found" – largely mute, a difference partly due to the fact that Lyca never asks a single

question. In “The Little Girl Lost,” it is the sound of the animal that initiates the poem’s action, as Lyca follows the “wild birds song” (E34:17) which brings her to a tree under which she falls asleep. As she lays there, “beasts of prey, / Come from caverns deep” (E34:35-6), and the poem ends with the “kingly lion” to “gambold round / O’er the hallowd ground” (E34:40-1). The sound of the animal – an issue that we will return to in chapter 5 in our discussion of Shelley’s *The Last Man* – marks another difference between Lyca and Thel. For where Lyca hears and follows the sound of the birds, Thel stubbornly refuses. In fact, birdsong becomes a painful sound for Thel: “I hear the warbling birds, / But I feed not the warbling birds. they fly and seek their food; / But Thel delights in these no more because I fade away” (*Thel* E3:21-23). Thel turns away from the birds, quickly moving on to the next figure. Thus while Thel may begin like Lyca, “she in paleness sought the secret air,” suggesting that she too is searching for a different state/atmosphere, the description of her supposed “gentle lamentation” that “falls like morning dew” (E1:7) is ironic, since Thel’s anxiety-ridden questions are jarringly inconsistent with the pastoral imagery that frames this first stanza.

If the Lyca poems restage the quandary of the *The Book of Thel* over the fragility and inhumanity of human life, an important difference emerges: Lyca doesn’t appear to have the same existential burden as Thel. Whereas Lyca’s mother is described as “Famish’d. weeping. weak / With hollow piteous shriek” (*Songs* E36:1-2) – and in this gesture is closer to Thel than Lyca herself – “Lovely Lyca,” as she is repeatedly called (E34:13,15), invites this new mode of being: “Sweet sleep come to me” (E34:18). Thus, with the exception of the “piteous shriek” from Lyca’s mother, there is no mysterious inhuman voice within the poem that bemoans the fragility of the human subject.

While initially it may appear that *The Book of Thel* and the Lyca poems present us with two images of man's place in nature's economy, they ultimately arrive at the same outcome: that it is woman who finds herself asking the great question of Kant's anthropology over what is human. Following from this, in Blake's thought – a point he moves more radically towards in *Jerusalem* – woman appears capable of exposing the human to the inhuman. Through Thel and Lyca's curious encounters with the inhuman, a new vision of a human-inhuman community is explored. What Blake seems to suggest, especially in the Lyca poems with the explicit references to the prophecy of Isaiah, is that there is a radical potentiality within woman for thinking our tumultuous co-existence with the inhuman.¹³⁰

Indeed, the first lines of “The Little Girl Lost” foreground this forward-looking vision of a new mode of existence:

In futurity

I prophetic see.

That the earth from sleep.

(Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise and seek. (E34: 2-6)

The vision of the earth awakening from sleep inverts Lyca's movement from wakefulness to sleep. What is at stake here, however, is this idea of a dormant or latent potentiality within the earth. I read Lyca's movement not as moving from a kind of death-in-life to life-in-death, or the setting-aside of her body to become a soul – the kind of Christian and

¹³⁰ “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” Isa. 11:6.

Neoplatonic readings that Kathleen Raine, Joseph Wittreich, and Norma Greco offer – but as the putting-to-sleep of her (full-)humanity, a move brought about through her openness to the inhuman others within the poem.¹³¹ Thus, if Lyca is a redeemer figure, as her alignment with the prophesy of Isaiah suggests, it is on the grounds of her potentiality to allow for the earth to “arise and seek,” recalling Kant’s observation in the *Opus Postumum* that humanity will make way for the coming of a “future species (race).” The human-inhuman relationship worked-through in both *The Book of Thel* and the Lyca poems, becomes more complexly enmeshed in Blake’s final illuminated work *Jerusalem*, to which we will now turn.

¹³¹ Kathleen Raine establishes the Neoplatonic tradition of reading Lyca, arguing in *Blake and Tradition* that Lyca represents “the soul, naked without its mortal body, entering the realms of the dead” (141). Joseph Wittreich reads the poem’s animals as positioning it firmly within a Christian context, an argument that relies heavily on Isaiah. Norma Greco in “Blake’s ‘The Little Girl Lost’: An Initiation into Womanhood” sees Lyca as ascending to “a more sacred mode of being, representing the triumph of the adult’s innocence of wisdom, the spiritual perception possible only through a willful affirmation of life, even - or perhaps especially – in the midst of experiential terror” (146). However, for Greco, this higher state of innocence is ushered in with “the sexual act” that “rends the veil of mystery and death” (154). Unlike Greco, and other critics who read the poem in sexual terms, I see the action of the poem as exhibiting a more profound, ontological crisis.

Chapter 4

4 “Intolerable to Organs of Flesh”: Blake’s *Jerusalem*

If Theory is dead, then we need to say emphatically, “*Long live theory*,” as the form of thought that takes the imaginative seriously, and begins the interminable labor, like Blake’s Los building the city of Golgonooza, of repairing the inevitable decay of the institutions that nevertheless sustain us in a common life.

– Leroy Searle, “Literature Departments and the Practice of Theory” (1255)

In abstract and general terms, what remains constant in my thinking [...] is indeed a critique of institutions, but one that sets out not from the utopia of a wild and spontaneous pre- or non-institution, but rather from counter-institutions. I do not think there is, or should be, the ‘non-institutional’. I am always torn between the critique of institutions and the dream of an *other* institution that, in an interminable process, will come to replace institutions that are oppressive, violent and inoperative. The idea of a counter-institution, neither spontaneous, wild nor immediate, is the most permanent motif that, in a way, has guided me in my work. It is probably this logic that has guided me for all these years, always at war with institutions, but always attempting to found yet another one [...]

– Derrida, “I Have a Taste for the Secret” (50-1)

4.1 Introduction

Jerusalem is frequently cited as Blake’s magnum opus, the product of an intellectual labour nearly two decades in the making (1804-20).¹³² Infamously described by Vincent

¹³² All references and pagination herein are in David V. Erdman’s *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988), hereafter cited as E. The *Jerusalem* plates referred to are from Copy E, available online through The William Blake Archive.

de Luca as a “wall of words” (218) for its dense visual-textual layout, *Jerusalem* suffocates us with its fullness. This quality of “suffocating fullness,” a description I take from Emmanuel Levinas’ description of existence, is the name for our experience with this text – over 100 richly orange-coloured plates in length – so swarming with life.

Despite the fact that this text calls out to us – the most direct of all of Blake’s apostrophes, calling out “To The Public” on its title page – the text, in many ways, resists its reader, or at least its human reader, a point raised in Algernon Charles Swinburne’s condemnatory account of *Jerusalem*’s excessive verbiage:

Human readers, if such indeed exist beyond the singular or the dual number, will wish that the authors had put themselves through a previous course of surgical or any other training which might have cured a certain superhuman impediment of speech, very perplexing to the mundane ear; a habit of huge breathless stuttering, as it were a Titanic stammer, intolerable to organs of flesh. (*William Blake: A Critical Essay* 35, my emphasis)

Why does Swinburne question the text’s “human” readers? Swinburne articulates something in *Jerusalem* that is resistant to the human reader, something which we are to infer might not be entirely intolerable for another kind or species of reader – perhaps in Kant’s creaturely terms a “differently organized” reader. This tantalizing comment becomes the touchstone for what this chapter takes seriously, namely, the ways in which *Jerusalem* tarries with the question of “the human” and the disciplines, and the possibility of what lies beyond.

Just as we saw in chapter 1 that the corpus of Kant is frequently divided into the early and the late Kant, or the anthropology and the critical philosophy, a similar

quarantining is found in Blake, whose early and late work are seldom overlaid. However, both *The Book of Thel* and *Jerusalem*, these illuminated bookends that form the bases of chapters 3 and 4, probe the limits of the human. By attending to the inhuman in both texts, we see the confluence between Blake's poetry and posthumanist theories where the human has been radically decentered and is instead open to what Blake elsewhere calls an "Innumerable company" (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, E566). The mechanisms driving this reimagining or re-organ-ization of the human are disciplines, especially those that Blake himself was directly encountering within the city of London. We can think of it as "re-organ-ization," written in this way to account for how the physical body is split open and viscerally rearranged in Blake's representation of a transformed humanity. As chapter 3 examined the collusion between parturitive science and *The Book of Thel*, chapter 4 will focus on the enmeshment of *Jerusalem* with the disciplines of architecture, and to a lesser extent medicine, surgery and technology. While the previous chapter outlined the ways in which aesthetics as a mode of "beautiful thinking" undergirds traditional readings of *The Book of Thel*, this chapter considers how aesthetic ideology – through conservative readings of the poem's architecture – also tends to frame Blake's voluminous *Jerusalem*, the text that presents Blake's most radical critique of "the human." As in *The Book of Thel* and the Lyca poems, *Jerusalem* resists "beautiful thinking," an argument I make in light of the ubiquitous architecture of Golgonooza, and which is symptomatic of the poem's larger unsettledness. For in *Jerusalem*, Blake cannot think through the possibility of a new humanity without re-organ-izing it through the disciplines, having himself been more or less involved with debates surrounding them

through the Joseph Johnson circle and what we might call the “knowledge culture” of Romantic London, a point to which we will soon return.

Blake’s *Jerusalem* is a crisis-text that finds itself in a predicament perhaps best summed up in a line borrowed from Charlotte Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets*: “the flowers fade, but all the thorns remain” (“Sonnet VI – To Hope”11). For *Jerusalem*, unlike his other texts that we have previously examined, becomes something of a thorn in Blake’s side, revealing the ways in which his own efforts of imagining a new humanity and a new humanities are thwarted by his own uncertainties over the disciplines. At many points throughout this massive and unwieldy text, Blake attempts to divide Art from Science – the latter of which is to be dismissed as system. However, Blake not only allows us to think about the generative potential of their pairing, such as in the case of Golgonooza as the place of both “Art & Manufacture”; his dismissal of Science must also be distinguished from his reliance on the individual sciences. Hence, Blake is critical of Science as system while his work simultaneously registers a fascination with the sciences. While we will unpack the historical relationship between art and science shortly, I want to flag the crucial feature that *Jerusalem* doesn’t have a fixed sense of the disciplines. Instead, this text reveals Blake to be, like the self-confessional Kant, “disorganized.” For like the disjunction in Kant’s anthropology between its moral and its tendency, Blake’s *Jerusalem* aims at a transhumanism, or what John Beer has called a “visionary humanism,” but it cannot escape, in practice, from offering us an image of the posthumanities. Hence, *Jerusalem* is, in practice, a wild patchwork, a symptom of the way that Blake opens up possibilities that he doesn’t quite know how to resolve. Reframed in this light, we can reinterpret Blake’s violent gouging of parts of his text as a

lashing out at his own disorganized, even monstrous, assemblage. Against his desires, Blake enables us to see the potentiality of a general economy. In what follows, we will examine *Jerusalem* on three grounds: its depiction and radical re-organ-ization of “the human”; the architecture of Golgonooza, Blake’s imaginary city of art and manufacture; and, finally, the poem’s unsettled reorganization of the branches of learning that leave us, against Blake’s will, with an image of a Romantic posthumanities.

4.2 The Human: “every thing is Human” (J 38:49)

Unlike Aristotelian definitions of the human as the rational animal, the speaking animal, or the political animal, in *Jerusalem* “every thing is Human” (J 38:49) – an echo found in Blake’s handwritten inscription to the recently discovered plate of *The [First] Book of Urizen*: “everything is an attempt / to be human.”¹³³ Indeed, his definition of what is human is unlike that of any other writer we encounter in this study. Not only is the human nearly unrecognizable, but *Jerusalem* is affectively marked by a wild restlessness in what amounts to a frenetic and prolonged working-through of the human that we do not find in Kant or the Shelleys.

One of the most curious inclusions under Blake’s concept of the “human” is cities. In *Jerusalem*, cities have a vitality (not to be taken as a solely positive term) that makes them human:

I behold London; a Human awful wonder of God!

He says: Return, Albion, return! I give myself for thee:

¹³³ I saw this in person during a workshop with the eight newly-discovered Blake plates (Organized by Tristanne Connolly and Philippa Simpson. Clore Gallery, Tate Britain, 14 July 2010). *The [First] Book of Urizen* (plate no 10), c. 1818. Engraving with watercolour. London, Tate Britain.

My Streets are my, Ideas of Imagination.

Awake Albion, awake! and let us awake up together.

My Houses are Thoughts: my Inhabitants; Affections.

The children of my thoughts, walking within my blood-vessels,

Shut from my nervous form which sleeps upon the verge of Beulah

In dreams of darkness. while my vegetating blood in veiny pipes,

Rolls dreadful thro' the Furnaces of Los, and the Mills of Satan. (38:30-38)

The city of London is human, not *like* a human; its streets and houses are ideas and thoughts. The city is a body and it is “a Human awful wonder” (38:30). London’s comingling of “awful” and “wonder” shows the city’s vitality in decidedly mixed terms that also evoke the sublime. Furthermore, the sensuous (self-)description of London’s “humanity” gives way to a terse rhythmic shift in the final four lines of the same plate:

..... for Cities

Are Men, fathers of multitudes, and Rivers & Mountins

Are also Men; every thing is Human. mighty! sublime!

In every bosom a Universe expands, as wings. (38:47-50)

In these enjambed lines, Blake places the stress on “Are Men” and “Are Also Men,” a move that both signals and denies man as the most important term in these lines. In becoming the loud refrain, or booming echo, man is emptied out, his function reduced to a rhythmic cog. Thus, the process of seeing everything as human – cities, rivers and mountains – is also the process of radically unworking the term “human.” For Jennifer Davis Michael, this unworking is really an act of greater humanization: “The point is not to make the city part of nature, but to reveal both ‘city’ and ‘nature’ as human, and the

human being as limitless” (16). Michael here extends a long tradition of reading Blake in militantly humanistic terms. For instance, John Beer’s *Blake’s Humanism* framed Blake as a humanist as opposed to mystic or social critic. However, Beer’s acknowledgment that “Blake’s humanism differs from both the normal senses in which the word is used” implicitly raises the question of whether it is best considered a humanism at all (20).¹³⁴ For given that “every thing” is human, Blake enables us to see the inhumanities that make the human cohere; it is not to reveal the human as limitless but rather as the congealing of a multitude of inhuman forms and forces.

The extent to which inhumans populate the text becomes apparent as *Jerusalem* unworks the “human” through a cataloguing or series of superimpositions of ever-thickening or suffocating descriptions. Most frequently, the “human” capaciously includes inhuman others:

According to the subject of discourse & every Word & every Character
Was Human according to the Expansion or Contraction. the Translucence or
Opakeness of Nervous fibres such was the variation of Time & Space
Which vary according as the Organs of Perception vary & they walked
To & fro in Eternity as One Man reflecting each in each & clearly seen
And seeing: according to fitness & order. (98:36-41)

.....

All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone, all

¹³⁴ Beer calls Blake’s unique humanism a “visionary humanism” grounded in a “belief in humanity yet refus[al] to accept any definition which is drawn from looking at the sum of human beings” (20). Blake’s posthumanism goes beyond Beer’s reading in addressing the troubling presence of the inhuman – a feature entirely absent from Beer’s sense of “visionary humanism,” which is still very much concerned with the human subject.

Human Forms identified. living going forth & returning wearied
 Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing
 And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality.

And I heard the Name of their Emanations they are named Jerusalem. (99:2-6)

Every word, character, tree, metal, earth, stone can be called human depending on the expansion and contraction of the “Organs of Perception.” Out of this peristaltic movement of minute physiological changes in the nervous fibres and organs of perception come time and space. In this activity of expansion and contraction of the organs of perception everything becomes human, including discursive and material bodies, organic and inorganic substances.

The most radical transformation of the human comes on Plate 98, when “every Man stood Fourfold. each Four Faces had” (98:13). The transformative force of this event is Albion’s firing of the arrows, the act that ushers in *Jerusalem’s* apocalypse and annihilates the Selfhood of “the human,” liquidating it till it contains everything and nothing. Albion’s “Murmuring[...] Bow-string” (98:5) sets into vibration the annihilation of the Spectre/Selfhood, which is described as an entropic scene of great heat and light: “A Sun of blood red wrath” (98:11), and “the dim Chaos brightend beneath. above, around!” (98:15). Following from the “murmuring” (98:5) and “clangor” (98:8) of the arrows, fourfold man’s senses have been re-organ-ized, and not in an aestheticized arrangement; instead, they resemble a disfigured portrait recalling the paintings of Francis Bacon (1909-1992)¹³⁵:

¹³⁵ Francis Bacon painted a series on Blake. See his *Study of Portrait II (after the Life Mask of William Blake)*. 1955. Oil on canvas. Tate Collection. Image available here: <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art>>.

South stood the Nerves of the Eye. East in Rivers of bliss the Nerves of the
 Expansive Nostrils West. flowd the Parent Sense the Tongue. North stood
 The labyrinthine Ear. Circumscribing & Circumcising the excrementitious
 Husk & Covering into Vacuum evaporating revealing the lineaments of Man.
 (98:17-20)

This description effectively flays open the human subject to reveal a disorganized and even frightening ordering of the human face. Indeed, in his account of the becoming-fourfold of man, Blake describes the radically disfigured human face, the part of the human that Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* suggest is “the inhuman in human beings”:

[I]f human beings have a destiny it is to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine, not by returning to animality nor even by returning to the head, but by quite spiritual and special becoming animal, by strange true becomings that get past the wall and get out of the black holes, that make faciality traits themselves finally elude the organization of the face – freckles dashing toward the horizon, hair carried off by the wind, eyes you traverse instead of seeing yourself in or gazing into those glum face to face encounters between signifying subjectivities. (171)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the point is to evacuate the human out of faciality, to render the face as a transformative site of becoming-imperceptible that moves “toward the regions

of the asignifying, the asubjective and the faceless” (187). To de-face the face is a negative act neither for Deleuze and Guattari nor for Blake. Defacing or becoming clandestine, as Gregory Flaxman and Elena Oxman note, has the effect of “suspending individuation” and beginning “the process of annihilating the network of power relations with which the face has been determined, namely, signification and subjectification” (50).

As *Jerusalem* moves ever closer to its end, we move farther away from any comfortable features of the human. Indeed, it is worth noting that Blake’s source for Fourfold Man is drawn from the four “living creatures” in Ezekiel:

And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one of them had four faces and every one had four wings. [...] they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire [...] and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. (Ezekiel 1:5-16)

Blake’s fourfold man has at his heart the four creatures of Ezekiel, identified as the lion, ox, eagle, and man, each of which has all four faces. Ira Livingston suggests that Blake’s fourfold man finds a contemporary version in Dorion Sagan’s concept of the human body as “metametazoa,” that is, “as an excess produced out of multiple interactions between other sets of creatures, each of which may be metazoan in turn” (81).

Blake enacts a similar violence to the human subject, whose self-annihilation leaves the human, like the animal-headed figures on plates 11 and 78, in a strange zone of indiscernibility. What comes to populate the final pages of the poem is the inhuman, as the human in the long catalogue of the annihilating scene is torn open. For Blake this disfigurement mobilizes change: “in Visions / In new Expanses, creating exemplars of

Memory and of Intellect / Creating Space. Creating Time” (98:30-32). This restless paring down of the human is the condition of possibility for creating “new Expanses,” for evacuating that which has caused the human to become a reified concept. After all, as Saree Makdisi observes, “any code of conduct or disciplinary mechanism or punitive apparatus [in Blake] is much like any other” (119). To be sure, the “human” is precisely one such term under pressure that cannot be left untouched at the dawn of a new humanity.

Building on Makdisi’s reading, which sees Blake’s human subject through a Foucauldian lens, as “a product like any other, an assemblage, a machine: a making machine, a consuming machine, a desiring machine, a living machine” (133), we might consider how Blake’s re-organ-ization of the human is itself an arrow aimed at a new way of thinking about the human beyond the clutches of humanism. Albion’s act of annihilating human Selfhood may be read as the positive act of dissolving a reified or despotic figure, without leaving anything recognizably human in its place. This “becoming imperceptible” or “becoming clandestine” is not surprising given what David Baulch identifies as Blake’s resistance to representation and a “step into what Deleuze calls ‘an unrecognized and unrecognizable *terra incognita*’” (136).

Although *Jerusalem* may not leave us with any concrete image of what remains or what emerges after the final apocalyptic scene, I want to suggest that there are germs or potentially embryonic ideas for what this post-humanity might look like formally embedded within the poem, namely, the two enigmatic images of the swan-headed figure on plate 11 (Fig.2) and the eagle-headed figure on plate 78 (Fig.3). Although these rebus-like images do not easily correspond with the plates’ text, they remain affectively linked

with the poem's project of rethinking humanity. Indeed, these tantalizing images of human-animal hybridity further buttress our ability to read *Jerusalem's* reorganization of humanity into a posthumanity. While numerous critics have addressed the nature of the human in Blake, fewer have attended to these hybrid figures, and none has connected Blake's project of reimagining the human with these bestial bodies. This is a striking omission, as these images are the largest, and most explicit depictions of animal-human hybridity found anywhere in Blake.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Other noteworthy instances of animal-headed figures in Blake's work include his set of watercolour-illustrations for Milton's *Comus* (c.1801). See esp. *Comus with the Revellers* and *The Magic Banquet* (Klonsky 86-7). Blake's pencil drawings known as Visionary Heads – sketches of Blake's visions – include an image of a Flea's face and sharp tongue on a human head. For an account and image of this, see Morton Paley's *The Traveller in the Evening: The Last Works of William Blake* (300-304).



Figure 2. *Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Giant Albion, copy E, object 11* (Erdman 11). William Blake Archive Online.

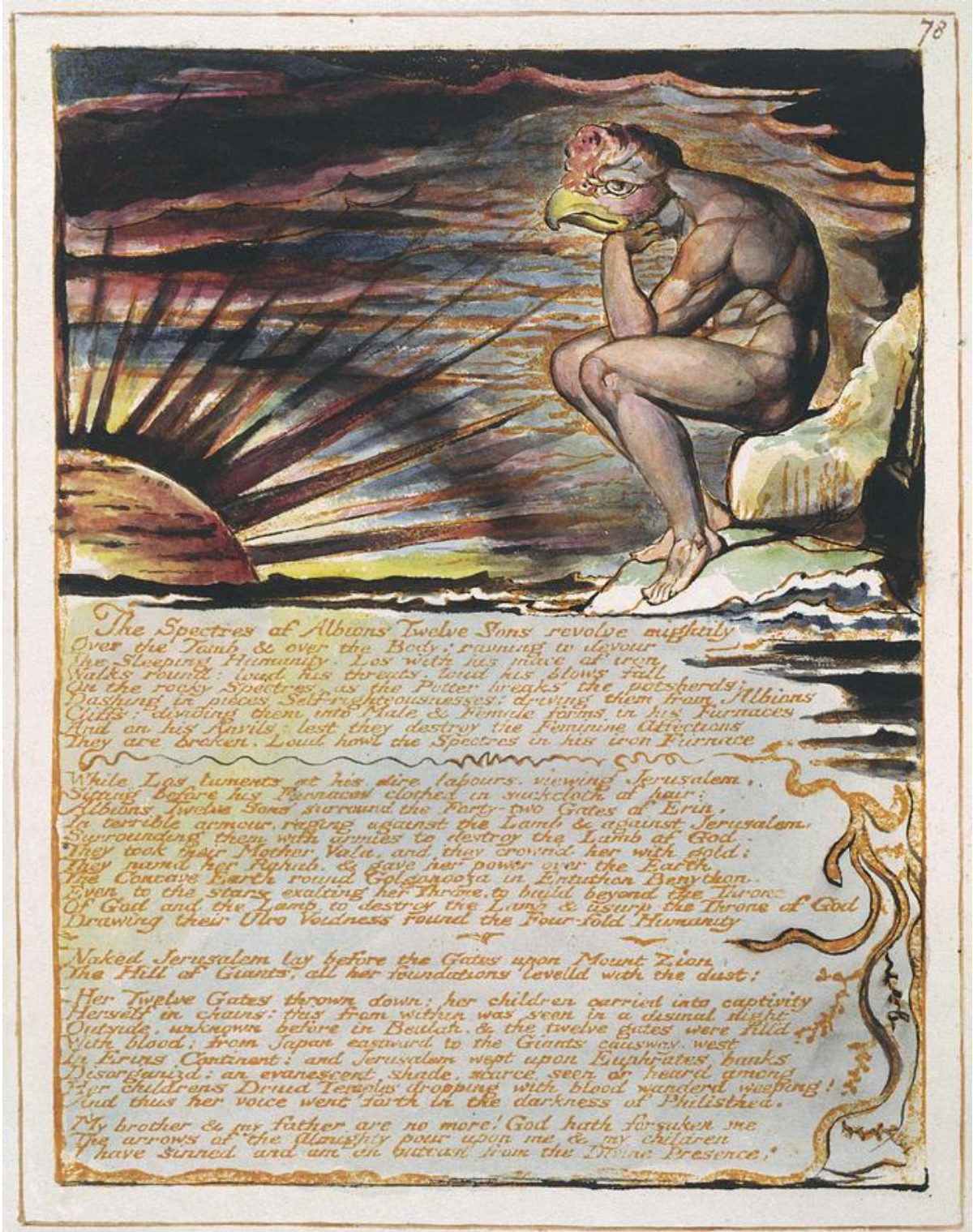


Figure 3. *Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, copy E, object 78 (Erdman 78). William Blake Archive Online.

These images on plates 11 and 78 leave us with more questions than answers: Are these images of a humanity to come? How does the appearance of two animal-headed figures participate in *Jerusalem's* project of re-organ-izing the human? These figures – or, the eagle-headed figure on Plate 78 more precisely – have been the source of much speculation amongst Blakeans. Joseph Wicksteed reads the eagle-man as a figure for a “profoundly” conflicted Los (226). Henry Lesnick reads it as a figure for Hand (400). S. Foster Damon reads the image as a personification of Egypt (*William Blake: His Philosophy*, 473). For John Adlard, it evokes St. John (121). They also evoke images of early modern monsters, such as those found in Gaspar Schott’s *Physica Curiosa* (1697), a large compendium of images and stories of monsters and medical anomalies (Fig.4). And considered among possible Romantic intertexts, the melancholic swan-woman on plate 11 recalls the unhappy scene in Shelley’s *Alastor*, where the Poet addresses his lamentations on human finitude to a swan.¹³⁷ I offer a renewed reading of them in light of Giorgio Agamben’s especially relevant comments in *The Open* regarding a redeemed humanity with animal heads.

¹³⁷ The *Alastor* Poet addresses the swan:

“And what am I that I should linger here,
 With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
 Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
 To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
 In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
 That echoes not my thoughts?” (285-90, *SPP* 77)

In a section titled “Theriomorphous” – meaning, “having an animal form” – Agamben describes how he came across a thirteenth-century Hebrew Bible in Milan’s Ambrosian Library that included an image of the messianic banquet on the last day. This image, like the bird-man and swan-woman in Blake’s *Jerusalem*, featured the righteous few as having human bodies and animal heads. “Why,” Agamben asks, “are the representatives of concluded humanity depicted with animal heads?” (2), a question similar to the one that Blake’s images leave us asking. For Agamben, the theriomorphous figure raises two possibilities:

It is not impossible [...] that in attributing an animal head to the remnant of Israel [i.e., those who are remaining, the righteous who remain alive during the time of the Messiah’s coming], the artist of the manuscript in the Ambrosian intended to suggest that on the last day, the relations between animals and men will take on a new form, and that man himself will be reconciled with his animal nature. (*Open* 3)

Promised in this image are potentially two things, namely, that the relationship between human and animal “will take on a new form,” and that a redeemed humanity will be one that sees him rejoined with his own animality that is otherwise repressed. Both these human-animal divisions are caused by what Agamben calls the “anthropological machine,” his name for those disciplinary mechanisms at work in scientific and



Figure 4. *Physica Curiosa* (1697).
Page 582.

philosophical discourses that hygienically isolate the human from the animal.¹³⁸ To be sure, Blake is similarly interested in jamming the “anthropological machine,” which seemingly dovetails with Blake’s description in *Jerusalem* of tyrannical cog-nition: “wheel without wheel. with cogs tyrannic / Moving by compulsion each other” (15:18-20). Indeed, *Jerusalem*’s eagle-headed figure recalls the large eagle head in Blake’s *A Breach in a City, the Morning after the Battle* (Butlin 195), which seems affectively linked with the aftermath of tyranny.¹³⁹ Hence, *Jerusalem*’s enigmatic humanimals could be Blake’s effort to jam the tyranny of anthropological machinery, to escape from the crushing weight of the cog-like way of thinking about the human and inhuman.

Not only do these theriomorphous figures complicate divisive ways of thinking about the human and inhuman relationship, they also gesture toward Blake’s own participation in what Roger Whitson and Jason Whittaker in *William Blake and the Digital Humanities* call *zoamorphosis*, “a creative act that emerges in collaboration with others in the present and the past” (5). Indeed, the brooding vulture or eagle-headed figure (perhaps a quasi-Prometheus figure) who sits on the edge of a large white rock, suggestive of the cliffs of Dover, and the swan-headed figure (perhaps a quasi-Leda figure) who kneels near the water’s edge find themselves outside the poem’s *topoi*, and perhaps even outside of its space-time. For as Mark Lussier notes, *Jerusalem*’s fourfold dimensionality complements wormhole theory, as the poem’s “conditions require

¹³⁸ The anthropological machine operates on a logic of inclusion and exclusion, and is divided by Agamben into two historical forms, the modern and the pre-modern, that move in opposite directions. Where the modern anthropological machine is driven by post-Darwinian science, which works to animalize the human, the pre-modern anthropological machine inversely works to humanize animals.

¹³⁹ David Bindman in “Blake’s ‘Gothicised Imagination’ and the History of England” reads this as depicting a scene from British history (45-6).

tunneling through relatively flat or enfolded sheets of space-time” (“Blake’s Golgonoosa” 203). Given the poem’s already flickering space-time, are these theriomorphous figures ambassadors from the pre-human past? From the post-human future? Are they, like the untranslated leaves of prophecy in Shelley’s *Last Man*, aborted possibilities that Blake does not sweep away?

These theriomorphous images call to us, yet because of their standalone quality whatever we say about them can only ever be speculative. After all, to take them as images of a “redeemed” humanity would be problematic given the brooding or even melancholic faces of these humanimals that surely threaten such a redemptive reading. Ultimately, the purchase of these hybrid images is the question they raise over the ways in which the human is traversed by the inhuman. They leave us entertaining the potentiality of a community to come, a humanity that has put the human under erasure. To put it in Derrida’s terms from *Writing and Difference* (1978), Blake’s humanimals represent “the as yet unnamable which is proclaiming itself and which can do so, as is necessary whenever a birth is in the offing, only under the species of the non-species, in the formless, mute, infant and terrifying form of monstrosity” (293).

Together with the spellbinding humanimals of plates 11 and 78, Blake’s vision of the human by the end of *Jerusalem* is a vision of a posthumanity. The gory re-organization occurs dramatically and suddenly in the final stanzas of this epic poem, collapsing the measured pace with which we have been reading. After we have suffered over its walls of words, and peristaltically inched over its densely packed plates, we experience the rush inaugurated by plate 98, which requires us – like the “slumberous Albion” (29:45) – to wake up and, in some ways, begin. One might argue that this is the point.

The intensity of *Jerusalem's* ending forces the reader out of her slumber, revealing the curious way in which the text performatively aims at transforming its human readers. Clawing open any comfortable understanding we may have of the human in Blake's work, we are left in this clearing or scene of disfigurement to think about what or who comes next, and of the role dissolution plays in its potentiality.

What is at stake in Blake's revaluation of "the human" is the potentiality of something new – a new ontology, a new mode of being-with(in) the world. There is no discrete human subject in Blake, and *Jerusalem* makes the porosity of the human's boundaries clearest. Here, the integrity of the conceptual category of "the human" has been stripped and torn apart, exposed as a vector of material and discursive forces or "inhumanities," as Deleuze and Guattari would have it. This is not a pessimistic thought; instead, it opens up a radical rethinking of who "we" are. Indeed, what *Jerusalem* leaves us with is the challenge of critical posthumanism: to rethink who "we" are, and the responsibility of *co-existing* in radical uncertainty, a mode of existence akin to a Keatsian "negative capability." In short, it is to go on without (ever) knowing who "we" are, the challenge of which is to never let this uncertainty ossify or reify. Blake's re-organ-ization of the human brings a new image of "us" into focus.

4.3 Jerusalem's Architecture: Golgonooza

As we saw in the previous section how *Jerusalem's* re-organ-ized human is complexly enmeshed with the city of London, we turn now to a more focused reading of Golgonooza, Blake's city of "Art & Manufacture" (*Mil* 24:50), a virtual city anchored, at various points, to the real London that Blake himself lived in for a good portion of his life. Golgonooza has been typically read by scholars as the city of imagination (cf.

Raine), the product of Los's incessant labour so that humanity can in a future time and separate space be renovated. Northrop Frye, for instance, writes:

All imaginative and creative acts, being eternal, go to build up a permanent structure, which Blake calls Golgonooza, above time, and, when this structure is finished, nature, its scaffolding, will be knocked away and man will live in it. Golgonooza will then be the city of God, the New Jerusalem which is the total form of all human culture and civilization. (*Fearful Symmetry* 91)

Conversely, Clint Stevens' more adventurous reading suggests that in Blake's descriptions of Golgonooza "we find little suggesting the redemptive power of art. To the extent that Golgonooza contains art, it does so, it seems, primarily to scare away visitors" (289). However, despite some promising acknowledgments of Golgonooza's non-redemptive aspects, such as the way the city is "mostly inhuman" (297), Stevens' reading aims at reconciling Golgonooza with Jerusalem, which he (in a line of "beautiful thinking") calls "its answering structure: the similarly fourfold arrangement that concludes the poem" (290). Thus, while Stevens reads Golgonooza more darkly than others, he ultimately protects a logocentric Jerusalem.

In what follows, I move against these readings by privileging Golgonooza, that is, taking it not as that which needs to be purified in order to become Jerusalem, but by examining it on its own particularly deconstructive terms. Read in this light, we might take Los, hammering away in Golgonooza, as a vector, as Blake becoming a figure in his own text, and thereby disclosing his own resistant desire to transform what is a deformed system into a more palpable formation. Indeed, it is Golgonooza rather than Jerusalem that is crucial to *Jerusalem's* re-organ-ization of the human, as revisionary work on man

and his disciplinary formations herein converge. Yet like the real city of London, Golgonooza is something monstrous. Hence, it is as if Blake creates Golgonooza and then attempts to contain its unruly potentiality by separating it from Jerusalem – the city/state he would still like to build. Yet the inhumanity of Golgonooza, the continuously deforming architecture, makes it a rich, irresistible site from which to re-organize man and the disciplines. As such, Blake can never be rid of Golgonooza. I want to suggest that in *Jerusalem*, Blake is between one world and another yet to be born. Indeed, the emergent is still profoundly troubled by the residual and dominant. Golgonooza, as the site of radicalism, of the new, is anxiously half-scuttled precisely because of the way the emergent sciences (medicine, physiology, technology, surgery, comparative anatomy) open up the inhuman, the realms of the vegetable and the polypi – those domains dealt with by the Hunters, and that prominently feature in the visual art of *Jerusalem*.¹⁴⁰ This opening up of the inhuman severely impedes Blake's vision of Jerusalem, rendering the text ultimately unable to – as Blake says in *Milton* – “wash off the Not Human” (E41:1). Hence, much like the dawn of the Promethean Age at the end of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, the arrival is dampened and even disfigured.

No other Blake text appears, upon first glance, as fully complete and well-structured as his final epic poem *Jerusalem*. With its one-hundred plates, equally divided into four sections, each section beginning with an apostrophe to a different group, the poem's structure lends the impression of being well-balanced and unified. Coupled with what is taken to be the poem's message – the power of love and forgiveness – readers

¹⁴⁰ For the text's most notable images of the vegetable and polypi see Plates 28, 40, 45, 53, 74, 80, 82, 85, 92, and 98.

themselves may be forgiven for their own readings that enthusiastically reproduce the poem's seemingly harmonious arrangement of materials. Yet *Jerusalem* has a troubled publication history: copy E is the only "finished" existent version of *Jerusalem*, and even within this copy there are substantial editorial disagreements over its reconstruction. Where Geoffrey Keynes inserts quotation marks for character speech, David Erdman fills in the strikeouts and omissions that Blake himself removed from the text.¹⁴¹ These editorial decisions mark but one way this poem has been actively reconstructed. The other, more covert but prevalent way in which this text has been reconstructed is once again through critical readings that have aesthetics – as a mode of harmonious cognition – as their underpinning. This becomes especially evident when these traditional readings take as their focus the poem's architecture, which most read as adhering to the traditional aesthetic values of containment and closure. However, upon closer examination, the poem's architecture is unsettled. In what follows, I will first account for the collusion between architecture and aesthetics, before revealing how *Jerusalem's* architecture has been misunderstood in aesthetic terms, and outlining the consequence of Blake's deconstructive architecture for the disciplines housed therein.

4.4 Beautiful Thinking and Architecture

It is not difficult to see how aesthetics would be sympathetic with architecture, a knowledge practice also defined by the values of closure, completion, and containment.

¹⁴¹ Susanne Sklar suggests that "Keynes is necessary when studying *Jerusalem*, for he follows the plate ordering of Copy E [...] In addition, Keynes inserts quotation marks whenever a character speaks. This helps readers see the relation between dramatic action and narrative...Blake obliterated keywords, especially in the first plate of the text; Erdman painstakingly reconstructed them" ("In the Mouth of a True Orator" 837 fn1).

As architect and theorist Mark Wigley explains in his Preface to *Deconstructivist Architecture*, a 1988 exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art, "Architecture has always been a central cultural institution valued above all for its provision of stability and order. These qualities are seen to arise from the geometric purity of its formal composition" (10). Drawing on "simple geometric forms – cubes, cylinders, spheres, cones, pyramids," buildings are designed "following compositional rules which prevent any one form from conflicting with another"(10). With all the simple geometric forms working harmoniously with one another, the architect creates a basic geometric structure whose "formal purity is seen as guaranteeing structural stability" (10). Any additional architectural work following this is done with the aim of preserving structural stability. "Any deviation from the structural order, any impurity, is seen as threatening the formal values of harmony, unity, and stability, and is therefore insulated from the structure by being treated as mere ornament. Architecture is a conservative discipline that produces pure form and protects it from contamination" (10). Hence, aesthetics and architecture overlap in being conservative disciplines aimed at the purity and preservation of a harmonic structure.¹⁴²

Architecture occupies a prominent region of Blake's thought, from the beginning of his career as an apprentice engraver under the tutelage of James Basire, where he

¹⁴² Like aesthetics, architecture also participates in the formation of the human subject. As Nicole Reynolds suggests in *Building Romanticism*, during the Romantic period "a number of politically charged and aesthetically resonant architectural spaces, both real and imagined, negotiated shifting notions of gender and sexuality, increasing class mobility, the individual's uncertain place in history, challenges to the British national character and to the project of nation building, and the very form and function of art itself" (3). Hence, "embodied subjects both determine and are determined by architectural spaces and the activities that unfold within, around, and through them" (6). Given Reynolds' attraction to interdisciplinary figures, especially those who bridge literature and architecture, the omission of Blake is an unfortunate oversight. As the architecture that Reynolds is drawn to is a conservative understanding of the discipline, one could make the case that Blake's architecture is too deconstructive for her architectonic.

sketched tombs at Westminster Abbey.¹⁴³ Furthermore, as Morton Paley in “The Fourth Face of Man: Blake and Architecture” notes, “a remarkable sense of architecture appears in Blake’s painting and printmaking [...] and architectural motifs are important in his poetry as well” (184-5). The architectural texts that Blake (likely) encountered during his time as a student at the Royal Academy and as an early engraver include works from Vitruvius and Palladio, to eighteenth-century figures like Colin Campbell, Sir William Chambers, and J.B. Fischer von Erlach (Paley “The Fourth Face” 186-7), neoclassical texts grounded in the values of “harmony, unity, and stability.”¹⁴⁴ Indeed, architecture’s influence on Blake’s work has been noted by numerous critics. For Pamela Bromberg, “geometrical architecture, which is adapted from the neoclassical [...] is Blake’s visual symbol of Urizen’s abstract, rigid judgments and stony rationalism” (47).¹⁴⁵ For Paley, Blake has seven architectural styles in his toolkit: “Egyptian, ‘Eastern,’ Classical, ‘Druidic,’ Gothic, Baroque, and Contemporary” (“The Fourth Face” 188), all which invariably encounter and, at times, enfold one another. For Jon Saklofske, a rhizomatic

¹⁴³ Beginning in 1774, for about three years, Basire sent Blake to the Abbey to make drawings of the monuments and painting for later engraving (Essick “Blake, William”).

¹⁴⁴ As Vicky Coltman in *Fabricating the Antique* explains, neoclassicism is a complex term, predominantly denoting a decorative style that is serious and austere. It is a return and rethinking of the models of Greek and Roman antiquity. Some of the best known examples of British Neoclassicism are the architecture of Robert Adam (1728-92) and the pottery of Josiah Wedgwood (1730-95). Sir John Soane’s (1753-1837) house-museum at 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London famously contained a large heterogeneous neoclassical sculpture collection (Coltman 1-16). Neoclassical elements, such as linearity and formfitting drapery, can be found in Blake’s early work, such as his 1785 watercolour *Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing*. Furthermore, as David Irwin notes, Blake’s “circle of friends included the Neoclassical sculptor John Flaxman and the painter Henry Fuseli, and he admired the achievements of James Barry” (180). In *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), Blake writes his most Neoclassical sounding lines: “The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the most perfect the work of art, and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling” (Number XV/E549).

¹⁴⁵ However, there appears to be some disagreement over the determinations of Blake’s architectural styles. Morton Paley in “Blake and Architecture” identifies Urizen as the “chief practitioner of the ‘Eastern’ style of architecture” (190), a style used to “render scenes of purely material power” (191).

“network architecture” defines the narrative structure of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

However, it is Blake’s *Jerusalem* wherein architectural figures – monuments, edifices, ruins, churches, cities – both real and imaginary from across a span of historical and geographical time-space abound, and, as I will argue, become unbound. Still, the limitation remains of the conservative collusion of aesthetics and architecture through which Golgonooza, Blake’s greatest architectural wonder, has been read. For Jennifer Davis Michael in *Blake and the City*, Golgonooza is “about the definition and reading of space: the inversion of inside and outside, the hardening of human souls (and indeed all created things) from translucence into opacity” (159). Golgonooza is reduced to a metaphor for the space of reading: the city is “an analog for the poem as a site of reading and a process of interpretation” (159). In a manner typical of the idealism that functions as romantic ideology, Michael’s reading brings the outside (the city) inside, and conservatively contains Golgonooza as a repetition of the poem itself. This nesting doll image of Golgonooza within *Jerusalem* – as a microcosm neatly fitted within the narrative macrocosm – smoothly papers over the troubling excesses that make Golgonooza difficult (perhaps impossible) to describe or represent. Similarly, Susanne Sklar sees *Jerusalem* as containing its own “operating instructions” (“In the Mouth” 837), a finished, readymade text that generously lays out the grounds of its future readings.

S. Foster Damon in *A Blake Dictionary* has attempted to map out a blueprint for Golgonooza (163). Yet a footnote indicates that “Golgonooza, being four-dimensional, cannot be reduced to a chart of two dimensions. Each of the four gates not only opens into each of the other gates but does so ‘each within other toward the Four points’ [J

12:48]” (163). Given this inadequacy, one wonders why he produced it in the first place. Furthermore, the diagram is lacking in visual detail; it does not include any of the ornamentation given in Blake’s descriptions of it. Damon provides a stripped-down diagram (consistent with neoclassical style), opting to describe Golgonooza’s features in words. Effectively, the diagram presents the mere skeleton of Golgonooza, all the while reinforcing the illusory sense of Golgonooza’s harmony. Even recent digital humanities projects, following in Damon’s wake, have failed in digitally modelling the dizzyingly non-Euclidean four-dimensionality of Golgonooza. “The Blake Model” is Adam Komisaruk’s totalizing project of diagrammatizing not only Golgonooza but Blake’s mythology more generally. This digital humanities project, in my opinion, is hampered by its poor graphics and failure to reflect the wild complexity of Golgonooza.¹⁴⁶

However, despite the sometimes surprisingly conservative ways in which Golgonooza has been read, it is an intense site of potentiality. Golgonooza is a form of what I am calling “ubiquitous architecture” that strangely creates fissures and vortices within *Jerusalem*, a building that is interminably (de)constructing. Moreover, its architecture is coterminous with Derrida’s notion of a “counter-institution,” a point that I will develop in the following section. The elaborately constructed city of Golgonooza is groundless, unrepresentable, and nearly unthinkable with its densely packed features and four-dimensionality. And, as we will come to see in the final section of this chapter, Golgonooza’s deconstructive architecture has larger implications for the ways in which it

¹⁴⁶ This project is likely one of those “unimaginative interfaces” (386) that Saklofske admits defines digital work on Blake – echoing a point I have made in “Anal Blake: Bringing up the Rear in Blakean Criticism.” Despite the obvious limitations I find in Komisaruk’s project, it is a step in an interesting direction. For a description of “The Blake Model” see Komisaruk’s interview in the Romantic Circles Praxis Series: “Blake & Virtuality: An Exchange.”

stages the disorganization of knowledge and contributes to the entangling of the branches of learning. Hence, Golgonooza is more than mere ornament; it is central to the poem's reordering of man and his disciplines. Its deconstructive architecture unsettles the poem's various memorializing and humanizing discourses (aesthetics, history) by "never bring[ing] them into the reassuring house of redemptory meaning" (Young 155).

4.5 Golgonooza: a "terrible eternal labour!" (12:25)

While references to Golgonooza first appear in the earlier *Milton* and *The Four Zoas*, it is only in *Jerusalem* where it is described at length. Our first description of Golgonooza in *Jerusalem* comes when the speaker, with trembling hand, "write[s] of the building of Golgonooza" (25) while recalling the terrors of those who "war, to destroy the Furnaces, to desolate Golgonooza: / And to devour the Sleeping Humanity of Albion in rage & hunger" (30-1). Los, who is elsewhere the guardian of Urizen, is here identified for the first time as the architect of Golgonooza: he "stands in London building Golgonooza / Compelling his Spectre to labours mighty" (10:18-9) in what are painfully interminable "sublime Labours" (10:66) as he wrestles with the stubborn materials of "iron & brass" (10:64).

Los and his labourers (his Spectre and Sons) – what Sklar dubs his "back-up band" (11) – are the "golden builders" hard at work building an architecture of affects: "is that / Mild Zions hills most ancient promontory; near mournful / Ever weeping Paddington? is that Calvary and Golgotha? / Becoming a building of pity and compassion? Lo!" (12: 27-9). Not only are the singular spaces of Calvary, Golgotha, and Paddington re-formed as sites of intensities, but their construction materials are too: "The stones are pity, and the bricks, well wrought affections; / Enameld with love & kindness,

& the tiles engraven gold [...] the beams & rafters are forgiveness: / The mortar & cement of the work. tears of honesty” (12: 31-4). The emotional labour or act of building becomes the building itself, operating in the double sense of the term “building” as both a verb and a noun. This double sense is echoed in the poem’s representation of Jerusalem as both a place and a person, that is, Albion’s female emanation with whom he must be reunited.

Out of the “sublime Labours” of Los and his motley crew comes Golgonooza’s dimensionality that approaches Kant’s notion of the mathematical sublime:¹⁴⁷

Fourfold the Sons of Los in their divisions: and fourfold.

The great City of Golgonooza: fourfold toward the north

And toward the south fourfold, &fourfold toward the east & west

Each within other toward the four points: that toward

Eden. and that toward the World of Generation.

And that toward Beulah. and that toward Ulro;

Ulro is the space of the terrible starry wheels of Albions sons:

But that toward Eden is walled up. till time of renovation:

Yet it is perfect in its building. ornaments & perfection. (12: 46-54)

Not only is the “great City of Golgonooza” “fourfold” (12:47) facing north, south, east and west, but each side is itself fourfold: “Each within other toward the four points” (12: 49). The four “points” are Eden, the World of Generation, Beulah, and Ulro, although Eden appears to be foreclosed, at least temporarily (“walled up. till time of renovation”

¹⁴⁷ Kant’s discussion of the mathematical sublime appears in his “Analytic of the Sublime” in *The Critique of Judgment*. The mathematical sublime is distinguished from the dynamical sublime.

[12: 53]). This “walled up” gate operates like what Paul de Man in *Allegories of Reading* describes as the “defective cornerstone” of a system or architectonic (104).¹⁴⁸ The defective cornerstone is an image of a building or structure (always) already weakened. The weakened integral feature of the cornerstone threatens the purity and stability of the entire structure. Like the deconstructive architecture, Golgonooza is built defective, built with the time of renovation in mind.

Following from this, a closer examination of Golgonooza’s other cornerstones (or gates) reveals the difficulty of even imagining them as stable. The “North Gate of Golgonooza toward Generation: / Has four sculpturd Bulls terrible before the Gate of iron” (12: 62-3); the South, a “golden Gate, has four Lions terrible,” and four sets of four made out of “immortal gold, silver. brass & iron” (13:6). The Western gate is “closd” (13: 7), guarded by four hermaphroditic Cherubim “each winged with eight wings” (13:9). It is unclear whether the eight wings themselves are made up of the elements of iron, stone, clay and metals, or whether these wings merely point to the sites of these elements themselves (iron toward Generation; stone toward Beulah; clay toward Ulro; and metals toward Eden [13:10-11]). Furthermore, “all clos’d up till the last day” (13: 12) may be read as the wings themselves or as the Western Gate itself. The Eastern Gate, while not guarded with bulls, lions or cherubim, has “terrible & deadly [...] ornaments” of Albion’s sons, formed as cogs in a wheel (13:13-5). The stanza that follows suggests that on each quadrant of the Eastern Gate is a seven-fold figuration/inscription of misery: toward Eden and frozen in ice are “seven folds / Of forms of death” (13:16-7); toward

¹⁴⁸ This phrase “defective cornerstone” is later taken up by Jacques Derrida in *Memoires: For Paul de Man*, in response to de Man (72-4).

Beulah and carved in stone are the “seven diseases of the earth” (13:18); toward Ulro, “forms of war; seven enormities” (13:19) and toward Generation, “seven generative forms” (13:20). It is interesting to note that Blake includes generative form alongside the forms of death, disease and war. However, apart from the momentary shift to seven-fold ornamentation, we are returned to the fourfold:

every part of the City is fourfold; & every inhabitant, fourfold.

And every pot & vessel & garment & utensil of the houses,

And every house, fourfold; but the third Gate in every one

Is closd as with a threefold curtain of ivory & fine linen & ermine,

And Luban stands in middle of the City. a moat of fire,

Surrounds Luban. Los’s Palace & the golden Looms of Cathedron. (13:21-6)

Immediately, the fourfold dimensionality of the house is qualified as an operative threefold, as one gate is closed in a wash of whiteness (ivory, linen, ermine). It is here that we see, for the first time, the luminosity of this closed gate – a foreclosure that is not figured as darkness or void (“lack” in psychoanalytic terms) but as a rich whiteness that calls attention to itself as a site of potentiality.¹⁴⁹ That Blake “fails” to “build” or illuminate the building (process and product) of Golgonooza speaks to the way in which it is an architecture actively unworking itself.

¹⁴⁹ I am associatively thinking about the way Deleuze and Guattari find in the whiteness of Moby-Dick the “special index [...] a quality [that] functions only as a line of deterritorialization of an assemblage” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 306).

4.6 Golgonooza: A Slippery Topology

Increasingly, by the end of the elaborate description of Golgonooza's construction we find a radically fluid structure, exceeding the "defective" deconstructive structure. Hence, Golgonooza comes closer to a continually deforming figure of the land that one finds in topology, given its architecture that is infinitely unfolding, the interior becoming exterior, and is engaged in a simultaneous process of multi-directional building and unbuilding.¹⁵⁰ Its vectors are thresholds that can be entered and passed through, like the Blakean process of "enter[ing] into [...] Bosoms" (*J* 71:16). Golgonooza as a process of an "interminable labour," is in continuous deformation, a transformation even reflected in its dynamic name. While its name partly evokes Golgotha, which according to the Gospels was the site outside of Jerusalem's walls of Jesus' crucifixion, it is likely the combination of two Hebrew words: *goleh* and *ganaz*. As Shelia Spector explains, *goleh* "has five specific glosses revolving around the basic concept of a radical change, whether geographical or intellectual, as a discovery or revelation, possibly through some sort of mirror image. *Ganaz* means 'To treasure, or lay up [...] Repositories, treasure-houses, treasuries'" (*Glorious Incomprehensible* 131, italics original).¹⁵¹

The city's architectural excesses cannot be contained within any traditional sense of architecture, an argument supported by Mark Lussier's impressive reading, in "Blake's Golgonooza: London and/as the Eternal City of Art," of Golgonooza's slippery space-

¹⁵⁰ Blake's Golgonooza recalls for me Antony Gormley's *Quantum Cloud*, and Diller + Scofidio's *Blur Building*.

¹⁵¹ Spector also finds lodged within the name Golgonooza is the kabbalistic concept of transmigration of the soul (*gilgul*), reads it as mystically representing the 'lower' Eden, "the place where those souls that have completed their cycle of purification wait for the others so that all together can rise to the Upper Eden" (*Glorious Incomprehensible* 131).

time that creates intertextual wormholes into a multitude of contemporary texts. For Lussier, following Donald Ault, Blake is a quantum physicist-poet whose imagery and dynamics in *Jerusalem*, as in *Milton*, resists “the emergent Newtonian paradigm, [and] traverses conceptual areas that only make sense when read in light of ideas currently defining the ‘new physics’” (*Romantic Dynamics* 101). Indeed, “[g]reat accord exists between Blakean dynamics and current physical descriptions of wormholes (89).¹⁵² Where classical physics imposes discrete boundaries between space, time and subjects, the way that Blake’s work violates the thresholds of spaces, times, and bodies – like Milton’s penetration of Blake’s left foot in *Milton*, or London and Golgonooza’s co-presence – reveals the extent to which Blake is operating outside of traditional dynamics and is in fact closer to quantum physics (90). After all, Jerusalem is both a city and a woman; cities, rivers, buildings are “Bosoms” in which we enter.

4.7 Golgonooza as Allegory for the Tower of Babel and University in Ruins

The pertinence of Golgonooza’s ubiquitous architecture concerns its role in the reorganization of knowledge. Like the Tower of Babel – which Wigley notes is the symbolic “intersection of translation, philosophy, architecture, and deconstruction” (*Architecture of Deconstruction* 23) – or Bill Readings’ “university in ruins,”

Golgonooza as a city of “Art & Manufacture” (*Mil* 24:50) is oriented towards building a

¹⁵² Lussier explains: “Blake presents a cosmology of contraction and expansion, where one must tunnel through density in moving from one ‘infinite’ plane to another while avoiding collapse into singularity. The dual drives of the vortex, to and from eternity, also resist resolution, since they are co-present, but only one can be accessed in ‘normal’ versus ‘imaginary’ spacetime. Such a structure operates on complementary dynamics, much like Blake’s contraries, that intersect quantum processes, especially the interpretation offered by Niels Bohr. Blake’s poem [*Milton*] attempts to map the interplay of mind and matter without referencing Newtonian celestial mechanics or Cartesian epistemology, and, in the process, he pursues a line of thought that conceptually anticipates relativity and quantum mechanics” (*Romantic Dynamics* 91-2).

new disciplinary structure.¹⁵³ Indeed, such a reading has already been gestured at in Leroy Searle's comparison of the work of Theory to the interminable labour of Golgonooza – the epigraph with which we began this chapter.

This deconstructive or counter-institutional architecture renders de Luca's description of *Jerusalem* as a "wall of words" (218) closer to a wall of loose stones, recalling Deleuze's "haecceities," those imperceptible individuations that together form "not even a puzzle, whose pieces when fitted together would constitute a whole, but rather a wall of loose, uncemented stones, where every element has a value in itself but also in relation to others" (*Essay Critical and Clinical* 86). Here, Deleuze's wall of loose stones is an evocative image with which to think Golgonooza, a gesture towards the ways in which we can unbind our beautiful thinking.

Indeed, that Golgonooza goes unillustrated in *Jerusalem* speaks to the ways in which the poem is an attempt to think beyond the available structures or architectonics of thought. Like the shadowy shapeless figure of Demogorgon in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* that spurs thought onward, Golgonooza draws potentiality from its lack of representation. Blake is engaged in a thinking that goes beyond the mode of critique. To repeat a point made earlier in chapter 3, Kant himself described the work of critique as leveling the unstable ground caused by the mole-like tunnelling of metaphysics.

¹⁵³ Wigley reads the Tower of Babel as "the figure of philosophy because the dream of philosophy is that of translatability. Philosophy is no more than the ideal of pure translation, the careful recovery and unmediated presentation of an original truth. But, as Derrida points out elsewhere, the univocal language of the builders of the tower is not the language of philosophy. On the contrary, it is an imposed order, a violent imposition of a single language. The necessity of philosophy is actually defined in the collapse of the tower rather than in the project itself [...] The building project of philosophy continues, but its completion is forever deferred. This is not to say that a single construction is slowly assembled, like the original tower, toward some unattainable goal, but that the ideal of the edifice is forever suspended in a scene of endless rebuilding, an interminable displaced discourse about building" (*Architecture of Deconstruction* 23-4).

Conversely, Blake's text attempts no such leveling; rather, it enables us to see the productivity of creating furrows or wormholes, an attempt to get beyond (or perhaps beneath) critique, which, as Claire Colebrook in "The New Jerusalem and the New International" notes, is the Enlightenment's primary attempt "to remove all the ghosts, illusions and spectres that haunt and imprison our thinking" (18). "Blake's work," she continues, "is a performance, rehearsal and working through of spectres [...] it is a necessary movement of conjuration or exorcism" (18).

While Colebrook doesn't attend to the specifics of Blake's *Jerusalem*, her discussion over the potentiality of not figuring or not illustrating something is entirely relevant:

Blake moves beyond critique by recognizing the necessary and liberating impossibility of imaging a universal ground. We must imagine a world [...] that is always beyond the given community or recognized corpus of speakers. This is counter-conjuration: the imagination and affirmation of that which is not grounded in the autonomy and presence of actual life. Whereas critique removes all those spectres that are posited as a law beyond life, counter-conjuration affirms life and the imagination's own power to think beyond life. Kant's *sensus communis* gestures to *possible* consensus. The idea of Jerusalem for Blake and the new International for Derrida gestures to impossible consensus: what lies beyond present criteria, recognition and justification. Can we speak, perceive and write as if each event were *not* determined by a context or territory? (23)

Going beyond critique with its act of removing spectres requires, Colebrook suggests, "producing an *emanation*. To think what is not ourselves we require a *perception of a*

beyond, but this image, perception or figure must not be the representation of what could be revealed or disclosed in a privileged interpretation” (23). Golgonooza’s ubiquitous architecture is a rickety structure complete with defective cornerstone; a topological figure in continuous deformation; a “wall of words” loosely assembled with small uncemented stones; an enigmatic deconstructive architecture that is, in the end, an emanation – that is, an opening.

4.8 The Disciplines in Jerusalem

Golgonooza as the city of art and manufacture creates a space for a Romantic re-organization of the disciplines. The role of Golgonooza in this project of knowledge re-organization is analogous to the real city of London where Blake lived for a good portion of his life. London during the Romantic period was an intense site of institutional change.¹⁵⁴ As mentioned in the introduction, the Romantic period saw the growth of new branches of learning outside of the university. One avenue was the proliferation of learned societies, such as the Linnean Society of London (1788), the Royal Institution of Great Britain (1800), and the Geological Society of London (1807), all of which contributed to the dissemination of scientific and geologic knowledge. The City Philosophical Society (1808), founded in 1808 by the mechanic and utensil manufacturer John Tatum, hosted lectures on topics as diverse as insanity, anatomy, physiology, and natural history (Pettigrew 10).

¹⁵⁴ Plate 57 includes the names of London and Jerusalem and sketches of buildings within a circle. London was not the only metropolitan epicentre of institutional or disciplinary change. As I briefly gesture at here, Edinburgh was a key site in the Scottish Enlightenment. While, for the sake of economy, I only consider the counter-institutions in Blake’s London, Edinburgh had its own, such as the new intellectual societies that traversed the space between university and the public. Two examples include the Select Society and its predecessor the Speculative Society. For an account of these societies, see Alex Benichmol’s *Intellectual Politics and Cultural Conflict in the Romantic Period*, especially chapter 2.

London's learned societies gave way to more disciplined formations known as Mechanics' Institutes, a concept imported from Edinburgh, developed there during the 1820s by George Birkbeck, a British-born Quaker who had to study at Edinburgh rather than Cambridge or Oxford because of his religious affiliation (Cambridge and Oxford excluded Quakers). As early as 1800, Birkbeck held free lectures on art and science for the working public, the content of which was technical in nature. In 1824, bringing his "mechanics" model south to London, Birkbeck established the London Mechanics' Institute. Although it eventually became Birkbeck College (part of the University of London), it was along with the Dissenting societies, at least during Blake's time, a counterforce, a general economy to the restricted economy of England's great universities. Closer to Blake's own life, however, was the famous Joseph Johnson circle of which he was a fringe member. Through his commissioned engravings for Johnson, who was an influential publisher in London, Blake came into contact with many of the cutting-edge intellectual work being done in London. As Jeffrey Cox and William Galperin note, Johnson was not only an important publisher of "some of the most advanced work in science and medicine" by leading figures such as Erasmus Darwin and William Hunter (as well as John Aiken, George Fordyce, and Edward Rigby), but hosted dinners for the Romantic-period's leading artists and intellectuals – Henry Fuseli, Alexander Geddes, John Horne Tooke, Gilbert Wakefield, Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, William Godwin, and William Blake – at his bookshop in St. Paul's Churchyard (94). Moreover, as Mark Schorer suggests in *William Blake: The Politics of Vision*, the Johnson circle created an "atmosphere of opinion in which [Blake] found a direction

rather than a set of fixed ideas” (134).¹⁵⁵ In short, Blake would have been exposed through the circle to those emergent disciplines that were increasingly taking up the inhuman. Thus, during the long Romantic period the city of London was an important site of disciplinary change and resistance; its counter-institutions were real-time alternatives to the institutions which Blake critiqued in *Jerusalem*.

Moreover, this change went beyond the walls of the ivory tower and (counter-)institutes and into the streets. As Iain McCalman suggests, it was “a time of blurred boundaries between electrical-magnetic showmen, natural philosophers, alchemical magicians, nostrum-mongers, folk healers and experimental scientists” (182). London was also a site of great technological advances. The city was not only the epicentre of the industrial revolution but was also the hotbed for what Peter Otto calls the “new mass entertainment industries” built around the “new optical media” of the Eidophusikon, Panorama and Phantasmagoria (“Romanticism, Modernity” n.pag). In 1788, Robert Barker, inventor of the panorama, first exhibited his technique in London. In 1802, the painter Thomas Girtin exhibited his *Eidometropolis*, a large panoramic painting of London (108 x 18 feet) that gave viewers “a 360-degree view of London at the turn of the century from an imagined point of vantage atop the British Plate Glass Manufactory at the south end of Blackfriars Bridge” (Chandler and Gilmartin 8). And P.J. De Louthembourg’s device the *Eidophusikon*, an apparatus with moving pictures and automata, inaugurated Romantic London’s taste for phantasmagoria shows. For Otto,

¹⁵⁵ Blake’s relationship to the Johnson circle is garnering more attention. See, for example, Joseph Bryne’s essay “Blake, Joseph Johnson, and *The Gates of Paradise*.” Helen Braithwaite’s *Romanticism, Publishing, and Dissent*, a book-length study of Johnson, makes only passing references to Blake’s relationship with the Johnson circle.

these technologies – all of which were exhibited in London – marked the birth of our interest in virtual reality. Virtual reality is largely “anticipated and conditioned by developments in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries,” and occupies a central part of the popular consciousness of London during the Romantic period.

In addition to the technological or media spectacles taking place in Romantic London, the spectacle of the city itself was everywhere. “This was the city,” writes McCalman,

of the famous ‘learned pig,’ of Lever’s Holiphusikon, Astley’s equestrian circuses, the Exeter Change menageries, Merlin’s automata shows, the fantastic magnetic performances of Gustavus Katterfelto and Dr. James Graham, as well as the scores of Bartholomew Fair freak booths, peepshows, conjurors, and nostrum sellers whose swirling spectacle had made young William Wordsworth’s brain reel. (180)

Moreover, London was a spectacle in its monstrous population growth. Wordsworth’s reference in Book 7 of *The Prelude* (“Residence in London”), to the “huge and fermenting mass of human-kind” (7.621) and to the city’s “thickening hubbub” (7.211), captured London’s population explosion.¹⁵⁶ The city, as James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin note in *Romantic Metropolis*, doubled its population between the years of 1800 and 1850 (2). Hence, London’s sudden and expansive increase makes us think of Golgonooza’s mathematically sublime dimensionality.

By having demonstrated the connection between the city and the organization of knowledge, our reading of Golgonooza also looks ahead to our discussion in the next and

¹⁵⁶ References are to *The Prelude* of 1850.

final chapter, concerning the evacuated cities of London and Rome in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1828), a novel that also takes as its focus disciplinary formations and the possibility of their ends. Of course, these texts couldn't use the city to more different ends: Blake's *Jerusalem* suffocates us with its fullness, superimposing the real and "virtual" cities of London and Golgonooza, while Shelley's novel offers the ever-emptying out of the *polis*. With this in mind, one question that tunnels beneath both this chapter and the next is over the city's role in the (re)ordering of knowledge.

Golgonooza is an immense archive, containing "all that has existed in the space of six thousand years" (*J* 13:60). Like the Sibyl's Cave in Shelley's *The Last Man* that after "many hundred summers" still contains all the prophetic leaves (3), Golgonooza is a cultural archive that houses stories told and untold, a point visually suggested in the margins of plate 13 where there appears, down the right-hand side of the plate, the textured pattern of a root-like network or a wall of small stones:

He views the City of Golgonooza. & its smaller Cities:

The Looms & Mills & Prisons & Work-houses of Og & Anak:

The Amalekite: the Canaanite: The Moabite; the Egyptian:

And all that has existed in the space of six thousand years:

Permanent, & not lost not lost nor vanishd, & every little act,

Word. work. & wish. that has existed, all remaining still

In those Churches ever consuming & ever building by the Spectres

Of all the inhabitants of Earth wailing to be Created. (*J* 13:57-64)

Every act, word, work and wish that existed across the space-time of six thousand years continues, "all remaining still." This can mean that it all still exists, or, that it *remains*

rather than exists, and that it remains *still*, as in a kind of stasis or suspension. The ability to perceive this archive depends on the ability to dwell inside, requiring a certain experience of it:

Shadowy to those who dwell not in them. meer possibilities:

But to those who enter into them they seem the only substances

For every thing exists & not one sigh nor smile nor tear [...] nor particle of dust.

not one can pass away. (13:65-14:02)

“[E]very pathetic story possible to happen” (16:64), all the minutiae of everyday life, or “All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years” (16: 68) is “seen in the bright Sculptures of / Loss Halls & every Age renews its powers from these Works” (16: 62-3). The conflation of sigh, smile and tear with dust particle achieves a flattening effect; they are all “things” which cannot pass away. Carved, which becomes a metonym for archived, in the form of luminous sculptures are the germs of future narratives, an archival space from which “every Age renews its powers” (16: 63). These germs “In all their various combinations” are “wrought with wondrous Art” (16:67), rendering Golgonooza a collection of potentialities.

Golgonooza is *Jerusalem's* privileged space for rethinking the limits of the faculties and disciplines. As we will see, Golgonooza finds itself uncannily close to what Simon Wortham, following Derrida, calls a “counter-institution,” an “alternative model for an institution” (8) that grounds itself on what Derrida calls an “unstable hierarchy,” and deconstructs its own disciplinary architecture (“Negotiations” 21). In reference to one such counter-institution, the International College of Philosophy that Derrida founded three years after completing his thesis, Derrida calls it a “philosophical place but also the

place where philosophy will be put into question” (18).¹⁵⁷ The problematic of Golgonooza for Blake dovetails with the problem of the counter-institution for Derrida, which is the space of the new Humanities.

Blake frequently appeals to the faculties of art and science, and to disciplines. His sole use throughout his entire oeuvre of the term “Humanities” occurs in *Jerusalem*: “Tell them to obey their Humanities, & not pretend Holiness” (*J E91:6*). What exactly Blake meant by this term is uncertain. For as the OED notes, the term during Blake’s time was polysemous; it could mean “human attributes or feelings” (II.3.a), or a plural form of “human beings” (4), reminiscent of Blake’s inventive pluralization of the Greek *zoe* (“life” or “creature”) into *zoas* in *The Four Zoas*.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore – to repeat the brief history of this term already recounted in the introduction – the term “humanities” was also being used to refer to the *humanitas* and study of humane letters (2a). Indeed, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) – who even makes an appearance in *Jerusalem* – refers in *The Advancement in Learning* (1605) to the “three knowledges, *divine philosophy*, *natural philosophy*, and *human philosophy*, or *humanity*” (85). John Chamberlayne in *Magna Britanniae Notitia* (1737) writes that “In this University [Edinburgh] are taught Divinity, Philosophy [...] Oratory, Humanity” (440). In 1837, British historian Henry Hallam in *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* explained, “Lectures in humanity, that

¹⁵⁷ Derrida was the first director of the State-funded International College of Philosophy (Ciph), founded 10 October 1983. For a discussion of the establishment of this counter-institution see the appendices to Derrida’s *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*. Other “counter-institutions” include the Greph (Group de Recherches sur L’Enseignement Philosophique, or Research Group on the Teaching of Philosophy), founded in 1975 as a reaction against the French government’s 1973-4 CAPES report that sought to diminish the presence of philosophy in the curriculum of the lycée. Derrida addresses Greph in “Who’s Afraid of Philosophy?” *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*.

¹⁵⁸ *Zoe* is singular; *zoa* is plural; Blake’s *zoas* is a pluralization of a plurality. Large sections of *The Four Zoas* reappear in *Jerusalem*.

is, in classical literature, were, in 1535, established [...] in all colleges of the university of Oxford” (350).

Given that plate 91 of Blake’s *Jerusalem* sets “Humanities” against “Holiness,” we have good reason to take “Humanities” here as literary learning, as the study of secular letters as opposed to theology. Moreover, this reference to “humanities” occurs only a few lines before some of *Jerusalem*’s most famous lines: “he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole/ Must see it in its Minute Particulars” (91:21-2). Accordingly, we might conclude from this proximity that, for Blake, obeying one’s “humanities” is linked with the act of seeing the Minute Particulars. There is no monolithic humanity, no stable sense of what it means to be human. While Blake’s meaning of the term “humanities” remains cryptic, he is elsewhere more cogent on the nature/state of the disciplines. Yet what Blake says about the disciplines often runs counter to his assessments of the faculties of “Art & Science” – faculties that fail to adequately contain the potentiality of particular sciences.

Like the many inhuman architectural faces of Golgonooza – its four walls guarded by “sixty-four thousand” genii, gnomes, nymphs and fairies (*J* 13:26-9) – Blake’s relationship to the sciences is multifaceted. His attraction and/or repulsion towards natural philosophy, anatomy, and medicine remain the topic of much debate among Blake scholars. Although I do not pursue it here, future work will examine Blake’s relationship with the second scientific revolution (1800-1840), and specifically the new sciences that emerged during the slow creation of *Jerusalem*, including electrochemistry (Davy), astronomy (Herschel) and physiology (Lawrence). Furthermore, as G.E. Bentley in *William Blake: The Critical Heritage* notes, in 1836 Blake’s name was included in a list

of sixty-five “Patrons and Admirers of the science and doctrine of Astrology” in J. T. Hackett’s *The Student’s Assistant in Astronomy and Astrology* (232). Some critics find Blake sharply critical of science, particularly the science of Locke, Newton, and Hunter. For George Gilpin, Blake satirizes the Enlightenment science of Newton, Hutton, and Hunter, which attempts to “define creation by rational laws and divisive rules” (37). Reading Urizen as a figure for John Hunter, whom Blake caricatures as “Jack Tearguts” in his satire *An Island in the Moon* (1784), Gilpin draws a firm bounding line between Blake and Hunter, noting that Blake reminds us “with poignancy and sadness, of the world of human distress and pain to which enlightened science, for all its empiricism and ‘progress,’ remains indifferent” (56). However, Blake does borrow heavily from William Hunter’s anatomical drawings, and – as we saw in chapter 3 with *The Book of Thel* – participates in the discourse of parturitive science.

Moreover, we cannot forget that Blake’s own corrosive engraving process keeps his illuminated work materially involved in the scientific. In Blake’s hands, the sciences prove to be a rich but tenuous archive inspiring many of the images throughout *Jerusalem*. The particular sciences – anatomy and medical science – are a site of potentiality and hesitation, used to imagine the multifarious ways in which inhuman forces constitute the human, rendering it an estranged material and discursive body.

On the whole, the difficulty of pinning down what science means for Blake derives from his frequently dismissive references to the faculty of “Science,” despite referring to and deploying elements of scientific disciplines in more creative ways. Blake’s three illuminated books that treat “science” most extensively are *Milton*, *The*

Four Zoas, and *Jerusalem*. Milton gives the clearest indication of what he understands as Science: namely, architectonic, or system:

But in Eternity the Four Arts: Poetry, Painting, Music,
 And Architecture which is Science: are the Four Faces of Man.
 Not so in Time & Space: there Three are shut out, and only
 Science remains thro Mercy: & by means of Science, the Three
 Become apparent in Time & Space, in the Three Professions
 Poetry in Religion: Music, Law: Painting, in Physic & Surgery:
 That Man may live upon Earth till the time of his awaking,
 And from these Three, Science derives every Occupation of Men.
 And Science is divided into Bowlahoola & Allamanda. (*Mil* 24:56-64)

The Four Arts – poetry, painting, music and architecture, the latter of “which is science” – comprise the Four Faces of Man, which is to say the four ways that man represents himself in Eternity. Preventing the arts from being recognized as such is the everyday experience of the world (“Time & Space”) where Science is the only face that remains visible – although why it remains through “mercy” is unclear. Perhaps Blake means this ironically, since Science – especially when put in a binary with Art – is a tyrannical, metastasized system for Blake, one that governs “every Occupation of Men” (24:63). Although Blake, here, aligns architecture with the systematicity and professionalization of Science, in *Jerusalem*, as we have already examined in detail, architecture is deconstructive, evident in Golgonooza’s continually deforming structure. Hence, what Blake attempts to disavow in theory as a rigid system is shown to be ubiquitous and

sublimely chaotic in practice. As we will continue to see, Blake is not in control of *Jerusalem*.

Upon first glance, the arts – poetry, painting and music (the same triad repeated in *Jerusalem* 3:51) – appear to lead a clandestine half-life by becoming bastardized through the “Three Professions”: poetry into religion; music into law; painting into physic and surgery. These are also the names of Kant’s three “businessmen of the faculties” (priests, lawyers, and doctors), those professionals in direct contact with the general public. In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant suggests that the “incompetent” public turns to these “*businessmen* or technicians of learning” (25, italics original) for help, conveniently forgetting they have been “*scoundrel[s]* all [their] life [...] broken the law [...] and *abused* [their] physical powers” (49).¹⁵⁹ To prevent corruption, the professional faculties are controlled by the government, although they have first required formal training from the “higher faculties” (theology, law, medicine). Blake, like Kant (and also Shelley in *The Triumph of Life*) is critical of the technicians of learning. However, Blake sees a more intimate relationship between these professions and the arts, something that Kant does not take up. Instead, Kant’s discussion of the faculties is framed against the faculty of philosophy, which is separate from the rest and has the right to criticize the other faculties, remaining “free to evaluate everything” (27). Like Golgonooza’s “interminable labour,” the faculty of philosophy for Kant is always in conflict with the other faculties:

¹⁵⁹ Kant says that “the people want to be *led* [...] *duped*. But they want to be led not by the scholars of the faculties (whose wisdom is too high for them), but by the businessmen of the faculties – clergymen, legal officials, and doctors – who understand a botched job [...] and have the people’s confidence” (*Conflict* 51).

“This conflict can never end, and it is the philosophy faculty that must always be prepared to keep it going” (55).¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, how exactly Blake arrives at these professions is a mystery. His pairing of the arts with their disfigured outward forms escapes any recognizable rationale. How does poetry meet religion? How does music meet law? What we are to understand as the positive terms in this equation, namely the arts, are seemingly at odds with the oppressive knowledges of religion, law, physic and surgery. For as Blake puts it in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), law and religion are oppressive architectures: “Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with / bricks of Religion” (*MHH* 8:2-3). Although we are asked to abject these rigid organizations, Blake’s poetry doesn’t allow for such binary divisions to hold. So while he may be firmly against Science – which is shorthand for a repressive, tyrannical system of cog-nition – his text, despite his disavowal, allows us to see the creative potentiality of the new, individual sciences. While we never have in *Jerusalem* a full embrace of the new disciplines that were emerging during his time, as Blake finds them fascinating but threatening, the text enables us to think beyond what Blake thinks but defensively attempts to harness and contain. Hence, we can think about how these institutional disciplines of religion, law, physic and surgery could contain within themselves the germs of art. These disciplines (religion, law, physic and surgery) move towards a matrixial space within themselves that is figured as “poetry” for religion, “music” for law, and “painting” for physic and surgery. Read in this light, the arts are not an Ideal that have become degraded into

¹⁶⁰ The freedom of philosophy’s movement within the structure of the faculties is a good example of the way in which Kant’s thought permits mole-like movements, despite his claim in *The Critique of Pure Reason* of his critical philosophy to level the unsteadied ground (a point raised in chapter 3).

Science. Instead, the artistic – like a kind of Shelleyan Poetry – is a potentiality within the various sciences. Indeed, Shelley’s account of the Poet’s multi-disciplinary reach in *A Defence of Poetry* maps on to the arts and sciences to which Blake refers. Shelley writes:

But Poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance and architecture and statuary and painting: they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion. (1169)

These “arts” – poetry, painting, and music – appear to be a creative matrix embedded within these oppressive disciplines, and offer the possibility through which the disciplines can be transformed. Just as Milton was of the Devil’s Party without knowing it, Blake is a posthumanist when he desires to be a transhumanist. In this way, we can see Blake’s poetry as unconsciously offering something on the order of what Derrida in his essay “Titles” calls an “interscience,” an interfering concept that traverses the “topology of knowledge,” running between “the domains of already legitimated fields when borders allow themselves to be exceeded or displaced” (205). It is any

thematic [...] field [...] research activity [...] that the map of institutions, at a given moment, does not yet grant stable, accredited, habitable departments. These zones of instability might appear wild and uninhabitable in the eyes of a certain social representation of organized research. They are in fact sites of great traffic, privileged sites for the formation of new objects or rather of new thematic networks. (206)

To help contextualize the way Blake's illuminated poetry takes up the shifting boundaries of the sciences, we should recall what Noah Heringman in *Romantic Science* identifies as "the mutually constitutive nature of literary and scientific discourse in Britain during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (2). More recently, Jon Klancher in *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences* notes that "If today we take the expression 'Arts and Sciences' to designate a disciplinary system in the university, writers of the Romantic age – especially *as* writers – still believed the arts and sciences to belong largely to what early moderns called the Republic of Letters (also called the Commonwealth of Learning, or in Germany the *Gelehrtenrepublik*)" (154). While the arts and sciences were not formally calved from one another into the two separate faculties that we have now, there was, as Maureen McLane notes, a kind of sensibility that existed during the Romantic period that did, in fact, acknowledge them as contributing to different types of knowledge: the positive knowledge of science, and the elusive knowledge of poetry (4). Indeed, in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1802, Wordsworth distinguishes between the Poet and the Man of Science:

The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and inalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath

and finer spirit of all knowledge: it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. (qtd. in McLane 4-5)

Undoubtedly, Blake would have sympathized with both Wordsworth's division here of poetry and Science (as system) and his privileging of poetry. Yet *Jerusalem*, in light of its many disfigured features that we have already examined, betrays our ability to see it (Blake's poetry) in such idealistic terms as a refined knowledge. While Blake may want to separate Art and Science as attitudes, the fact remains that they were together during his time as (con)fused bodies of knowledge. Their entanglement – so explicitly staged in the discipline of architecture – is precisely what forms the basis of a Romantic posthumanities, which appeals in many ways to what Derrida calls the new Humanities that includes “law, ‘legal studies’ [...] ‘theory’ [...] but also, of course, in all these places, deconstructive practices” (“The Future of the Profession” 29).

Furthermore, that Blake appears in *Jerusalem* to be on both sides, torn between the two worlds of the emergent and the residual, of the future and the past, is unsurprising given his own mixed identity as an engraver-poet. After all, as Klancher convincingly demonstrates, the arts and sciences weren't mutually exclusive categories, nowhere demonstrated more clearly than by their “tangled middle-ground” (13) – that is, those emergent arts or crafts that populated the pages of the encyclopedias, those “hidden arts” (grafting, engraving – for example) – as Ephraim Chambers put it in 1729 – found not in books or libraries but “hid in Shops, Garrets, Cellars, Mines, and other obscure Places, where Men of Learning rarely penetrate: Rich Fields of Science lie thus neglected under Ground” (qtd. in Klancher 14). For its part, *Jerusalem* opens up many of these rich sciences – more than what Blake knows what to do with. This is the predicament and

arguably a partial cause behind the restlessness of the text: Blake opens up possibilities through the inclusion of the new sciences that he doesn't quite know how to contain. In other words, whenever he presents the emergent it is thwarted by the residual. For the emergent is (to borrow Brian Massumi's phrase) a "shock to thought"; it is the confrontation with a thought that opens up the inhuman in ways that are traumatic for Blake, and ultimately jeopardize his (trans)humanism.

A brief history of Art and Science is provided early on in *Jerusalem*, as part of an anthropological narrative. Shortly after the poem's apostrophe to "the Public," the poet begins: "The / Primeval State of Man, was Wisdom, Art, and Science" (3:51-2), a point echoed on plate 77: "What is the Life of Man but Art & Science?" (77:31). These faculties frame the human; their sufferings negatively affect man: "Poetry Fetter'd. Fetters the Human Race" (3:49). This symbiotic relationship between an enslaved art and an enslaved people stages the importance of the disciplines for imagining a new mode of existence. The Poet in *Jerusalem* offers an early historical account, like Asia in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, of the fall of "Art & Science." In true epic convention, Blake draws battle lines between the faculties:

Scofeld & Kox are let loose upon my Saxons! they accumulate

A World in which Man is by his Nature the Enemy of Man,

In pride of Selfhood unwieldy stretching out into Non Entity

Generalizing Art & Science till Art & Science is lost. (43:52-5)

Blake frames the violence of Scofeld and Kox (Schofield and Cock – the soldiers who falsely accused Blake of sedition) with the violent generalization of art and science, an act that leads them towards their vanishing point, since "Art & Science cannot exist but in

minutely organized Particulars” (55:63).¹⁶¹ Blake’s rejection of generalization is likely a response to John Locke’s *An Essay in Human Understanding* (1690), which announced that “*a distinct Name for every particular Thing, would not be of any great use for the improvement of Knowledge: which though founded in particular Things, enlarges it self by general Views*” (3.3:§4, italics original).¹⁶² However, Blake is guilty of his own generalizations, referring at times to the faculty of Science, which he uses negatively as a tyrannical form of cog-nition, while drawing on particular scientific disciplines, such as anatomy, that operate more creatively.

Juxtaposed against the violence of generalization we find the interminable (painful) process of creating Golgonooza, which is explicitly framed as the interminable production of knowledge: “That to Labour in Knowledge. is to Build up Jerusa- / -lem: and to Despise Knowledge, is to Despise Jerusalem & her Builders” (77:40-1). Yet Blake’s critique of the disciplines is not merely the problem with generalization, at the hands of Scofield and Kox, but also the “terrors” (15:12) and “Reasonings” (15:13) of Bacon and Newton that “hang / Like iron scourges over Albion” and that “like vast Serpents / Infold around my limbs, bruising my minute articulations” (15:12-4). The weight and constrictive force – the systematicity – of the science of Bacon and Newton not only bruise the speaker’s “minute articulations” but also contribute to the “long & cold repose” of Albion (15:11).

¹⁶¹ In 1803, Private John Schofield of the Royal Dragoons, accompanied by Private Cock, falsely accused Blake of using seditious language. For a detailed account see David Erdman’s *Blake: A Prophet Against Empire*, 375-386.

¹⁶² On Blake’s anti-Lockean stance, Paul Yoder suggests, “Blake’s system is not based on an atomistic object-reference language in which one must always use the same word for the same idea. Sometimes that grain of sand is a whole world; sometimes that one man is a multitude [...] Blake’s system respects the integrity of the minute particulars; it does not celebrate the general terms that Locke says are so essential to human thought” (“Unlocking Language” par. 21).

Other constrictive forces are the “Schools & Universities of Europe” (15:15). Here, the iron scourges of Bacon and Newton give way to the “Loom of Locke whose Woof rages dire / Washd by the Water-wheels of Newton” (15:16-7). The woof that Locke’s loom produces is a black cloth that “In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation; cruel Works / Of many Wheels I view. wheel without wheel. with cogs tyrannic / Moving by compulsion each other” (15:18-20). Like one wheel jammed into another, Science is lodged within Europe’s institutions that are like the “dark Satanic Mills” (*Mil* 1[i]:36), those monstrous cotton mills that were parasitically weaving themselves into the landscape of Romantic England. Although the institutions are driven by Science they, in turn, become tyrannical mechanisms further reproducing this organization of knowledge. Hence, the poem represents institutions as monstrous bodies within Europe, like the “enrooted [...] mighty Polypus growing / From Albion over the whole Earth” (15:5-6). For as Livingston notes, “The proverbial ability of the polypus to grow a new head and tail when cut in half makes it [...] a nicely gothic figure for disciplinary reproduction and indestructibility” (70).

Indeed, more of the inhuman rather than human seems to characterize this text. In addition to the frequent references to the polypi, *Jerusalem* produces other monstrous bodies of knowledge, such as the hermaphroditic three-headed Hand (which is a composite of Bacon, Locke and Newton) on plate 70 that seems to be affectively linked with Golgonooza, rather than the “mild Jerusalem” (88:54). Against a tradition dating back to the myth of Aristophanes in Plato’s *Symposium*, where the hermaphrodite is the image of humanity before division or separation, Blake’s hermaphrodite is a problematic

coupling; it is one thing jammed inside another.¹⁶³ Similarly, plate 58 frames rational philosophy and mathematic demonstration as hermaphroditic, also signaling the ways in which they are dangerously joined. All these monstrous bodies that Blake develops, however, bring us back to Golgonooza: its closed Western Gate is guarded by four eight-winged hermaphroditic Cherubim (13:6-8), in addition to the pantheon of inhuman figures (bulls, lions, forms of death and disease, genii, gnomes, nymphs, fairies, polypi). The monstrous bodies – like those adorning Golgonooza’s architecture – are symptoms of the ways in which the emergent represents a tremendous energy that Blake introduces but then anxiously attempts to contain. This is one way that we might understand the sudden effort at the end of *Jerusalem* to forgive Bacon, Locke and Newton (and place them alongside Milton, Shakespeare and Chaucer) (98:10) – those figureheads that, plates earlier, had figured as the monstrous Hand. Of course, forgiveness ultimately fails, and Blake’s violent gouging of the text betrays the possibility of ever truly leaving Golgonooza behind in favour of Jerusalem. After all, Golgonooza may be the city of art and manufacture, but it is also the place of “Prisons & Workhouses” (13:57), and it is “continually building & continually decaying” (53:19). Golgonooza is a problematic amalgam, a rich but monstrous assemblage. And while Blake may want to keep Jerusalem separate from Golgonooza, he cannot. What Stevens rightly calls Golgonooza’s “radical incommensurability” resonates throughout the poem’s entirety that even the final scene cannot escape (304, fn.11). For the supposed renovation of man described in plate 98, which as we earlier argued actually disfigures man, returns us to the inhuman features of Golgonooza rather than bringing us closer to a sense of

¹⁶³ For case histories of nineteenth-century hermaphrodites, see Geertje Mak’s *Doubting Sex* (2012).

something recognizably “human.” Blake’s grandest project of man’s renovation is deeply troubled by its own unsettledness, by the ways in which it appeals to the new disciplines but half-aborts them. While we cannot say that Blake embraces the posthuman, his illuminated poetry does enable us to think this potentiality.

Chapter 5

5 A Clandestine Catastrophe: Disciplinary Dissolution in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*

[N]othing just vanishes; of everything that disappears there remain traces.

– Jean Baudrillard, “On Disappearance” (27)

What would the humanities, a knowledge of the posthuman, be like far in the future, after mankind has evolved beyond man?

– Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone* (14-15)

5.1 Introduction

While chapter 4 examined the ways in which *Jerusalem*'s project of rethinking man is restlessly torn between the potentiality and the unsettling trauma of the emergent disciplines that treated the inhuman, in this final chapter we will consider Mary Shelley's interest in the disappearance – and clandestine reappearance – of the disciplines of literature and music. Where Blake's thought towards the future becomes something that must be half-aborted because of its frightening possibilities of opening up the inhuman and unsettling the sustainability of man, in Shelley's fiction the future is a rich site of creative potentiality despite the possibility that it does not hold a place for man. One consequence of this reading is that the instability of these discursive bodies is not a unique problem belonging to our contemporary “vulnerable times,” to pick up on the recent theme of the Modern Language Association 2014 convention, but one that has plagued the disciplines from their modern beginnings in the Romantic period.

5.2 Institutions in Ruins

Shelley is a writer deeply invested in the state of the disciplines. In a gesture that unworks the idealism of the (German) university, Shelley sets *Frankenstein* at the University of Ingolstadt, an institution with a tenuous past. Ingolstadt, which was initially a leading university in Europe with ties to the Illuminati movement, was closed in 1800 by Prince Elector Max IV Joseph of Bavaria under economic pressures.¹⁶⁴ However, the closure of Ingolstadt was not unique given the “mass death” of universities in Germany at the time, making it an easily substitutable term in a larger chain of signifiers. The figure of the German university in Shelley’s first novel betrays a potentially deeper critique, a space ‘outside’ her own England from which to think questions of disciplinarity and institutional organizations. Victor Frankenstein’s education at the University of Ingolstadt might be explained in a variety of ways. The history of Ingolstadt lends itself to the novel’s larger drama over the disappearance of grand things (humanity, community, culture), to recall its previous glory before collapsing under economic pressure. As an example of institutional disappearance, Ingolstadt, as represented within the novel, becomes the site of tension between different temporalities of knowledge (ancient and modern), disciplines (natural philosophy and chemistry), and pedagogies (Krempe and Waldman). This tenuous constellation frames the university as that which is capable of producing something disfigured or monstrous, as in a form of monstrous knowledge (or a dangerous mind). But where *Frankenstein* addresses the university, *The Last Man* turns to other cultural institutions, such as museums, galleries, and theatres. Indeed, it is my

¹⁶⁴ Prince Elector became King Maximilian I in 1806. In 1800, the university was relocated to Landshut. In 1802 it was renamed Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. In 1826 the university was relocated to Munich, where it remains today (“History” www.en.uni-muenchen.de).

argument throughout this chapter that the fiction of Mary Shelley operates as a thought-experiment over what the arts might look like without the human, a line of thought that begins in *Frankenstein* (1818) but becomes increasingly pushed to its limit in *The Last Man* (1826) – the latter of which is the focus of the chapter. In the language of Deleuze, what Shelley here enables us to think in *The Last Man* is the “degree zero” or minimal intensity of existence and with it the “degree zero” of the disciplines, the minimal degree to which a discipline can disappear.¹⁶⁵ Essentially, then, what *The Last Man* is engaged with is a thought-experiment about the recalcitrance of a discipline, of arriving at or finding the particularity or stubborn germ of poetry, literature, music – an ineradicable germ that might survive on into perpetuity.

5.3 The Art of Disappearance

Jean Baudrillard in his essay “On Disappearance” (originally a conference paper given *in absentia*) observes that “Behind every image something has disappeared. And that is the source of its fascination,” which leads him to ask “is it in fact the real we worship – or its disappearance?” (29). Disappearance is twinned with the production of knowledge; at the same time that humans generate “meaning, value and reality to the world” they also begin a “process of dissolution (‘to analyse’ means literally ‘to dissolve’)” (24).¹⁶⁶ He continues:

¹⁶⁵ Deleuze describes the “degree zero” in his *Logic of Sense* (71) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (61). Deleuze draws the term from Alain Masson, who uses the phrase to describe that a moment between the motor step and the dance step that is “like a hesitation, a discrepancy, a making late, a series of preparatory blunders [...] or on the contrary a sudden birth” (*Cinema 2* 61). However, another source for the “degree zero” is likely Roland Barthes’ influential *Writing Degree Zero* (1953).

¹⁶⁶ Indeed, this recalls Coleridge’s description in *Biographia Literaria* of the work of the secondary imagination: “it dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create” (156).

We may thus suppose that everything that disappears – institutions, values, prohibitions, ideologies, even ideas – continues to lead a clandestine existence and exert an occult influence, as was said of the old gods which, in the Christian era, assumed the form of demons. Everything that disappears seeps back into our lives in infinitesimal doses, often more dangerous than the visible authority that ruled over us. (27)

It is Baudrillard's sustained reflection on what he calls at various points the "art" or "mode" of disappearance that can insightfully frame the internal logic of disciplinary disappearance, one which, as this chapter seeks to address, is part of Mary Shelley's project in *The Last Man* (1826). Disappearance, with the emphasis on emergence and fading, accounts for the ways in which the novel's disciplines, specifically literature and music, are emphatically drained out of the text – along with the majority of its humans – only to reach a variable tipping point and come limping back. Here, the driving question of Shelley's disciplinary thought is, like Lyotard's question in *The Inhuman* ("Can thought can go on without a body?") – *Can the humanities go on without the human?* Shelley's novel through its representations of literature and music actively 'unworks' the disciplines and their function along with its *anthropos* in the 'order of things.' The arts that reappear towards the end of *The Last Man* mark Shelley's speculative thought towards what it might mean for literature and music to survive beyond the human and what forms they might take. As I will argue, this novel operates as an unworking of the idealism of aesthetics (as the art of thinking beautifully), a critique of the sustainability of both man and his cultural achievements. Here, through the disciplines of literature and music, the novel registers a movement towards subtraction, a paring down of the

disciplines towards what I will call their point or germ of minimal existence. This subtractive gesture is not, however, nihilistic; disciplinary decreation becomes the condition of possibility for renewal. The limping back in mangled form of literature and music renders the novel a site of both dis-ease and of potential for dismantling institutions and disciplines.

5.4 Disappearing Disciplines

In *The Last Man* disciplinary dissolution is witnessed in what the eponymous narrator Lionel Verney calls the “consecrated spots” (262) of culture: churches, museums and palaces. In London, Rome, Venice, and Milan, those epicenters that house humanity’s cultural achievements, Verney witnesses their emptying out as crowds of people give way to herds of animals that make their dwelling here (336). London’s St. Paul’s becomes less like a temple and more like a tomb, falling victim to “mildew and damp” that defaces the ornaments (262). If in London “Nothing was in ruin” but the “undamaged buildings, and luxurious accommodation, in trim and fresh youth, was contrasted with the lonely silence of the unpeopled streets” (262), in Venice the scene is remarkably different, with the tide ebbing “sullenly from out the broken portals and violated halls [...] sea weed and sea monsters were left on the blackened marble, while the salt ooze defaced the matchless works of art that adorned their walls, and the sea gull flew out from the shattered window” (342). The “unpeopling” and defacement of these great cultural spots and their “matchless works of art” is met by a similar restructuring of how Verney and the fellow survivors experience art. In Milan, their daily routine consists of the retrieval of “pictures or antiquities” during the day, and reading and conversation at night (336). Art becomes a means by which to measure out the day, like Eliot’s coffee

spoons. And yet, while art becomes an organizing principle, a tool of measurement for telling time, certain forms or genres are foreclosed, rendered unreadable because of their intense affectivity:

There were few books that we dared read; few, that did not cruelly deface the painting we bestowed on our solitude, by recalling combinations and emotions never more to be experienced by us. Metaphysical disquisition; fiction, which wandering from all reality, lost itself in self-created errors; poets of times so far gone by, that to read of them was as to read of Atlantis and Utopia; or such as referred to nature only, and the workings of one particular mind; but most of all, talk, varied and ever new, beguiled our hours. (336)

These specific forms of literature, these acts of reading, are eventually forsaken and certain intellectual conversations are foreclosed as a result of their painful pressure on the desolate reality of the survivors. Here, literature proves to be no balm, no salve against the vacuous horror of their dis-eased existence. Such escapist fiction (“wandering from all reality”) and poetry – the aesthetic distance afforded by these disciplines – are defacing objects, described by Verney as disfiguring the “painting we bestowed on our solitude” (336). This disfiguring power of literature or art, more generally, finds a displaced image in Venice where “salt ooze defaced the matchless works of art” (342).

However, the world of the last man is not just one that contains beautiful buildings that have fallen into decrepitude or have become disfigured; it is also a world where grandiose architectural plans are flawed in their very genesis. For example, Evadne’s anonymously submitted sketched designs for Raymond’s proposed “national gallery for statues and pictures” are inherently flawed: “The design was new and elegant,

but faulty; so faulty, that although drawn with the hand and eye of taste, it was evidently the work of one who was not an architect” (83). Despite Raymond’s supposed desire for a design that is both original and of “perfect beauty” (83), he is captivated by Evadne’s drawing. As Protector and the mind behind the national gallery, Raymond is a preserver of culture, of man’s humanity – a position that echoes Schiller’s description of the poet in *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* as the “preserver” (“Bewahrer”) of nature. Given Raymond’s appeal to aesthetics – desiring designs of “perfect beauty” to build a national gallery to preserve man’s cultural achievements, a phenomenon that was largely occupying the popular consciousness of the time with the newly emerging projects of national galleries and museums, such as the British Museum (1753), the Louvre (1793), and the National Gallery (1838) – it is curious that he is increasingly drawn towards the malformed sketches: “the more he gazed, the more pleased he was; and yet the errors multiplied under inspection” (83). Evadne’s design appears increasingly flawed, as if the design were only further mutating or unworking itself under Raymond’s gaze. There are clear parallels between Evadne’s failed sketch and her “wretched abode” (85). Evadne sits Urizen-like at a table: “one small hand shaded her eyes from the candle; the other held a pencil; her looks were fixed on a drawing before her, which Raymond recognized as the design presented to him” (85). Evadne’s pose with one hand concealing her eyes is symbolic of an obscured vision, the process of composition or design for the national gallery here figured as a kind of dark labour. The drawing itself also harbours another darkness, namely Evadne’s desires for Raymond, as the drawing becomes a screen or a portal through which Evadne gains access to him: “The drawing itself became ineffably dear to her. He had seen it, and praised it; it was again retouched by her, each stroke of

her pencil was as a chord of thrilling music, and bore to her the idea of a temple raised to celebrate the deepest and most unutterable emotions of her soul” (89). This eroticized description of the design’s composition reveals how the design is not motivated by archive fever or an impulse towards preserving man’s cultural achievements but by the desire for a secret space through which Evadne gains fantasmatic access to Raymond. Like Blake’s Golgonooza, Evadne’s imperfect designs – imperfections which remain despite numerous revisions (83) – prove to be the “defective cornerstone” (to use Paul de Man’s phrase [*Aesthetic Ideology* 104]) for the novel’s grandest aesthetic project, its greatest project of *Bildung*. Indeed, the national gallery is itself a frayed figure within the narrative as we never learn of what comes of these designs; the project of building a national gallery is left undeveloped, suspended in its half-botched genesis.¹⁶⁷

While the novel consistently stages the failure of aesthetics in a world without humans, the repeated act of that staging demonstrates its persistence and ability to tear through the fabric of the survivors’ reality. This failed aesthetics remains and is frequently marked by being untimely. When Adrian, Clara, and Verney set sail over the Laguna for Venice, Adrian and Verney are roused to recite poetry – “quoting a translation of Moschus’s poem” (“But, when the roar / Of ocean’s gray abyss resounds, a foam / Gathers upon the sea, and vast waves burst – “); it is an act that incites hostility, as these “verses were evil augury” (343). Literature, here, mauls the thinly aestheticized appearance of their solitude. Art – these verses of “evil augury” – tears through the fabric of the Real. Within the novel, the abandonment or radical dissolution of aesthetics is

¹⁶⁷ In being unrealized, we might read the national gallery as closer to other unfinished projects of Romanticism, such as the German University (Jena), rather than the British Museum to which Raymond’s gallery is typically compared.

required for the sustainability of man. In the world of impending extinction, the abandonment of aesthetics is consistently called for as a result of its failure to operate as an anaesthetic.

Complementing the novel's attention to the depopulated spaces and disfigured architecture of culture's institutionalization, are the radical transformations to the disciplines of poetry, theatre and music – disciplines that garner special authority within the novel, despite the long catalogue of disciplines that have disappeared according to Verney's loquacious farewell:

Farewell to the giant powers of man – to knowledge that could pilot the deep-drawing bark through the opposing waters of shoreless ocean – to science that directed the silken balloon through the pathless air – to the power that could put a barrier to mighty waters, and set in motion wheels, and beams, and vast machinery, that could divide rocks or granite or marble, and make the mountains plan! Farewell to the arts – to eloquence, which is to the human mind as the winds to the sea, stirring, and then allaying it; – farewell to poetry and deep philosophy, for man's imagination is cold, and his enquiring mind can no longer expatiate on the wonders of life, for 'there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest!' – to the graceful building [...] farewell to sculpture [...] to painting [...] to music [...] to the well-trod stage [...] Alas! To enumerate the adornments of humanity, shews, by what we have lost, how supremely great man was. It is all over now. (254)

But although Verney eulogizes man's greatness and his cultural and scientific accomplishments, one discipline in particular garners special attention: music.

5.5 Music and Sounds of (De)creation

Shelley's novel is not only about the end of man or a thought-experiment about what may take his place, but perhaps more importantly is also about the end of man's crowning achievements: his disciplines. What is at stake in this novel, then, is what the end of man means for those literary and cultural artifacts and related institutions and disciplines. One of the disciplines under pressure in Shelley's *Last Man* is music, where the operas and oratorios of Mozart and Haydn resound throughout the novel. While the role of music within the novel has garnered critical attention (cf. Palacio, Paley), what remains unexplored is the cultural-historical purchase of Shelley's choice of musical genre. In what follows, I will examine the role of the oratorio via Haydn's *Creation*, and why this enigmatic choice in genre is particularly haunting within the context of Shelley's novel.

The oratorio enters the novel late in the third section. On their way from Ferney to Geneva, Verney and the remaining survivors hear the "unaccustomed sounds of music" coming from a "rural church which stood embosomed in trees, surrounded by smokeless, vacant cottages. The peal of an organ with rich swell awoke the mute air, lingering along, and mingling with the intense beauty that clothed the rocks and woods, and waves around" (328). Up until now, music has been "forgotten," having failed to remedy the survivors' spirits: "nor pipe at eve cheered us, nor harmony of voice, nor linked thrill of string" (328). The gradually recognized organ music is Haydn's "New-Created World" (*The Creation*) (328), performed by a young woman who is disfigured as "sickness, bent her form" (329). The sound transfixes Verney and Adrian till "the last chord struck, the peal died away in lessening reverberations. The mighty voice, inorganic we might call it, for we could in no way associate it with mechanism of pipe or key, stilled its sonorous

tone” (329). Given the cultural-historical context of this song, but more importantly its genre – the oratorio – this frequently overlooked detail exerts great force for how to interpret the movement(s) of the disciplines within the final sections of the novel.

Haydn’s *Creation* (1798) is a three-part oratorio about the creation of the world, with its libretto drawn from the Bible and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. First performed in Austria, it debuted in 1800 at the Covent Garden Theatre in London, the city where a few years prior Haydn was first exposed to Handel’s oratorios – the inspiration for his composition. Despite the irony of having a song celebrating the world’s creation performed at the end of the world in Shelley’s novel, its genre is equally if not more important for the novel. Insofar as it is an example of the oratorio, the absent figure haunting this text is the more important Handel, for whom, as I want to argue, Haydn is but a mask. Fresh in the British Romantic consciousness would have been the enormous Handel Commemoration held in 1784 in London’s Westminster Abbey. It was, as Gillen D’Arcy Wood notes, “the largest musical event in recorded European history up to that time” with over 500 musicians and 4000 attendees (20). For some, within the popular imagination, the event represented the edification and unification of the nation, while for others it was an appeal for a “new cult of monarchy” (20), “a counter-revolutionary assembly, a monarchist choral rejoinder to Burke’s ‘horrid yells and shrilling screams’ of the sansculottes” (20). In short, the real purchase of the 1784 Commemoration was the suspension of political dissonance; what the “full-scale production of a Handel oratorio created,” observes Wood, was “what no Act of Parliament or royal proclamation could: an environment of affirmation, of consensus-building sociability through the spectacular production of an irresistible aesthetic” (30). The oratorio even fulfills such a consensual

spot in Kant's thought, as when he claims in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that "the presentation of the sublime [...] can be united with beauty in [...] an oratorio" (203/Ak5:325). Similarly, the heteroglossic quality of Blake's *Jerusalem*, which we treated in chapter 4, can be – indeed, has been – read for its affinities with the Handelian oratorio. Morton Paley finds that "Oratorio-like, *Jerusalem*, also contains parts for groups of voices and for massed voices" (294). Like Handel's *Messiah*, Blake's *Jerusalem* includes a range of styles, ranging from a "Handelian dry recitative" to "lyrical outburst" (*The Continuing City* 293). Moreover, Blake's text includes different duets, quartets, chorales, and orchestral interludes, and discloses itself as a musical work, such as when the poem ends: "The End of the Song / of Jerusalem" (Paley 294). But if, as Wood suggests, the Handel Commemoration was successful at producing a new *sensus communis* through this enormous spectacle, which itself staged what the genre of the oratorio internally accomplished (the balancing of voices), Blake's *Jerusalem* works to the opposite effect. Moreover, Blake's text appears to be aware of its failed status as an oratorio, as evidenced in the gouging of the copper plates, but also what Laura Quinney calls the text's "chilling couplet [...] "A man's worst enemies are those / Of his own house & family" (qtd. in Quinney 171). In this way, Blake's *Jerusalem* responds to the oratorio not unlike Shelley's *The Last Man*.

Returning now to Shelley's novel, as Verney and Adrian enter the empty church it brings to their minds "the recollections of vast congregations, in once thronged cathedrals" (328). However, where the grand musical event suspended political factions in 1784, it takes on a different tone four decades later in Shelley's rewriting of the scene that now produces a vastly different affect. Here, the commemorative event, the spectacle

of an overflowing Westminster Abbey with its thousands of bodies – “this irresistible aesthetic” as Wood calls it – is starkly contrasted by the church’s nearly evacuated state. Save Lionel Verney and the few remaining friends, gone are the hordes of people; now the organist’s “sole auditors,” beyond the survivors, are the “mute mountains, senseless lake, and unconscious trees” (329). Likewise, the hundreds of musicians are pared down to two unlikely figures: a blind father and his daughter, an organist.¹⁶⁸ Shelley’s choice to have an oratorio as the sole song echoing through the unpeopled streets and institutions, blowing through like cultural detritus, is a poignant one. This scene uncannily repeats the 1784 Commemoration albeit with some differences: now what is being commemorated is the loss of grand cultural events. The oratorio – that form celebrated for its innovative merging of the chorus and virtuoso – now becomes a requiem, a song marking the death not only of grand cultural events (like the Commemoration) but also of music or culture, more generally, itself. The oratorio now commemorates incommensurability; it is the swan song for song itself. Thus, where the oratorio in its cultural association with the 1784 Commemoration is initially a symbol of cultural harmony and unification – individual and collective voices singing together in harmony – it operates in the novel with more uncertainty as a gauge of social and physiological disintegration. Indeed, it is telling that the two musicians are physically disfigured: the father is a “blind old man” whose “whole soul was ear” (328), while the young woman at the organ “perhaps twenty years of age” is “thin; languor, and alas! sickness, bent her form” (329).¹⁶⁹ The nameless

¹⁶⁸ The physically disfigured musicians are yet another manifestation of a broken aesthetics figured earlier by the diseased opera-dancer, a “figure all in white... flourishing about the road” (320).

¹⁶⁹ The blindness of the father makes him a figure for the De Lacey father in Shelley’s first novel, *Frankenstein* (1818).

organist is victim of a “symptomatic illness [...] paralyzed with horror at the idea of leaving her aged, sightless father alone on the empty earth” (329). Like the sick opera-dancer, the mangled bodies of the musicians signal a direct pathological correspondence between music and the body – an idea consistent with the late Romantic collusion of physiology and music through what has been referred to by James Kennaway as “pathological music.”

5.6 The Increasing Disenchantment of Music

During the Enlightenment, music was still closely aligned with the idea of social order and cosmic harmony, an idea derived, as James Kennaway notes, from “the Pythagorean notion of music as a question of mathematics and the harmony of the spheres” (399). From Pythagoras and Plato to Boethius, through the Renaissance and into the Enlightenment, music was aligned with reason and regulation, and as such thought to have restorative powers (399). As Kennaway notes, music gradually became associated with a material vision, one based more in physiology rather than cosmology: “Music was gradually disenchanted and became part of ‘brute nature’ rather than a sign of universal order. World harmony became a mere metaphor, albeit one with continuing influence” (400). While the idea of cosmic harmony gave way to physiology, certain aesthetic principles were internalized, especially in early eighteenth-century music theory where the medical effects of music were still considered positive; music was still about achieving an internal harmony, “of bringing the soul and body into harmony” (401). Even with the shift towards physiology, with its emphasis on the body and specifically the nerves, a conservative paradigm of aesthetic thinking underpinned new theories that still advocated for the refining qualities of music. It was a view that, as Kennaway puts it,

connected the refining power of music on the nerves with the idea of music “as the alignment of the human microcosm and the social and cosmic macrocosm using the terminology of early modern neurology, something that was reflected in the rhetoric of ‘sympathy’ and order” (402). Furthermore, where the eighteenth-century discourse of sensibility connected “feeling” to the body through the notion of sensitive nerves – a sign of one’s refinement viz. morals and aesthetics – discussions about music “still, for the most part, regarded music as a model of order, morality, and health as much as any Neo-Platonist, seeing it as a means of refining the nerves and of calming unhealthy passions, including sexual ones” (402). It wasn’t until the expansive growth of medicine and psychiatry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century that discussions surrounding nerves changed from the language of sensibility to pathology (405).

This shift towards the potential malignant power of music was marked by new characterizations of music as electrifying, as what Kennaway dubs “a direct quasi-electrical stimulant,” capable of administering direct shocks to the body’s nerves (407). Thus, whereas the earlier discourse of sensibility couched discussions of nerves in terms of refinement, championed sensitivity as a signifier of an aesthetic ideal (the well-rounded man), and saw music as positively contributing to this refinement of nerves, the advent of pathology (ushered in by medicine and psychiatry) would change the potential affect of music from one of restoration to deterioration:

[T]he development of a discourse of pathological nervous music [...] marked a failure of the sensibility model that had combined neurology and the metaphysics of order under the rubric of refined and sensitive nerves. The vicissitudes of the French Revolution and the economic and cultural changes of the period proved to

be a watershed in the decline of the association between music and natural order. Conceptions of music as a commodity and a social vice or virtue, rather than a sign of hierarchy, took the materialist assumptions of Enlightenment music aesthetics to their logical conclusion, dramatically undermining the combination of nerve stimulation and genteel order that was evoked in the culture of sensibility. [...] Music, therefore, was losing many of its associations with order at a time when anti-Jacobinism made threats to hierarchy and order unfashionable. (Kennaway 414)

The conceptual shift for music provides a sympathetic disciplinary backdrop to the figure of music in *The Last Man*, just one of the disciplines undergoing restructuring. Where the oratorio would have been a pre-Revolutionary symbol of cultural unity, in Shelley's novel it is repurposed as a requiem, marking the death of one (if not both) such cultural ideal(s) – cultural unity and the Revolution. This loss registers itself physiologically such as when music is heard it fails to have an antidotal affect on the surviving listeners; instead, it works to agitate and increasingly torment them, intensifying the pain as if it were directly searing their nerves. Upon hearing “a child singing a merry, lightsome air” (262) – a sound to which we will return – Verney remarks that “never was merry ditty so sadly timed, never laughter more akin to tears” (262). This painful affect of music is a rejoinder to the other aesthetic responses in the novel, such as the act of hearing a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, when hearing Macduff's speech causes Verney to “[re-echo] the cry of Macduff, and then [rush] out as from a hell of torture, to find calm in the free air and silent street” (221), as well as when hearing poetry recited, those verses described as “evil augury” (343). The performance of Haydn's *Creation* is what

Morton Paley calls a “cruel joke by author upon reader,” as the organist is a dying girl playing for her dying father (21). Yet the richness of Haydn’s *Creation* extends well beyond the obvious irony of including a song that celebrates the Creation in a narrative that marks the end of the human species: the history of *The Creation*’s composition itself reveals the infamous oratorio to be a kind of malformation. The libretto for this oratorio is a beautiful disaster, a nearly impressive series of mistranslations, originally composed in English from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and the Book of Genesis before being translated into German and back again into English. The result is a bad translation. Indeed, Schiller famously called the oratorio “a hodge-podge without character [...] The whole thing is frigid” (qtd. in Stravinsky 85). Thus, in keeping with the concerns over the novel’s interrogation of the shifts in the disciplines, the fact that Shelley selects a musical piece that is already disfigured due to its serial mistranslations lends further credence to the novel’s highly critical representation of the humanistic disciplines. In selecting an oratorio disfigured by a mangled libretto, Shelley suggests that lodged within the anthem of creation is the disfiguring act of translation; rather than providing a clear-cut narrative, we are presented with a piece whose meaning is always already lost in translation. Thus, the process of creation itself is muddied: Shelley’s commentary perhaps on any illusory moment of idealism, any chance we might have of reading this scene in a redemptive light, is dramatically undercut and undermined by its bad translation. Hence, music within the novel, instead of marking a natural order, now becomes a barometer of socio-cultural disorder. Thus, there is no mistaking what music (or art, more broadly) signals – not only the failure of cosmic harmony but also the failure of nerves, of refined nerves so valued by the discourse of sensibility. More than being plagued by memories, Verney

suffers physiologically from the novel's various forms of pathogenic music and other unsettling acoustic events.

5.7 Strange Resonances: The Sound of the Inhuman

It is not only man-made music such as the oratorio that shocks the survivors' systems; there is also nature's "music" in the form of birdsong and other acoustic events, such as the crashing of waves. Here, the force of these acoustic events is felt so strongly it functions as a kind of wounding. Indeed, a parallel exists between the organ in the deserted soundscape of the empty church and the injured robin's chirp against the "unbroken silence" (243). Both these scenes share the image of a dilapidated lung – here, organ in the mechanical and physiological sense – labouring to make sound against a backdrop of silence; it is an image of a wounded body (instrumental and animal), that linkage indicative of pathological music. Indeed, the novel is deeply marked by unsettling acoustic events that include music and sounds, more generally.

In addition to the agitating force of music, another sound that is especially unsettling is *the sound of the animal*. The animal, and more specifically the dog, is a thought that Shelley nurses throughout *The Last Man*. Together, animal and human forge an economy of resonances that enables us to attend to their kinship, one rooted in sound or "voice" in Jean-Luc Nancy's sense of the term as "what sounds from a human throat without being language, which emerges from an animal gullet or from any kind of instrument, even from the wind in the branches: the rustling toward which we strain or lend an ear" (22). Voice, or sound more generally, is a capacious term that allows us to think about a sonority belonging to both animal and human; voice yokes animal and human in an economy of resonances.

In *Listening* Jean-Luc Nancy asks: “What does it mean for a being to be immersed entirely in listening, formed by listening or in listening, listening with all his being?” (4). Here, considering what it means to listen as opposed to understand, Nancy pays particular attention to the way that the act of listening opens up the subject to become instead a “resonant self.” Sound, Nancy notes, “outweighs form. It does not dissolve it, but rather enlarges it; it gives it an amplitude, a density, and a vibration or an undulation whose outline never does anything but approach” (2). He distinguishes between hearing, which is an understanding of the sense, and listening, which is “to be straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible” (6). The subject of the listening, the one who is listening, is emptied out and only exists as a nexus of resonances: “he is perhaps no subject at all, except as the place of resonance, of its infinite tension and rebound, the amplitude of sonorous deployment and the slightness of its simultaneous redeployment – by which a voice is modulated in which the singular of a cry, a call, or a song vibrates by retreating from it” (21-22). Verney is a listening subject in Nancy’s sense of the term; he constantly strains towards sound and fails to recognize it, even when the sound is what should be an easily recognizable form, namely human voice. While visual and textual traces of other humans are also a preoccupation of his as he scours Europe in search of a human companion, Verney is acutely aware of the *sound* of extinction, of the *sound* of the world being emptied of man. Indeed, Verney’s senses – including his hearing – are painfully magnified after he comes into contact with the plague: “methought I could emulate the speed of the racehorse, discern through the air objects at the blinding distance, hear the operations of nature in her mute abodes; my senses had become so refined and susceptible after my recovery from mortal disease”

(271). Verney is hypersensitive; he listens, an act which, as Nancy says, “is always to be on the edge of meaning, or in an edgy meaning of extremity, and as if the sound were precisely nothing else than this edge, this fringe, this margin” (7).

Verney’s hypersensitivity to voice (both human and nonhuman) – that “rustling toward which we strain or lend an ear,” as Nancy puts it – manifests itself in its vertiginous affect. As Verney comes to realize his own decentering, as Shelley slowly kills off every other human companion in the narrative, he becomes, like Heidegger’s animals, “poor-in-world” – which is to have, as Derrida notes, “a world in the mode of a *not-having*” (“Eating Well” 277). Man, as Verney says, “the queller of the elements, the lord of created nature, the peer of demi-gods, existed no longer” (253). Here, Shelley places the nearly extinguished human race in the same poverty as animals, and shows them not attuned with the world but resonating with it like ants running about “in search of their lost companions” (250).

Heidegger in his *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* suggests that humans, unlike animals, are *attuned* to their world. Revealing his humanist and anthropocentric tendencies, Heidegger suggests that humans are always attuned to the world and have an accessibility to the world, whereas animals are only able to *behave towards* objects in the world. As Gerard Kuperus notes, Heidegger defines the human through this “*ability to be attuned*,” rather than the more traditional markers of logos, reason, or politics (13). Animals are limited by the inability to penetrate their environment, to really “know” the things around them. Heidegger writes: “the extent and manner in which an animal is able to penetrate whatever is accessible to it is also limited” (qtd. in Kuperus 14). Humans, by contrast, can extend themselves and their knowledge, and penetrate the world much

deeper. Heidegger's example is the bee who "does not know the stamens of these blossoms *as* stamens, it knows nothing about the roots of the plant and it cannot know anything about the number of stamens or leaves" (ibid 14). Animals are poor in the world, relating through a particular mode of privation characterized as a non-attunement. Shelley's characters are closer to this category of privation rather than as agents that are, as Heidegger would have them, "world-forming".¹⁷⁰ A number of actual dogs appear within the novel: there is the nameless sheepdog of Verney's youth, who tends the flock while Verney is away; Florio, the faithful companion of Raymond, who goes with him everywhere, and; Lion, the Newfoundland dog, who joins Verney at the end of the novel to travel the world in search of others.¹⁷¹ Shelley also employs the dog as metaphor, and in ways that are often at odds with the actual behaviour of the canine companions. For example, Verney describes how in his youth he was "rough as the elements, and unlearned as the animals" he tended (11). While wandering the "hills of civilized England as uncouth a savage as the wolf-bred founder of old Rome" (11), Verney imagines himself as Romulus, founder of Rome, who along with his twin brother Remus was suckled by a wolf. Verney, recalling his "wild" youth, laments: "My life was like that of an animal, and my mind was in danger of degenerating into that which informs brute nature" (14). Strangely enough, what Verney associates with animality or "brute nature"

¹⁷⁰ A range of animals populate the novel including horses, cattle, dogs, and goats, the latter of which Peter Melville has explored at length in *Romantic Hospitality*. At stake in the goats, according to Melville, is an image of the family – one otherwise absent from the narrative. I suggest that dogs equally frame the narrative though their presence is only locatable by listening otherwise (to the moans of the dogs themselves and to the rhetoric, the various ways in which the dog is employed as a metaphor). The dog is a figure for listening.

¹⁷¹ The act of naming is also important in the novel. That Lionel Verney names his final companion Lion – an abbreviated form of his own namesake – we can read this as yet another variation on traditional notions of lineage and kinship.

is lawlessness, the love of peril and the resistance to authority (27) – characteristics, none of which are consistent with his account of dogs (who seem more humane than the humans). Verney writes: “My trusty dog watched the sheep as I slipped away to the rendezvous of my comrades” (13). The dog, we might imagine, continues to watch over this flock throughout the duration of Verney’s life – an idea we are confronted with when, much later in the narrative, Verney having fallen asleep dreams of a “shepherd’s whistle to his dog [...] of sights and sounds peculiar to my boyhood’s mountain life, which I had long forgotten” (348). Verney, after meeting Adrian, undergoes an ennobling process he describes as a kind of humanization, thereafter casting aside his responsibilities as a shepherd preferring instead to tend to “a flock of new-born ideas” (27). Even in his rhetoric, the young Verney describes himself as “panting” “for enterprises beyond [his] childish exploits” (14). What Shelley’s novel offers is an inversion of Heidegger’s paradigm of human attunement vs nonhuman non-attunement, and it does so by showing the extent to which the human is no longer attuned but instead has become resonant. Importantly then, the novel stages the distinction between the *ability to be attuned* and the *ability to resonate*. Where “attune” means “to bring into harmony,” “resonate” is quite different, meaning “to cause a sound to be prolonged, echoed, or modified by resonance” (OED), though resonance’s real power lies, as Marsha Meskimmon notes, in “its ability to shatter what had been thought to be solid:”

resonance enables us to conceive the power which differences can have when they connect and harmonize. The ‘synchronous vibrations’ which resound are not the same, they do not become one. Instead, it is because they meet at coincident

points while maintaining their difference that they can act in the here and now, that they can resonate. (238)

Hence, resonance as a mode of shattering rather than attunement as a mode of harmonizing appeals closer to Shelley's apocalyptic text, this "journal of death" (Shelley 209).

The poverty of both animal and human resonates in 1) changes to the landscape (the loss or setting aside of work, a certain becoming wild), and, 2) ruptures in the soundscape (moans, which are indistinguishable as human or animal, or those sounds which resonate between subjects). Verney, troubled by the "utter inutility" of his activities (241), bemoans the loss of his "old occupations [...] To read were futile – to write, vanity indeed. The earth, late wide circus for the display of dignified exploits, vast theatre for a magnificent drama, now presented a vacant space, an empty stage – for actor or spectator there was no longer aught to say or hear" (241). Beyond the loss of intellectual labours, this "utter inutility" extends to the loss of physical labour, which is most evident in the countryside:

The fields had been left uncultivated, weeds and gaudy flowers sprung up [...] the work had been left half-way, the ploughman had died beside the plough, the horses had deserted the furrow, and no seedsman had approached the dead; the cattle unattended wandered over the fields and through the lanes [...] Sickly and few, the country people neither went out to sow nor reap; but sauntered about the meadows, or lay under the hedges, when the inclement sky did not drive them to take shelter under the nearest roof. (252)

Here, the “country people” saunter about the fields and lay strangely under the hedges, wandering like cattle, Wordsworthian Beggars pecking about the countryside, or the living-dead. This scene of unproductivity rings as a direct contrast to Adam Smith’s dictum in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* that what distinguishes man from all other animals is his labour, his “propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another” (25). Furthermore, where Smith uses the examples of cattle and dogs to explain how the “effects of those different geniuses and talents, for want of the power or disposition to barter and exchange, cannot be brought into a common stock, and do not in the least contribute to the better accommodation and conveniency of the species” (30), Shelley uses the disfiguring idleness and utter inutility of the country people to show their greater proximity to Smith’s animals than his great labouring humans. Just as “the strength of the mastiff is not, in the least, supported either by the swiftness of the greyhound, or by the sagacity of the spaniel, or by the docility of the shepherd’s dog” (Smith 30), Shelley’s country people – the dead ploughman, the absent seedsman, and the “sickly and few” country people – fail to be of use to one another. Where these diseased country people seem to merge with the equally unproductive nature – the “deserted” horses, “unattended” cattle, and “uncultivated” fields – they are further dislocated within the city, showing that what has eroded is any distinction between city and country, civilization and savagery; in both *topoi* the distinguishing markers of man’s specialness – labour in the country, art and culture in the city – have collapsed. In the city, “birds, and tame animals, now homeless, had built nests, and made their lairs in consecrated spots” (Shelley 262) becoming “kennels for dogs and stables for cattle” (263). In London, Verney hears “the lonely silence of the

unpeopled streets” (262) and the “voiceless steeples of the churches” (262) before moving on to the “voiceless towns” of Italy (336). While in London, a melody cuts through the silence and seems to violently overwhelm Verney: “a human voice, strange now to hear [...] It was a child singing a merry, lightsome air; there was no other sound” (262). This absolute silence, cut by one single voice, is later echoed in the text by haunting organ music, a young woman playing Haydn’s *Creation* (328). Both of these “final performances” resound with even greater fullness by virtue of being performed in empty cities, which are already noisier because, as Beth Meszaros observes, they have many non-absorbent reflective surfaces and sound paths which results in a greater intensity in sound (119). And yet, both these piercing sounds figure as echoes of the earlier, quieter sound of a robin’s chirp that Verney recalls while traveling through the woods. He recalls, having saved this young robin, how against the “unbroken silence” was this “feathered nursling [...] warm, and safe, speaking its content with a light chirp” (243). The starkness of the auditory contrast between the silence and quiet chirp is echoed again with the “lightsome air” (262) of the young girl, and finally with the overwhelming organ peal of Haydn’s *Creation*. Thus, as the narrative unfolds a distinct soundscape emerges: at the same time that the novel is being emptied of man it is filling up with sound.

The novel’s paramount acoustic event occurs when Verney finally awakens as the sole survivor; he is acutely aware of the acoustics of this experience and runs to the shore “calling on the beloved names. Ocean drank in, and absorbed my feeble voice, replying with pitiless roar” (347). Later, he notes, “the sighing wind, mimicking a human cry, roused me to bitter, fallacious hope” (348). The narrative reaches a feverish pitch when

Verney awakens from his pastoral dreams – which itself is an acoustic event: he dreams of a shepherd’s whistle to his dog – to the deafening emptiness of his life now as the last man on earth. He is confronted with sound:

Now I awoke for the first time in a dead world – I awoke alone – and the dull dirge of the sea, heard even amidst the rain, recalled me to the reflection of the wretch I had become. The sound came like a reproach, a scoff – like the sting of remorse in the soul – I gasped – the veins and muscles of my throat swelled, suffocating me. I put my fingers to my ears, I buried my head in the leaves of my couch, I would have dived to the centre to lose hearing of that hideous moan.

(349)

Indeed, Verney’s dream of the pastoral sound of the shepherd’s whistle to his dog is violently replaced by that hideous, inhuman acousmatic sound – a moan whose origin is, at first, unclear. It is unclear from where this horrifying sound comes; it torments Verney as an inescapable sound, as if he were locked in a resonance chamber. Verney finds himself displaced by this “hideous moan” that now conceivably comes from within him, just as he was earlier displaced by the “the sound of regular distant moans” (161), those disturbing moans of his friend Raymond’s dying dog, which were initially undetermined to be “human cries” or “more like the howling of a dog” (161). In this earlier scene, it is the unknown voice, what Verney calls a “melancholy howl” (162), that unsettles Verney enough to race back into the ruined city of Constantinople on a mission to “rescue the sufferer, whether human or brute” (162). When Verney finds it to be the “dying dog of Raymond crouched beside the mutilated form” of Raymond, he ambiguously says: “At such a time sorrow has no voice; affliction, tamed by its very vehemence, is mute” (162).

Verney and Raymond's dog both share in this muteness. The voice of the wind, animal and man become indistinguishable, and, in what is perhaps the most explicit resonance, the dog who accompanies "Lionel" Verney as his only companion by the end of the novel is similarly named "Lion" – whose name we might hear as a half-lost echo, or resonance. We are confronted with a vertiginous performance of acoustic dislocations. In short, the novel leaves behind a model of attunement, of harmony, of aesthetics for one of resonance, noises and sounds. However, there are no harmonious cadences at the conclusion of this novel, no clear sense of what survives other than something, perhaps the germ of the arts. Similar to how Morton Paley observes that the strange temporality of the novel absolves the reader of having to imagine a future without readers (24), the novel stages that the disciplines of art, literature and music in their germinal, pared down forms – via the figure of voice and sound, and various acts of reading and writing – continue to survive albeit in a minimal existence.

If Shelley's novel is *heteroglossic*, a well-documented site of many voices both from other Romantic writers and literary characters, ranging from Wordsworth and Coleridge to a thinly veiled Byron and Percy Shelley, its pages also echo with a multitude of voices (in Nancy's capacious sense of "voice") that announce new modes of being. Indeed, sound renders Verney a "nerve o'er which do creep / The else unfelt oppressions of this earth" (*Julian and Maddalo* 449-50). By examining Shelley's novel through its unsettling soundscape, we can see that the sounds within the text signal the horror of existence but also how through *the act of listening*— that is to say, as listening subjects – Shelley's characters (human and otherwise) reveal their openness to one another, a mode of being-together that erodes ontological boundaries. The sound of the animal –

particularly its moan – has a dizzying affect on the listening subject. This unsettling hypersensitivity between animals and humans is one strategy, contra the Heideggerian philosophy of ‘attunement’, that Shelley uses to show species as open to one another, forming a kind of kinship based on resonances rather than harmony, a filiation based not on descendants or generation but on shared deprivation, a mode of a *not-having* together.

5.8 The Return of the Disciplines

However, towards the end of the novel when Verney and his last few friends are on the cusp of their extinction, the disciplines slowly and mysteriously reappear. When Adrian is found reading a book, his “eye wandered from the pages [...] his looks confessed that his thoughts had quitted the inanimate print, for pages more pregnant with meaning, more absorbing, spread out before him” (326). We can read this passage as the failure of literature to captivate, but simultaneously as the renewal of literature via the act of reading, the return of reading as a particular way of viewing the world. This might be the narrative’s tipping point. Verney recalls how the earth’s beauty caused him to be “carried away by wonder” and forget the “death of man” (327), while hearing the organ performance of Haydn’s *Creation* causes Verney to wonder: “old and drooping as humanity had become, the world yet fresh as at creation’s day, might still be worthily celebrated by such an hymn of praise” (328).

In their slow and nearly clandestine reappearance, the disciplines come limping back – like the clubfooted Byron, or palsied Cumberland Beggar. Language is accompanied by what Verney calls “our long drawn agony” (340), as he laments “how can words image sensations, whose tormenting keenness throw us back, as it were, on the deep roots and hidden foundations of our nature” (340). And yet, despite this lamentation

over the inadequacy of language, or what seems to more generally be a problem with *form*, or *Bildung*, Verney – like Beckett’s ‘unnamable’ who can’t go on, and yet does – continues narrating in a highly elliptical manner with digressions in the present tense constantly tearing through the narrative’s fabric of anteriority. As such, this failure of “words to image sensations” is not only a problem with *Bildung* as form but also *Bildung* in the sense of development. From the botched libretto of Haydn’s *Creation*, the ironic choice in genre of the oratorio (the harmonious meeting of individual and chorus), the sick musicians and opera-dancer, the performance of *Macbeth* that drives Verney out of the theatre, the deeply flawed sketches for Raymond’s proposed national gallery, the ill-timed recitations of poetry, the novel stages various de-formations of *Bildung* and as such participates in a critique of aesthetic ideology.

5.9 De-formations

Part of the novel’s tension is whether to read the movement of the disciplines – what I am calling the limping, peristaltic movement of music, literature and poetry – as a triumphant return, a testimony to their resilience and sustainability despite the extinction of man, or as something profoundly darker, an inhuman force unto itself that reflects back to man not the mirror image of an intact subject, but that further refracts the shattered subject, the shattered image of man. The ending of the novel is neither bleakly nihilistic, nor does it offer a return of the disciplines to what Schelling in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* calls “the general ocean of poetry” (124).

Poetry, for Schelling, is the mother of all disciplines; it brings philosophy and the sciences into existence and continues to nurture them, until they reach their full potential and recede back to the primary maternal discipline of poetry. This ebb and flow of the

disciplines is a movement echoed in the final pages of Shelley's novel albeit with a far deeper darkness. Even before the sublime ending where the histrionic Verney flanked by his canine companion stands on the shores of Europe, the representation of water – indeed, turbulent water – begins filling the pages of Verney's lone existence. Water, and specifically the assaulting sound of crashing waves and turbulent water, is the sole deafening sound of existence when Verney awakens for the first time as the “last man.” What becomes evident in the final phase of the novel, when Verney finally becomes the eponymous last man, is the figure of (inhuman) sound, the “dull dirge of the sea” and the “hideous moan” (349). The novel moves from the little girl's solitary melody (262), to the organ music (328), to the overwhelming sound of Verney's minimal degree of existence (349), an *acousmatic* sound – that is, an unfamiliar sound whose origin is unclear.¹⁷² Hence, music – indeed, the highly intricate and balanced music of Baroque harmony and counterpoint – moves episodically towards its minimal point, as recognizable harmony and counterpoint eventually give way to uncanny, inhuman sound. Now, aesthetics – as embodied by Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* – gives way to acousmatic sound.¹⁷³ Here, the double fugue structure of Haydn's oratorio is fully embodied in the entwining of the two narratives: the oratorio that sounds the creation of the world, and the narrative of the last man, this “journal of death” as Verney calls it.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Acousmatic sound is a term used by film theorist Michel Chion in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, adopted from composer Pierre Schaeffer, to refer to an off-screen sound of which the viewer cannot see the origin. This mysterious sound propels the narrative by causing the viewer to actively ask after the nature and cause of the sound.

¹⁷³ The novel itself shares a tripartite structure with Haydn's oratorio.

¹⁷⁴ In the second part of the oratorio, which begins with the fifth day of Creation and the formation of the animals, the chorus “Achieved Is the Glorious Work” ends with a double fugue. The majestic ending segues into the third part and the entrance of Adam and Eve. (See Machlis and Forney 302-306)

Processes, figures and emblematic symbols of creation give way to processes of becoming undone. Replacing the roaring masses of performers and musicians at the performance of an oratorio, or of the sweeping crescendos that mark Haydn's *Creation* oratorio itself, is the inverse or negative image: the deafening rush of Verney's solitary existence is now the absent presence, the deafening silence that marks this process of unbecoming. Haunting the novel are "ancestral voices" (30) – to use a phrase from Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* – both human and otherwise, living and those echoing from beyond. Indeed, the imagined sound of the ghostly multitude torments Verney's mind when in Rome: "I, who just now could almost hear the shouts of the Roman throng" (361). We arrive at the end of *The Last Man* knowing that something survives without fully knowing what: something of literature, poetry, and music, survives. I am calling this indistinguishable something the indestructible germ of art that registers within the novel through the figure of sound or voice. What is not audible, however, is any point at which the individual sounds combine to form a new kind of harmony. Music operates as a larger catch-all container, a metonym for all the disciplines, since music, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, displays greater deterritorialisation than any other art.¹⁷⁵

5.10 The Sound of The End

Shelley's novel stages the ideological exhaustion of aesthetics and of aesthetic education. The emptied "spots" of culture, architectural wonders, the statues of Castor and Pollux (359) – all of these cultural markers or "stupendous remains of human exertion" (358)

¹⁷⁵ In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari compare music to other arts, such as painting, suggesting that "music has a deterritorializing force that is much greater, much more intense and collective at the same time, and the voice a power of being deterritorialized that is also much greater (302).

that accumulate throughout the novel are rendered meaningless in the face of human extinction – or, as in the case of “Ozymandias,” testaments to mutability. Such cultural artifacts only matter if the world to which they refer still exists. Indeed, one of the issues at stake in this novel is precisely what that “world” is. Since the narrative stretches across England (among other European metropolises), one backdrop for this crisis is England’s lack of a constitution, that missing politico-historical grounding that only exacerbates the cultural hemorrhaging caused by the loss of its great cultural traditions, or what Žižek calls England’s “substance of traditions” in lieu of a constitution.¹⁷⁶ However, the world of the novel is not singularly England; the novel is decidedly cosmopolitan, a collusion of decaying decadence from a variety of European metropolises, suggestive that no constitution or “substance of traditions” provide a bulwark against inhuman forces like extinction. The failure of aesthetics becomes the cosmopolitan backdrop of the novel, a pathogenic extension – or metastasis – of the localized crises in her earlier novel, *Frankenstein*, where, as Maureen McLane has convincingly argued, aesthetic education fails to properly humanize the Creature into human society.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ This is an observation developed out of Žižek’s analysis of Alfonso Cuarón’s *Children of Men* (2006), a film that shares a number of similarities with Shelley’s novel. Both are set in the future, in England, and take as their focus the impending extinction of the human race. Where extinction is caused by the plague in Shelley’s novel, it is caused by human infertility in the film. Hence, some of Žižek’s analyses can help frame important issues common to both: “By setting the movie in England, only there, despair can be felt. England’s one of the few countries in the world that doesn’t have a constitution. Because it can rely on its substance of traditions, you don’t need it written. And in such a country, the loss of this historical dimension, the loss of this substance of meaning is felt much worse” (Commentary). Like Shelley’s novel, the final scene of the film ends with an image of the boat. Žižek comments: “What I like is that the solution is the boat. It doesn’t have roots. It’s rootless. It floats around. This is, for me, the meaning of this wonderful metaphor, boat. The condition of the renewal means you cut your roots. That’s the solution” (Commentary).

¹⁷⁷ For a magisterial reading of *Frankenstein* see McLane’s *Romanticism and the Human Sciences*, ch.3.

The Last Man ends with Verney making plans to leave Italy by sailing around in a small boat with “a few books, provisions, and [his] dog” (366) in hopes of floating through the Mediterranean, Asia, down the “tawny shore of Africa” and the “far Indian ocean” (366-7) in search of a human companion. However, we have good reason to doubt whether Verney will actually make this trek, since, after all, he admits “These are wild dreams. Yet since, now a week ago, they came on me, as I stood on the height of St. Peter’s, they have ruled my imagination” (367). This eruption of the present tense in the final paragraph of the novel undercuts the idealism, expressed only sentences earlier, of his future project of traveling the world.¹⁷⁸ Verney becomes disillusioned with Rome, as evinced by his pathological response to its artwork, and by the ways in which moments of idealism are abruptly undercut, such as when he imagines the sound of the Roman crowds, a scene that as Graham Allen observes “collapses before the stark depopulated reality before him” (28). Here, Verney’s imagination in building and collapsing the fantasmatic scene of a human voices wounds him like Beatrice’s in Shelley’s *Valperga*, for whom “no content of mind exists [...] no beauty of thought, or poetry; and, if imagination live, it is as a tyrant, armed with fire, and venom darts” (367). Indeed, the building and collapsing of the fantasmatic scene of the Roman multitude in Verney’s imagination finds a displaced image in *Valperga* when Castruccio witnesses the literal collapse of a Florentine festival, “a strange and tremendous spectacle” (66), a staged exhibition of “Hell, such as it had been described in a poem now writing by Dante

¹⁷⁸ Verney’s panoramic view of Rome is recast in Shelley’s unfinished short story “Valerius: The Reanimated Roman,” though here Rome “only awakened a vague and transitory interest” for Valerius.

Alighieri, a part of which had been read, and had given rise to the undertaking” (65). The stage with its

accumulated drapery [...] appeared for a moment as a reality, rather than a representation [...] when suddenly a tremendous crash stamped with tenfold horror the terrific mockery. The bridge of Carraia, on which a countless multitude stood, one above the other, looking on the river, fell [...] its props loosening, and the curved arch shake [...] it fell in with a report that was reverberated from the houses that lined the Arno [...] it rebelled along the sky, accompanied by fearful screams, and voices that called on the names of those whom they were never more to behold. (66)

Hence, the collapse of art is a scene Shelley repeatedly stages throughout her fiction, a problematic she continues to work-through from *Frankenstein* (1818), through *Valperga* (1823) to *The Last Man* (1826). However, in both *Valperga* and *The Last Man*, Shelley pairs the failure of art with imagery of water. In *Valperga* the “countless multitude” on the bridge “looking on the river” falls in a performance of Dante’s poem gone disastrously wrong, undermining Percy Shelley’s idealization of Dante’s poetry in *A Defence of Poetry*, as “the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and antient [*sic*] world” (1173). *Valperga*’s defective architecture is symbolic of the failure of aesthetics to knit together these disparate times, a figure that becomes intensified when we consider how Kant describes his (aesthetic) project in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), as the act of “throw[ing] a bridge from one domain to the other,” that is, of bridging the gap between nature (what is) and freedom (what ought to be) (81/Ak5:195).

In *The Last Man*, Mary Shelley returns us to the “poisonous waters which flow from death through life” – to invoke another idealized description of poetry in Percy Shelley’s *Defence* – but without the promise of aesthetics, that is without the “secret alchemy” that Percy earlier celebrates for being able to turn the contaminated waters to “potable gold” (*Defence* 1176). Verney and his boat packed with “Homer and Shakespeare” (367) sit suspended on the shore of the Mediterranean ocean. Though both scenes are marked by different intensities (chaotic movements in *Valperga* and abortive stillness in *The Last Man*) they both represent an inoperativity of art. Indeed, Shelley’s Mediterranean is not Schelling’s “general ocean of poetry”; instead, the river that Verney floats on is muddied by the uncertainty over whether he will ever make the journey at all – and unlike Schelling who uses the sea as a generative mother of all disciplines, Verney sees it as the site of nothingness: “the sea, which, though it be a grave, rears no monument, discloses no ruin” (342). Verney’s boat, the “tiny bark” (367), becomes a floating remainder of humanity.

Whereas *Frankenstein*, late in the novel, features the scene of the Creature scrawling a series of directive statements into natural objects, such as rocks and trees, *The Last Man* closes with the scene of Verney engraving or leaving graffiti-like marks on the city buildings, icons of Western culture. The imperative in both acts of writing is to follow: the Creature dares Victor to follow him, while Verney hopes against the odds that there will be another human survivor to follow his path to Rome. Here, the iconic monuments of Western culture, such as the Dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral, become its mausoleums. Indeed, it is telling that Rome, “that wondrous city, hardly more illustrious for its heroes and sages, than for the power it exercised over the imaginations of men”

(359), is the final site of humanity – the city in which Verney’s narrative ends. Rome, “replete with relics of ancient times” (359), reveals Verney to be a Schiller-like figure, who in his *Aesthetic Education* valorizes the Ancients against the Moderns as the highpoint of aesthetics.¹⁷⁹ Yet *The Last Man*, through its particular references to Greek art and sculpture – such as the statues of Phidias and Praxiteles “representing Castor and Pollux” (359) – explicitly challenges the sustainability of this tradition in the face of human extinction. Here, Rome is an overdetermined site much like Percy Shelley’s description of it in *Adonais* as “at once the Paradise, / The grave, the city and the wilderness” (ll.433-434, *SPP* 404). Verney’s response to Rome rings as a distorted echo of other accounts of Rome, such as Lord Byron’s account in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and Germaine de Staël’s *Corrine or Italy*. In the fourth canto of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* the poet travels through Italy (Venice, Arqua, Ferrara, Florence and finally Rome). Unlike Verney who is frustrated and enraged by Rome’s art and its emotional barrenness, its “unsympathizing complacency” (363), Childe Harold sees Italy as the “Mother of Arts!” (4. XLVII l.3) whose “decay / Is still impregnate with divinity” (4. LV l.6-7), an idealistic description also echoed in Germaine de Staël’s account of Rome’s art. For de Staël, Rome

presents the melancholy aspect of degradation and misery, but all of a sudden a broken column, a bas-relief half destroyed, stones knit together in the indestructible manner of the ancient architects, remind us that there is in man an

¹⁷⁹ In Shelley’s later *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844), Italy is figured as a “glimpse of paradise regained,” according to Clarissa Campbell Orr (paragraph 41). A future reading might compare her dystopian view of Rome in *The Last Man* with her paradisiacal Rome of the *Rambles*. Such a reading might enable us to make the case that, following Morton Paley who reads the *Last Man* as an apocalypse without millennium, that *Rambles* is that delayed millennium that *The Last Man* never fully achieves.

eternal power, a divine spark, which he must never cease to excite in himself and revive in others. (1.137)

If Verney appears to have a similar aesthetic experience in Rome when he describes how “the sight of the poetry eternised in these statues [of Castor and Pollux], took the sting from the thought, arraying it only in poetic ideality” (359), such an idealistic response (sculpture as “poetry eternized”) is immediately undercut when only pages later Verney recalls how he “passed long hours in the various galleries” (362-3) where “marble forms of divine beauty [...] looked on me with unsympathizing complacency” (363) – a darkening of the “marble grew divine” of *Prometheus Unbound* (II.IV.82). Verney’s scurrilous attack on these statues recalls the strange behavior (that “access of delirium”[320]) of the sick opera dancer: Verney “often in wild accents [...] reproached them for their supreme indifference [...] often, half in bitter mockery, half in self-delusion, [he] clasped their icy proportions, and, coming between Cupid and his Psyche’s lips, pressed the unconceiving marble” (363). Hence, what is remarkably absent from Verney’s aesthetic experience is the “divine spark” championed by de Staël. Again, as in *Frankenstein* where something misfires, or mis-conducts during the scene of education, what we are presented with here is an image of a disfiguring spark, such as in art’s capacity or potential to set off or incite a kind of pathological response. Ancient art rouses Verney into a kind of pathological rather than poetic madness. Thus here, as in *Frankenstein*, Shelley mounts her critique of the aesthetic tradition through the figure of the nonhuman/inhuman.

The disciplines return (or survive) – mangled, disfigured, limping, that is to say wearing all the markers of a Romantic physiology, a Byronic body – but no longer with

the steadfast idealism or the unbreakable faith in their humanizing potential. Art, to use Baudrillard's phrase, "seeps back [...] in infinitesimal doses" ("On Disappearance" 27) – through various references to literature, acts of reading, haunting melodies, and acts of listening – without their idealism. Instead, these signposts of art become markers of their impotence and their impotentiality to humanize. The novel's references to Romantic novels by Radcliffe and de Staël, Paley notes, ironically undercut the idealistic thought of community by working to create instead a "ghostly community" (13). While Verney may take "a few books [...] Homer and Shakespeare" (367), and bitterly plans to write a book dedicated "TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD. SHADOWS, ARISE, AND READ YOUR FALL! BEHOLD THE HISTORY OF THE LAST MAN" (364), he is aware of the impossible future of the book: "for whom to read?" (364).¹⁸⁰ Unlike Godwin for whom the "discovery of printing" appears to offer an intimation of immortality – "By this art we seem to be secured against the future perishing of human improvement. Knowledge is communicated to too many individuals, to afford its adversaries a chance of suppressing it" (*Enquiry* 1. 281-2) – Shelley repeatedly figures printing or writing as a highly fraught act, and one that by no means can secure the attainment of one's humanity (as in *Frankenstein*) or secure the survival of humanity, as in the event of extinction (as in *The Last Man*), a process which, as Marc Redfield etymologically parses, means "disappearance without residue" ("Wordsworth's Dream" 61).¹⁸¹ Although Verney

¹⁸⁰ According to Richard Albright, "the arts continue with Verney's recording of his history, before he abandons writing altogether at the end of the novel" (14). Writing, however, is not abandoned, I would argue, as we end with Verney packing his boat with books and having "carved on [St. Peter's] topmost stone the aera 2100, last year of the world!" (365). This engraving is a germ of writing.

¹⁸¹ The word "extinction," Redfield writes, "is interestingly tautological: *extinguo* is a third conjugation verb based on *stinguo*, which itself means to extinguish or put out, which in turn means that the *ex*-prefix adds almost nothing, just a little extra death: *extinguo* – to quench, extinguish, kill, destroy. The *ex* (from

attends these galleries and continues to engage in aesthetic tasks (such as writing the individual history of the Last Man), Shelley ultimately shows the futility of such a project in the face of extinction, and gestures at the limits of such idealistic ideologies through Verney's quasi-pathological response to the marble statues. Hence, the figures of art and the disciplines fail to create the idealized community so valorized and indeed promised by (Schillerian) Romantic aesthetics. Shelley's novel, beyond narrating the fate of a solitary human survivor, accounts for the extinction or minimal existence of a Romantic aesthetic ideology.

The novel itself becomes a metonym for the larger cultural anxiety over the afterlife of Romanticism itself. *The Last Man* becomes more than a "journal of death" for the individual Verney; it becomes a signpost for Romantic literature at large at the cusp of the Victorian period, yet a new shift in aesthetics. Indeed, the final enigmatic scene of Verney standing on the shores of Western civilization – as the last Romantic – is a scene returned to in Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach*, whose speaker also shares in Verney's melancholic worldview, now recognizing the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" (25) of the "Sea of Faith" (21) or *Empedocles on Etna* where the eponymous Empedocles, the "weary man, the banished citizen" (II.11) shares both Verney's weariness and the impossible situation of surviving oneself like the stars and their "distant, melancholic lines" (270). This inhuman, liminal existence of "surviving oneself" that Empedocles

the Greek and ultimately Indo-European *eks* or *ek*, "out of") is an x of excessive withdrawal, the mark of an extra extinguishing, and that tautology or stutter may offer the best help we can get if we are seeking a non- (or almost-non-) apocalyptic representation of extinction" ("Wordsworth's Dream" 61).

associates with old, celestial bodies is itself a distant, melancholic echo or line extending from Shelley's last man. We imagine the "melancholy lines" in synesthetic ways, evoking the sight and sound of this strange existence: the way these old stars look, their lines that mark their age, while also holding open the possibility for their sound, their "melancholy lines" as in the sad, distant melodies of these celestial bodies that have survived themselves. Of course the melancholy lines evoke other images of broken lines, melodies, as Verney, the Last Man, stands on a new aesthetic of broken sounds that appears to mark so much of the early Victorian poetry, such as Thomas Hardy's *The Darkling Thrush* with its scored sky "like strings of broken lyres" (6) – an emblem for the failure of lyric poetry not unlike the Bard's breaking of his harp in Blake's *America*:

The stern Bard ceas'd, asham'd of his own song; enrag'd he swung
 His harp aloft sounding, then dash'd its shining frame against
 A ruin'd pillar in glittering fragments; silent he turn'd away. (2.18-20, 52)

Indeed, Shelley's novel gestures to this idea or image of a collapsing aesthetics – and with it a flagging idealism – in its references to birdsong and music, both of which pivot around the common image of an exhausted or dilapidated organ (in the physiological and instrumental sense). In addition to the organist who, having died, now lays "side by side, beneath the high walnut-tree" with her dead father (329), Raymond compares himself to a musical instrument without power. Recalling the rhetoric of the organ, he notes: "I find myself, for one, as a stringed instrument with chords and stops – but I have no power to turn the pegs, or pitch my thoughts to a higher or lower key" (52). Even Verney appears as a reluctant musician: "if talk failed under the pressure of thought, I had my clarinet with me, which awoke the echoes, and gave the change to our careful minds" (339).

Even here, music is only appealed to in light of the failure of talk, and it is strangely valued for awakening “the echoes” rather than its own properties. Music, like the other arts represented in the novel, appears mangled and disfigured, a symptom of the failure of aesthetics. While the arts survive in a germinal, pared-down form – which is repeatedly figured as sound or voice – what has been stripped away is the unflagging humanistic belief of aesthetics: that art will somehow secure a human community to come. *The Last Man* is Shelley’s thought towards what germ(s) of Romantic thought and art will survive. Like “shadows of futurity,” the deformations of the disciplines that belie the dampening of a Romantic idealism within Shelley’s novel find themselves cast over us as we consider the (un)sustainability of our own institutions and disciplines.

Where Shelley’s novel ends with the Last Man on the shores of Italy, we are uncannily returned here to Foucault’s infamous invocation of the sandy end of man in *The Order of Things* (“like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” [387]). We might even see in Foucault the anastomosis of a Romantic thought so privileged in the fiction of Mary Shelley.¹⁸² The same concerns over man and his disciplinary extensions (humanities) in Shelley’s fiction wash ashore in Foucault’s seminal text, such that I would want to agree with Gray Kochhar-Lindgren in wondering if, “Perhaps these inscribed memories and un-lived potentialities of Romanticism are now coming to haunt us” (9). To recognize the potentiality or potentialities of Romanticism (of Romantic thought) for thinking the future of disciplines we find ourselves engaged in what Jean-

¹⁸² Anastomosis: “Intercommunication between two vessels, channels, or distinct branches of any kind, by a connecting cross branch. Applied originally to the cross communications between the arteries and veins, or other canals in the animal body [...] between the separate lines of any branching system, as the branches of trees, the veins of leaves, or the wings of insects.”(OED)

Michel Rabaté sees as the demand of the future of theory, namely taking “stock of past events and inscribing oneself in a historical mode” (2). This call for our accountability but also our own inscription into what we might otherwise call our intellectual or theoretical “debt” to previous mode of thought, reminds us of the ever present purchase of the (Romantic) past for our future.

6 Conclusion: “from the model to the matrix”

The best possible time to contest for what the posthuman means is now, before the trains of thought it embodies have been laid down so firmly it would take dynamite to change them. – Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (291)

.....Round the decay

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away. – P.B. Shelley, “Ozymandias” (12-4)

In her recent book *Becoming Undone*, feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz considers three key moments in the history of the posthumanities, epistemic ruptures where certain privileged understandings of “the human” become undone by the troubling presence of the inhuman, those “animal, plant, and material forces that surround and overtake the human” (11). Like its usage in Grosz and Lyotard, the inhuman is part of a vocabulary that, in addition to “strange kinship” (Merleau-Ponty) and “innumerable company” (Blake), I have used throughout this study as a way of articulating the Romantic anamnesis of the human and inhuman.

For Grosz, the posthumanities rise out of three assaults on man: the Copernican revolution, which displaced the centrality of the earth; the Freudian revolution, which displaced consciousness; and most importantly, for Grosz, the Darwinian revolution, which “demonstrated that man descended from animals and remains still animal, and was perhaps a more profound insult to mankind’s sense of self than the other two” (13). What Darwinian science created, Grosz convincingly suggests, was

a new kind of humanity [...] a fleeting humanity whose destiny is self-overcoming, a humanity that no longer knows or masters itself, a humanity doomed to undo itself, that does not regulate or order materiality but that becomes other in spite of itself, that returns to those animal forces that enables all of life to ceaselessly become. (24)

Yet despite Darwin's rupturing of man's narcissism, or perhaps because of it, the nineteenth century and its "humanities" continued to draw grand lines of demarcation between the human and the inhuman – divisions found in earlier in Godwin, Kant, and a long history of the *humanitas*.

Without challenging the force of Darwinian science in the nineteenth century or the impact it has on our understanding of the human – an area of study that has been scrupulously examined – what "The Romantic Posthuman and Posthumanities" has attempted to do is assemble an alternate genealogy, a history of ideas that takes us prior to Darwin but that also takes as its focus the precarious co-existences of the human and the inhuman. Moving incrementally back to the Romantic period, out from under the stamp of Darwinian science, we find, in Romantic texts, a rich archive of vital negotiations over the certainty, centrality, and privilege of the human, a concept profoundly unsettled by an inhuman other.

If Romanticism has a future in shaping the key discussions of the posthumanities – climate change, various modalities of catastrophe theory, and the "strange kinship" between humans and the inhuman – it is because the same dark water flows between them. However, these two ships continue to pass one another in the night. One reason, as we've explored throughout this study, is the persistence of a Romantic ideology, of a

“ready-made” Romanticism whose disfigured image continues to be reproduced in much of the criticism today. Hence, despite many of the exciting new directions taken by Romantic studies, such as studies turned towards Romantic embodiment rather than psychic escape, or those interdisciplinary studies – like Nicole Reynolds’ *Building Romanticism*, to name but one example – they regrettably limit themselves by being far more conservative than they ought to be, evident in the ways they remain underpinned by aesthetics. A question we need to ask ourselves is the role we play in “disciplining” the study of Romanticism – in all senses of that word. How can we reorganize or disorganize a reified concept? Our challenge going forward, I want to suggest, requires working backwards “from the model to the matrix,” as Paul Klee put it (qtd. in Buci-Glucksmann 69), a movement oriented back to that “dark scheme of things” (Shelley *Letters* I. 419).

This study has attempted to follow two lines of thought that are complexly enmeshed – like Asia’s tangled tresses – in the philosophy and literature of Romanticism, the period that, as Deleuze says, begins with Kant. The first line of thought responded to the hysterical (because interminable and unanswerable) question of what is human (Kant’s question), and the vexing anamnesis, or painful working through, of the human/inhuman relationship. The second line of thought – and what is perhaps the study’s most original contribution to the field – analyzed the way this anamnesis was staged in the literary representations of the disciplines. Each chapter explored the way the text at hand represented the disciplines as something to tarry with: anthropology (chapter 1), music, history, and poetry (chapter 2), aesthetics (chapter 3), architecture (chapter 4), and literature and music (chapter 5). Kant’s pragmatic anthropology is, more accurately, a general anthropology in Bataille’s sense of general economy, a model that is darkened

in Shelley's negative anthropology. Where the first two chapters toggled between what is beyond man, in Kant, and behind or beneath man, in Shelley, chapters 3 and 4 located the inhuman within the human. After rehearsing and then deconstructing the aesthetic grounds on which Blake's illuminated work has typically been read, we witnessed the human flayed open revealing its inhumanities and the influence of parturitive science and surgery in Blake. Our final chapter framed the end of man through an extinction-event as Mary Shelley's thought-experiment about what it could mean for man and his cultural achievements – most notably literature and the arts – to think themselves down to a point of minimal existence, to imagine what “germ of restitution” – returning to Kant's interest in the germ (as discussed in chapter 1) – will survive beyond the death of humanity. Hence, the study is bookended by two speculative thinkers for whom the inhuman operates in accordance with Lyotard's definition of the inhuman, as a spur to thought. Across chapters 2 through to 5, we encountered exemplars of Romantic literature that thematized key disciplines as a form of disciplinary critique. These Romantic writers were, then, also keenly interested in the history, organization, and futurity of the disciplines – the very problematics that are defining the humanities today.

It is the hope of this study that these entwined lines of thought will deepen to become fault lines, the effects of which will be felt in studies of Romanticism and the posthumanities. This project aims to burrow beneath edifices, to persist like a germ, and grate like a vexing sound; it is a renewed effort at disfiguring both the humanism conjoined with Romanticism and the resistance of posthumanism to Romanticism. The payoff of “unsettling academic disciplinarity” is, as Andrew Willford and Eric

Tagliacozzo suggest, that it “opens up new opportunities for examining the inner workings of power, culture, and the archive” (1).

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Curriculum Vitae

Name: Elizabeth Effinger

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
2002-2006 B.A.

University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
2006-2008 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2008-2014 Ph.D.

Honours and Awards: Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2012-2013

Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Doctoral Fellowship
2010-2012

McIntosh Prize
2012

Graduate Student Teaching Award
2012

Related Work Teaching Assistant
Experience The University of Western Ontario
 2008-2012

Lecturer
 Huron University College
 2012, 2014

Lecturer
 University of Windsor
 2014

Select Publications:

“Shelley’s Clandestine Catastrophe: Disciplinary Dissolution in *The Last Man*.”
European Romantic Review 25.1 (2014): 19-34. Special Issue. Ed. Ranita Chatterjee and
 Diane Hoeveler.

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