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Unread: The (Un)published Texts of Romanticism

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

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Abstract

This dissertation reads the unpublished texts of Romanticism not as fragments on the road to publication but as psychoanalytic “partial objects” that re-figure our understanding of the relationship between Romantic authors and publication. Against positivist interpretations of literary production that limit writing to the professionalization of the author and to a sociology of texts, *Unread* develops the concept of the (un)published whose parenthetical bracketing signals an unstable suspension of textual instability that is at once prior to and yet persistently remains a part of the writing of the published text. I argue that non-publication also arises from the author’s relation to the act of writing itself, which reached its own point of crisis in the writing of Romantic authors. Drawing especially on Jacques Lacan’s re-imagining of object-relations, and the method of textual studies known as *la critique génétique*, the (un)published simultaneously promises unity and completion as well as disintegration and instability.

In Chapter 1, I analyze the three versions of Friedrich Schelling’s unfinished *The Ages of the World* (1811, 1813, 1815) to develop the different valences of the Romantic author’s relationship with the (un)published, which can be summarized as an encounter with the crisis (1811), the negation of crisis (1813), and the involuntary affirmation of crisis (1815). In Chapter 2, Wordsworth’s negation of the crisis of writing in the different versions of the *Salisbury Plain* poems (1790, 1795-98, 1842) and *The Prelude* (1798, 1805, 1850) result in an incorporation of that crisis that unworks his poetic project of self-constitution. In Chapter 3, I argue that Coleridge’s revisions to “Christabel” (1798-1834) before and after publication represent a relation to the text as a textual object, which traumatically confronts Coleridge with the Real of his desire and transforms revision into a function of the psychoanalytic drive, whose end is to have no end. In Chapter 4, John Clare’s (un)published writing reveals a dissatisfaction with both personal and impersonal perspectives and leaves no place for a stable subjectivity. Finally, in Chapter 5, Mary Shelley’s *Mathilda* represents an affirmation of the (un)published as a partial object, because it rejects the Symbolic of literary community while it still includes itself within the Symbolic as both that which exceeds it and as that which it lacks.

Keywords

Romanticism; British Romanticism; English Literature; Unpublished; Manuscript; Psychoanalysis; Genetic Criticism; Textual Unconscious; Jacques Lacan; German Idealism; German Romanticism; Friedrich Schelling; *Ages of the World*; William Wordsworth; *Salisbury Plain*; *The Prelude*; Samuel Taylor Coleridge; “Christabel”; John Clare; “I AM”; Mary Shelley; *Mathilda*; Object Relations; Partial Object; Desire; Trauma; Melanie Klein; Abraham and Török; Sigmund Freud.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| Table of Contents | v |
| List of Figures | vi |
| Introduction | 1 |
| I. What Remains Unread? | 1 |
| II. The <i>Textual Condition</i> and the Subject of Public Materialism | 16 |
| III. A Textual Idealism Without Absolutes | 26 |
| Chapter 1: Vanishing into Nothing: Schelling’s <i>Ages of the World</i> | 41 |
| I. The Question of Beginning | 41 |
| II. (Un)published Versions | 52 |
| III. A Part of God, A God Torn Apart: 1811 | 63 |
| IV. Original Yearning: 1813 | 76 |
| V. The Open Wound of Non-Being: 1815 | 88 |
| Chapter 2: Wordsworth’s Genetics: Preservation or Encryption | 105 |
| I. A “Maniac’s Anxiousness” | 105 |
| II. The Strange Repetition of Textual Immunity: The <i>Salisbury Plain Poems</i> | 116 |
| III. Textual Incorporation: Metaphor and Metonymy in <i>The Prelude</i> | 135 |
| IV. The Stone, the Shell & the Kernel | 150 |
| Chapter 3: “Christabel”: Revision Before and After Publication | 163 |
| I. The Retreating Retreat | 163 |
| II. A Practical and Theoretical Approach to Revision | 167 |
| III. Revision, Retreat, and the (Un)public Sphere | 171 |
| IV. (In)conclusions and Indifference | 181 |
| V. The Textual Object | 189 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 4: John Clare's Dissatisfaction | 198 |
| I. Who is John Clare? | 198 |
| II. First Person, Second Place | 211 |
| III. Third Person Impersonality | 226 |
| IV. (Im)personal (Dis)satisfaction | 236 |
| Chapter 5: <i>Mathilda</i> or There is No Textual Condition | 247 |
| I. Nothing is Missing | 247 |
| II. A Third Glance | 258 |
| III. The Hysteric's Oblique Offering | 272 |
| IV. "For it will be the same with thee, who art called our Universal Mother" | 279 |
| Works Cited | 291 |
| Curriculum Vitae | 308 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1. Darnton, Robert. <i>The Communications Circuit</i> . “What is the History of the Books?” | 18 |
| Figure 2. Blake, William. <i>The Book of Urizen</i> . Plate 1. | |
| William Blake Archive Online | 74 |

Introduction

I. What Remains Unread?

In answer to the question posed above, this dissertation claims that there is much that is still left unread. For while the question at first appears straightforward, it is not posed in terms of whether a particular text has literally been or not been read. Neither am I concerned, like the New Historicism, with texts and authors that have been sidelined by literary canons, which, as New Historicist critics argue, should be read since they still reflect the social and cultural codes of production that were illustrative of their respective historical periods. Rather, my concern has to do with a particular debate that occurred in the field of textual studies in the 1990s and how it relates to the texts of Romanticism. The debate revolves around this central question: how should bibliography and textual studies interpret, incorporate, or reject literary theory's—specifically post-structuralism and deconstruction's—assertion that all texts are subject to *textual instability*? For textual scholars, the problem of textual instability was distinct from the problems of language and signification that Derrida identified in *Of Grammatology* (1967) because textual instability was not only about the linguistic turn but about the fact that written, printed, or electronic texts often exist in different versions and thus possess significant or insignificant differences between themselves. The question of textual instability is one that, as G. Thomas Tanselle once stated, “is valuable because it directs attention to an aspect of textuality” that “was taken as the starting point, as the essential condition within which one had to work, not as a particular focus of interest in its own right” (“Textual Instability and Editorial Idealism” 49). It is also a question about which literary and textual critics prefer not to think.

The debate was mainly framed by two positions in editorial theory: the Greg-Bowers-Tanselle position and that of Jerome McGann.¹ In the twentieth century, editorial theory largely arose from the editing of medieval or Elizabethan texts where either no clear original could be discerned or there were significant scribal errors between versions. This method was developed by R. B. McKerrow's adaptation of Karl Lachmann's genealogical theory of textual editing from the nineteenth century and was called the theory of the copy-text, which, as Sally Bushell explains in *Text as Process* (2009), was used "to make clear the importance of deciding on the most authoritative manuscript (the 'best' text) by careful study" (10). In this sense, it is not the earliest version but the best version of a text that could be followed; even when an earlier text is available, if a later version embodies later corrections that the editor believes to be made by the author, this would form the copy-text. When W. W. Greg wrote "The Rationale of Copy-Text" (1950-51), he wished to give more freedom to editors in how they approach multiple manuscripts than that afforded by McKerrow and Lachmann's opinion that the decided upon copy-text must be re-copied exactly. Greg opposed the "tyranny of the copy-text," which placed an undue amount of authority on the best text that an editor selected as the basis of their own edition. Greg argued for the increased ability of an editor to choose from more than one version of a text if there was more than one text with substantive differences in content, while he also maintained the need for a disciplined approach to the accidentals in manuscript versions. Opposing an absolute freedom to editorial choices

¹ For more on this debate see Fredson Bowers's *Bibliography and Textual Criticism* (1964) and "Some Principles for Scholarly Editions of Nineteenth-Century American Authors" (1976); W. W. Greg's "The Rationale of Copy-text" (1950/51); Jerome McGann's *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983), *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (1983), and *The Textual Condition* (1991); and G. Thomas Tanselle's *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (1992).

based on subjective editorial decisions, Greg argued that a copy-text should be the earliest version in terms of accidentals—such as issues pertaining to punctuation and spelling—because later versions copied by scribes could be drastically different from the first or ‘original’ version. Substantive differences should not restrict the editor from modifying the copy-text with additions or revisions from later versions. This allowed room for authorial as well as editorial intention and intervention, since editors could then decide, based upon individual judgment, what parts of texts could be deemed authorial. Fredson Bowers extended Greg’s theory of copy-text to nineteenth-century texts, which complicated matters further since many nineteenth-century manuscripts had survived into the twentieth century. Many of these versions even had further authorial interventions that increased the need to define what actually constitutes authorial intention, because substantive as well as accidental differences were not just a matter of scribal error. Bowers differs from Greg in that he argues for the *final* manuscript version to be a sign of *final* authorial intention, hence the final manuscript version or final edition with the author’s revisions should form the copy-text for future editorial presentations of a work. These principles became codified and then adopted by the Center for Editions of American Authors (CEAA, founded in 1963), which defined the role editors should play in the presentation of editions.

Later, G. Thomas Tanselle, the most well-known defender of the Greg-Bowers approach, argued that editors must work to produce an ideal text, that is, a text that serves the practical needs of readers, edited according to the theories of Greg and Bowers. These texts are to be accompanied by an apparatus that provides either the rationale of the editor’s presentation or an apparatus to compare it with other substantive versions of the

text. Tanselle eschews any labelling of eclectic editing by subscribing to a belief that all versions are, as Bushell writes, “imperfectly impermanent within each individual incarnation” (84). As Tanselle writes in *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (1992), “the real work,” which is an idealized category, can be found “hovering somehow behind the physical text, which” serves “as an occasionally unreliable, but always indispensable, guide to it” (14-15). Tanselle’s position, therefore, gives priority to the editor’s presentation of a text, while it also makes room for the independent status of individually published texts. It is here that Jerome McGann enters into the debate. As opposed to Tanselle’s distinction between the ideal work and the material text, McGann develops a new approach that emphasizes the social aspects of the text’s material, but more importantly, *social* production. For McGann, authority is not constituted by authorial intention but by the actual labour of bringing a text to publication. His theory aims to release editors from the restrictions imposed by an author-centric approach to textual production and revises the concept of authority in favour of the social network from which a text emerges. As opposed to an intention that is solely possessed by the author, the social text constitutes a shared authority between multiple actors within a network.

This debate persists even today, and yet the way that it is framed excludes that which inspired the debates of the 1990s in the first place: theory. It is this exclusion that concerns me, for, to adapt Joan Copjec’s reading of Kant on the matter of textual studies, textual scholarship’s theorization of textual instability is engaged in a kind of “euthanasia of pure reason” (*Read my Desire* 201).² Faced with the problem of textual instability,

² Copjec borrows this phrase from Kant’s categorization of the two possible responses to the antinomies of reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There, Kant distinguishes how reason fails to conceive of the transcendental as a whole from both the side of the

which is also something that can never become a direct object of our experience, textual scholarship has assumed either one of the two responses that Kant outlines in reason's response to the problem of instability: dogmatism or scepticism. Adapting Kant's distinction to the matter of textual studies, current options dictate that we must either defend the dogmatic position held by Greg-Bowers-Tanselle, which is limited by the practical concerns of textual editions and which also forces us to recreate an author's intentions by means of editorial interpretation and apparatuses; or we take McGann's position, which maintains a skepticism regarding claims to even the mere artificiality of textual stability. Many, following McGann, argue that we must locate authority not in authors themselves but in the social authorship of a text, which is located in the act of publication.³

The question of textual instability, though, has been displaced in both responses.

While McGann's social approach to the study of published texts has proven successful

mathematical and the dynamic antinomies of reason. Copjec uses Kant's description of the failure of reason to account for the transcendental in order to illustrate how the theorization of sex "inevitably falls into contradiction whenever it seeks to apply itself to cosmological ideas, to things that could never become objects of our experience" (*Read* 201).

³ The position occupied by Jerome McGann, as well as Peter Shillingsburg, has its own history that is opaque in comparison with that of the position held by Greg, Bowers, and Tanselle. One reason is that McGann's *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* appears as the radical alternative to intentionalist positions, and, hence, has been framed as the only progressive departure from intentionalist editors and their assumed notion that there is a single ideal text. As Sally Bushell has deftly shown, the way for McGann's position was paved for by previous debates over final intentions by critics such as "Tanselle, Morse Peckham, E. D. Hirsch, Philip Gaskell, and James Thorpe" (Bushell *Text as Process* 12). Emphasizing Gaskell and Thorpe's works, Bushell outlines how McGann's work was anticipated by Thorpe's position, which favors "including the process of publication as part of the move toward final intention (and thus as a factor to be taken into account when choosing copy-text): 'In many cases the author expected that his intentions would be completed by the agency of the editor or printer in the matter of accidentals.... It is clear that a reversion to the authorial manuscript would, in such cases, actually thwart the author's intentions'" (Bushell 12).

given the rise of the History of the Book with its emphasis on print culture,⁴ his critique of dogmatically intentionalist modes of modern textual editing accomplishes its aim merely by negating singleness with multiplicity and difference. Strangely, the social aspect of his approach has been largely accepted by textual studies while the importance of textual versions to the matter of textual instability has been almost wholly ignored. Although McGann does not fit neatly into Kant's critique of the radical sceptic (i.e. that nothing matters because meaning remains unfixed), he, to quote Copjec paraphrasing Kant once again, "simply clears a space for the assertion . . . for scepticism's sunny flipside: a confident voluntarism" (*Read* 201-202). Furthermore, McGann, like Tanselle, mischaracterizes theory as a state of helplessness when faced with the aporias presented by deconstruction, which, as they both argue, would result in the abandonment of the need for all editorial practice. These misreadings result in a reproduction of Tanselle's own assessment of editorial and textual work as essentially conditioned by instability, yet both proceed without ever engaging with the difficult task of analyzing how that instability shapes not only the editor's work but the literary work itself.

What is left unread, then, is the possibility of another alternative in our response to textual instability. For, at the moment, we are left with either the dogmatic belief that the editor's job is to provide readers with a stable text that represents a version of the author's

⁴ In the Multigraph Collective's recent *Interacting with Print*, they argue that "until very recently, most scholarship on the material history of" the eighteenth and nineteenth century "seemed to implicitly support the theory of manuscript obsolescence. According to many eighteenth-century scholars, it was during this century that print finally emerged as the dominant form, largely subsuming oral and manuscript culture (Haslett; Kernan 1987; McDowell; McKitterick; Zionkowski). Likewise, book historians examining the later part of the [eighteenth] century have turned their attention to the causes and effects of this moment's unprecedented rise in print production, and thus have left manuscript culture relatively unexplored" (185).

intentions amidst the morass of textual instability, or we repeat the skeptical position that is content to undo the (re)constructed stability of authorial intention and replace it with an equally (re)constructed notion of total freedom when approaching the multiple versions of texts. This dissertation claims that both alternatives fail to recognize the problem of authorial textual versions as a distinct textual problem that transforms the author's relation to textual instability. The emergence of the modern manuscript, as Donald Reiman argued in *The Study of Modern Manuscripts: Public, Confidential, and Private* (1993), initiates this transformation, and started around the seventeenth century until it reached its point of maturation in the Romantic period. However, as opposed to Reiman's personalist poetics, which posits an organicist view of literary production as the emergence of a whole and complete text as a result of the poet's final intentions, *Unread* reads this point of maturation as the eruption of a crisis point in the history of the author's relation to their (un)published manuscripts and to the act of publication itself. For between 1790 and 1850, what has been generally understood to be the long Romantic period provides a privileged time-frame in which the (un)published complicates a straightforward reading of the decision to withhold a text from publication. Rather than simply withhold a text out of a desire for privacy or out of the fear of a text's unreadiness for publication, I argue that non-publication also arises from the author's relation to the act of writing itself, which reached its own point of crisis in the writing of Romantic authors.

One of the consequences of this crisis that remains underappreciated, however, is also its effect on Romantic authors' dis-ease with the act of publication. Reflecting on the transformation of the modern manuscript from the medieval period to the Romantic

period, Marta Werner, editorial theorist and editor of Emily Dickinson's poetry, describes how even

in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a writer's blotted drafts were of little interest and the archives of even well-known authors of this period are often empty of autograph manuscripts, most of which were discarded as soon as they were committed to print. By the eighteenth century, however, the new value accorded speculative thinking and scientific experimentation, [sic] was accompanied by a rise in the production and preservation of autograph manuscripts. Personal manuscripts—notes, diaries, etc.—appear as the first sign that the borders of the private realm might be breached. ("Reportless Places" 61, n. 2)

Werner's observation that many manuscripts were discarded as soon as they were committed to print points to one of the many difficulties that arises when one begins to trace the emergence of the modern manuscript. Indeed, the practice of destroying what Ann Blair calls "printer's manuscripts" was still common well into the Romantic period (3). However, this only further emphasizes the strange place that the (un)published texts of Romanticism occupy, since some of these, like the 1811 and 1813 versions of Friedrich Schelling's *die Weltalter* (1811-1815), were brought forward for publication but were withdrawn at the last minute, while others, like Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1798-1850), went through numerous revisions only to be published posthumously, as was his wish. But what Werner's description of the history of manuscript preservation highlights is the fact that until the Romantic period the preservation of literary manuscripts was a rarity. For before then, we have a very uneven development of the act of preservation, which only further emphasizes the pressing need to investigate the matter of preservation and non-publication.

An empirical investigation of the matter of preservation and non-publication is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, *Unread* will focus on the forms of non-

publication that the (un)published takes as that which resists both publication and inclusion within the public sphere during the Romantic period. Like Groucho Marx's famous joke—"I don't want to belong to any club that would accept me as one of its members"—the (un)published chooses not choosing to be a part of any public, preferring instead to remain in-between, in suspense, in a position of non-being. (Un)published manuscripts were mostly kept by authors themselves. Furthermore, unlike fair-copy texts, which were presented for publication, the presence of multiple draft versions potentially draws "fair" copies back into the process of composition and de-composition. Even fair-copy does not necessarily mean public, since, as we will see in Chapter 5, Mary Shelley's *Mathilda* was prepared as a fair copy but never made it to publication until 1959. While the existence of different versions would appear to point to the author's sustained intention to clarify and complete a text, revision also points to an author's struggle with the conflict between what Roland Barthes terms text and work. This struggle transforms the problem of versions into one that has more to do with a text no longer being identical with itself because it becomes an object that is always in process; hence, the text remains always partial because of the author's relation to the "work" rather than "labour" of writing. I refer here to Maurice Blanchot's distinction between "work" and "labour" in "The Essential Solitude," where "work" has virtually the opposite meaning to the finality that Barthes attributes to it. But to be clear, Blanchot's terms are less a distinction than a blurring of the lines between the labour of bringing a text to publication and the author's relation to the work, the "work" as Blanchot conceives it being that which infinitely retreats from being brought into existence.

What becomes apparent when looking at the (un)published is that Barthes's more binary distinction between work and text falls apart when applied to the author's decision to withhold a text from publication against the decision to publish a text. For the (un)published preserves a text privately by withholding it, while publication preserves a text publicly by publishing it, because the publication of a text, as will be shown, intends to rid itself of its relation to the work. The (un)published preserves the author's unsustainable relation to Blanchot's concept of the work by remaining suspended in a state of non-being, for it remains undecided as to whether it is something or nothing and thus questions whether presence or being is a good in itself. For this reason, the modern manuscript-text is a partial object that blurs the lines between published text and unpublished text. Rather than focus on the development of print culture, which has been very well documented by book historians over the last two decades, *Unread* explores the unpublished as a relation that exists subterraneously and offstage and that still preserves the author's conflict between wanting to produce a text as opposed to the work. For if publication preserves publicly, the preservation of the (un)published illustrates that authors realized, unconsciously or otherwise, that even the private preservation of a text would one day result in that text's public reception. That (un)published manuscripts, such as those that were completely withheld or eventually published in a different form, were preserved for posterity rather than discarded unceremoniously like printer's manuscripts is itself evidence that authors were aware that the private was, as Werner states, already "breached."⁵

⁵ The matter of preserving manuscripts is an uneven problem during the Romantic period. Both William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge preserved many of their texts even after publication. Even though "The Ruined Cottage" was incorporated into *The*

But the significance of this breach goes beyond merely what Habermas identifies in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* as a consubstantial relation between private and public authority, wherein the private always already participated in the construction of the public sphere in much the same way as the private individual was understood merely to be someone who could participate in the public (27).⁶ This breach is instead one that takes place in an author's relationship to the literary work itself, which arises from the introduction of a cut or gap produced by the act of writing. This cut prevents the author from fully participating in the public or from retreating even into the private as a sphere of autonomous and isolated sovereignty. For, in this movement of the retreat, the author fails to enter into such a space of sovereign intention and instead experiences what Blanchot calls the "essential solitude." According to Blanchot, the

Excursion, there remain three distinct periods in which there exists manuscript evidence that "The Ruined Cottage" underwent revision from 1797 to 1812: DC MS 13 (1797), DC MS 17 (1798), DC MS 16 (1799) which also underwent revisions from 1802 to 1804, DC MS 37 (1803-04), DC MS 44 (1804), DC MS 6 (1809-1812), and DC MS 71 (1809-1812) (Bushell "From 'The Ruined Cottage' to *The Excursion*: Revision as Re-reading 76). Others such as Shelley and Keats left their work unpublished either for the sake of posterity or due to early deaths. In the case of Byron, *The Giaour* represents a special case of textual versions that is produced out of the additions to each published version, creating a network of published drafts rather than the organic growth of a narrative. As for texts that were published and that are without manuscripts, no manuscript exists for Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman*, Mary Shelley's *Valperga*, as well as many of the novels of Jane Austen. Interestingly, Austen preserved two cancelled chapters of *Persuasion*, which present an alternative ending to the one that made it to print. For further reading on the posthumous intentions of Romantic authors, see Andrew Bennett's *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity*. For further reading on the act of revision in modern manuscripts, see Sally Bushell *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson*.

⁶ Habermas writes in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, "[t]he bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason (*öffentliches Raisonement*)" (27).

“literary work” presents a “more essential solitude” than that of the private sphere because it “excludes the self-satisfied isolation of individualism,” as the “person who is writing the work is thrust to one side” and “dismissed,” though they do not “know it” (“The Essential Solitude” 63). Blanchot recognizes in the work—as opposed to Barthes’s endorsement of “text” and his consequent association of the “work” with a totality—a materiality that is not reducible to simply an empirical or historical analysis associated with what this dissertation describes as a public materialism; for what the work brings forth is an incessant and demanding materiality that, as Blanchot says, “expresses only the word *being*: a word that the language protects by hiding it or that the language causes to appear by disappearing in the silent void of the work” (64).

This dissertation, then, contends that if we are to build another alternative that responds to the inherent problem of textual instability, we must turn to what I call the (un)published, which points textual scholarship in the direction of an analysis of textual instability in terms of Blanchot’s description of the literary work’s essential solitude. According to the distinction Reiman makes in *Romantic Texts and Contexts*, this dissertation aims to contribute to both the goal of scholarship, which is to “aid the teacher and student in understanding what [the unpublished] did mean or should have meant to the sensitive reader at the time of its composition,” and the aim of criticism “in ascertaining what the work of art amounts to in the present tense” (8). As an already interdisciplinary undertaking that borrows from textual scholarship, German Idealism, and theories such as deconstruction and biopolitics, this dissertation draws significantly on psychoanalysis, thus directly answering the challenge mounted by D. C. Greetham in his 1991 essay “The Manifestation and Accommodation of Theory in Textual Editing,”

which asks: what would happen if we were to adapt psychoanalysis to textual theory (87)? In many ways, the textual scholar and the analyst stand in an analogous position to their respective objects of study, yet psychoanalysis and its investigation into both the relationship between the “hermeneutics of the unconscious” and “the energetics of the drives” informs the particular interdisciplinarity of my argument more than any one psychoanalytic concept.⁷

In its response to Greetham’s challenge, this project also contends that we must adapt Anglo-American models of bibliography and textual studies towards the French method of textual studies known today as *la critique génétique* (genetic criticism). Differing from the German approach to genetic criticism associated with Hans Walter Gabler and Hans Zeller,⁸ the origin of genetic criticism in France lies somewhere in between the work of Louis Hay’s scientific-objective analysis of versions and Jean Bellemin-Noël’s psychoanalytic practice of *le textanalyse* (the analysis of the text). In France, genetic criticism has now become a largely ‘scientific’ method of analyzing textual process, as it was consolidated in 1970 by Louis Hay under the aegis of *Le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (the National Centre for Scientific Research), which later resulted in the founding of the *Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes* (ITEM, 1982). However, during that same period, Jean Bellemin-Noël developed genetic criticism in relation to the terminology of psychoanalysis. Hay and Bellemin-Noël represent two distinct approaches to genetic criticism. Where Hay cautions “against

⁷ Aaron Schuster defines psychoanalysis as a complex tension between these two elements in *The Trouble with Pleasure*. See page 48.

⁸ For a thorough investigation into the differences between Anglo-American, German, and French approaches to textual studies, see Chapter 1, “Contextualizing Process: Three Perspectives on Genetic Criticism,” in Sally Bushell’s *Text as Process* (2009).

transferring concepts from one domain to another in [a] purely metaphorical fashion” (Hay 20), Bellemin-Noël saw the potential in borrowing from psychoanalysis to study *l'inconscient du texte*. His analysis of *les brouillons* (rough-drafts) or the *avant-texte* of published books was thus geared towards an interpretation of the unconscious of the text similar to Fredric Jameson’s analysis of the political unconscious. According to Bellemin-Noël, “the avant-texte is the text’s other” in the same way that “the text is attached to what brought it into the world only as it would be to the Other” (“Psychoanalytic Reading” 32). With its emphasis on the process of composition as opposed to the author’s intention, genetic criticism destabilizes the stability of the final published text. As such, it is an important aspect of this dissertation’s theoretical tool-box, and thus shares with Sally Bushell’s *Text as Process* (2009) a desire to introduce Anglo-American scholarship to the methods of genetic criticism.

This dissertation, however, seeks to distinguish itself from prior genetic criticism in its reading of psychoanalysis, for it does not merely seek to connect a concept of textuality with Freudian concepts of the unconscious, the uncanny, or a return of the repressed. The aim of *Unread* is to conceptualize the unpublished as part of the constellation of phenomena that at once assemble and disassemble the Symbolic.⁹ Rather than being a complete object, then, the (un)published text can be understood according to the psychoanalytic theory of the “partial object,” which retains its partial condition even after the subject incorporates it into the seemingly totalized register of the Symbolic. The partial object is thus a piece of the Real that the Symbolic cannot exclude. *Unread* thus reads the un- of (un)published as a parenthetical suspension of a persistent state of

⁹ I capitalise this word to indicate my use of it in the Lacanian sense of the Symbolic register as opposed to what he calls the Real and the Imaginary.

disintegration that is at once prior to and gives rise to the Symbolic, for the partial object appears as an initial stage in the formation of the subject's development of its 'identity.' As such, its partial nature never stops causing trouble for the subject.

A term first coined by the British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein to describe the affective state of infantile object-relations, the partial object expands our understanding of the *avant-texte* beyond its merely prefatory function before the publication of a complete text, as it becomes an object, as Guy le Gaufey argues, that "is not any part of any object" ("A Part Object" 89). The term partial object conveys multiple meanings that are more accessible to an English audience because of the multiple meanings of the word 'partial,' meaning something that is simultaneously a part, apart, as well as an object of preference, attraction, or desire. Like the partial object, the (un)published persists as a rem(a)inder of a state of affective turmoil and dis-integration, which could represent, as Klein herself noted of the mother's breast, a good and benevolent object or a bad and cruel object ("A contribution" 40). The (un)published's potential for disintegration remains unread by both textual and literary critics since it affirms the necessity of textual instability as the groundless support for any notion of the stabilized text. As Deleuze says of the partial object, every good object conceals a bad part that potentially returns the subject to the affective mood that belongs to the child prior to its entrance into language (188). In this sense, Klein's concept of the partial object and Bellemin-Noël's concept of the *avant-texte* can be read as immature states, which either give way to a 'whole' object or a 'published' text. However, as opposed to Klein and Bellemin-Noël, later readings of the partial object see a constant potential for disintegration within it that never disappears. Disintegration is rather built into all objects, since all object relations can potentially

produce even more partial objects. Drawing on further theorizations of the partial object by Jacques Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari, and psychoanalytic thinkers such as Joan Copjec and Slavoj Žižek, the following chapters seek to uncover the complex history of the (un)published texts of Romanticism by turning to the works of Friedrich Schelling, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Clare, and Mary Shelley. In doing so, the main purpose of *Unread* is, in the words of D. C. Greetham, to bring about a “bibliographic disturbance,” to alert “the practitioner” of both textual studies and textual theory “to the very practice” that they have “been operating under by showing [them] where the ‘seams’” of the field are hidden from view (97).

II. The *Textual Condition* and the Subject of Public Materialism

Across *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983), *The Romantic Ideology* (1983), and *The Textual Condition* (1991), McGann criticizes the Greg-Bowers-Tanselle position and intentionalist editions for their promotion of a “textual idealis[m],” specifically the presentation of a single text over other potential versions or editions (*Textual Condition* 7). In response to these criticisms, Tanselle claims that “intentionalist editors” have never believed in “the notion that there is a single ideal text for each work,” but rather that critics such as McGann “have blurred two separate issues—singleness and ideality” (“Editorial” 53). For Tanselle, a separate apparatus or appendix in ‘critical’ editions adequately responds to the general reader’s need to know all of the variations and emendations of a text, because the “presentation of single texts d[oes] not necessarily mean (and in fact [is] not likely to [mean]) that [critical editors believe] only one text [is] valid or desirable; it only mean[s] that the option of presenting more texts [i]s not open to

them” (“Editorial” 53). But with the digitization of texts, rare, unpublished, and multiple versions of texts have been made more available to readers. We are now far ahead of what Tanselle could have ever imagined, as we now have access not only to genetic or variorum editions such as the Cornell Wordsworth or the Bollingen Coleridge, but multiple digitized editions of texts, like the Blake archive, of which we can compare versions. For now, however, it is important to keep in mind Tanselle’s description of the role of the editor, which aims at producing a text that is as close as possible to an ideal work, which “is measured against the potentialities of the language in which it is expressed”; Tanselle’s concept of the text remains committed to the fact that “the act of reading or listening to receive a message from the past entails the effort to discover, through the text (or texts) one is presented with, the work that lies behind” (*Rationale* 18). By stating that the editor’s role entails such an effort to discover the work that lies behind a text, McGann’s critique of Tanselle’s platonic idealism is therefore accurate.

If Tanselle’s editorial approach is a form of textual idealism, McGann’s theory of the textual condition takes the position of a textual materialism. Materialism is largely concerned with the social life of texts as a means to negate any idealist concept of ‘the work’ as an impossible conception. For the materialist, the work should not concern us because the singularity or totality of the concept of ‘the work’ is itself a fantasy or the product of ideology. While McGann’s materialism and its focus on the “scene of writing” as opposed to the “scene of reading” might appear to align it with the aims of deconstruction, as in the title of Derrida’s essay “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” McGann’s critique is meant to bring into focus the *social labour* of bringing a text to publication as opposed to the *work* of composition (*Textual* 4). In other words, McGann’s

materialism ignores the separation that Tanselle reads between text and work by making each co-extensive with the other in order to positivize the work into something that is reducible to its social function. McGann therefore defines the “textual condition” in terms of the ‘life cycle of a book’ or ‘the sociology of texts,’ popularized respectively by Robert Darnton and his concept of the communication circuit and D. F. McKenzie’s famous lecture, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*. Akin to Pierre Bourdieu’s field of cultural production, the communications circuit focuses on publishers, printers, suppliers, shippers, booksellers, and readers, who are shaped by and shape “intellectual influences and publicity,” which are further influenced by social, economic, and political and legal conditions (Darnton 68). The elements that belong properly to texts also belong to an

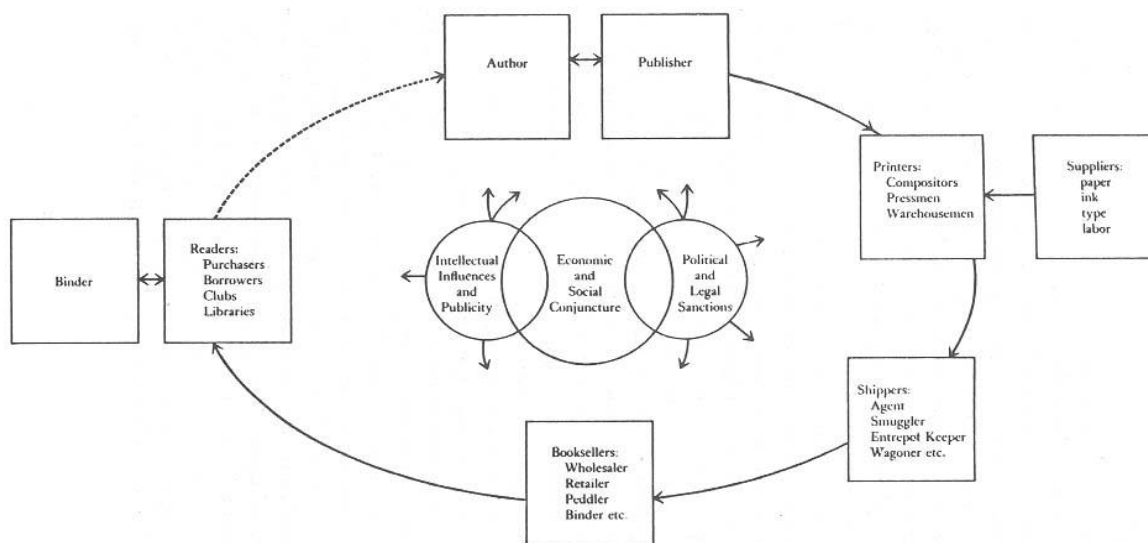


Fig. 1. Robert Darnton’s “The Communications Circuit.” “What is the history of books?” *Daedalus*, vol. 111, 3, 1982, 66-83.

indexical field, wherein all objects and actors are defined by their public function. The problem with this approach is that it renders both authors and texts subjects and objects of what this dissertation calls a “public materialism.” A public materialism—as opposed to a

dialectical or speculative materialism—is always going to be concerned with being ‘historical enough’ or ‘social enough.’ It thus seeks out detail for the sake of the public.¹⁰ Another problem with public materialism is its view that the humanities should “urge for solutions,” as David Simpson has remarked, which in its “enthusiasm for inclusiveness” seeks to construct a campaign of political “empowerment” via academic research (*The Academic Postmodern* 162-163). However, this search for empowerment entails that the only way to read against the grain of textual idealism is to attend to the granular and to collect more data. Simpson equates this move with the transition from theory to cultural studies in English departments, which “den[ie]s and assert[s] foundations and foundationalism at the same time” (161). Indeed, McGann’s public materialism denies the transcendence of the work even as it asserts its own version of a social essentialism. This is because, in the words of Kathryn Sutherland, “the synecdochic power of [...] detail functions as its own self-legitimizing episteme,” because detail “seduces us from our enquiry into wholeness” not as a “substitute for but an annihilation” of “order and shape in the service of an ever richer [sic] accumulation and a more privileged insight” (105). It is perhaps for this reason that McGann has moved away from Romanticism towards the digital humanities in recent years. As a new discipline that emerges as a method of textual studies, early digital humanities asserted its independence from traditional modes of

¹⁰ Proof that the materialist project is defined by its repression of constitutive lack can be found in Tom Mole’s recent *What the Victorians Made of Romanticism* (2017), specifically in his critique of McGann’s project. Grouping historicist projects under the term “punctual historicism,” Mole states that historicist editors and editorial theory are concerned with presenting texts the way that a text was read by “its first readers” (23). “Privileging the first reader,” Mole writes, “can give the impression that literary works are events that happen once only. It can make it harder to see how they function in later contexts for other readers. In this way, punctual historicism neglects the important historicist insight that all present readings of a text are shaped by the history of past readings. In this respect, punctual historicism is not historicist enough” (23).

literary study by asking editorial rather than theoretical questions, leaving critical theory behind as an outmoded mode of investigation because it only lead to further aporias. Branding itself as a new discipline, Digital Humanities, also know as the practice of distant reading, arguably arose out of the humanities' urge for solutions by substituting the granularity of Digital Humanities' evidentiary work for the problem of tarrying with the negativity of textual instability. Such projects present an objectivity, however, that is tied to the sample that they investigate: social or published texts. Distant reading has the potential to make important contributions to the study of literary texts. The best digital humanist work accepts that "the underlying project of experimenting on samples," as Ted Underwood has recently argued, do not forget the "premise that samples of the literary past have to be constructed rather than passively received" (10). For this reason, it is paramount that data-driven research be equally informed by the hermeneutic questions textual studies faced during the debates in the 1990s discussed earlier in this introduction.

For while McGann's influential critique of modern textual criticism has been widely accepted by the History of the Book and larger studies into print culture, it is important to note that it is also tied to his specific critique of what he calls the Romantic Ideology. Both the textual condition and Romanticism are imbricated in McGann's critiques, and indeed *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* and *The Romantic Ideology* both appeared in 1983. "One breaks the spell of romantic hermeneutics," writes McGann in the *Textual Condition*, "by socializing the study of texts at the most radical levels" (12). McGann's public materialism, however, conflates Romanticism with Idealism, seeing in both a threat to the 'real' historical work of materialism. As Tilottama Rajan argues in the "Introduction" to *Idealism without Absolutes*, Idealism "denote[s] a

specifically philosophical movement committed to dialectical totalization, identity, and system,” while Romanticism “is the larger literary-cum-philosophical context within which Idealism emerges as no more than an ‘idea’ continually put under erasure by the exposure of Spirit to its body” (14 n. 9). Idealism, according to Rajan’s distinction, should be avoided or at least situated as a fantasy. But McGann’s rejection of Romanticism stems not only from his conflating it with the totalitarianism of Idealism, but also as a result of the gap between the real and ideal that puts such totalizing ideas under erasure. Because Romanticism for McGann, including the Romantic idea of the author and text, suffers “the contradictions of its own illusions and the arguments it makes for them,” McGann’s public materialism shies away from the radically deconstructive potential that has been studied in the writings of Romanticism (McGann *Romantic Ideology* 13). When McGann shifts the focus of textual studies away from a “scene of reading” towards what he calls a “scene of writing,” he does so with a completely different aim from that of Derrida’s deconstruction in “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” because writing is taken to mean a completely material process that grounds historical analyses of the work of art according to their immediate social context (*Textual Condition* 4). The sociology of texts thus attends to what McGann calls “an interactive locus of complex feedback operations” that are informed by such elements as ink, typeface, paper, bindings, book prices, page format, and paratextual elements that were generally “the subject of attention of bibliographers, sociologists, economists, and tradespersons of various kinds” (McGann *Textual Condition* 12-13).

McGann, therefore, brought into focus a detailism that was perhaps necessary at the time. But that McGann equates Paul de Man with G. Thomas Tanselle is itself a sign

of a much more significant misreading of Romanticism in terms of his critique of textual idealism as well as of the Romantic ideology. For while de Man's concept of the ideal conceives of it as an empty transcendental signifier, Tanselle's concept more closely resembles something contained within the Platonic realm of ideas. If McGann believes that both critics are "caught in [their] own version of an impossible dialectic, an 'unequal contest' between transphenomenal desires and factive, material conditions," this criticism, in the words of de Man, "pretends to designate a crisis when it is, in fact, itself the crisis to which it refers" (McGann *Textual* 3; de Man "Criticism and Crisis" 7). Indeed, McGann's textual condition is itself nothing more than a repression of this crisis, as it conceptualizes human intercourse, "even in [its] most complex and advanced forms" as only "materially executed: as spoken texts or scripted form" (McGann *Textual* 3). As will be argued, the material execution of a text does not negate a text's materiality. For in poetic language, to quote de Man again, there is not only a material presence but the "presence of nothingness," or, as we will see in Chapter 1, what Schelling calls non-being (de Man "Criticism" 18).

Therefore, while this dissertation at no point contends that scholars should not attend to the importance of the paratextual elements listed above, it argues that the social is not some material or domain in which these things always already find themselves. Following the work of Bruno Latour, *Unread* understands the social rather as an assemblage in which "there exists *nothing*" constitutive "behind those activities" between actors and networks; for "even though they might be linked in a way that does produce a society," writes Latour, the social is only observable "when a new association is being produced between elements which themselves are in no way 'social'" (8). Significantly,

Latour's reassembly of the social here only repeats what Schlegel says of the public in his *Critical Fragments*: "One sometimes hears the public being spoken of as if it were somebody with whom one had lunch at the Hôtel de Saxe during the Leipzig Fair. Who is this public? The public is no object, but an idea, a postulate, like the Church" (Schlegel 36). Taking the public as an idea rather than as a constituted force or factor frees writing from any imposition of a "textual condition." This dissertation recognizes that Romantic authors saw the public or the social as something that was produced out of the assembly of non-social elements at the turn of the nineteenth century. In no way does *Unread* claim that the writers analyzed here were not in search of more singular readers, who were yet to be conceptualized or be collectivized as audiences. Instead, I claim that the texts that remained unpublished or that were withheld from publication for extensive periods of time before they were brought to publication reveal a complex set of desires and uncertainties around the act of publication itself. For to publish a text is not only a decision to make a text public but is a decision to legitimate the immediate conditions of a public. As such, *Unread* investigates how the (un)published text both does and does not contribute to the crystallization of what is social.

Because McGann ultimately fails to consider that writing is not purely social, or even that some writing fundamentally separates itself from the social, we need to re-imagine a more contingent and radically negative textual instability. Public materialism lends itself to a definition of the writer that is tantamount to Bentham's definition of the utilitarian subject. For insofar as Bentham measured the utilitarian subject by the marker of pleasure, so too does McGann seem to believe that texts can be measured according to an equally as yet undefined and unknowable concept such as the social. While this may

arise out of the democratic sentiment to include more texts that have literally not been read, it also sets up its own exclusions and hierarchies. These exclusions can be seen in McGann's famous edition of *The New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse* (1993), which reduces Romanticism to the Romantic period by choosing to include only those works "that had been printed and distributed at the time" (McGann "Introduction" xxiv). Leaving out those texts that went unpublished during the "Romantic period" from 1790-1835, McGann admits that "[s]uch a collection would doubtless prove, in one sense, a far more 'romantic' body of work than the present volume"; however it "would necessarily convey a less reliable experience of the actual scene of reading and writing in the period" because "it would [also] supply a diminished experience of the work of the period, and even of romanticism and romantic writing" ("Introduction" xxiv). McGann's definition of the textual condition and its reduction of writing to only that which has been published or serves a public function reveals how the fantasy of such a writing arises from the negation of the one object that produces the fantasy: the unpublished. By incorporating the unpublished as the impossible or unreasonable limit to the textual condition, McGann's exclusion of the unpublished includes the fact that desire flows irrespective of causal chains and bibliographic codes. Therefore, while the subject of public materialism can be characterized, as Copjec describes the subject of utilitarianism, in terms of "a pure positive drive toward realization and self-affirmation," there is something excluded within its identity that it is incapable of eliminating (*Read* 103-104). In the same way, (un)published texts that were either withheld from publication, preserved after publication, or spiraled off into multiple unpublished and published versions represent a writing that functions according to unconsciously libidinal or involuntary motivations, forcibly implicating the concept of text with the processes of its *avant-textes*.

Curiously, even while McGann is critical of idealist claims to artistic and poetic transcendence of the material world, he gives a definition of writing in his “Introduction” to the *Textual Condition* that is analogically grounded in the “sexual event,” which, McGann argues, affirms a non-transcendent form of completeness.¹¹ But what McGann cannot imagine about writing or sex is exactly what psychoanalysis has been saying about texts and sex since Freud founded psychoanalysis on the refusal to limit sex to either anatomy or convention. Indeed, McGann’s sexual supplement to the textual reveals that the whole order of the textual condition is far from being the positive affirmation of one’s complete identity guaranteed within a ‘social context.’ McGann’s recourse to sex as the “mystical” supplement of writing incorporates within the textual condition that which reveals itself to be, to quote Copjec again, “the stumbling-block of sense” (*Read* 204). Sex and text, like the subject, are the gap that separates writing from the achievement of the work. Like Lacan’s definition of feminine sexuality, writing is forever not-all because no “predicate suffices” to define what writing *is* (Lacan *Encore* 11). For once one disjoins either concept from the signifier, neither writing nor sex can communicate what it is autonomously, because both are that which marks the subject and object as unknowable to the world and even to themselves. Both represent the failure of auto-production. When Lacan stated in *Encore* that “there is no sexual relation,” one can easily replace “sexual” with “textual” in the same way that Blake in the 1790s claimed that “There is no Natural Religion” (Lacan 108). What this amounts to, then, is not only a revision of the literary as

¹¹ Describing sex as the “climactic marriage of our persons” that “is most completely experienced as a total body sensation almost mystical in its intensity as in its meaning,” McGann assumes that the textual and sexual are defined by their public function, since, as McGann writes, “to be human is to be involved with another”; but, by tying sex to the way it is signified in “related acts of intercourse at the personal as well as more extended social levels” in “courtship rituals, domestic economies, political exchanges and so forth,” McGann excludes any non-social elements to both sex and text (McGann *Textual* 3).

something that has no meta-language, but also a repudiation of the sociology of texts, that denies any discourse that “posits,” in the words of John Frow, “the social as a frame within which texts and textual practices are contained as definite functions” (243). In this sense, *Unread*, like Latour’s reassembly of the social, claims that only a textual idealism, as an idealism without absolutes, can lead us away from the absolutism of a sociology of texts that reads writing as a function of an already pre-given public materialism. This dissertation, therefore, reads Romantic textuality in the same way that psychoanalysis has understood sexuality as that which occurs in “the failure of signification,” as that which appears there “where discursive practices falter—and not at all where they succeed in producing meaning” (Copjec *Read* 204). As such, a textuality that is “not-all” requires a return to the projects of Idealism and Romanticism to reveal how they both construct and deconstruct being as absolute. Rather than a movement towards completion, the (un)published texts of Romanticism exist as partial objects that repeatedly assemble, reassemble, and disassemble a whole that was never really there in the first place.

III. A Textual Idealism without Absolutes

It is for this purpose that *Unread* turns to the works of Romanticism, for studies in Romanticism have indeed contributed to a Romantic Ideology of literature as itself absolute. As will be seen, many of the Romantic authors in *Unread* were responsible for the creation of “literature” as “a new *genre*,” as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy have argued, that has contributed to thinking literature to be absolute in itself (*Literary Absolute* 39). In other words, the concept of literature was taken to be an auto-production of itself. This completeness, however, comes at the expense of its alienation

from what Lacan has called the three registers of the Real, Imaginary, and the Symbolic. As such, the (un)published cannot be put to use or cannot simply be made to show the development of what is literary, and it is in this sense that this dissertation links Blanchot's concept of the work with Lacan's reading of the partial object. As both material and immaterial objects, Blanchot's work and Lacan's partial object illustrate a materiality not to be confused with a materialism that positivizes existence. As Tilottama Rajan argues, materiality "needs to be distinguished from the narrower notion of 'materialism,'" for materiality "indicate[s] a field of concepts, theoretical and practical effects, and intellectual 'events,'" which disturb "all absolutes: whether those of Idealism or materialism" ("Introduction" 2). We need not search far for a solution to McGann's critique of a Romantic Ideology, for the idealism of the period deconstructs rather than constructs a concept of the absolute that is complete. The (un)published also deconstructs any notion of an absolute work or an absolute public as it retreats from any urge for solutions by suspending such an urge to instead leave all solutions up to question. As will be shown, idealism was already shot through by materiality, so that such ideas as the work, the absolute, the author, or the public are never posited as complete but rather bring about their own auto-deconstruction. As mutable assemblages whose assembly is contingent upon the impact that the part has upon the whole rather than the whole upon the part, this is an idealism without absolutes.

Unread thus advocates a textual idealism without absolutes, or, better yet, a textual Romanticism, which understands texts according to the logic and function of the partial object. The partial object potentially throws everything into disorder, since it is both the promise and absolute lack of the whole system of discourse. Facing the partial

object, which functions as the mediator of language (as both deceptive and non-deceptive), one either turns back towards the Symbolic because one is still invested or perhaps capable of being re-invested in it, or one sees the Symbolic from the perspective of the partial object because one remains on the edge between the Symbolic and the real of language. This position is not the same as entering the Real, for that would entail the ultimate destruction of subjectivity. Rather, the perspective of the partial object is what Lacan calls the essence of tragedy, which affords the subject the ability to see its being as not-all. Lacan's famous statement that the unconscious is structured like a language helps to make sense of the partial object's contribution to a psychoanalysis of the text. Lacan's formulation of the unconscious treats it not as something that is there but as something that is fictitious, since the unconscious, like language, is simultaneously deceptive and non-deceptive. Because the conscious ego forgets the fictitious nature of the unconscious and the Symbolic, it can pursue its self-affirmation in bad faith because it founds itself on the exclusion of that which destroys the fantasy of a cohesive and integrated whole. The partial object, though, is at once something real and that which it is not, that is, Lacan's most famous object: the *objet a*. As such, it serves as the hinge upon which language functions, for it can at once 'reinvest' the subject into the Symbolic or completely disintegrate its place within the Symbolic's assemblage. Because the potential for disintegration never leaves the partial object, the (un)published is written in parentheses; for while there are texts that remain unread simply because they are unknown to the public, the parentheses convey the suspension of the disintegrative potential that remains unread in the publication of an author's *avant-textes*. What remains unread in this suspension, then, is that the disintegration is never repressed, but is only a contingent product of an idealized plenitude of being or language. The parenthetical suspension

therefore relates to the negativity of writing's non-being, its fractured condition, which "is always still what it was before," as Schelling says in the third version of *The Ages of the World*, since "the forces of that consuming fire still slumber in life, only pacified and, so to speak, exorcised by that *word* by which the one became the all" (49).

The partial object, in its rejection of both plenitude and stability on the one side and emptiness and instability on the other, becomes a particularly helpful concept for understanding the complex nature of Blanchot's concept of the work. While reading and writing bring about the work, the work is never done and never becomes whole. As Blanchot says, what the writer "has finished in one book, he begins again or destroys in another" ("Solitude" 63). "What it [the book] says," furthermore, is "that it is—and nothing more"; "[o]utside of that, it is nothing," and "[a]nyone who tries to make it express more finds nothing, finds that it expresses nothing" (64). Whereas Roland Barthes' influential "From Work to Text" has had more of an impact upon Anglo-American readings of textual instability, Blanchot's notion of the work goes beyond Barthes' binary that privileges text over work. Barthes makes use of Lacan's formulation of the name-of-the-father for his description of the work, where "[t]he author is reputed the father and owner of his work" while his playful concept of the text "reads without the inscription of the father"; but his reference to Lacan is merely in passing (161). Interestingly, moreover, it is this very idea of "text" that gave rise to Anglo-American adaptations of an affirmative post-structuralism which can be seen in the way McGann characterizes the textual condition's instability as a result of its material and social context. To quote McGann,

we may think of a ‘text’ as something else—something more determinate—than the fluid medium for free interpretive play which Barthes had imagined. The ‘text’ one *works with* is particular and material, even in the case where one’s attention is focussed [sic] on a certain set of texts. (*Textual* 164)

“[T]his may and must be true of literary work in general,” McGann goes on to write, “which necessarily appears as a series of particular texts produced and reproduced in different times and places for different uses and ends” (164). But while this adaptation of Barthes’s notion of texts to the material opens a path to interpretations of the socially produced and reproduced text, McGann still considers writing according to its use value as that which understands production as a form of positivity. As Rajan notes of Barthes—and to a certain extent Deleuze and Guattari—this kind of “[a]ffirmative post-structuralism . . . may use the techniques of deconstruction . . . against systems and structures, but not against itself” (*Deconstruction* 36). In Barthes’ dualism of work and text, the text claims a right to the negative rather than a right of the negative.¹² As such, text assumes the position of a counter-public that does not threaten the current public assemblage, since it only scrutinizes the inclusion and exclusion of content from what makes up a public in order to one day integrate itself into that public that excludes it. As a result, the language that hypostatizes current regimes of power still remains unread.

Blanchot’s “work,” in contrast, unworks the idea of the work as a totality that is complete in itself. This is clearer in French, for the writer’s work is instead the writer’s

¹² As Tilottama Rajan notes in her “Introduction” to *Romanticism and the Rights of the Negative*, the “right of” distinguishes itself from positivist claims of the “right to” because it “entails a use of that word that is more metaphoric and elusive than any positive right. We speak here of the ‘right’ of the negative because the plural might imply a range of rights that can be specified, but it is also necessary to think in terms of ‘rights’ because the effects of this right, and indeed what an effect is, are far from clear. And we speak of a right ‘of’ rather than ‘to’ the negative because the right not to be or do something, as in civil disobedience, risks being a determinate negation that is simply an antithetical form of positivity” (3).

“*oeuvre*,” which always entails its own “*désœuvrement*.” Ann Smock, the translator of Blanchot’s *The Space of Literature*, clarifies that the work (*l’oeuvre*) is distinct from labour (*travail*), because “*l’oeuvre* is impotence endlessly affirmed,” whereas *le travail* is “negativity in action, death as power and possibility”; labour is “diametrically opposed to inaction and passivity” but work “requires them” (12). The *désœuvrement* of a work, thus, involves how the particular reality of fiction presents literature as simultaneously deceptive and non-deceptive, which forces the writer to accept or reject the non-coincident nature of language with reality. The work is tantamount to the idea of literature itself, for the work, as Blanchot writes in “Literature and the Right to Death,” asks:

What is a work? Real words and an imaginary story, a world in which everything that happens is borrowed from reality, and this world is inaccessible; characters who are portrayed as living—but we know that their life consists of not living (of remaining a fiction); pure nothingness, then? But the book is there and we can touch it, we read the words and we can’t change them; is it the nothingness of an idea, then, of something which exists only when understood? But the fiction is not understood, it is experienced through the words with which it is realized, and for me, as I read it or write it, it is more real than many real events, because it is impregnated with all the reality of language and it substitutes itself for my life simply by existing. Literature does not act: but what it does is plunge into the depth of existence which is neither being nor nothingness and where the hope of doing anything is completely eliminated. (57-58)

In *The Space of Literature*, as Paul Davies argues, “Blanchot refers to the solitude of the work, the demand of the work and the concern of the work” to signify how we are always already entangled in an encounter with the work whether we like it or not (92). That the work “demands” writing becomes the matter of our particular concern as living subjects, for writing represents the impossibility of occupying either the deceptive or non-deceptive pole of the partial object. To see writing as completely deceptive is to experience the world as Judge Schreber did, that is, to occupy the position of the

psychotic who sees God, as Lorenzo Chiesa argues, as a “deceiver who enacts ‘a permanent exercise of deception which tends to subvert any order whatsoever’” (112).

What Lacan and Blanchot understand is that we, as neurotic subjects of language, are caught in a more and less difficult position than the psychotic. As neither being nor nothingness, neither private nor public, the (un)published reveals how even objects that are there, that are present and exist, still *withdraw* from us. As a partial object, the (un)published text forces us to take a stand in relation to our debt to language’s fictional irreality: either we exclude this fact and return to the Symbolic, or we accept that the subject’s investment in language is not-all. Yet neither position can be fully occupied. For while it is true that “[t]he book,” as Blanchot writes, “can become an active event in the world,” “what makes the book a substitute for the work is” also “enough to make it a thing that, like the work, does not arise from the truth of the world”; rather the work makes the book into a “frivolous thing, [for] it has neither the reality of the work nor the seriousness of real labor in the world” (“Solitude” 65 n.1). “To write,” Blanchot states, “is to break the bond uniting the speech to myself, to break the relationship that makes me talk towards ‘you’ and gives me speech within the understanding that this speech receives from you, because it addresses you,” since writing rather “withdraws language from the course of the world” and “deprives it of what makes it a power such that when I speak, it is the world that is spoken, it is the day that is built by work, action and time” (“Solitude” 68-69). Drawing on the particular irreality of language, the writer, for Blanchot, “seems to be master of his pen,” because he “can become capable of great mastery over words, over what he wants to make them express,” but “this mastery only manages to put him in contact, keep him in contact, with a fundamental passivity in which the word, no longer

anything beyond its own appearance, the shadow of a word, can never be mastered or grasped” (“Solitude” 67).

The (un)published, then, does not claim an autonomy that transcends the public so as to posit the sovereignty of the Romantic author as independent from the suffering of material being. Rather, the (un)published works of Romanticism illustrate how individual authors react to the crisis posed by the “demand” of the work by either staying with or giving up the trouble of the work. Unlike the desire of idealism, which seeks completion, “[t]he primary ambivalent characteristic of all demand,” as Lacan writes, “is that it is equally implied in every demand that the subject does not want the demand to be satisfied” (*Transference* 201). In the words of Blanchot, “[e]ven if one gives ‘all one’s time’ to the work’s demands, ‘all’ still is not enough, for it is not a matter of devoting time to the task, of passing one’s time writing, but of passing into another time where there is no longer any task” (*Space* 60). Rather than merely feeling anxious over the reception of their work, Romantic authors were gripped by the anxiety brought on by the demand of the work, that is, the demand of the partial object of desire. This object, unlike the typical view of objects as complete, represents a surplus that is included within the Symbolic around which the author’s desire circulates as in Lacan’s understanding of the drive, that is, that which produces what represents the subject’s *jouissance*. In the (un)published, both Blanchot’s concept of the work and Lacan’s concept of the partial object are given shape in the author’s failure to declare the presence of being as a total object. By writing these texts that promise being, Romantic authors are confronted instead with the incommensurability of being with itself imposed upon being by the traumatic demand of non-being. Left with only the demand of the work, the (un)published

represents the essential solitude of writing, that is that the work must be written and, hence, be re-written.

It is for this reason that we turn to the writing of Friedrich Schelling in the first chapter. Unlike Hegel's development of Absolute Knowledge in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Schelling's systems have been painted as marginal or failed versions of Hegel's project. These failures, however, become the success of Schelling's idealism, because they translate the totalizing tendency of Absolute Idealism into a Romantic writing that puts the idea of the Absolute itself under erasure. Until the publication of Schelling's 1809 *Philosophical Investigation into the Essence of Human Freedom*, he had published nearly everything he wrote; yet 1809 also marked the end of his commitment to publication, as Schelling then began writing *The Ages of the World*—a text which he would never finish. Beginning in the age of the past before God made the world, *The Ages* was meant to be a systematic account of the development of the world across three books: the past, the present, and the future. But Schelling was never able to move beyond the first book on the past. Written in 1811, 1813, and 1815, the three extant versions of *The Ages of the World* represent the difficulty of beginning from the perspective of a God that is the author of its own existence. But existence itself proves to be more troubling than originally thought, as Schelling's development of an Absolute God becomes entangled with the repeated writing of *The Ages* itself. A genetic reading of these versions' attempt to bring about existence overturns any understanding of a progressive genesis towards publication, as Schelling's writing is beholden to the instability associated with the development of the concept of non-being, which short-circuits any claim to existential or textual completion. This genetic reading of Schelling's *avant-textes*

reveals them to be nothing more than partial objects that never amount to a complete text, illustrating both the suspension and disintegration of the writer's relationship to his (un)published texts. Because Schelling can neither fully begin nor end his relation to the demand of the work, *The Ages* provides a powerful example of how the (un)published becomes a problem in which an author remains caught in the circulation of desire's cyclical movement of self-cancellation.

In Chapter 2, building on the dis-integration of the partial into a whole, "incorporation" is read both as a textual as well as a psychoanalytic process across William Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plains* poems (1790, 1795-98, 1842) and the versions of *The Prelude* (1798, 1805, 1850). As opposed to "introjection", which internalizes the loss of an external object and is akin to the success of mourning, Wordsworth constitutes his authority by means of melancholic "incorporation," which is less about the loss of an external object than it is about the loss of the ego's presence to the subject. Because writing is very much tied to Wordsworth's project of auto-poesis, revision becomes the only means by which Wordsworth can re-construct the self's construction of itself. However, because revision cannot cure those parts of texts that prove to be too traumatic to the integrity of Wordsworth's subjectivity, he instead excludes the traumatic affect from those objects by incorporating them under a revised and altered form in later versions. A psychoanalysis of those experiences that remain partial proves trauma persists in the later versions of "Guilt and Sorrow" and *The Prelude*. No matter what, these traumatic experiences expose Wordsworth to the experience of the "trance," an experience that first appears in the *Salisbury Plain* poems that temporarily invalidates the subject's experience of itself as a conscious subject and estranges it from its assumed

agency and control. In the same way, the earliest version of the spots of time is not connected to the project of constituting the authorial “I” but is rather associated with moments of trauma and estrangement, as the passage is itself bookended by the passage of the Drowned Man of Esthwaite and the death of Wordsworth’s father in the Two-Part *Prelude* written between 1798 and 1799. This is why Wordsworth re-organizes the spots of time, and further incorporates scenes such as the Drowned Man of Esthwaite and the Boy of Winander into Book Five of *The Prelude*. All of these incorporations, though, only betray how the traumatic associations of the spots of time are transferred into Book Five, as other scenes such as the Dream of the Arab become hallucinated reflections on the trauma of the spots of time itself. I read Book Five as a mise-en-abyme of Wordsworth’s revisionary practice of incorporation itself by illustrating the failure of melancholic incorporation as a defense against dis-integration. A genetic reading of Wordsworth’s texts from the 1790s up to their published versions thus reveals that the publication of “Guilt and Sorrow” and *The Prelude* also remain (un)published partial objects that only conceal a more complex dis-integration.

In Chapter 3, we continue to perform a different genetic analysis by reading Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Christabel,” another text that was long withheld from publication but eventually published. From 1798 to 1834, Coleridge produced eighteen separate versions of the text, nine of which remained unpublished in manuscript or fair copy versions, and another nine of which were published after Coleridge decided to include it in a small pamphlet alongside “Kubla Khan” and “The Pains of Sleep” in 1816. Whereas Schelling and Wordsworth made significant revisions to the versions of *The Ages of the World*, the *Salisbury Plain* poems, and *The Prelude*, “Christabel” was re-

written many times without any significant modification after Coleridge initially worked on the poem between 1798 and 1800. Between 1800 and 1816, Coleridge still revised the text, but it was only after its publication in 1816 that he added a whole new section entitled *The Conclusion to Part the Second*. By reading the interval between 1798 and 1816 as an attempt to retreat from publication, this chapter discusses how not only significant but even insignificant revision compounds textual instability and represents an involuntary rather than voluntary retreat from publication. For textual instability is not only the product of a difference in content or a difference in versions but is itself a function of Lacan's radicalized understanding of desire as drive, which transforms writing into the very materialization of the gap that is the subject's estrangement from the world. Because the object of the drive is to never reach its goal precisely because it has neither object nor goal, revision is thus not only an act that is meant to clarify but a function whose end is to have no end. Unable to deal with this relation, however, Coleridge's addition of *The Conclusion to Part the Second* gives an "ending" that allows him to publish the poem; yet this only occurs because this *Conclusion* represses the abjection of Christabel herself at the end of *Part the Second* to reconstitute the social Symbolic. Because Christabel involuntarily retreats from this social because she still wishes to speak the trauma of the text, I read "Christabel" as a specific partial object known as a "textual abject."¹³ For not only does Coleridge both abject Christabel from the text's Symbolic register at the end of the poem, his own repression of the text's trauma involuntarily

¹³ I argue that the "textual abject," a term coined by Tilottama Rajan's "Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Textual Abject," shares many of the same characteristics as the partial object. The difference lies mainly in the fact that the textual abject is generally a textual matter whereas the partial object concerns the particular aim, end, or goal. A partial object, therefore, involves the multiple meanings of the word "object," as both a "material thing that can be seen and touched," as well as the action or direction of a subject's relation to a person or a thing.

involves him in a relation that equally internalizes what is excluded in the text. Coleridge, then, is never quite finished with the poem even after its publication, as he both retreats and returns to the poem several times after 1816, showing that the textual object is a “form in which the writer submerges in some trauma or affect from which [he] will not separate” himself (Rajan “Mary Shelley’s ‘Mathilda’” 45).

In the next two chapters, we approach the problem of the partial object from another side of psychoanalysis. In the same way that Lacan sees all satisfaction arising out of the subject’s failure to satisfy its desire (i.e. its aim is to be dissatisfied), *Unread* also understands the partial object as a verb—to object—because it represents for the subject two different kinds of dissatisfaction. For while Wordsworth and Coleridge’s dissatisfaction arises out of their inability to accept the partial nature of their projects, John Clare and Mary Shelley illustrate a dissatisfaction with the work as “not-all.” Clare’s (un)published poetry deterritorializes the local detail of place into a space of literature, in Blanchot’s sense of “space,” that estranges the stabilizing perspective of the lyric “I.” Whereas local detail is generally considered to be a tool used by Romantic authors to produce, as Sutherland states, “a subjectivity that is total in its situatedness,” and which is “thoroughly rather than contingently grounded,” Clare’s poetry represents a minor position within the Romantic period (101). In Clare’s experimental poem that has come to be known as “The Lament of Swordy Well,” he uses *prosopopeia* both to illuminate the disenfranchisement of Swordy Well—a piece of common land that has been transformed into a quarry—as well as to deconstruct how this disenfranchisement is the result of the economy of personhood and property that Swordy Well uses to adopt the lyric “I” to claim some right to self-preservation. “Swordy Well” both illustrates the danger inherent

to the discourse of civic personhood as well as represents the beginning of Clare's intentional shift away from a personal to what this chapter calls an "impersonal" poetry. During Clare's Northborough period, he writes sonnets that represent objects metonymically and paratactically to "imagine a desire," as Lacan says of metonymy, "that is based on no being—a desire without any other substance than that assured by knots themselves" (Lacan *Encore* 126). But by crossing the boundary that separates the personal from the impersonal, Clare's impersonal poetry signals his estrangement from any stable identity. The Northborough poetry is thus related to Clare's later asylum poetry, which reflects yet another drastic change in his poetry's relation to the "I." Much like Deleuze and Lacan's conception of the psychotic subject, Clare realizes only too well that the orderliness of the Symbolic actually represents, to paraphrase Aaron Schuster, a "disorder in which the subject has no place, except as excluded" (Schuster 180). Clare's asylum poetry, which was preserved in the copies that were taken down by Clare's doctors in both High Beach and Northampton, agonistically depicts how even an impersonal poetry cannot fully negate the question of the I's position in the world. What to do with the "I," thus, becomes a question that Clare famously lyricizes in "I AM," which once again takes up the "I" not as a defense against disintegration but as an objection to subjectivity's indebtedness to the "I" as an inescapable and yet hollow position.

Finally, in Chapter 5, Mary Shelley's *Mathilda* presents a partial object in the form of a letter from a dying friend. As Mathilda communicates the "sacred horror" of her father's incestuous passion for her to Woodville, she "pollute[s]" her history by transmitting a secret that in life was "unfit for utterance": the desire that in death she will

be reunited with her father (5). Rather than a secret that expresses Mathilda's traumatic exclusion from the Symbolic, the novella is framed as a letter that always arrives at its destination by rejecting literary community in favour of a narrative that transforms Mathilda's body into the text. By incarnating her desire in the letter, Mathilda makes the letter itself a partial object which both exceeds the Symbolic and that which it lacks. Therefore, while Shelley's father, William Godwin, withheld the text from publication due to its incestuous narrative, the text's destination can be said to be Godwin, masculine Romanticism, and the Symbolic all at the same time, for the letter also objects to any and all discursive confinement. *Mathilda*, thus, becomes the successful communication of the (un)published as a missed encounter, affirming the unstable nature of the partial object by making its addressee the literary community that wishes to simultaneously exclude and include Mathilda's desire into the Symbolic. Declaring herself to be "not-all," Mathilda makes public her desire to reunite with her father the subject of the text as a critique of the instrumentalization of writing to contribute to the good of a public. *Mathilda's* oblique offering to the reader, then, is to encounter the partial object not as an opportunity to sympathize with Mathilda's tragic fate but to experience the encounter as something that fails between the subject and the *objet petit a*. What one encounters, then, is not some fully realized subject but the Real as that which is impossibly within the Symbolic.

Vanishing into Nothing: Schelling's *The Ages of the World*

There is a question that is so natural that it is already raised in childhood: What kept God busy before God created the world?

- Friedrich Schelling (*The Ages of the World* 1815 80)

I. The Question of Beginning

In Friedrich Schelling's discursive novel, *Clara: Or, on Nature's Connection to the Spirit World* (generally dated around 1810), Clara is visited by the novel's two unnamed characters, the priest and the doctor, who seek to console her after the death of her beloved, Albert. In a strange shift that takes the reader out of the present tense and into the past, the priest, who speaks in the first person, remarks that an

indication of [Clara's] earlier concern with thoughts of death and the beyond—but, at the same time, also of a remaining peaceful mood and untroubled gaiety therein—was found among her papers after her death. A sheet of paper, unfortunately only a scrap, written by a young and delicate hand, read thus:

[empty place in Schelling's manuscript]. (Schelling *Clara* 22)¹⁴

Ideally, the translator of *Clara*, Fiona Steinkamp, could have left a blank space. An empty space in a text marks an absence that Schelling could have intended to fill, but for some reason could not, but it also marks a space that presents us with one facet of the strangeness of being. This absence appears meaningful precisely because a desire for

¹⁴ Steinkamp's presentation of this blank space in Schelling's manuscript differs from Karl Friedrich August Schelling's presentation of it in the first published version of 1862. In Steinkamp's presentation, the empty space in Schelling's manuscript is more compressed, whereas Schelling's son provides more space to the empty place in between the paragraphs. The difference is that Schelling's son shows that emptiness actually takes up space in the manuscript, while Steinkamp almost skips over the emptiness in the manuscript by only giving it a line.

meaning calls for something to appear there where presence should be but is unable to be. Even absence, then, fails at not being, because it fails at being nothing.

The question of why a whole text remains unpublished may seem to resemble this blank space in many ways, but it is distinct. Rather than an absence of being, the (un)published is the presence of nothing, or, better yet, the presence of non-being. This presence of non-being that belongs to the (un)published has rarely been a subject for textual scholarship. Indeed, it is a difficult question to pose, for how can non-being be? Many times, the (un)published is assumed to not be meant for or ready for publication, or the result of the author's reticence to send a text into the frantic circulation of the public sphere. But the presence of non-being, that is, the presence of that which chooses not to be, that prefers not to, poses a more difficult presence than an absence of being. While the question of why something went unpublished has appeared to have no legitimate answer, this apparent difficulty has been relegated to matters of subjective re-construction or, worse, bars our interpretation of the (un)published because of biographical details such as John Keats or Percy Bysshe Shelley's early deaths, which prevented them from finishing "The Fall of Hyperion" or "The Triumph of Life" respectively.¹⁵

¹⁵ Donald Reiman in *The Study of Modern Manuscripts* argues that Percy Bysshe Shelley's "The Triumph of Life" cannot be read deconstructively because it "is a fragmentary rough draft that Shelley not only had kept from the public but apparently had not shown even to his wife or his most confidential friends, who discovered it after his death. What now passes for a public poem was wrested from the inchoate manuscript by editors, beginning with the heroic effort of Mary W. Shelley before 1824. The proper way to explicate "The Triumph," I am now convinced, is the way he left it, in all its incompleteness and confusion. The poem cannot be deconstructed, because Shelley did not live long enough to decide what he would suppress or exile from the poem and what he would include" (63).

However, one may consider the decision to not publish a work in the same way that Sharon Cameron describes Emily Dickinson's non-publication. Dickinson, in Cameron's words, "choos[es] not choosing" publication.¹⁶ In other words, Dickinson's decision short circuits decision. This act of self-cancellation is, therefore, still a decision. It is still meaningful and requires attention of a different kind. For while the blank space in *Clara* makes emptiness appear meaningful out of a desire for meaning, emptiness does not accurately describe the writing of the (un)published, since it still exists as a sustained interval in which the text can either become an interruption of or a submission to the "work" or the "book." The (un)published withholds a writing that does not end in publication as it rather disrupts a perception of writing as a straightforward movement. The difficulty in approaching such a self-cancelling act, then, lies precisely in leaving this process open. For while the emptiness of the space edited for clarity is marked by square brackets and wedged in between paragraphs in Steinkamp's edition, the blank space fails to call attention to Schelling's omission, as the brackets treat the empty space like a sutured wound that is restricted to the economy of a published text. In contrast, in the 1862 edition presented by Schelling's son, Karl Friedrich August Schelling, "*leere Stelle im Manuscript*" is parenthetically suspended between large double spaces on either side of its presentation within the text, communicating something more openly undecided than sutured. It is my aim, then, to keep such a wound open, for the (un)published remains, as will be shown, always open, superfluous, and emptied out.

In this chapter, Schelling's struggle to develop the concept of non-being across the three versions of *The Ages of the World* helps us to understand the (un)published not

¹⁶ This is the title of Sharon Cameron's outstanding book, *Choosing not Choosing: Dickinson's Fascicles*.

merely as a textual object but as the process behind that object. Schelling gives us various permutations of this concept of non-being across the three versions of the *Ages of the World*. As all texts were left unpublished in his lifetime, they reveal what Blanchot calls a “strange slipping back and forth between being and not being, presence and absence, reality and nonreality” (“Literature” 57-58). The *Ages* provides a glimpse into a space of literature that is simultaneously productive but cancels that productivity before it reifies itself into a complete or whole product. This is because non-being, as I will show, is productive of a process of repetition that, like Schelling's description of eternity in the 1815 version of the *Ages*, “vanishes into nothing, or what likewise says as much, it vanishes into a mere moment” (Schelling *Ages* 3 80).¹⁷ On the one hand, by defining eternity in relation to nothing or to a moment, Schelling highlights the impossibility of measuring eternity empirically. On the other hand, since both nothingness and a moment are concepts that impress themselves upon our regime of sense as tangible things; even though they are impossible to experience, these still have a virtual effect that still has a materiality that cannot be ignored. Caught in the throes of exiting out of eternity, Schelling's God in *The Ages of the World* becomes a model by which we can understand the strange recursive condition that emerges out of Schelling's indecision to withhold his texts from publication as well as serves as a metaphor for the author's inability to finish or bring a text to publication. God emerges from eternity in the same way that the author emerges into language, as both experience the essential solitude of the Blanchotian work that produces nothing but worklessness. Rather than see this self-cancellation as non-

¹⁷ In order to distinguish between the different versions of the *The Ages of the World*, I will hereafter refer to the 1811 version as *Ages 1*, the 1813 version as *Ages 2*, and the 1815 version as *Ages 3*.

productive, Schelling's texts demonstrate that these texts achieve their goal precisely through the cancellation of an end that would eliminate the text's productive repetition. This produces an excessive productivity, which circulates at the heart of writing itself.

This productivity cannot perhaps be measured, but it can be analyzed in terms of a process that remains partial, as it points at once to its incomplete material and immaterial existence. In the same way that the priest's and doctor's discovery of the blank sheet of paper suggests that what is found among the unpublished papers of a deceased writer is not always a book, the (un)published reveals that sometimes something immaterial is found, something that is in fact less than paper—as the priest says, it is "unfortunately only a scrap." *Clara*, this unfortunate, "gorgeous nothing"¹⁸ opens a path for us to imagine the (un)published as a threshold that resists being crossed by the bibliographic desire that reifies a writer into a bookmaker. For the *Ages* thematizes the (un)published as the indecision that cancels any internalization of the part into the whole, any transference of the internal into the external, or the immaterial into the material. *Clara*, especially in its search for a philosophical account of a life after death, not only turns the reader's attention to the precarious finitude of the human soul, but, because it too remained unpublished, is itself a text that encloses and entombs its own investigation into life and death as if in a crypt that hides something away from public view. *Clara*, therefore, is one case among many interesting cases of non-publication in Schelling's body of work, because *prima facie* it should have been a more amenable text for public consumption. Yet, it was a deeply personal work for Schelling, written after the death of his wife Caroline; read

¹⁸ "Gorgeous Nothing" is a term Marta L. Werner uses to describe Emily Dickinson's envelope poems and is the title of her book, *Emily Dickinson's The Gorgeous Nothings*.

biographically, many scholars¹⁹ approach *Clara's* themes of death and the afterlife as Schelling's attempt to grapple with the loss of his wife in the same way that Clara struggles with her melancholic attachment to the loss of Albert. Indeed, Georg Waitz claims that the empty space Schelling leaves open in the text was meant to contain one of Caroline's handwritten notes that read "*Gedenke an den Tod!*" ("Be mindful of death!").²⁰ But this personal story only explains one side of the (un)published that still presents a public face, as if the text were not ready for the public rather than Schelling not being ready for the writing of the text.

To a certain extent Waitz's claim is correct, insofar as there are elements from Caroline's notes in Schelling's text. But the empty space and the non-publication of *Clara* itself draw positivizing attempts to fill in the gaps of the "absence of the work" that haunted Schelling from the time he stopped publishing in 1809. Even though he continued to write and give private lectures, the shift from public to private lectures in Stuttgart and Erlangen illustrates a change in Schelling's dissemination of his thought. Caroline died the same year that Schelling completed and published his 1809 *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*. Of the period before this retreat, Hegel complained that Schelling "worked out his philosophy in view of the public," since he published almost everything he wrote (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy* 513). From his earliest essay in 1794 on Plato's *Timaeus* to the 1809 collection that includes the *Philosophical Investigation into the Essence of Human Freedom*, Schelling published approximately twelve major titles. Schelling was also a

¹⁹ See, for instance, Alexander Grau. "Clara. *Über Schellings gleichnamiges Fragment*." For a reading that takes *Clara* as an integral turn in Schelling's thought, see Laurie Johnson. "Uncanny Love: Schelling's Meditations on the Spirit World."

²⁰ See Waitz, Georg. *Caroline: Briefe aus der Führromantik*.

prominent lecturer at the universities in Jena and Würzburg. Given the fact that Schelling also started his Master's at the early age of 15—when the normal age of enrolment was 20—scholars tend to agree that he was one of the most highly regarded and productive philosophers in Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century.

It is nearly impossible, then, not to read Schelling's unpublished texts in terms of a persistent and paralyzing crisis, similar to the one the doctor describes in *Clara*.

I believe, the doctor said, our friend finds herself trapped in just such a process. We just need to keep the crisis under control and steer it towards a healthier goal. What has happened has completely shaken her previous ideas; something unconsciously sleeping within her has been awakened; the views she held no longer help her with this feeling that has stirred in her innermost being; she won't rest until she forms a new world for herself suited to the measure of her feelings. (Schelling *Clara* 28)

The motivation to keep a crisis under control becomes increasingly relevant to this chapter's interpretation of Schelling's (un)published works and to the larger theme of writing for publication in general. In his attempt to lead the three versions of *The Ages of the World* to some form of closure, in each version Schelling elaborates different methods or narratives to work through this crisis; but because these arise out of the attempt to answer questions that have no rational answer, each version revolves around irresolvable questions: what came before the world? why is there something rather than nothing? In answer to these questions, Schelling begins *The Ages* from a different point of origin than his old mentor Fichte's "I" or Hegel's dialectic, because, for him, the Absolute must be *a priori*; rather than ending with the Absolute as Hegel does, Schelling's philosophy argues that the Absolute must exist out of its necessity and its freedom. Therefore, the task of the *Ages* is to present a genetic reconstruction of the Absolute's process of self-becoming, for only the Absolute can solve the seemingly irresolvable. This approach internalizes Kant's

subject-object opposition by narrating God's internalization of this dualism into the problem of a troubled monism, which then represents history as the process of the Absolute's becoming as *auto-generation*.

The aim of the *Ages*, then, can be seen as the goal of idealism in general: to create a universe that does not depend upon any *a posteriori* knowledge. As such, it might seem an example of precisely the kind of Romantic Ideology that Jerome McGann critiques. For if the text's goal is a teleological end that resolves the problems of systematic philosophy, it seeks to construct an Absolute that is complete in itself; but this obsession with completeness drives Schelling to return again and again to the beginning of the text, since completion will give "the seal of perfection" to Schelling's own philosophic system: for only a universe, as Schelling writes in *Clara*, that "is completed" can be called "the most excellent of all, not only in itself but also as the work of a *divine artist*" (Schelling *Clara* 70; italics mine). Schelling's idealism, however, proves to be a *pharmakon*. For rather than admit the limitations of reason as Kant does, the project of the *Ages*, concerned as it is with the immanent unfolding of God's self-revelation, includes the transcendent within a system that envisions God's *auto-poesis* across three different books: the book of the past, the book of the present, and the book of the future. As the author of these three books, Schelling's God can be compared to Schiller's description of the sentimental poet in his essay, *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. There, Schiller argues, that the sentimental poet's "art separates and divides him" and it is only "by means of the ideal" that the sentimental poet "returns to the unity" in order to work through this divided self (202). Opposed to the sentimental poet, the naïve poet, like the concept of the Classical God, thinks that they "[stand] behind [their] work," and are

therefore “the work” because “the work is the *naive poet*” (196-197). While Schelling’s God naïvely enters into a relation with the work, believing the ground of material existence to be consubstantial with its aims, the writing of the books splits God and leaves it more like the sentimental poet. Schelling’s God, therefore, enters into a relation with infinity, resulting in a point, as Schiller writes, that the poet “never reaches,” “because the ideal is an infinite” creation of division (202).

Despite Schelling’s intentions for completion, Schelling’s God is in the world as much as the world is necessarily intertwined within God, and hence becomes intertwined with the concept of non-being that divides God’s being from accomplishing the aims of Absolute idealism. For this reason, Schelling redefines God’s relationship to the ground of its existence in each of the three versions, wherein every re-definition provides a different valence of *The Ages of the World* as a text that thematizes its own unpublishability. In the 1811 version we see the beginning of a crisis between the public and hidden transcript of *The Ages*, as the idea of system encounters its perverted or inverted other.²¹ As such, Schelling’s system exemplifies the paradox of German idealism, for, to quote Žižek, a system “is a totality that is all-encompassing since it includes/contains its own inversion” (Žižek *Abyss of Freedom* 11). In 1813, after experiencing the perversion of the lower principle that rejects its subordination to the higher principle, Schelling negates the difference between the lower principle of non-being by making it consubstantial with God

²¹ Slavoj Žižek gives a psychoanalytic definition of the philosophic system characteristic of German idealism. Calling the “perversion of the ‘proper’ hierarchical relationship between potencies” the “key feature of the German Idealist notion of a philosophical ‘system,’” Žižek argues that “perversion is a free act, the most elementary manifestation of freedom” (*Abyss of Freedom* 11). For Žižek, perversion sheds light on the real nature of subjectivity, for “the gesture of the subject par excellence is that of willfully putting at stake ... the entire substantial content for a capricious and meaningless detail: ‘I want *this*, even if the whole world goes down’” (*Abyss of Freedom* 12).

as merely that which is not-knowing or completely unconscious. Finally, in 1815, Schelling's description of the rotary motion of non-being cancels God's self-generation before it has a chance to even begin, and instead illustrates the crisis of the *Ages* in its own impotent re-production of thesis, antithesis, and the unity of the two that only falls back again into a further antithesis. As Schelling states in the 1815 version of *The Ages*, the "antithesis can as little surrender to unity as unity can surrender to antithesis" (*Ages* 3 10). These valences can thus be summarized as an encounter with the crisis (1811), the negation of crisis (1813), and the involuntary affirmation of crisis (1815). All of these positions are at play in the different chapters of *Unread*, but it is only in the works of Schelling that we see each of the ways that writing's generation degenerates its own ends.

Against much of what has been said about the "death of the author," a reading of the (un)published instead requires a re-insertion of the author as a partial subject to read these different positions at the level of writing itself. In the same way that Schelling's God is as much in the world as the world is within God, the *Ages* does not present the reader with the God of Abraham, but with a subject in the most Romantic sense. God's entrance into existence is marked by a writing of anguish that reads Schelling as caught in a transferential relationship to the textual unconscious. As God is literally produced in the words of the *Ages*, writing exposes it to a history that shows its incapacity to make all of existence identical with itself. Like the God described in Stanisław Lem's novel *Solaris*, Schelling's God is a God

whose deficiencies don't arise from the simplemindedness of his human creators, but constitute his most essential, immanent character. This would be a God limited in his omniscience and omnipotence, one who can make mistakes in foreseeing the future of his works, who can find himself horrified by the course of events he has set in motion. This is . . . a crippled God, who always desires more

than he's able to have, and doesn't always realize this to begin with. Who has built clocks, but not the time that they measure. Has built systems or mechanisms that serve particular purposes, but they too have outgrown these purposes and betrayed them. And has created an infinity that, from being the measure of the power he was supposed to have, turned into the measure of his boundless failure. (330)

This God described by Lem captures the struggle that Schelling's God undergoes across the three versions of the *Ages*, yet also represents the struggle that is apparent in Schelling's confrontation with the structure of repetition his writing takes in the form of the 1815 version's "wheel of initial birth" that spins "about itself as if mad" (Schelling *Ages 3* 103). For while the *Ages* seeks to guide God out of the age of the past to usher in the age of the present, it becomes ever more apparent in the third version that the "Godhead sits enthroned over a world of terrors," which reject any claim to authority that the figure of God is meant to perform (Schelling *Ages 3* 49).

Because Schelling could never progress beyond the first book on the past, this impasse re-figures the path of writing from one that moves towards the book towards Blanchot's concept of the work. Because Blanchot does not affirm this distinction, but instead sets it up in order to erode it, we must understand that the "book is not yet the work" because the aim of the writer is to never reach a firm ground; writing is "never grasping more than its substitute, its approach, and its illusion in the form of the book" ("Solitude" 65). Because the book substitutes itself for the work, it inverts Barthes's distinction between work and text, as we have seen in the Introduction, as the book claims a material totality that Blanchot's notion of the work does not. One can understand this in a similar way to how Schelling conceives of "beginning" in the 1815 version of the *Ages*: a "true beginning is one that does not always begin again but persists" (Schelling *Ages 3* 20). A beginning that persists (i.e. that is complete) is only a substitute for a beginning

that begins again, because to begin only precipitates a repetition of yet another beginning that will follow it. Each revision becomes yet another iteration of this structure of repetition that takes Schelling further and further away from illustrating the Absolute as complete in itself, as the book of the past fails to adequately steer its narrative—with its traditional beginning, middle, and end—as a form that would establish the book of the past as complete, certain, and finished.

II. (Un)published Versions

The writing of *The Ages of the World* is characterized by two conflicting discourses. These discourses are split since discourse always takes the form of a “public transcript” and a “hidden transcript.” In light of Hegel's criticism that Schelling worked out his philosophy in view of the public, the *Ages* stands as a textual witness to the crisis of Schelling's own philosophic discourse, because the screen that keeps the public separate from the hidden transcript can no longer be maintained. The revisions that Schelling makes in each version do not clarify the intention of its author, but rather intensify the conflict between the public and hidden transcript that was “unconsciously sleeping within” Schelling's previously published works. Read as a structure of repetition that belongs to the textual unconscious of Schelling's philosophy, revision signals at the level of writing that there is something about the writing's relationship to the Romantic subject that, to paraphrase Lacan, it loves “in writing more than writing.”²² This

²² In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan writes about the specific case of the *objet petit a* as a partial object: “This paradoxical, unique, specified object we call the *objet petit a*. I have no wish to rehash the whole thing again, but I will present it for you in a more syncopated way, stressing that the analysand says to his partner, to the

something that exceeds what is most internal to the subject is Lacan's concept of the partial object, best known as the *objet petit a*, or "the central lack in which the subject experiences himself as desire" (Lacan *Four Fundamental Concepts* 265). The *objet petit a*, as the most extreme form of the partial object in psychoanalysis, involves the subject in an impossible relation to the object characterized by the drive as opposed to desire, for its aim is satisfied precisely in not achieving its goal. It is in this sense that the partial object is at once a substitute for the aim of the drive, insofar as its presence can sublimate the subject's desire for the *objet a*, but it can also lead to the production of more partial objects of the drive that continue the drive's production of the subject's *jouissance*.

Whereas Wordsworth or Coleridge, as we will see in Chapters 2 and 3, attempt to repress the compulsion to sublimate the drive by handing over *The Prelude* and "Christabel" respectively for publication, Schelling's *Ages* never escapes from writing its own textual unconscious,²³ a concept that describes a textual condition that remains underdeveloped and widely misused by literary critics. The textual unconscious speaks to the element of unconscious repetition in writing, a concept that Jonathan Culler has used to designate the literary critic's own repetition of the crisis that is in the text under analysis. This is a textual form of what Freud understood as counter-transference in which the analysand passes on something to the analyst, which itself arises from the subject's demand for the Other's desire. One can, however, extend a different understanding of the

analyst, what amounts to this—*I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you—the objet petit a—I mutilate you*" (268).

²³ Though he focuses on the critic's position, Jonathan Culler argues that the textual unconscious is not something that can be decoded. When "critics" claim "to stand outside the text and analyze it," Culler claims they necessarily "fall into the text and . . . play out a role in its dramas" much like Schiller's description of the sentimental poet ("Textual Self—Consciousness and the Textual Unconscious" 376).

textual unconscious that also applies to the author's relationship to writing itself. In an essay on Joyce's *Ulysses*, Nicholas A. Miller further develops such a reading of the textual unconscious that "has nothing whatever to do with representation, textual or otherwise," for "the textual unconscious comes into being, rather, as a process of production" when "language is no longer defined by what it says, even less by what makes it a signifying thing, but by what causes it to move, to flow, and to explode—desire" (212). What links the textual unconscious to the (un)published is that they both cannot be reduced to their material existence. Rather, they both produce partial objects that emerge out of the compulsion to repeat, wherein writing is itself a function of the drive's compulsion to produce itself anew.

The production of multiple versions is thus the crisis of *The Ages of the World*, a crisis whose repetition Schelling both produces and reflects upon in a psychoanalysis of the textual unconscious of his own writing. As such, Schelling participates, as Joel Faflak has argued, in Romanticism's "inventing" psychoanalysis.²⁴ Furthermore, as studies by Sean McGrath as well as Tilottama Rajan demonstrate, Schelling was an early, though indirect, source for psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious.²⁵ Indeed, Schelling's God

²⁴ See Joel Faflak's *Romantic Psychoanalysis: The Burden of the Mystery* (2008).

²⁵ While there is no evidence of how much Schelling Freud had read, McGrath argues that Schelling's use of the unconscious differs from Freud's "bio-personal unconscious, the Jungian collective unconscious, and the Lacanian semiotic unconscious" and reads the "negativity" of Schelling's "dark ground" as "essential to life" (1, 186). Rajan, on the other hand, shows that Schelling's interest in the unconscious was born from the interest in Germany at the time in "magnetism," "somnambulism," and "[m]esmerism," which, "unlike in France was a serious science in which chairs were instituted at the universities of Berlin and Bonn" ("Abyss" 14). As opposed to McGrath, Rajan reads the episode of magnetic sleep in the 1815 version against the idealized episode at the end of the 1813 version and argues that "magnetic sleep symptomatically embodies the very essence of transcendental idealism as a philosophy that produces itself inside itself through a hypnotism of itself, thus sidestepping the labour of the negative" (17).

is split into one part that Schelling describes as a wholly conscious "Supreme Being" of freedom, while another part is described repeatedly as the necessary ground or the unconscious other of God's freedom to be (Schelling *Ages* 3 6). Whereas the ground may start out as a heuristic figure in the 1811 version of *The Ages of the World* to push forward God's self-formation, by the end of the 1815 version, the ground becomes a figure of the unconscious that moves God "toward[s] personality," even if that personality is fully split; by the last version of the *Ages*, the unconscious ground, rather than the conscious will of God, becomes the "eternal force of selfhood, of egoity" that is "required so that the being which is Love," that is, God, "might exist as its own and might be for itself" (Schelling *Ages* 3 6).²⁶ God, it seems, can never be truly for itself because it depends on this other figure of the ground. In both the 1811 and 1813 versions, Schelling may sublimate the force of non-being in order to bring the writing of the text to an ending that represses its partial nature, but these endings are just moments in the rotation of the text's circular movement that turns back in on itself, producing yet another version of the partial Absolute.

As Pierre Macherey writes in *A Theory of Literary Production*, the "specificity of the work is also its autonomy: in so far as it is self-elaborating it is a law unto itself and acknowledges only an intrinsic standard, an autonomous necessity" (60). Macherey's observation helps us to understand how the (un)published functions as its own distinct textual object, for it functions according to a law unto itself that is separate from the

²⁶ These two senses of the ground date back to Schelling's 1809 *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*. However, in *The Ages*, the two senses of the ground reach a crisis point that does not resolve but further problematizes Schelling's completion of his philosophical system. As a result, Schelling continues to tarry with God and the ground's entanglement across the versions of the *The Ages*.

teleological role manuscripts are assumed to play in publication. Schelling's writing during this crucial period of non-publication, to paraphrase Werner, "bears witness to and follows the trajectory of a desire" that "articulate[s] a new space of knowledge" and inscribes itself "*otherwise* than within the dominant discourse of the day" (Werner *Open* 13). Following the way that *The Ages* elaborates itself across different unpublished versions that are unable to successfully move beyond the book of the past, we see how the (un)published is characterized not only by the multiplicity of partial objects but how these also deconstruct the dominant discourse of textuality as a public/published discourse. Instead, the textual history of the *Ages* illustrates a beginning that repeatedly goes nowhere, because it is a beginning whose aim is only to begin again.

Indeed, it is estimated that two thousand pages of Schelling's writings were destroyed during the World War II bombing of the University of Munich library, much of which—if not the majority—were notes for Schelling's *Ages of the World*. One thousand or so pages still remain in the Berlin archive's Schelling *Nachlass*, some of which has been published in the *Nachlaßbands die Weltalter Fragmente*. But because of this loss, scholars today refer to the *Ages* in what are now known as the three versions from 1811, 1813, and 1815,²⁷ even though Schelling actually returned to the first book of the *Ages* not three but twelve times. Were it not for Horst Fuhmans's discovery of a large chest filled with thousands of Schelling's folio pages in the cellar of the Library of the University of Munich that Manfred Schröter transcribed before they were destroyed, scholars would only have had access to the 1815 version of *The Ages* that had been

²⁷ The dates of composition remain uncertain for the third version of *The Ages of the World*, which could have been written sometime between 1814 and 1815. For the sake of consistency, we will refer to 1815 as the year of composition for the third version of the *Ages*.

published by his son, Karl Schelling. But what becomes apparent from the sheer number of notes Schelling produced during this period is a dynamic characterized by an obsessively prolonged interval of thought about how to construct the *Ages*, as if the autonomous necessity of the project were itself an involuntary commitment to persist in what Schelling called "the abyss of the past" (Schelling *Ages* 3 33). This abyssal writing also gave way to the writing's abysmal preservation, as much of Schelling's writing for the project of the *Ages of the World* was found locked away in a large chest in the cellar of the Library and not in a well-kept and curated archive. This "remind[s] us," to quote Werner again, "that a writer's archive is not a storehouse of easily inventoried contents—i.e., 'poems,' 'letters,' etc.—but also a reservoir of ephemeral remains" and "bibliographical escapes" (Werner 207).

Indeed, it is difficult to pinpoint where the *Ages* begins and ends, since Schelling scholars generally consider the rest of Schelling's career after the writing of the *Freedom* essay in relation to the unfinished project of *die Weltalter*. What remains of Schelling's unpublished oeuvre after the writing of the *Freiheitschrift* begins with *Clara* in 1810 and continues with the *Stuttgart Seminars* of 1811, the three extant versions of the *Ages*, and *The Deities of Samothrace* from 1815. This work is followed by the *Erlangen Lectures* that Schelling gave in the Winter semester between 1820 and 1821, a transcript of which has been published as *Initiae Philosophiae Universae*, and from which Schelling's son distilled the long essay *On the Nature of Philosophy as a Science* (1823), which he published in the *Sammtliche Werke*. There are also further lectures devoted to re-working *die Weltalter* system that Schelling gave between 1827 and 1828 known as the *System der*

Weltalter.²⁸ Thereafter, we also have the *Introduction to Philosophy* from 1830, the *Foundations of the Positive Philosophy* lectures from 1832-1833, and *On the History of Modern Philosophy* in 1833-1834. Finally, near the end of his career, after assuming Hegel's position as chair of philosophy in Berlin, Schelling gave the lectures published posthumously as *The Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation*, the lectures on the *Philosophy of Mythology* being prefaced by two introductions consisting of 24 lectures altogether, and those on *Revelation* being preceded by *The Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation, or the Grounding of Positive Philosophy*.²⁹

Whereas Schelling published or presented in public lectures nearly everything he produced before 1809, none of the above were meant to be published as complete books. Rather, they represent works in process. Though Schelling presented much of these in public lectures, lectures modify the book as the privileged mode for the communication of a systematic philosophy. As Sean Franzel has recently argued, Schelling's lectures, referring specifically to his earlier lectures from 1799 and 1803, "take as a primary concern the distinction between 'historical' knowledge" and "knowledge that is living, lively, or *lebendig*," for philosophy does not simply amass facts but "grasps 'living' knowledge in its holistic connection to other forms of knowledge" (350).³⁰ What this tells

²⁸ Finally published in 1990, *System der Weltalter: Münchener Vorlesung 1827/28 in einer Nachschrift von Ernst von Lasaulx* was edited by Siegbert Peetz.

²⁹ Only the first of Schelling's two introductions to the *Philosophy of Mythology* has been translated into English as the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* from 1842, while the second, the *Reinrationelle Darstellung*, has not yet been translated. The *Reinrationelle* was also the last thing Schelling produced, and yet these were not given as lectures, even though they are separated as lectures. The introduction to the lectures on *Revelation* have been translated as *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy* and were also given as a series of lectures in Berlin between 1842 to 1843.

³⁰ Franzel argues that "the Romantic lecture comes into view as a form that enables experimentation with a variety of discourses of linkage, synthetization, systematization,

us is that Schelling engaged with two very different forms of textuality, both equally unfinished, since both are involved in a kind of writing or *écriture* that revolves around two problems of beginning. The first form of textuality, the publication of everything, reveals a writing *in media res*, which unworks the book as a complete and discrete text, since it calls attention to the elaboration of the same project of writing that spills over into every subsequent publication. Arguably, this is because Schelling's publications can be read as variations on a theme that revise how to construct a genetic philosophy of the Absolute similar to that of the vitalist theory of preformationism in which all the organs of an organism are already whole, but exist *in potentia*, so that they will gradually unfold according to a pre-defined organization. What Schelling produces instead is a second form of textuality that inverts the first, and is best described by his distinction between two different versions of beginning:

The beginning that a being has outside of itself and the beginning that a being has within itself. . . . A beginning from which it can be alienated and from which it can distance itself is different than a beginning in which it eternally remains because it itself is the beginning. (Schelling *Ages 3 17*)

Schelling's publications do not appear to meet the requirements for a beginning that is outside of them, because so many of them come back to the question of how things such as Nature, the Subject, or God begin as both subject and object, productivity and product. This is to say that Schelling's published works are not able to distance themselves from a beginning outside of themselves because each philosophy Schelling elaborates sets out from a beginning where the Absolute must necessarily be and eternally remains "because

and 'entanglement.' Lecturers have a variety of rhetorical and medial means at their disposal through which to construct notions of holism and overview, as well as to engage self-reflexively with their institutional environment. The Romantic lecture thus comes to play a definitive role in recasting the project of *organizing* and *disseminating* knowledge in the university and the broader public sphere" (349; my emphasis).

it itself is the beginning.” Insofar as each version of the *Ages* turns back to the same problem of beginning, a beginning that inevitably returns back to itself in an infinite loop, Schelling, to quote Edward Said, falls prey to the "danger[s] of too much reflection upon beginnings," a reflection that would also turn the problem of the *Ages* into an "*idée fixe*" for Schelling (76). This fixation on beginnings, which Said calls "intransitive and conceptual," is very much a "creature of the mind," but it can also be discerned in the actual act of re-writing and revision (77).

The first form of textuality that is characterized by a beginning that a being has outside of itself is thus actually part of the problem of the second form of textuality, for Schelling's question of how it was that God began as an eternal beginning becomes a problem not only for Idealism but also for Schelling's textual idealism. For if *The Ages* were to successfully portray God's auto-generation, then writing is itself capable of representing the truth of the Absolute. Yet Schelling's non-publication also reveals how the writing of non-being, as the material ground of God's existence, prevents God from achieving a beginning that is outside of God. As an allegory for writing, the material ground shows how publication is itself caught in the same throes of a beginning that precedes all forms of writing, since even the publication of 1811 and 1813 would have substituted the 1815 as a work of writing's non-being. For while God is being, it is equally the non-being of the ground. As non-being proves to be less and more than the Absolute is capable of containing, it becomes impossible for Schelling to move past the third version of *The Ages* because of its failure to illustrate a smooth transition towards a textuality that has a beginning outside of itself. The failure of this impasse, though, makes Schelling's project an important text for a new relation to the Absolute because it sees that

the human should no longer be considered as the only thing limited in its capacity to know itself. There is something in the Absolute that also *withdraws* from it, meaning that all things, including the Absolute, are not able to access that which is in-itself. The (un)published, therefore, is also characterized by the collapse of the barrier that keeps *The Ages*'s public transcript separate from its hidden transcript. Whereas this is true of published as well as unpublished texts, there is something, in the words of the French translator of the 1811 and 1813 versions, Pascal David, in "the fecundity" that comes from "the renewal of the same project of which the different realizations invite the reader to cross the threshold into the creator's workshop" (David 315; translation mine).

Just because Schelling's *Ages* remains unfinished, then, does not mean that his project should be considered a failure. Nor should we even consider it according to Schlegel's definition of the romantic fragment. The *Ages* does not reflect this concept of the fragment because it brings about the destruction of Schlegel's synonymous use of 'system' with 'fragment,' wherein all "individuals are systems at least in embryo and tendency" (Schlegel 51). Schelling demonstrates how idealism, in the words of Kant, "annihilates the end which its concept constituted" (Kant § 5; 253). Because Schelling's God intends to prove the Absolute completeness of his system, his God is monstrous precisely because it brings about its destruction by infinitely deferring its end, for it is the symptom of the *Ages* to repeat its textual unconscious. As Lacan states, repetition overturns any sense of a system in embryo, or of a future yet to come, because the unconscious figures a "perfectly articulated knowledge for which strictly speaking no subject is responsible" (Lacan *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* 77). Repetition, then, is the erasure of *telos*, because it is a function of the unconscious rather than a conscious

individual, forsaking the ends of desire for the unpleasant *jouissance* of writing's repeated circular movement back towards its own beginning. Whereas Schelling writes, “[a]ll beginning is, in accord with its nature, a desire for the end or for what leads to the end,” we must re-vise how Schelling writes of both desire and its ends. Because God is at once its own subject and object, or what Schelling schematizes as the A that is both equal to A and B, the distinction between God and the ground becomes the deciding factor in whether or not there is an actual teleologic end to the *Ages* (Schelling *Ages* 3 16). This is especially the case when one compares the 1813 version of the *Ages* to the later 1815 version, for Schelling writes in 1813 that the beginning must be “eternally what is done, and is consequently what has past”; “by sinking [it] into unconsciousness” the beginning “works like something concealed, like that everlasting, eternal, primordial deed in us, even if it is not yet actually declared as such, and still less recognizes itself” (Schelling *Ages* 2 182).

However, there is a crucial marginal note found in the text that describes the abandonment of the entire manuscript, as noted in Judith Norman's translation of Manfred Schröter's note to the text:

The manuscript prepared for printing does continue for another five or six pages, but a marginal note was added (by F. W. J. Schelling) that the treatise falls into utter falsehoods *from this point forward*. This self-critique explains why the author did not publish even the portion of the manuscript presented here. (Norman 182n)

That Schelling could not finish *The Ages* was not for lack of effort, for his decision to abandon the 1813 version is a result of his repression of the ground's function as non-being in the text. The text falls into “utter falsehoods *from this point forward*” because Schelling sees the mistake in depicting the unconscious as “eternally what is done, and ... consequently what has past.” As Slavoj Žižek observes of the *Ages*, Schelling's note

shows that the second version's "very failure is theoretically extremely productive" (*Indivisible Remainder* 23). For it is not that Schelling fails to describe God's unconscious in the first two versions of the *Ages*, but that the different descriptions of it have implications for the way the text should unfold precisely according to God's relationship to it. What is theoretically productive, then, is that Schelling could not move from the eternal past into the present because he could not fully accept the consequences of his description of the unconscious as the originary precedent to consciousness. Schelling realized the necessity of the unconscious as a more vital force than the valorization of the conscious that he describes in the first two versions of the *Ages*.

As Paul de Man would say, the *Ages*'s description of "the actual event" of the unconscious's resistance to God "as a crisis" only "pretends to designate" what the crisis actually is, for the writing that describes the freedom of the unconscious "is, in fact, itself the crisis" that Schelling's text unfolds ("Criticism and Crisis" 7). Still incapable of acknowledging the function of non-being as that which grounds God's being, the 1811 and 1813 versions repress non-being's vitality as Schelling also does in *Clara*. The figures of the doctor and the priest, exemplars of an immunitary guidance that "constrict[s] development" towards a point that they insist "nature strongly desires," attempt to lead Clara as well as Schelling himself away from the drive to return to the past, which "stop[s] not only [her] progress, but that of the whole of nature" from accessing "the heavenly world" (*Clara* 24). But this desire to go back to the past represents the reality of the crisis that unfolds in Schelling's texts as one that also affects our understanding of publication. For writing is not something that moves us beyond the abyss of the past but rather is itself that which returns us to it, the crisis that is itself a

beginning that it eternally is. The only way to resolve this crisis would be to contain the uncontainability of the past, that is, to contain it within a beginning outside oneself, just as an author crosses out the text's non-being and instead declares it to be a work that announces being. What this conflict between the public and hidden transcript of Schelling's writing demonstrates instead is a psychoanalysis of the text's own multiple beginnings, wherein beginning is never something that takes place but is rather a movement that precedes and captures the author in its trajectory. As such, Schelling involuntarily demonstrates that there is no proper beginning to the Absolute or to writing since, by returning to what he calls in the 1811 version "the original time" of "darkness and closure," which is repeated at the beginning of the 1815 version as "the dark night" in which "God self-referentially shrouds [his] point of departure," the beginning begins all over again (Schelling *Ages* 1 24, *Ages* 3 3). As such, *The Ages* represents a shift in Schelling's writing that unconsciously reflects upon a beginning from which we cannot escape.

III. A part of God, A God Torn Apart: 1811

Written in 1811, the first version of the *Ages* retreats from the conception of the ground that Schelling develops in the *Freedom* essay, which is free to be active but is "dependent" on the existence of God as the aim of its "original yearning" (Schelling *Freedom* 29). In the 1809 *Freedom* essay, Schelling initially encounters the insoluble problem of what to do with the unconscious in the figure of God's ground, describing non-being as an involuntary "propensity to evil as an act of freedom" that points to what he called a "life before this life" (52). In a key passage from the *Freedom* essay, Schelling

describes the ground's deviation from God's becoming in terms of non-being's containment within being, for the ground of non-being remains independent while still being contained as a part within God. Schelling describes this autonomy in terms of "a dependency without a dependent, a consequence without a consequence, and, thus, no real consequence" in which "the whole concept" of itself "would abolish itself" (17-18).

Borrowing from anatomy, Schelling describes how

[a]n individual body part, like the eye, is only possible within the whole of an organism; nonetheless, it has its own life for itself, indeed, its own kind of freedom, which it obviously proves through the disease of which it is capable. Were that which is contained in another not itself alive, then there would be containment without some thing being contained, that is, nothing would be contained. (18)

The question of the *Ages* then becomes, what is the ground? What is this maternal and material force that Schelling defines only negatively just to merely exclude it at the end of the *Freedom* essay? If it is a part of the whole that God also is, what is its function as part of the *Ages*?

In this first version of the *Ages*, the ground is described according to the concept of non-being as the "will that wills towards something," which "begets . . . itself, and, for this reason, merits the name of the eternal will" (Schelling *Ages I* 17).³¹ This eternal will can "neither be the beginning to something" nor "actively precede anything," because God as drive, which is the "will wanting nothing," does not necessitate existence (Schelling *Ages I* 17; *Ages 2* 74). In other words, as Schelling writes in the third version, God is the will wanting nothing "because it is itself enough, [and] has nothing that it can want" (Schelling *Ages 3* 24). This initial relation appears as nothing, since the will that

³¹ All quotations from the 1811 version are my translation of Manfred Schröter's 1946 *Die Weltalter Fragmente* unless otherwise stated.

wills toward something and the will wanting nothing actively negate time and stand opposed to it as they are caught up in eternity. God, then, is figured as the self-sufficient author of its own existence, while the ground lacks something because it is not in possession of being. Therefore, it is not God but the ground that initiates the necessary desire for the beginning of existence. This relation between the two contradicting wills, according to Schelling, "is nothing other than the infinite profusion and affirmation of itself" wherein "this other will" that is non-being "must be, relative to eternity, of another nature that limits, contracts and negates" (Schelling *Ages I* 31).

This contradiction between God's self-sufficiency and the ground's lack thus sets the stage for the dynamic unfolding of God's self-formation, wherein the ground's lack serves as the beginning for a teleological unfolding of history that posits its end in God's internalization of the ground. The ground lacks in order to preserve God as absolutely complete in the same way that Schelling describes "the serene artist" as "more concerned with slowing down than accelerating development in art as in science," because God in the 1811 version still maintains the classical depiction of God described by Schiller as standing behind his work (Schelling *Ages I* 83). This concept of the "true artist" returns later in Schelling's *Erlangen Lectures* from 1822, where the artist "always recognizes himself in his power of restraint and delay rather than [in] production, impulse, [and] acceleration" ("On the Nature of Philosophy as Science" 236). However, as will become apparent, the impulse to delay and restrain becomes a feature of the ground rather than of God—more so in the third version than in the first or the second—because the ground delays through the production of its own self-cancelling non-being. This act of self-cancellation, of the annihilation of its own ends, becomes a negativity that cannot be

negated by God's efforts to contain the unconscious as eternally past, since non-being instead leads to its own destruction and production of itself, which instead eternally repeats a hidden transcript that defies God's public transcript of self-revelation.

Though the ground is the generative and expansive will of life, Schelling aims to transform this will for a Christian theodicy in which the ground will later become in the 1811 version "the son of God" who fulfills the covenant of God "the father" (Schelling *Ages I* 83-84). Without this theodicy, Schelling maintains that there could in fact be nothing if it were not for the fact that the ground was contained within God. This is because nothing would be able to exist in the ground, since, as the will that wills something, it is too powerful without something to temper its destructive activity. When "faced with creation, this force of ipseity," what Schelling calls the eternal will "within God[,] would be like a fire that would annihilate and consume," "an eternal wrath that could tolerate nothing unless love would prevent it, a mortal contraction comparable to that which produces the cold in our planetary world if the sun were to be subtracted" (Schelling *Ages I* 19). What is intriguing about the 1811 version is that the ground's generative power is sublimated as it necessitates the existence of God as a check to its power, and hence requires love to transform itself from a force of destruction into a force of generation; yet this fault in the ground does not arise from its lack, but rather from its generative excess. Being that which both exceeds completion and that which lacks completion, the ground of non-being preserves both God's wholeness as well his as his freedom to not act, because the ground's immaterial productivity ensures that nothing complete can be created.

Although non-being's subordinate position means that it is not procreative, non-being still appears to create its own non-creation, which means that it is not nothingness. In a passage that all three versions share in some form,³² Schelling distinguishes non-being as the will wanting something as distinct from the common understanding of nothing. Schelling writes,

[n]onbeing is not absolute lack of essence; it is merely what is opposed to the essence proper. Yet for all that, it is not any the less positive essence. If being is unity, nonbeing is the contrary—it is the opposite without qualification, or in itself. For that very reason it is an eternal force; indeed, it would be more correct to say that it is eternal force without qualification, God's strength, by means of which, above all else, he himself is as he himself, the solitary one, cut off from everything, the one that must be first of all and all alone if anything else is to be. Without this efficacious principle the concept of God's singularity would be a vacuous, all-negating concept. Even if God willed that this principle be subordinate to the essence that is divinity proper in him, it is nonetheless in itself something living. God, as what properly is, surpasses his being. Heaven is his throne and earth his footstool. Yet even that which in relation to his supreme essence is nonbeing is so full of force that it irrupts into a life of its own. Thus in the vision of the prophet, as Raphael depicts it, the eternal is sustained not by nothingness but by forms of living animals. (Schelling *Ages I* 20-21)³³

This passage from the first version is distinct from all the others because of its description of God's footstool. The 1811 version remains untranslated into English, and only Manfred

³² This passage can be found in Judith Norman's translation of the 1813 version on page 141 and can be found in Jason Wirth's translation of the 1815 version on page 14.

³³ This translation is taken from David Farrell Krell's *The Tragic Absolute* on page 153. The German reads: "*Das Nichtseyende ist nicht absoluter Mangel an Wesen, es ist nur das dem eigentlichen Wesen entgegengesetzte, aber darum in seiner Art nicht minder positive Wesen; es ist, wenn jenes die Einheit ist, der Gegensatz und zwar der Gegensatz schlechthin oder an sich. Schon darum ist [es] eine ewige Kraft, ja wir würden richtiger sagen es sez die ewige Kraft schlechthin, die Stärke Gottes, wodurch vor allem andern Er Selbst als Er Selbst ist, der einzige, von allem abgeschnittene, der zuerst allein seyn muß, damit anderes seyn könne. Ohne dieses wirkende Princip wäre der Begriff der Einzigkeit Gottes ein leerer, ein gemeinverneinender Begriff. Wenn auch Gott gewollt hat, daß dieses Princip dem Wesen als der eigentlichen Gottheit in ihm unterworfen sey: so ist es darum doch in sich nicht weniger ein Lebendiges. Gott der eigentlich seyende ist über seinem Seyn; der Himmel ist sein Thron und die Erde sein Fußschemel; aber auch das in Bezug auf sein höchstes Wesen Nichtseyende ist so voll von Kraft, daß es in ein eignes Leben ausbricht*" (20-21).

Frank and David Farrell Krell "prefer to draw attention to the first" version's first half for its use of an imagery that exceeds the aridity of the text's Christian terminology and logical formulas (Krell 151). In contrast, Manfred Schröter, one of the most important editors of Schelling's oeuvre in the twentieth century, argues that the "footstool metaphor is meant merely as a heuristic device to make more palpable or 'intuitable' . . . the highly abstract problem of God's contracting" (quoted in Krell 151). Whereas Krell argues that the footstool's presence in the 1811 version can be read against the grain to reveal the animal life that is not separate but integral to God's existence, I read its absence in the other versions of the *Ages* that specifically deal with the issue of non-being as a sign of Schelling's own misgivings over non-being's subordination to the system he creates in the 1811 version.

For its absence opens a new interpretation of what Schelling presents in 1813 and 1815. While this passage does not epitomize the 1811 version, it serves as a *point de capiton* that contrasts with Schelling's depiction of God as a figure of stability both before and after existence. The footstool passage becomes a deconstructive moment that is revealed in the act of crossing-out, since, as Bellemin-Noël observes, "deletion does not uniquely consist in editing a few quasi-superfluous details in the name of some aerodynamic vision of the oeuvre: it is also, as is more often the case, and much more seriously, deleting to replace, to transform" (my trans.; 6). What the deletion and replacement of objects shows is that the genesis of God's onto-theology and the genesis of the versions are much more violent than what is detailed in the public transcript of the 1811 version. For the public transcript posits God's ground initially as resistant to revelation in order for revelation to actually take place. Since God cannot exit out of its

state of suspension, it rather generates an untenable position for the ground unless it gives up its autonomous position to become Christ as the messenger of God's love. As

Schelling writes:

For it is not permitted that the force of contraction to find any respite: it is that it eternally continues to exert itself, so that the Son is eternally generated by the Father and the paternal force eternally expands in the Son, so that from their concerted action the eternal delights are born which both the Father and the Son may experience, the one in what it overcomes, the other in that it is overcome. (Schelling *Ages 1* 58)

The footstool passage, then, is in fact not superfluous but integral for how we understand the ground before Schelling turns to Christian theodicy, because the footstool gives a sense of the fate of the figures present within non-being. For, in Bellemin-Noel's words, "crossing-out the expression amounts to obstructing the content," so that the footstool's autonomy is not only subjugated to the totality of the text's Christian theology; this public transcript also effectively negates the possibility of non-being's own development independent of God's revelation (my trans.; 6). In the 1813 version, for instance, when the image of the footstool and its included carvings should accompany the description of non-being, Schelling represses the ground's independence by merely relegating it to that which it is not, separating it from its link to the material world by writing it "*under what-is*"; since God is "Being, according to the very concept" and "cannot be as one with what-is," the ground of God's existence must in effect be "by nature *what-is-not*," but "not nothing" (Schelling *Ages 2* 141-42). Schelling repeats this passage early on in the 1815 version and the 1813 version, but he inverts the assertion he makes in the 1811 version about God as the serene artist. In 1815, the "actual power" of God lies in the ground, insofar as the ground's power "lies more in delimitation than expansion," for to "withdraw oneself has more to do with might than to give [of] oneself" (Schelling *Ages 3*

14). It is not until the 1815 version, as we will discuss later in this chapter, that Schelling further develops the concept of non-being in this way in a section that his son Karl Schelling entitled in his addition of a "Table of Contents," "The intensified concept of that which does not have being" (Wirth xxxiii).

However, the figures that Schelling introduces in the process of developing the concept of non-being in the 1811 version still require more attention before turning to the 1813 and 1815 versions. As in the *Freedom* essay's description of the "eye" as "an individual body part," the footstool is a partial object that is in possession of an excess of libidinal energy within Schelling's system (Schelling *Freedom* 18). Whereas the eye through "disease" "has its own life for itself" and "its own kind of freedom," the footstool Schelling describes is compared to one that "portrays the extremity of human fate, to wit, the death of Niobe's children, on the foot of the throne on which . . . Olympian Zeus reposes; and, representing there as he did the battles of the Amazons, he decorated the very footstool of the god with energetic life" (Schelling *Freedom* 18; *Ages I* 21).³⁴ The difference between Being and non-being, or between God and his creatures, is that God does not appear to be at all alive. As Tilottama Rajan argues, "in the first two versions" there "was no history because there was no subject," since there is only will in the figure of God as the will that wills nothing, which is more like the "stilling of what Schopenhauer calls will" (Rajan 29). As such, one can read the 1811 version of God as completely involved in its own Symbolic development of Christian theodicy, which blinds it to the existence of the figures inscribed upon its footstool. Yet, as Schelling's French biographer Xavier Tilliette observes, if the ground is an object that is a part of a

³⁴ Krell's translation, 153.

whole, it does not merely reflect God and reproduce his will as if in a mirror. For as an "object" that "is not a mirror, it is a presence, a haecceity, that can either be a screen or sign," so that one can either see it as a mirror or turn it around and observe the tain of the mirror, "its obscure reverse" (my trans.; 547). As Tilliette continues, "this is why we have described the unitotality more so as a world of eyes, swarming with eyes, engorged with living retinas, weak or piercing, like an immense *sensorium Dei*" (my trans.; 547). These eyes recall Lacan's theorization of the gaze, one of his privileged partial objects, which clarifies what Tilliette means when he says that a mirror can either be a screen or a sign. For the partial object can be either a screen on to which the subject displaces its traumatic entrance into language, and thus defends the subject against disintegration, or it becomes a sign of that disintegration. As Žižek writes of the partial object of the gaze, it "frames the very frame which confers meaning on your life; it structures the horizon within which things make sense to you; if we unknot it, you will lose the ground under your feet" (Žižek "Why does a Letter always arrive at its Destination").

If the footstool were just a heuristic device that enabled a better understanding of the contraction of non-being, the images upon the footstool would not have illustrated a repudiation of the position of subordination with an energetic life all their own. One would assume that the footstool would consolidate God's authority as the love of the father for the son rather than disfigure the relationship between the earth and God. As Krell points out, the image of the footstool itself remains unstable, as it changes places with the 1810 *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*'s image of God's "footsole" (Krell 162). Whether nature takes place outside of God or takes place right on the skin appears to be as difficult for Schelling to decide as it is for God to discern. Indeed, not only its place in

relation to God but its place in time is also left up to question. For as Schelling writes in the 1815 version, during that "primordial state [which] is posited as an eternal past," the ground is "a past that did not first become past, but which was the past from the primordial beginning and since all eternity" (Schelling *Ages* 3 39). If we open "the so-called body and spread out all its surfaces," as Jean-François Lyotard writes at the beginning of *Libidinal Economy* (1993), God's feet do not rest indifferently on the footstool, because the footstool may also be the sole of God's foot, resulting in the inscription of the images of the footstool to be written on the skin, the bones, and the sinew that make up the fabric of the cosmos (1). These images do not represent "the organic body," but rather represent how such an organic body is "organized with survival as its goal against what excites it to death"; laying bare the body of the *Ages* reveals a "libidinal body" that is made up of "the many terrible things in nature and the spiritual world" that "a benevolent hand seems to cover up" (Lyotard 3; Schelling *Ages* 3 49). If we follow the flows of desire that pass through the footstool, the body of Schelling's God resembles Urizen as he is depicted on the front plate of Blake's *The Book of Urizen* in the Lambeth Books. Though Schelling could not have been aware of this image, the way that Urizen is positioned shows his right foot as it follows the text from right to left in a desperate attempt to close-read the book of nature, while both of Urizen's hands actively strive to write in the books behind him in order to organize and establish some semblance of a system. Schelling's image of the footstool thus exceeds what may be its intended role as a mere heuristic annotation to the contracting negativity of the ground and its subordination to God. If anything, the images upon the footstool are the hidden transcript made legible, each image a partial object like the eye in Schelling's *Freedom* essay that

resists the public transcript of subordination to the authority of God as author of its own teleological self-formation.

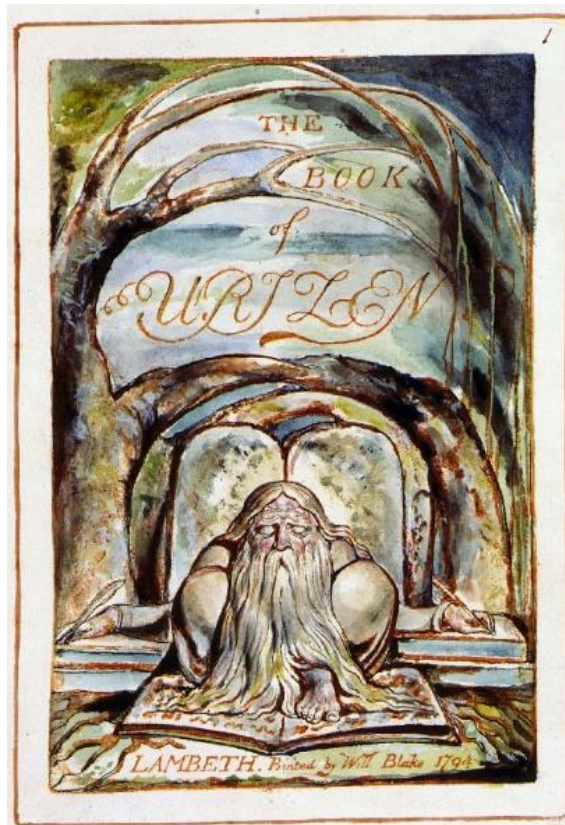


Figure 2. Blake, William. *The Book of Urizen*. Plate 1.

Writing, as the plate from the *Book of Urizen* illustrates, does not necessarily empower the author or give authority. Rather writing the *Ages of the World* submits God to the images on the footstool that splits him from his own order and organization. Like Hegel's sense of Symbolic art, the footstool represents "[b]eing" "indeterminate[ly]," as "the Idea has not found the form even in itself and therefore remains struggling and striving after it" (Hegel *Aesthetics* 76). This is because writing, if we consider it in terms of Schelling's passage on the footstool, produces partial objects that exist for the whole

but that do not legitimate it. Rather, because partial objects cannot even legitimate their own existence, any attempt at instrumentalizing them for the aims of authority ends up putting such authority under erasure. Though the 1811 version's own conservatism also precipitates Schelling's crossing-out of the footstool from the 1813 version, this disappearance does not signal its irrelevance but Schelling's own resistance to the excessive libidinal potential presented within the images of non-being. Non-being, therefore, does not clarify the role of the ground in the 1811 version, since the footstool allows for a deconstructive moment within the text's teleology that provokes instead a fascination with the partial object as opposed to an investment within the text's Symbolic of Christian theodicy.

The emergence of partial objects within the teleology of the text can thus be read according to Joan Copjec's interpretation of Lacan's myth of the lamella from Seminar XI as the "*organ of the libido*." For Copjec, "the human body is not a 'body without organs,'" because the body is defined by that which has been subtracted from it; the mere fact of the body's existence produces the subject's experience as a gap in existence, which finds itself repeated in "*representatives* (not representations) of its [lack] in the form of little libidinalized objects," which we have been calling partial objects (Copjec 51). As was stated above, Lacan argues that the partial object remains independent from and not a part of some whole, all while it resists internalization even as it exists within the Symbolic. This autonomous nature of the partial object is developed further by Copjec's reading of Deleuze's concept of the close-up in film, "which does not pretend to be a part of some whole, but is instead a part that replaces a whole" (Copjec *Imagine* 74). In this sense, Schelling's development of non-being in the image of the footstool results in the

emergence of "partial object[s] or object[s] of lack . . . *out of the lack*, the void, [which are] opened by the loss of the original Plenum," which is exactly what happens when God enters into relation with the footstool (Copjec 59). Though Schelling drops the image of the footstool from the 1813 and 1815 versions, its existence in the 1811 version portends the emergence of new (w)hole-part dynamics as well as new partial objects that will emerge out of the limitless depths of non-being.

IV. Original Yearning: 1813

Turning to the 1813 version of the *Ages*, we see Schelling move away from the more overtly Christian theodicy that he resorts to in the 1811 version towards a more internal description of God's being and non-being within an unconscious state. Rather than contend with the unruliness of the footstool, Schelling makes non-being into something that is always already unconscious and lacks the "pure freedom" of what Schelling calls the "immovable, divine . . . indifference"; this pure freedom, according to Schelling, "is absolutely First," for if indifference "is the beginning," it must "also at the same time [be] the end" (*Ages* 2 134, 132). The reason for existence, then, is not to complete God, but for God to be what he already is. Whereas Schelling's description of the footstool in the first *Ages* complicated rather than clarified the boundary limits of what is a part of or apart from God, which was also the issue in the pantheism debates Schelling contributed to in the 1809 *Freedom* essay, the 1813 version attempts to protect God from the contradiction of the first version by designating God first as a point of absolute indifference between two opposing principles: being (*das Seyn*) and what-is (*das Seyende*). God, then, is separated into three different principles, wherein God's

indifference (first principle) remains eternally protected from God as being (second principle) and the ground of his existence (third principle). These are posited as initially indistinct, since if “activity in general, or a particular deed or action were the First, then contradiction would be eternal” (Schelling *Ages 2* 133). The problem of beginning thus persists for Schelling in the 1813 version of *The Ages*, since there must still be something that brings about the dynamic entry into existence, what Schelling calls ‘what-is,’ so that God may ground itself at the end of the text as absolutely self-conscious of itself (Schelling *Ages 2* 136). Consequently, in this initial state of indifference,

the more this composure is profoundly deep and intrinsically full of bliss, the sooner must a quiet longing produce itself in eternity, without eternity either helping or knowing. This is a longing to come to itself, to find and savor itself; it is an urge to become conscious *of which Eternity itself does not become conscious*. (Schelling *Ages 2* 136)

Rather than in any psychoanalytic sense of the unconscious, God’s conscious will, according to Schelling, as “the resting” will is “the First,” so that “we can also say that an unconscious, tranquil, self-seeking will is the Second” (Schelling *Ages 2* 137).

While this definition of the unconscious designates it as secondary to, and hence, dependent upon the first position of indifference, the ground is still described as a “dynamic hiding-away, an active striving backward into the depths, into concealment”; although it is completely unconscious, Schelling still states that the ground involuntarily “produces itself in eternity *without* eternity knowing and remains, with respect to its ground, concealed from eternity” (Schelling *Ages 2* 143). This involuntary presence of the unconscious serves the purpose of introducing a fundamental lack within the *Ages* as the reason for God to enter into existence, all while it keeps God’s desire distinct and separate from it that maintains the concept of God as complete in itself. However, because lack is

described as a hole that can only be filled by God's love, the unconscious is not necessarily psychoanalytic but rather passively libidinal.³⁵ In this case, the 1813 version shares with the 1811 version a conservative discourse that represses the vitalism of the ground, insofar as the hidden transcript is largely absent from the content of the text. Both the 1811 and 1813 versions describe non-being in terms of a lack of being, where what is lacking in God turns the problem of the text not into an issue of self-conscious knowledge but of desire.

Unlike Žižek, who argues in his introduction to the 1813 version of the *Ages* that God finds itself within the register of the drive, which “designates a repetitive movement not driven by constitutive lack,” the second version consistently defines the ground in terms of lack, which, I argue, does leave God “within the space of *desire*” (Žižek “Abyss of the Past” 84).³⁶ But while I disagree with Žižek's reading, the *Ages*' textual history does allow for a way to read Schelling's disavowal of the 1813 version as a sign that there is another order of repetition that proceeds according to the function of the drive. As opposed to the rhetoric used to repress the ground in the 1813 version as a desire that is completely unconscious, Schelling's decision to not publish the second version relegates

³⁵ At the same time, this introduces a more psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious in terms of desire as lack, for the ground is “itself in” an “unconscious state of longing” (Schelling *Ages* 2 138). Slavoj Žižek, in contrast, argues in his introduction to the 1813 version that the second version is also an example of a “rotary motion” that sees God “in the state of an endless ‘pleasure in pain,’ agonizing and struggling with himself, affected by an unbearable anxiety, the vision of a ‘psychotic,’ mad God who is absolutely alone, a One who is ‘all’ since he tolerates nothing outside himself—a ‘wild madness tearing itself apart’” (17). For more, see Slavoj Žižek's “The Abyss of Freedom” in Judith Norman's *The Abyss of Freedom/Ages of the World* (1997).

³⁶ Though Žižek reads the second version as constitutively within the register of the drive, his analysis draws largely from the language of the 1815 version, which is what perhaps allows him to perform an anachronistic reading of the second version as a text defined by the emergence of the drive.

the text itself to the register of the drive because desire fails to successfully complete the onto-theogony of the text; in other words, desire is at work in the 1813 version itself. The drive, therefore, is at work in Schelling's repeated return to the writing of the text, as evidenced by Schelling's marginal note near the end of the text: "the treatise falls into utter falsehoods *from this point forward*" (Norman 182n). This marginal note, according to Schelling's son Karl Schelling, was made in the parts of the interrupted manuscript that are now lost to scholars. We only have access to this ending thanks to the typeset proofs³⁷ of the second version, where we can see that Schelling was in the final stages of preparation needed to publish the 1813 version. Yet this only further reinforces our reading of the drive's presence in Schelling's writing, as he cannot exit out of the *Ages*'s textual unconscious. Instead, compelled by the repetition of the drive, Schelling disavows the ending to the second version of the *Ages* because he recognizes that lack leaves the system necessary rather than both free and necessary. This is further corroborated by Schelling's decision to begin yet another version in 1815, which forms a tacit acknowledgement that the 1813 text's failure arises from the repression of the hidden transcript of non-being.

For whereas God or the Absolute must always already be, God remains indifferent to the cause of existence in the 1813 version, so that the problem of how to begin falls to non-being rather than to God. As Schelling writes, "beginning lies in negation alone" (Schelling *Ages* 2 138), since "what-is" first posits itself not as that which in itself exists but as "what-is-not" (Schelling *Ages* 2 141). In order to preserve God as the

³⁷ Judith Norman observes in a footnote: "According to the German editor [Manfred Schröter], the printed manuscript ends here, and the rest of page 109 remains blank. What follows is a variant of page 109 and the further continuation from the typeset proofs" (Norman 167n).

unconditioned or "the *will* toward eternity," Schelling depotentializes the ground of God's existence, and instead makes the ground into a self-negating will; in Schelling's words,

[i]n positing itself as negated, it is at the same time the self-negating will. Yet it cannot negate itself by positing itself as not being at all; rather, it can only posit itself as not being the *essence*, or what affirms, or what—(genuinely and by nature)—*is*. Moreover, the will cannot negate itself as being the essence without positing itself as lack [*Mangel*] and—to the extent that it is also active—as hunger, as yearning, as desire for essence. Returning into itself, it necessarily finds itself to be empty and in need but is for that reason all the more eager to fill itself, to satiate itself with essence. (*Ages* 2 138-139)

As Manfred Frank argues, it is here that Schelling develops an early sense of subjectivity similar to Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of the subject as *le néant* in the sense of the Greek *me on* (non-being) as opposed to the *ouk on* (nothing). Frank reads Sartre's subject through Schelling's distinction between non-being and nothing, which makes a place for the subject as "an ontically dependent quality that helps being appear" and yet is "not a *being* itself, but rather exists as [an] ek-static (intentional) reference to a being" (Frank 161).³⁸ As opposed to the pure freedom of God, Frank reads the ground as *necessarily* free because it is incapable of deciding its own freedom. Since the ground in the 1813 version is not free to choose, or, if it does, the ground chooses not to choose its own self-negation, Schelling still considers this freedom in terms of a constant lack within itself that only God can fill. But the lack that is introduced into the ground also contains within it the potential for a lack that is technically contained within God. As we will see, this

³⁸ Schelling's later philosophy seems to further take up the distinction between non-being, nothingness, and being that is developed in the *Ages*. Schelling distinguishes between "different species of being" where "[a] deficiency is therefore posited with the pure subject: but deficiency is not an unconditional negation, but rather contains an affirmation of another sort in itself, as we will show when the time comes . . . not being (*me einai*) is not being nothing (*ouk einai*), since Greek has the advantage of being able to express the contradictory and merely contrary negation of each through its own particle. The mere deficiency of being does not exclude ability-to-be. Pure *ability* (and we can determine the pure subject as this) is non-being" (quoted in Frank 162).

lack within the ground eventually leads to a different sense of the unconscious in 1815, which inserts itself within God's indifference as a yearning that could potentially surpass God's desire for self-presence.

The 1813 version, however, takes many steps in defending itself against this potentially new understanding of the unconscious in Schelling's revised interpretation of the parts of God as three separate modes of God's being: the expressing, the expressible, and the expressed. In Schelling's words, the expressing can be understood as "One and the same = X," which "is the expressing of both, [that is,] of what-is, and of being" (*Ages* 2 128). The expressing is not that which expresses itself but constantly remains the capacity to express the unity of God as being (*das Seyn*) and what-is (*das Seyende*). In other words, the expressing can be compared with the typical understanding of the unpublished as that which has not yet been expressed, like Percy Bysshe Shelley's sense of inspiration in *A Defence of Poetry*: the "mind in creation is as a fading coal" because "when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline" (531). To be expressed, then, is the aim of the second version, but an aim that Schelling dutifully avoids. For much of the text, Schelling constantly describes this initial life of the 'expressing' God as a defense against contradiction, since it maintains the simplicity of a singular subject as opposed to the difficulty that arises from the subject's conflict with the object or the Other's existence. Being and what-is remain united but unconscious of each other's existence, and hence are only expressible and not yet expressed in this state; if one were to be expressed, the other would be negated and hence cease to exist, so they must remain in "an inert opposition, or one in which the opposites are indifferent to each other" (Schelling *Ages* 2 128-129).

Thus, while the 1811 version at least identified the partial nature of the ground in the figure of the footstool, the 1813 version represents that which is under what-is (*das Seyende*)—or the ground of God’s existence—as not-being rather non-being. An inactive object as opposed to a partial object, God’s ground is an object that does not resist its discursive place within the text’s public transcript because its completion lies in God as its intended other. Thus, even if what-is or, as Schelling calls it elsewhere in the text, "the eternal will to nature" is described in the same way that non-being is described in the 1811 version, the tain of the mirror is absent from the 1813 version; for when held "up to eternal being (which in itself is pure spirit)," the ground merely reflects God’s being "as if in a mirror, and thereby pull[s] this being to itself and out of its eternal indifference" (Schelling *Ages 2* 140, 154). Such a view only reproduces the view of a classical God who stands behind the text, like the view of the manuscript text as that which serves to communicate the clear intentions of its author. Rather than pose any contradiction, then, this indifference only gives way to a potential for expressing being (*das Seyn*) and what-is (*das Seyende*).³⁹

As Tilottama Rajan has argued, the 1813 version of the ground thus presents a "non-knowledge" that "is short-circuited by the section on magnetic sleep, which comes close to the end of the text, and expands the trope of "silent dialogue" or "inner . . .

³⁹ Even when the ground’s desire becomes a contradiction and is set “into motion,” it remains consubstantial with God. As Schelling writes,

he [God] is necessarily summoned into action as well. If being is drawn toward nature, it is his own being which is so drawn; or rather, he first recognizes it as his own when it is drawn. If what-is, is summoned to posit itself actually as such in relation to being, he himself is drawn out of indifference, for he is the expressing of what-is. In this very summoning, he thus recognizes what-is as his own, as that of which he is the expressing. (Schelling *Ages 2* 166)

conversation" in the Introduction (Rajan 12). As such, the 1813 version sleeps yet does not dream, since dreams are a process that are unreconciled to the public transcript of consciousness, which complicate the merely non-conscious understanding of the unconscious in the 1813 version that instead characterizes unconsciousness as the oblivion of activity. This is why Schelling states, "that a man does nothing if he is sleeping, or dead, or enraptured," so that this inner contradiction of "Wisdom, together with the first corporeality in which she is clad, is like a tranquil, passive unity that cannot lift itself up from a merely germinal state into a state of activity" (*Ages 2* 164-65).

Yet this state of activity does not express being and what-is, since, near the end of the text, being and what-is are not brought into contradiction with each other; rather, the expressible or the indifference that contains the expression of the two opposing forces "becomes the inexpressible" (Schelling *Ages 2* 170). The will that wills nothing, the will that wills something, or even the unity of both are thus never expressed, as Schelling represses contradiction in favour of preserving "the pure I of divinity, [which] becomes actual" by "ascend[ing] in the inaccessible glare of its purity <which no created thing may approach>" (Schelling *Ages 2* 170). The second version thus never truly reaches the level of the expressed, as the actualization of God's contradiction becomes contained within God's inexpressibility. What this effectively amounts to is the identification of the subject with a lost object which leaves us with an empty and inactive existence. Such a defense is what, as Lacan says, "Freud means when he says the unconscious gravitates around a lost object that can only ever be refound—in other words, never truly found," as the text closes itself off to dis-integration by a melancholic incorporation that 'completes' the text as a dead or lost object (Lacan *Transference* 242). It is impossible to imagine a better way

to preserve the search for identity than by making that identity into that which must be found again and again for eternity.

As has been noted above, Schelling's son had added a marginal note that said his father had deemed that the last four pages of the treatise fall into utter falsehoods. This note by Karl Schelling is further glossed by Manfred Schröter:

An identical marginal note by Schelling's son appears after the concluding sentence of p. 178 above. The following two pages of the manuscript were crossed out. The two concluding pages were not crossed out; at the end of these pages, Schelling's son had copied out the concluding lines, together with the preceding marginal note. (quoted in Norman 182n).

What makes Schröter's note particularly confusing for us is the total absence of the manuscript, paired with the fact that the existence of Schelling's revision to the manuscript comes to us by means of a complex game of editorial telephone: first Karl Schelling's copying of the end of the manuscript, then Schröter's copying of Karl Schelling's copy, and, finally, our mediated reception of this note in Norman's translation of the text, which, unfortunately, has not clarified this editorial quagmire. What is most important, though, is the crossing out, which signals a negation of those parts of the text that show non-being's resistance against its identification with God's being. As negation only represses the ideational content, it cannot get rid of the attached affect, which instead attaches itself to new partial objects or remains suspended in anticipation of the return of the repressed. Because the ground is, in these crossed out pages, "the fundamental force of contraction" and is "in fact the original force, the root force of nature," what we see here is the negation of a definition of the ground that becomes central to the 1815 version's re-imagining of the ground as a rotary movement of eternal nature (Schelling *Ages 2* 179). In a tone that is more characteristic of the 1815 version, Schelling goes on to

write, "[a]ll life first becomes and develops in the night; for this reason, the ancients called night the fertile mother of things and indeed, together with chaos, the oldest of beings [Wesen]" (Schelling *Ages 2* 179). That these pages are crossed out, and that the preceding quotation in fact comes back in full force in the 1815 version,⁴⁰ signals Schelling's awareness of the force and vitality of non-being. But the problem is that the public transcript of God's mollifying love more fully represses these passages. What has been crossed out therefore shows what has been lacking throughout the 1813 version, that is, contradiction. Nowhere does Schelling provide any evidence of the "[d]arkness and concealment" "of the primordial time"; the only "violence, severity and power" that is seen in the text lies in the repression of the ground's potential to be for itself, for in no other way could "the revelation of the Eternal" take place (Schelling *Ages 2* 179).

The 1813 version thus remains (un)published because the text's idealism occludes the actual negativity of non-being by suspending God's inner conflict with itself for the sake of revelation. This failure lies not just with the text's teleological ending, which preserves God in the lie of the I's pure divinity, but also in Schelling's hypostatization of God as Absolute. The 1813 version ends with non-being ceding its condition of lack to God's love "so there could be something to bear the grace of the divinity and to carry it upward" (*Ages 2* 179). By the end of the text "[t]here are no longer two wills" but "only

⁴⁰ In 1815, Schelling writes, "In accord with its ground, therefore, nature comes out of what is blind, dark, and unspeakable in God. Nature is the first, the beginning in what is necessary of God. The attracting force, the mother and receptacle of all visible things, is eternal force and might itself, which, when set forth, is seen in the works of creation. Nature is not God. For nature only belongs to what is necessary in God and, strictly speaking, God is called God only in accordance with its freedom. And, furthermore, nature is only a part, a potency, of this necessity. But God can only be called the whole and not even this after it has become the All out of the One and, so to speak, come to pass from the Godhead" (Schelling *Ages 3* 31).

one,” excusing Schelling from the hard task of guiding his text through the crisis of contradiction (*Ages 2* 180). “The Eternal,” Schelling writes, “leads the force of the highest consciousness into unconsciousness and sacrifices it to externality so that there might be life and actuality” (*Ages 2* 181). Therefore, at the end of the 1813 version, Schelling eliminates the Romantic subject of the 1811 version, as the ground need not be conscious of its role in revelation, because “[t]his is how things had to stand if there were to be an eternal beginning, an eternal ground” (*Ages 2* 181). The projected end only works on the condition that “[t]his deed occurs once and then immediately sinks back into the unfathomable depths,” so that the will that wills towards something, which “is posited once at the beginning and then led to the outside, must immediately sink into unconsciousness” (*Ages 2* 181).

We can attribute this need to eliminate non-being’s activity to Schelling’s reaction to the realization that what grounds God’s being is a partial object. In the same way that Melanie Klein characterizes the child’s fear over the partial object, Schelling’s God “projects its own aggression on to these objects” “not only in that they frustrate its desires: the child,” or, in this case, God, “conceives of them as actually dangerous—persecutors who it fears will devour it, scoop out the inside of its body, cut it to pieces, poison it—in short, compassing its destruction by all the means which sadism can devise” (Klein “A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States” 40). This fear of being drawn in, of being devoured, can be seen in a passage with multiple partial objects, which expands on Schelling’s earlier reflection on the germinal state of the passive unity between being and what-is. As Schelling writes,

germinal life is of itself full of longing; it increasingly demands to emerge from mute, ineffective unity and to be lifted instead into an active unity. In the same way, we see the whole of nature to be equally full of longing; the earth sucks the force of heaven into itself through countless mouths; the seed strives toward light and air, in order to catch sight of an image, a spirit.... (*Ages 2* 165).

Whereas this passage seeks to draw from genetic theories of preformationism, as the “seed” arguably becomes a figure for the ground’s gradual unfolding of God’s self-revelation, Schelling’s description of germinal life is accompanied by the multiplicity of “countless mouths” that suck “the force of heaven into itself,” which internalize rather than project back the image of God. In this strange passage, Schelling presents two separate libidinal objects, the singular seed and multiple mouths, where the preformed seed becomes the flower that will seek out God’s spirit, while, in the other, God becomes aroused by this unquantifiable stimulation from the ground, and “is necessarily summoned into action as well” (Schelling *Ages 2* 166). If, as has been said above, a lack has been introduced into God in the 1813 version, this lack potentially produces multiple lacks that threaten to devour God’s essence as pure freedom. This passage, then, illustrates that there is still the possibility of reading the 1813 version as capable of producing parts that derange the whole. However, the intention to move from the expressing to the expressed can be seen as an allegory for the writing of the text itself. Crossing out the unruly passages above, the inexpressible is substituted for the expressed, which preserves the 1813 version’s textual idealism by hiding the truth of the Absolute in some inexpressible absence that cannot be made immanent. In contrast, the next section explores how Schelling takes the logic of God’s auto-poiesis to its radical limit in the 1815 version by developing a text that does not bring about yet another return of the repressed. Instead, the text gives itself over to the economy of the drive, where non-being’s primacy constantly sublimates its own position in its own self-negation. Rather

than the non-conscious ground of the 1813 version, Schelling makes the unconscious visible outside of any whole-part relation by providing a more fully developed concept of non-being that, like the earth, has the potential to suck the force of heaven into itself and submit God to an existence that it cannot escape.

V. The Open Wound of Non-Being: 1815

In between the 1813 version's withdrawal from publication and the writing of the 1815 version, the ground no longer becomes internalized as a complete object. Gone is the distinction that makes God into the expressing, expressible, and expressed and in its place is a more fully active contradiction between non-being as the necessary other to God's being. Non-being is now "its own complete being," so that the obstacle of its autonomy becomes central to the text's and the system's completion (*Ages 3 9*). Still needing to contain non-being sufficiently for God to exit out of the past and enter into the present, Schelling begins the 1815 version with a description of non-being as a "wheel of birth [that is] the interior of all nature," which turns about itself in a "completely involuntary movement" like the "systole" and "diastole" of the heart that, "once begun, makes itself from itself" (Schelling *Ages 3 21*). Because this rotary movement arises by itself within God, the problem Schelling must now confront is no longer how to account for God's decision to bring about its own existence as well as that of the universe; rather, existence is already expressed by Schelling's new definition of non-being as the "annular drive" (*Ages 3 20*). Rather than achieve being, the annular drive of non-being does not differentiate between a "higher" or "lower" principle within a hierarchy but again "sublimates itself," because there is "neither a veritable higher or lower, since in turn one

is higher and the other is lower” (*Ages* 3 20). As the unconscious ground of God’s being, non-being cannot be denied by God because it is already sublimated as a knowledge that retreats even from the word of God.

The problem of the text, then, becomes the problem of psychoanalysis. For once God decides to enter into a relation with non-being, it is no longer in terms of a decision to emerge into existence but rather the decision to undergo treatment. Treatment, however, raises a more troubling issue: the interminability of treatment. Like Schelling’s actual revision to *The Ages*, the third version intra-diegetically represents the failure of revision as treatment, as the options available to both God and Schelling to put an end to their engagement with the textual unconscious fail. God can either guide nature’s involuntary movement by internalizing it, which would kill the system’s vitality, or God can remain caught in the text’s own repetitive movement, and be forced to suffer the same repetition as non-being’s wheel of birth. The 1815 version thus finally represents God’s relation with non-being as a relationship between the subject and the partial object, not as that which is made complete by God, but as that which fascinates God with the promise of completion in the first place. In contrast with the 1813 version’s public transcript of a successful internalization of non-being, the 1815 version illustrates that God’s public transcript cannot exit out of its contradiction with the private transcript of non-being’s repetition and is thus forced to incorporate rather than fully internalize that which will indivisibly remain.

Schelling’s inability to internalize non-being’s hidden transcript can be read according to the psychoanalytic subject’s difficulty with the internalization of the lost object that Freud discusses in “Mourning and Melancholia,” a dynamic that is further

revised and developed by Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török in their essay, "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation." They distinguish two starkly opposed versions of internalization: introjection and incorporation. Abraham and Török view introjection much like Freud views the healthy mourning of the lost object, since it internalizes "a desire, a pain, a situation" to be channelled "through language" (Abraham and Török "Mourning or Melancholia" 128). Incorporation, on the other hand, proves to be more complicated. As Abraham and Török argue, when the "mouth is unable to say certain words and unable to formulate certain sentences, we fantasize, for reasons yet to be determined, that we are actually taking into our mouth the unnameable, the object itself"; incorporation, therefore, is what happens when "*words* fail to fill the subject's void and hence an imaginary thing is inserted into the mouth in their place" (128-129).

Applying this to God's relation with non-being in *The Ages*, either the encounter gives rise to the fantasy of a successful internalization (i.e. introjection), and allows God as a subject to work through the lost object through mourning, or it swallows and preserves the lost object in a space Abraham and Török call the crypt (i.e. incorporation), which remains separate yet still in relation to the subject. To quote Jacques Derrida, incorporation is like "vomiting [the object] to the inside," like an anti-internalization which makes it so everything "is organized in order that" the object that remains "missing[,] departed" or "nowhere to be found" exists to preserve the subject by involving it in the repetitive process of finding the lost object again (*Fors* xxxviii).

Non-being, therefore, is no longer a concept in the 1815 version since a concept can be internalized and kept under control; rather it becomes a non-concept because it sublimates its own existence and occupies a space according to the logic of atopy, that is,

according to its always being out of place. This is to say that non-being is not internal or external but instead illustrates the problem of grounding that which cannot be grounded. The text therefore swings back and forth between wanting and not wanting to subjugate the ground to God's love, since stilling the annular drive would effectively lead to the disappearance of desire, what Lacan calls "*aphanisis*" (*Transference* 216). The predicament that God faces, then, is that God's subjectivity, its personality, its very existence "depends so much on the Other's demand that what the neurotic demands of the Other in his neurotic demand for love" is simply "that he be allowed to do something" (*Transference* 216). Schelling realizes that the emptiness of non-being does not solely represent lack but also an excess that overflows like a "secret liquid passion . . . that knows no measure," as Blanchot says, for to "overflow does not signify plenitude, but emptiness, the excess by comparison to which fullness is still lacking" (*Space* 129). This new understanding of non-being as both a lack and surplus thus complicates how we are to understand God's entrance into existence. For rather than a voluntary decision, Schelling represents existence in a way that is not only akin to but predates what Heidegger calls the subject's thrownness, so that the subject's relation to existence becomes an undecidable relation to itself like an open wound. Nature, the ground, or non-being in the 1815 version are no longer merely parts of God but capture God in the process of the annular drive, which is "torn" because it is made up of "opposites," one negative and the other affirming, which stand "for and in" themselves "as [their] own being" (Schelling *Ages* 3 19). In this radically more excessive development of non-being, the 1815 version finally confronts non-being as that which repeatedly disrupts the completion of the different versions of the *Ages*.

For unlike the 1813 version, which keeps God separate from the activity of being (*das Seyn*) and what-is (*das Seyende*), Schelling introduces three distinct and interrelated forces within the ground of God's being: the expanding, the contracting, and the unity of the two. Because "each of the three has an equal right to be that which has being," rather than unite the opposing forces into a complete object for God, the endless dialectic created by these three forces of the ground ensures that the text is not "already finished in the beginning," because Schelling realizes that a complete object leaves no room for "further progression" (*Ages 3 19*). Embracing rather than rejecting the principle of contradiction, Schelling develops the text according to an eternal beginning, where "the concept of the beginning, as well as the concept of the end, again sublimates itself in this circulation" (*Ages 3 20*). "In this respect," writes Schelling, the ground of God's existence "is *without* (veritable) beginning and *without* (veritable) end" (*Ages 3 20*). The 1815 version thus reproduces the structure of repetition that was manifest at the level of writing in all versions of *The Ages of the World* by writing it into the process of the annular drive. This stands in stark contradiction with God's love, which attempts to guide the text through towards God's revelation of itself as the Absolute One. Each act of guidance thus stands at odds with the ground since the annular drive precedes God's public transcript. Insisting that only a true beginning begins once non-being undergoes treatment, God cannot stop the annular drive and its rotary movement. Treatment, therefore, does not positivize the subject's experience of itself or somehow allow God to transform from a "passive Whole" into an "actual Whole"; for treatment, in this sense, is involuntary because, as Schelling writes, "Love comes to be out of compulsion . . . [e]ven though it is separated and set into mutual opposition it wants the inner all the more as something in order to sense itself as One and to feel itself through a voluntary, inner harmony as a

living Whole” (*Ages 3 55*). While God wants to “feel itself through a voluntary” communication of itself as whole, that is, to consciously declare itself the beginning, beginning and ending cancel each other out in the spinning of that wheel of birth, and thus no longer represent two discrete points of a narrative. Any therapeutic guidance is instead caught in what has already “began since all eternity in order never (veritably) to end,” because it already has “ended since all eternity, in order always to begin again ” (*Schelling Ages 3 20*). Whereas Schelling’s stated goal of writing is God's self-revelation in terms of a “true beginning,” which “does not always begin again but persists” as “the ground of a steady progression,” the process of writing itself instead short-circuits progression into the repetition of “an alternating advancing and retreating movement” of the rotary motion (*Ages 3 20*). These irreconcilable narratives thus lead Schelling to the conclusion that God is incapable of fully internalizing the ground, and must incorporate the ground, which fantasizes—rather than achieves—a successful internalization.

This fantasy constantly rubs up against the reality that Schelling still cannot move beyond the text, for the only way that he can write is to incorporate as opposed to introject the ground. Incorporation, as Abraham and Török write, causes

everything . . . [to] be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved. Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject. Reconstituted from the memories of words, scenes, and affects, the objectal correlative of the loss is buried alive in the crypt as a full-fledged [object], complete with its own topography. The crypt also includes the actual or supposed traumas that made introjection impracticable. A whole world of unconscious fantasy is created, one that leads its own separate and concealed existence. Sometimes, in the dead of the night, when libidinal fulfillments have their way, the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations. (“Mourning or Melancholia” 130)

Incorporation only blurs the line between what is internal and external to the self, and only allows for an operative rather than definitive sense of the subject's wholeness. For while incorporation conceals God from the traumatic repetition of non-being, God must still turn to non-being in order to authorize his existence. Just as an author is only an author as long as they write, so too is God only God when it is in relation with its ground. God's love, then, is not love but desire. Desire denies the ground any claim to its own being, as God only claims to love the ground in order to experience itself as whole. This is what Lacan means when he describes the subject's failure to love the Other: "*I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you—the objet petit a—I mutilate you*" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 268). Indeed, one can see how non-being is transformed into *objet petit a* quite clearly. For after non-being enters into a relation with God, "this first being never comes to Being" but is rather possessed by the "unremitting urge to be," as it is interpolated by God's public transcript, which proclaims that the ground "cannot be"; the incessant rotation of the annular drive now "comes to a standstill in desire, as an unremitting striving, an eternally insatiable obsession [*Sucht*] with Being," since only God can enjoy itself as a whole subject (*Schelling Ages 3* 20-21).

Yet Schelling does not still the rotary movement, as this incessant rotation continues despite the denial of non-being's existence. Whereas Schelling writes that "in that eternally commencing life" of non-being "there lies the wish to escape from the involuntary movement and from the distress of pining," this wish is a part of the dialectic itself, wherein the synthesis of the contracting and expanding principles is negated by the fact that each equally has the right to have being (*Ages 3* 28). This desire for an end to the ground's suffering forms part of the public transcript of the text that does not wish to

concern itself with the trouble of non-being's incessant movement. Whereas the public transcript would have the reader believe that the obvious solution to non-being's suffering would be to mollify its "obsession [*Sucht*]" "into [a] yearning [*Sehnsucht*]" to "ally itself" with God's desire for self-revelation, such a solution attempts to replace the drive's *jouissance* with desire (Schelling *Ages 3 28*). It comes as no surprise, then, that this discourse returns to the language of the 1813 version of the *Ages*, as Schelling writes in 1815:

Since eternal nature first spots that against which it becomes Being, the merely expressible, and can therefore simultaneously give up, in all its forces, the expressing potency, being that which has being; and because this awakens within it the yearning to escape the annular drive and to reach continuance and rest; and furthermore because the highest is the standard by which the lower principle knows its lowliness and the higher principle knows its dignity. But yearning turns the mere beginning and only the first inner effort (*nisus*) into the cision. Only when the relationship to the highest actually emerges into being on account of this inner beginning is the cision first confirmed; and it first becomes abiding only when eternal nature, placed into freedom by the confirmed cision itself, is able to *decide*. (*Ages 3 29*)

But while Schelling attempts to deny non-being's incessant repetition as unproductive like the 1813 version's description of the unconscious as non-conscious, the 1815 version places the responsibility of decision in the ground rather than in God. Because non-being does not decide but brings about a de-cision, God's ground rather than God himself creates a "cision" or a cut that splits God into a partial subject. The 1815 version therefore presents God as the paranoid-schizoid subject of Kleinian psychoanalysis that has not yet exited out of the pre-conscious or pre-Oedipal state, but remains, as Deleuze says, in the "development of an oral-anal depth—a bottomless depth" surrounded by a world of dis-integrated objects that are "dreaded as toxic substances" (Deleuze 188-9). For while Schelling writes of the rotary movement that "each of the three" principles within it "has

an equal right to be that which has being," non-being's "urge to be" is different from God's desire, since, even before referring to yearning's connection to the cision that gives way to existence, non-being's obsessive repetition of its end annihilates the concept of the ground as grounding. As opposed to a unilinear desire, non-being's obsession is characterized by a repetitive and cyclical haunting of the subject's attachment to a lost object, whose movement takes possession of the subject involuntarily. In spite of Schelling's attempt to use love to treat non-being's self-destructive obsession, the annular drive continues to produce itself auto-erotically as opposed to remaining at a standstill. The transition from a devouring obsession into a mere yearning is itself, like the unity of the expanding and contracting forces of the ground, just another moment within the rotation of the annular drive that will yet again lead the text back into contradiction.

The text's public transcript, which sees the irritability of obsession give way to the passivity of yearning for God's love, cannot help but give reasons for why non-being should give up its autonomy. But in repeatedly trying to give reasons for why non-being should yearn for God, Schelling's writing delays the aim of the text itself in favour of more descriptions of non-being than in any other version that came before it. In a section his son entitled, "The intensified concept of what does not have being," Schelling maintains that even if God were to subjugate nature, it would do so only "relatively," since Schelling "maintain[s] the possibility that what does not now have being could endeavor to emerge from out of the state of potentiality and elevate itself again to what has being" (*Ages 3 48*). Schelling remarks that, although it is not "an actual or truly living life," sickness is a "life that does not have being but" one "that wants to elevate itself from not-Being to Being" (*Ages 3 48*). This description recognizes the idealism of the

previous versions, as Schelling would have had in mind the *Freedom* essay's passage on the eye when composing the intensified concept of non-being. Indeed, in the 1815 version, Schelling criticizes Idealism for it "consists in the denial and nonacknowledgment of that negating primordial force," because it replaces negativity with a positivity that he mockingly refers to as "the universal system of our times" (*Ages* 37).

Because non-being's negativity is included within the system of Idealism, its capacity to fall sick or to pursue evil has implications for how we consider idealism's development of the part-whole relationship of the Absolute. As Schelling describes it, even evil and sickness are contextual, for the ground can potentially disintegrate its relation to God and once again assert its own being. As Schelling writes, "[i]f that initial blind life, whose nature is nothing but conflict, anxiety, and contradiction, were ever for itself or were it not engulfed since eternity by something higher and placed back into potentiality, it could neither be called a sick nor an evil life" (*Ages* 348). Evil or sickness, therefore, have a freedom much like that of the partial object of the gaze, as these illustrate the frame that frames the fantasy of God's subjectivity. Read outside of the framework of God's guidance, good and evil, health and sickness, are distinctions that arise out of God's entrance into a Symbolic that makes those distinctions in the service of constructing subjectivity. But guidance cannot rectify the subject's split identity, since it is the subject's desire itself that brings about the split in the first place. To be a subject is to be caught in relation to the annular drive's failure to achieve being, so that what such a writing presents is not meaning but the failure of meaning to be meaningful.

Non-being's failure to assert being deterritorializes and reterritorializes itself regardless of the orders of the "ruling spirit" (Schelling *Ages 3* 48). For while non-being is called evil, we can read this as an inversion of Klein's observation that the good object simply hides a bad part, for when non-being is recognized not as a part of a whole but a part that is its own whole, "something terrible becomes manifest"; even if non-being is obscured by the totality that is God, the unremitting wheel is capable of turning

[w]hat was once an object of adoration or love [into] an object of fear and the most terrible abjection. For when the abysses of the human heart open up in evil and that terrible thought comes to the fore that should have been buried eternally in night and darkness, we first know what lies in the human in accordance with its possibility and how human nature, for itself or left to itself, is actually constituted. (Schelling *Ages 3* 48-49)

Schelling's description of incorporation is similar to how the director David Lynch has explained the positive and negative possibilities inherent to incorporation, as he describes the mind as "such a friend to us when it shuts off certain things"; but, as Lynch reminds us, "there's a price to pay for shutting it off" for it "can fester" (38).⁴¹ Indeed, incorporation only keeps the subject's relation to an object alive, even while it denies that the object is present for the subject. As such, non-being, the drive of the text, is a kind of living dead that, in spite of its productivity, is only temporarily buried in favour of the subject's desire, because the reality of the annular drive is too traumatic to the integrity of the ego. But because incorporation identifies the subject with this lost object, such a process leaves the wholeness of the subject in question, for we are not sure if it is the subject or the object, in the words of Abraham and Török, as the lost object gives the

⁴¹ The quotation, which I believe merits finishing, continues, "How big the mind is we do not know. It's a beautiful place, but it can also be pitch-dark. Sometimes ideas come into my mind that make me crazy. I don't know where they come from, and I don't know what purpose they serve" (*Lynch on Lynch* 38).

subject "strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations" (Abraham and Török 130).

The 1815 version of the *Ages*, therefore, represents a third form of non-publication that stands apart from the previous versions. Both the 1811 and 1813 versions forsake the negativity of non-being for an idealist integrity of the system, where the first version remains (un)published because Schelling writes a finished book even as he knows that the work goes on, while Schelling recognizes that the second version represses a hidden transcript in favour of a public transcript that amounts to simply a lost object. The third version, then, cannot be published because it embraces its own inner contradictions inherent to the annular drive. For while the third version attempts to incorporate non-being, it does so only to involuntarily deconstruct incorporation. Wholeness is nothing but a frame that the partial object reveals. The 1815 version lays bare how incorporation "recreates in a single psychic area, system, or agency, the correlate of the entire topography," where non-being "isolate[es] the wound" by "separating it . . . from the rest of the psyche" and reveals it to be the part that stands in for the whole (Abraham and Török 135).

Whereas God cannot access his trauma because its public transcript defends God from non-being in 1811 and 1813, Schelling's repeated revision allows us to read the non-publication of the 1815 version as repetition's insistent demand to be analyzed. By exposing how the subject of incorporation relies upon the compulsion to repeatedly find itself again in a lost object, the 1815 version reveals that this process had already been "unconsciously sleeping" within the text and needed to only be expressed by the rotary movement. For while incorporation initiates the fantasy of successful internalization, it

ultimately leads to an anti-internalization of the object, which produces more and more partial objects that insist upon the subject as lack. For subjectivity to continue to conceive of itself as whole, as Abraham and Török note, there is “no other choice but to perpetuate a clandestine pleasure by transforming” the lost object, “after it has been lost, into an *intrapsychic secret*” (“Mourning or Melancholia” 131). Encryption, however, does not mean oblivion, as the intrapsychic secret returns in the writing of the textual unconscious. The process of incorporation in the *Ages* that takes shape across a number of erasures, crossings-out, and deletions does not appear—at least up until the 1815 version—to be a successful repression, but a reluctance to accept the textual topography that the figures of non-being ultimately create. Indeed, textual incorporation, as opposed to the therapeutic aims of diagnosing incorporation in a patient, manifests an impossible syndrome that is constitutive of the subject’s entire imagination of itself as whole.

What follows after the section on “the intensified concept of non-being”⁴² is a text that progresses on two separate tracks. On the one hand, Schelling writes as if non-being has been introjected into God, where the ground’s obsession has abated into a yearning. On the other hand, it appears as if the annular drive remains present in the repetitive production of new partial objects and textual parts that point to repetition as another process of production. In one, Schelling once again writes a public transcript, describing the ground as a “ladder reaching from heaven to earth” that accords with revelation (*Ages* 3 68). Like the 1813 version, the third version relates the crisis of the ground to that of magnetic sleep, as Schelling writes that “[e]ach subordinated nature” whose “guiding connection with its higher principle is interrupted, is sick,” is made good in the “guidance

⁴² “The intensified concept of what does not have being” occurs on page 48 of Wirth’s translation.

that is always restored, at least for a while, by magnetic sleep" (*Ages 3 69*). Whereas this comes at the end of the 1813 version of *The Ages*, the passage on magnetic sleep comes much earlier in the third version, and instead gives way to further reflections on non-being that are given voice by the text's hidden transcript that returns to images that share characteristics with the footstool from the 1811 version. For instance, Schelling writes near the end of the text that eccentric objects and practices re-insert themselves into the present as "harbingers of the recurrence of a past age, of universal destruction, of the dissolution of things again into chaos" (*Ages 3 96-97*). The "self-lacerating madness" of nature's unremitting wheel, instead of remaining in the past, returns at the end of the text, exposing existence to the trauma that "is still now what is innermost in all things" (*Ages 3 103*).

Rather than resort to reason or order at the end of the text, Schelling argues that nothing "great can [ever] be accomplished" in philosophy "without a constant solicitation of madness, which should always be overcome" (*Ages 3 103*). Ironically, this statement that madness should be overcome only reproduces the old definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Madness informs the process of writing rather than falls under the control of writing, since the figures of non-being prove to be too unruly and happen upon the text involuntarily, foreboding rather than protecting God against disintegration; partial objects do not point to any kind of resolution to the "struggle between cision and unification, consciousness and unconsciousness" but rather to the persistent and unsupportive support of the drives that unground Romantic subjectivity (*Ages 3 103*). These images explode out of the text like the

[p]anthers or tigers [that] do not pull the carriage of Dionysus in vain. For this wild frenzy of inspiration in which nature found itself when it was in view of the being was celebrated in the nature worship of prescient ancient peoples by the drunken festivals of Bacchic orgies. Furthermore, that inner self-laceration of nature, that wheel of birth spinning about itself as if mad, and the terrible forces of the annular drive operating within this wheel, are depicted in other frightful splendors of the primeval customs of polytheistic worship by acts of self-flaying rage. One such was auto-castration (which was done in order to express either the unbearable quality of the oppressive force or its cessation as a procreative potency). (*Ages 3* 102-103)

Just as frenzy, self-laceration, and the spinning of the annular drive persist into the present, so too does the text return to the abyss of the past. The writing of *The Ages* does not positivize God's existence, but instead reveals God's own auto-castration. Not even the Absolute holds the phallus, as *The Ages* involuntarily affirms the disintegration of the annular drive over that of God's completion.

As Heinrich Heine observed of Schelling's philosophy, "[p]oetry is Mr. Schelling's strength and weakness," because poetry allowed him to create a genetic system of history by imagining the Absolute as its starting point rather than from the perspective of the subject of history (Heine 106). Heine was critical of what he saw in Schelling's poetic intuition because a philosophy that begins from the Absolute is "where philosophy ends in Mr. Schelling and poetry, or I would say, folly, begins" (Heine 110).⁴³ Though the criticism is unfair to Schelling, it does reflect how Schelling's poetic imagery runs

⁴³ Interestingly, Heine continues his critique of Schelling because poetic insight is also "where he finds the most resonance among a group of drivellers, who are perfectly happy to abandon tranquil thought and, as it were, imitate those whirling dervishes who . . . spin themselves around in a circle long enough that the objective as well as the subjective world vanishes for them, until both flow together into a white nothingness that is neither real nor ideal, until they see something which is not visible, [and] hear something inaudible" (Heine 110). The kind of poetry that Heine sees Schelling espouse can thus be likened to Lacan's development of a hollowed out subjectivity, as the dance of the whirling dervishes instead revels, much like the spinning of the annular drive, in the spinning of the dance.

counter to the philosophy of Idealist systems, for perhaps poetry is a more accurate way of describing the writing of *The Ages of the World*. For while the danger of Idealism lies in declaring itself whole, the danger of poetry lies precisely in declaring itself to be partial; poetry threatens the integrity of anything that claims to be whole, since the fictional aspect of poetry claims to be real while itself being not real. By resorting to poetry, as opposed to philosophy, *The Ages* cancels its own Idealist aspirations, and, hence, devolves into a Romanticism that never really begins or ends. At the end of the third version of the *Ages*, Schelling describes how comets are "celestial bodies in becoming" that "are still unreconciled," "living witnesses of that primordial time . . . migrating through later time via particular phenomena" (*Ages* 3 96). Much like these comets, *The Ages* comes to reflect itself as a partial object that signals "the recurrence of a past age, of universal destruction, of the dissolution of things again into chaos" (Schelling *Ages* 3 98, 96-97). This is because comets come to represent for Schelling an image that perfectly reflects his own perspective on the limitations of building a system of dynamic pantheism. Recalling the *Freedom* essay's own experimentation with both pantheism and *Naturphilosophie*, the comet serves to show that pantheism can only internalize everything within it if, as Schelling observes of Spinoza's philosophy, both "forces [of the contracting and expanding] are juxtaposed in inactivity" (*Ages* 3 104). After Spinoza, philosophy had to either take up the cause of pantheism, that is to write a philosophy of the Absolute, or, like Descartes, break apart the mind and the body, which instead admits a hierarchy that subjugates the body to spirit or a "hylozoism" like that of Giordano Bruno, which "viewed matter as in itself living" (Schelling *Ages* 3 105). But, as Schelling comes to understand, the idealism of Descartes, the realism of Bruno, and the pantheism of Spinoza are all destined to fail, because none can adequately capture the complexity of

Being. Something will always escape, as he says of the comet, since "individual center[s] of gravity (the separate life)" will always remain "unreconciled with the universal center of gravity" (Schelling *Ages* 3 97). It is with this realization that Schelling concludes something went wrong with the philosophy and religion of his day, and instead leaves *The Ages of the World* (un)published. Schelling admits that his "is a God whose highest force or expression of life consists in thinking or knowing and which, besides this, is nothing but an empty schematizing of itself" (Schelling *Ages* 3 106). Knowledge, in the end, cannot account for desire, for life, or even for itself. All it represents "is a world that is still just an image, nay, an image of an image, a nothing of nothing, a shadow of a shadow" (Schelling *Ages* 3 106).

Wordsworth's Genetics: Preservation or Encryption?

I. A "Maniac's Anxiousness"

While Schelling's texts were lost as a result of the Allied Bombings that destroyed the University of Munich Library, the *Cornell Wordsworth* series arose out of an anticipation that the same could befall the collection at Dove Cottage, Grasmere. "[I]n those Cold War days," to quote James A. Butler, "heavy with the threat of nuclear apocalypse," Helen Darbishire had many of the Wordsworth manuscripts held at Dove Cottage microfilmed (96). This desire to preserve Wordsworth's texts, ironically, mirrors Wordsworth's own sentiments reflected in Book Five of *The Prelude*, specifically the scene of the dream of the Arab, who preserves two objects in the face of the "[d]estruction to the Children of the Earth/ [b]y deluge now at hand" (1805 5. 98-99).⁴⁴ Wordsworth, reflecting upon the obscure mission of the Bedouin, states:

Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.
 ...
 In sober contemplation of the approach
 Of such great overthrow, made manifest
 By certain evidence, that I, methinks,
 Could share that Maniac's anxiousness, could go
 Upon like errand. (1805 5. 152, 156-161)

What the Arab's preservation of two Symbolic books means for Wordsworth is that "such a madness" in the face of total and complete annihilation reveals "anxiousness" that has

⁴⁴ References to the different versions of *The Prelude* will take the form of 1798-9 for the 1798-9 Two-Part *Prelude*, 1805 for the 1805 thirteen-book *Prelude*, and 1850 for the fourteen-book *Prelude*.

“reason” in spite of the uselessness of preservation. But this preservation in the face of extinction only begs the question: what reason is there to preserve anything if there is no one left to read it? The thought that an all-out nuclear war would reach Ithaca as much as it would reach Grasmere must have occurred to Helen Darbishire on behalf of Dove Cottage as well as George Healey, Stephen Parrish, or John Finch of Cornell. Except the editors of the Cornell series did not consider the transfer of Wordsworth’s manuscripts to Cornell “such a madness.” Their efforts, instead, resulted in one of Romantic scholarship’s greatest achievements in codex-based archives.

The project of the Cornell series was also born of the necessity to improve upon Ernest de Selincourt’s five-volume edition of Wordsworth’s works because of the omissions and difficulties caused by his editorial choices. For instance, whereas the *Cornell Wordsworth* series presents MS. 2 of *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* in full, Stephen Parrish notes that “de Selincourt reproduces 11 [stanzas] in his Notes, provides an *apparatus* for reconstructing 44 others (though he neglects to place one of these), and passes over the remaining seven” (Parrish xi). The practical motivation that guided the *Cornell Wordsworth*, then, was to provide “full and accurate texts of Wordsworth’s long poems, together with all variant readings from first drafts down to the final lifetime (or first posthumous) printings” (Parrish ix). What this practical editorial intention may have not realized is that it also introduces a theoretical component that is grounded in the materiality of Wordsworth’s revisions of the different versions of his longer poems, because Wordsworth’s (un)published texts are meant to be textual companions to Wordsworth’s own project of depicting the growth of the poet’s own mind. Like the memories that Wordsworth collects in *The Prelude*, each version allows for a genetic

reading of what N. Katherine Hayles describes as a text's "materiality," which is "the *interplay between a text's physical characteristics and its signifying strategies*" (72). This definition of textual materiality "opens the possibility" for "considering texts as embodied entities while still maintaining a central focus on interpretation" (72). As such, the materiality of the text, like our definition of the (un)published, understands writing according to "a dynamic quality that *emerges* from the interplay between the text as physical artifact, its conceptual content, and the interpretive activities of readers and writers" (72).

Such a materiality is present in all the texts under investigation in *Unread*, which, unlike much of the History of the Book's public materialism, reads this interplay between the "physical," "conceptual," and "interpretive" aspects of texts not only as a topic left up to question but as the posing of the question itself. For, in the case of Wordsworth's (un)published texts, specifically the *Salisbury Plain* poems and especially *The Prelude*, the materiality of the text clearly illustrates the author's "attempts to incarnate desire," as Lacan says, not only in an object but through the act of representation itself (Lacan *Transference* 258). The discrepancy between the hidden and public transcript of Wordsworth's (un)published poems, to quote Lacan again, illustrates "the discordance between" Wordsworth's "fantasy—insofar as it is precisely linked to the function of phallicism—and the act in which he aspires to incarnate it, which always falls short of the fantasy" (*Transference* 255-256). In this chapter, we will analyze how Wordsworth's fantasy of incarnating desire transforms revision into a neurotic obsession with the constitution of an autobiographical authorial subject, so that Wordsworth's specific revisions to his (un)published texts can be read not only textually but psychoanalytically.

In the same way that Schelling's texts are composed of both public and hidden transcripts, Wordsworth's writing can be seen to produce two bodies in which the unpublished manuscripts cryptonymically incorporate that which threatens to metonymically contaminate the metaphoric construction of the author's authority in his published texts. Referring back to the three modes of non-publication discussed in the last chapter, Wordsworth's writing would fall under the category represented by the second version of *The Ages of the World* (1813) because it literally incorporates the self as a lost object to preserve it as something to be found again in the text. Wordsworth, therefore, deserves Keats's epithet of the "wordsworthian [sic] or egotistical sublime," since Wordsworth's writing retreats from its initial investigation into the self's unconscious motivations and instead represents the author as a sublime subject to preserve the self from disintegration (500).

Wordsworth, though, mistakes the function of writing to be tied to the register of the author's conscious will when it in fact opens up for the author an interminable psychoanalysis of its origins. But since this psychoanalysis of origins is transformed into the fantasy of incarnating desire through writing, Wordsworth enters into a more demanding relationship with what we have designated as the totality of the work. This should not be taken to mean that he intends a work like *The Prelude* to actually contain the real presence of his mind; rather, this fantasy is related to Lacan's view that language is tied to the "verif[ification] that our representations are truly represented, in the sense of *Vorstellungrepräsentanz*"; this relates the writing of *The Prelude* to the creation and verification of ideational representation, or that which forms the basis of the self's capacity to make sense of the world through representation's relation to an object's

affective hold on the subject (Lacan *Transference* 241-242).⁴⁵ Another way of understanding ideational representatives is tied to the subject's relation to the partial object, which, as Melanie Klein and Gilles Deleuze have argued, forms the basis for the self's distinction between the world of surfaces and the world of depths in the self's development of its identity. Like the partial object, ideational representatives are not to be confused with the actual object, but rather are to be understood according to an objective or aim that fails to reach its goal. By mistakenly assuming the origin of subjectivity to be a stable ground rather than a partial object, Wordsworth's writing brings about a traumatic encounter with the self as a lost object. However, Wordsworth buries the partial reality of this relation between the subject and the ground of its subjectivity in the (un)published, because what is partial threatens Wordsworth's project with the fact that authorship puts him in an undecidable position that he can only respond to by avoiding it.

To legitimate his authority as a whole subject Wordsworth desires self-presence in the fantasized construction of the total work, *The Recluse*. But because this desire emerges out of his investigation into the past, which, instead, disintegrates self-presence, Wordsworth represses the fact that in "speech," as Blanchot argues in "Literature and the Right to Death," "what dies is what gives life to speech; speech is the life of that death, it is 'the life that endures death and maintains itself in it'" (46). Wordsworth's investigation into the past thus only unearths what has been encrypted, tying revision and textual incorporation to the process of melancholic incorporation. The writing of *The Prelude* signifies Wordsworth's resistance to this partial reality, for incorporation instead encrypts

⁴⁵ *Vorstellungrepräsentanz*, as Adrian Johnston puts it, is "a psychical drive-representative *qua* a mental idea (representing a drive's linked aim [*Ziel*] and object [*Objekt*]) invested by somatic drive-energy *qua* the affecting body" (121).

scenes of trauma and death like a secret that can be observed at the level of the text's content and its non-publication. The act of withholding, like the psychoanalytic concept of incorporation, thus only further puts Wordsworth in an undecidable position, since to construct a crypt does not produce an intimacy but reveals the absolute extimacy of the subject to itself. As Derrida puts it, the crypt "is a kind of false unconscious," an 'artificial' unconscious lodged like a prosthesis, a graft in the heart of an organ, within the *divided self*" (Fors xiii). As such, the crypt serves as the basis for investigating Wordsworth's relation to his own textual unconscious. Because Wordsworth's revisions to his texts do not clarify but encrypt their own inconsistency, revision instead produces a topography of different versions of published and (un)published works. As such, this distinction between published and (un)published must also be troubled, since the crypt is not something that can be repressed but instead wears the subject like a mask, directing the subject at a distance. Understood this way, publication does not only release a complete text to a public, but also serves to withhold the secret of cryptonymic incorporation from the public eye by presenting only one version. Indeed, as Wordsworth was preparing the 1850 version for publication when he died, we can read *The Prelude* as the highest example of encryption. For while the reality of this secret may be questioned, we must instead ask why Wordsworth left so many versions of *The Prelude* unpublished? And if there were no secret, if *The Prelude* succeeded at declaring the production of the self like an undivided Thing-in-itself, why would Wordsworth not have published it in his lifetime?

This is an important question for the way that we read *The Prelude*, for it is not one text, but a series of texts that exist within a project motivated by self-preservation,

where, according to Wordsworth himself, all his texts can be read as *avant-textes* that build towards his project of (re)constructing the institution of the “I”. This occurs by means of autobiographical parts and other parts of poems that Wordsworth intends to project or introject into one or many texts. Yet these never amount to a synthetic whole. For Wordsworth’s self-analysis represents a subject engaged in a project that only appears to have any meaning retrospectively. As such, writing and memory are tied to revision if we analyze Wordsworth’s most famous definition of composition as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” that “takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” (“Preface to *Lyrical Ballads 1802*” 611). For what happens if the spontaneity of emotions threatens the poet with a jumble of fragmented feelings that produce “mood[s]” rather than a “mood” that do not lead to “successful composition” but instead entrance the writer in traumatic repetition? This question is especially important for how we consider the spots of time in Wordsworth’s *Prelude*. For when Wordsworth asks himself, “[w]as it for this/ [t]hat one, the fairest of all rivers, loved/ [t]o blend his murmurs with my nurse’s song,” it is because he must come up with a reason that accounts for a writing that appears to be the result of an unconscious or involuntary act (1798-99 1.1-3). As Wordsworth expands the Two-Part *Prelude* into five, thirteen, and then fourteen books, he revises how the spots of time function by mollifying the affect of the passage from its association with traumatic memory.

“[M]uch like the neurotic who contrives a reason for acts motivated at the unconscious level,” as Bruce Fink writes of the Lacanian neurotic subject, the genesis of Wordsworth’s *Prelude* can be read as part of the process of an obsessional neurosis to prolong life by means of death (*Lacan to the Letter* 107). Indeed, *The Prelude*’s textual

presentation in the *Cornell Wordsworth* appears as an obsessive quest for self-consciousness that Wordsworth cannot achieve, let alone share with the public, since he instead keeps it unpublished until after his death. In the words of Joel Faflak,

as Wordsworth expands the earlier text, the projected work of memory works against the teleology of the “Wisdom and spirit of the universe” (1.429). The prolonged encounter with memory only exacerbates a repetitiveness that returns [Wordsworth] to the unconscious of his imagination, the “solitude / Or blank desertion” that is the “trouble of [his] dreams” (1.422-23, 426) preventing the mind’s “revival.” (*Romantic Psychoanalysis* 106)

The answer to the question, “[w]as it for this” (1798-99 1.1), which begins the Two-Part *Prelude* thus becomes ever more elusive as Wordsworth expands the *Prelude* into further versions, exposing his project of creating the “I” as itself only a metaphoric substitution of “[o]ne word for another” that instead returns the self to the production of metonymic parts that displace the completion of the “I” (Lacan “Instance of the Letter” 422).

Metaphor and metonymy, as Lacan argues, are not only linguistic properties but also effectively illustrate the two basic functions of the unconscious: repression and displacement. As noted above, metaphor preserves desire by substituting difference for a singularity that is itself a fantasy, whereas metonymy preserves desire by displacing it onto yet more and more objects. These functions help us to make sense of the topography of Wordsworth’s (un)published texts as a complex process of incorporation or encryption, by which the repression of difference into the crypt attempts to substitute the sameness of metaphor for the difference of metonymy. For the crypt is itself the result of substitutive metaphor, in which the subject emerges as a result of its incorporation of itself as a lost object. “The identification concerns not so much the object who may no longer exist, but essentially the ‘*mourning*’ that this ‘object’ might allegedly carry out because of *having lost the subject*,” argue Abraham and Török (“The Lost Object—Me” 141; my emphasis).

Read this way, both metaphor and metonymy are constantly at work in Wordsworth's texts, as one can see how the many revisions and incorporations Wordsworth makes to the versions of *Salisbury Plain* and *The Prelude* are part of a metonymic displacement of Wordsworth's desire, as well as a response to his struggle with metaphor's failure to represent meaning as self-same outside the repetition of metonymic language. Metonymy also preserves desire, but not in the way that Wordsworth wants. By analyzing how metaphor and metonymy play out at the level of the text's narrative and also at the level of Wordsworth's textual incorporation of different parts of texts into new texts, we can see how Wordsworth's incorporation of these parts aims to create new wholes out of the past to immunize his writing from the more destructive potential contained within earlier versions. But because Wordsworth is incapable of fully introjecting these parts, incorporation aims to negate and dispose of these troublesome parts that problematize self-presence precisely by including them into a new whole that transforms them by means of metaphoric sublimation.

Rather than negate the persistence of trauma, metaphor gives rise to the metonymic displacement of the troublesome parts of his *avant-textes* into that which is finally published. In Wordsworth's *Prelude*, for instance, what becomes evident is a simultaneous repetition at the level of the material text and content that demonstrates his inability to resolve the trauma of his past (un)published texts into a unified public text. Wordsworth's revision of the 1798-9 Two-Part *Prelude* into the 1805 and later 1850 *Prelude* shows that these textual parts remain "indigestible," in the words of Denise Gigante, since they not only reject his attempt at a successful introjection but persist within these apparent wholes as "inassimilable irritant[s] within the system at large" (45).

Rather than help form a narrative link between past and present, these parts prolong the project of narrative indefinitely, extending Wordsworth's self-analysis into an infinite task. All of this contributes to Wordsworth's obsessive fantasy with creating an inside outside of himself in the way Jacques Derrida argues that the "I" "can *save* an inner safe" for itself "only by putting it inside '[it]self,' *beside(s)* [it]self, outside" (Derrida *Fors* xiv). One can trace the origins of this obsessive constitution of the self through incorporation to Wordsworth's revisions to the *Salisbury Plain* poems,⁴⁶ whose representation of psychology through the retelling of the "history of an individual mind" revises the experience of suffering across the text's three versions. Wordsworth's gothic experimentation in the *Salisbury Plain* poems develops a working theory of Romantic psychology by exploring trauma at both the individual and social level. Once again, the past is equated with that which is unconscious in the self, but both the past and that which is unconscious promise a destruction in the (un)published versions that the final published version of "Guilt and Sorrow" incorporates to negate and contain. The more transgressive elements of the (un)published versions of "Salisbury Plain" and "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" simultaneously open up for Wordsworth a more complex psychological subject that he later explores in himself in *The Prelude*, while they also prove to be too alienating for a "High Romantic" psychology of the completely self-present ego. Wordsworth, then, withholds these poems, much like he does the Two-Part *Prelude* and 1805 *Prelude*, until he has, as he remarks in a note to the published "Guilt and Sorrow," undergone "a

⁴⁶ From here on, "Salisbury Plain" will be referred to in parentheses as *SP*, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" will be referred to in parentheses as *ASP*, and "Guilt and Sorrow" will be referred to in parentheses as *GS*. All poems are quoted from the Cornell edition of *The Salisbury Plain Poems* edited by Stephen Gill.

treatment more subdued & yet more strictly applicable in expression than [he] had at first given to it” (Wordsworth *GS* 221n).

While a genetic reading of texts generally moves upwards or forwards by reading *avant-textes* as that which precedes the published text, Wordsworth’s incorporation of past parts allows us to read these incorporated bits both backwards and forwards. This chapter therefore reads incorporation as an attempt to metaphorically substitute difference for the singularity of the work, just as Wordsworth sees all of his texts as *avant-textes* for the unrealized *Recluse*. Indeed, *The Recluse* becomes a further obstacle to Wordsworth’s desire for completion, and contributes to Wordsworth’s decision to not publish *The Prelude* after he writes the 1805 version: “it seems a frightful deal to say about one’s self, and of course will never be published, (during my lifetime I mean), till another work has been written and published of sufficient importance to justify me in giving my own history to the world” (Wordsworth *Letters Early Years* 470). The project of metaphor also gives rise to a degenerative movement that points Wordsworth’s major poems back towards his minor ones as a relation that always remains metonymic. By tracing Wordsworth’s incorporation of the bits and pieces of his (un)published works into *The Prelude* by using the *Cornell Wordsworth* as our codex archive, this allows us to read how these texts represent multiple partial objects in which Wordsworth must either hide that which makes them bad or somehow make them good if he is to present them for publication. If, as Kathryn Sutherland claims, the Romantic poet’s “creative labour” has largely been viewed “outside the economy of books,” the *Cornell Wordsworth* has played a pivotal role in how Romantic scholarship deals with the textual remains that gave rise to an immunitary bibliographic agora (101). In this chapter, then, I wish to provide a more

complex perspective on the autobiographical metaphor of writing as the growth of the poet's mind by analyzing the transferences and displacements involved in Wordsworth's incorporation of the *Salisbury Plain* poems and how they stand in relation to *The Prelude*'s own revisionary textual history. For what textual history demonstrates is that the past is as entangled in the present as it is with the future of a text, because the (un)published persists as a partial object that delays or suspends the achievement of the work.

II. The Strange Repetition of Textual Immunity: The *Salisbury Plain* Poems

What generally defines *The Prelude*, in the words of Andrew Bennett, is Wordsworth's desire for a "secular-life-after-death" (12). According to Bennett, Wordsworth is the exemplar of Romantic posthumous writing, because "the poet's individual identity *while alive* is more a matter of writing, of language, than of living"; Wordsworth writes "his life into poetry" and "composes himself" for the future (19). But if Wordsworth's *Prelude* relates to *The Recluse* as "the ante-chapel" to "the body of a gothic church," what did Wordsworth mean when he also stated that his "minor Pieces," if "properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the [gothic cathedral's] little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses" (Wordsworth *Preface* to the 1814 Edition 5-6)? Rather than contain the minor works, Wordsworth's architectural analogy actually calls attention to these individual rooms that populate the great Gothic Cathedral. For the cathedral is always spectral since *The Recluse* itself is only ever present in Wordsworth's writing as an absent future that these pieces signify is yet to come. Because there have

been so many readings of *The Prelude* as the ante-chapel to *The Recluse*, let us instead invert Wordsworth's own assertion. Let us turn our focus from the whole towards the little cells, oratories, or sepulchral recesses, which demonstrate a partial, degenerative, and ultimately troubling space for Wordsworth's Gothic cathedral.

The Prelude's connection with "Salisbury Plain" (1793-94), "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" (1795-99), or its later published version, "Guilt and Sorrow or, Incidents Upon Salisbury Plain" (1841) is rarely discussed.⁴⁷ "Salisbury Plain," which is largely known for being the first example of Wordsworth's poetry that treats "the history of an individual mind," contains what would later be extracted in 1798 as "The Female Vagrant" in *Lyrical Ballads*. "Salisbury Plain" also finds its way into *The Prelude*—specifically Book Twelve of the 1805 version and Book Thirteen in the 1850 version. It is "[t]o such mood" that "Salisbury Plain" inspired Wordsworth to write a poem that proceeded "from the depth of untaught things," so that his poetry "might become / A power like one of Nature's" (1805 12.313, 310-312). According to Wordsworth, a power such as that found in nature is related to nature's permanency, which stands in stark contrast with writing's ephemerality. Like *The Prelude*, "Salisbury Plain" appears to also be invested in writing for posterity, as both struggle to fill the gap that forms the basis of Wordsworth's complaint in Book Five of *The Prelude* when the poet asks, "why hath not the mind/ [s]ome element to stamp her image on/ [i]n nature somewhat nearer to her own"; for why is it that even if the mind is "gifted with such powers to send abroad/ [h]er

⁴⁷ For studies that mention the connection between the *Salisbury Plain* poems and *The Prelude*, see Steven Bruhm's "Imagining Pain" in *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction*, Alan Liu's *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*, and chapter 1 of David Collings's *Wordsworthian Errancies: The Poetics of Cultural Dismemberment*. See also Karen Swann's "Public Transport: Adventuring on Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain."

spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail" (1805 5. 44-49)? Whereas the *Prelude* aims to ground Wordsworth's authority by incarnating his desire for self-presence in the text, "Salisbury Plain" is similarly invested in constitution but at the level of the body politic. The first half of the poem combines the British history of the plains with the individual history of the female vagrant's tale of suffering to establish a past that sets up the poem's final prophetic call for revolution. Suffering, be it individual or global, thus informs the basis of Wordsworth's understanding of the past as the *figura* for a future in which all suffering is extinguished.

Such is the way "Salisbury Plain" is re-membered in *The Prelude*, as Wordsworth recalls his adventures on the plain as that which "gently . . . charmed" him "[i]nto a waking dream" that connects Britain's druidic past with the present project of the poet's self-genesis (1850 13. 342-434). The presence of Stonehenge's white wizards in *The Prelude* and the "music [that] swayed their motions" allows Wordsworth to connect himself "with them" and their "sweet sounds" (1850 13. 342-343, 348-349). But this "reverie" is a missed encounter with psychoanalysis. For in the 1805 version's recollection of the past, Wordsworth instead experiences a "solitude" that "o'ercome[s]" the poet, so that the past is recognized as something that has the potential to unman him (1805 12. 319 my emphasis). This instability results in the 1850 alteration of the tone of his experience of "ages fled / [b]ackwards" in terms of a "*vision clear*" rather than that of a reverie (1850 13. 319-320 my emphasis). Already, by tracing the effect of "Salisbury Plain" on the *Prelude* we can see that revision serves to encrypt the more traumatic aspects of Wordsworth's past.

As we consider Wordsworth's attempt to present a seamless history from the druids to himself in *The Prelude*, a return to the manuscript of "Salisbury Plain" reveals, to paraphrase Marta Werner, "a splintered mode of time, in the 'terrifying tense' of pure transition" (Werner *Gorgeous Nothings* 205). For when Wordsworth travelled on Salisbury Plain, he was without money or prospects, was parted from Annette Vallon, and for the previous month had watched the British fleet off Portsmouth preparing for a war that went against all his deepest feelings, personal, patriotic, and political. Wordsworth's perception of history is more accurately rendered in the "Salisbury Plain" poems than it is in *The Prelude*, as the third stanza of the first version of "Salisbury Plain" sets the tone for the way that past memories and history are braided with the unnamed traveller's present experience.

The thoughts which bow the kindly spirits down
 And break the springs of joy, their deadly weight
 Derive from memory of pleasures flown
 Which haunts us in some sad reverse fate,
 Or from reflection on the state
 Of those who on the couch of Affluence rest
 By laughing Fortune's sparkling cup elate,
 While we of comfort reft, by pain depressed,
 No other pillow know than Penury's iron breast. (*SP* 19-27)

Well before the gentle breeze of inspiration in *The Prelude*, depression and penury were carried by the wind in the *Salisbury Plain* poems.

The first version, "Salisbury Plain" (1793-94), describes the encounter between an unnamed traveller and a female vagrant, whose individual history sets up Wordsworth's declamation against humanity's history of violence, thereby establishing the need for

revolution. Wordsworth began revising the second version, “Adventures on Salisbury Plain” (1795-999), in 1795 and, as Stephen Gill notes, “abortive attempts were made . . . to publish the new version”:

The poem was then abandoned for new major poetry such as “The Borderers”, “The Ruined Cottage” and *Lyrical Ballads*, but was pillaged later for the extract printed in 1798 as “The Female Vagrant”. Wordsworth planned to revise and complete the poem, even after this substantial excision, but he did not do so, absorbed as he was in the beginnings of *The Prelude*, and in 1799 the poem was committed to fair copy even in its truncated state. There is little doubt that this MS of 1799 substantially represents the poem of 1795. In 1841 the poem was revised yet again and published as “Guilt and Sorrow”, in *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842). (“Adventures on Salisbury Plain’ and Wordsworth’s Poetry of Protest 1795-97” 48 n.2)

As with *The Prelude*, Wordsworth struggled over the publication of his “Salisbury Plain” poems. Both also reflect the travails of a solitary individual by contending with what Wordsworth calls in his second “Essays on Epitaphs” a “counter-spirit” (85). It is this aspect that especially connects these poems, since this counter-spirit resists containment by claiming, like Schelling’s comets, its own center of gravity that pushes Wordsworth to either confront his trauma or revise and incorporate that which threatens the self with dissolution.

While “Salisbury Plain” is a poem of protest against Britain’s war with France, Wordsworth recognizes that his depiction of human suffering is, as David Collings argues, “contained within the terms of protest, and thus is almost as distant from the poet as the sacrifices” he describes in the unnamed traveller’s hallucination of druidic sacrificial rituals (21). For while *The Prelude* describes them as wizards, “Salisbury Plain” represents a darker druidic past of men wearing “dismal red/ [clothes]” circling around Stonehenge’s “sacrificial altar fed/ [w]ith living men” (*SP* 182-185). “Salisbury Plain,” like the *Prelude*, names suffering to distance itself from it, and, hence, fails to

provide a narrative that answers the call for a revolution. Indeed, by the conclusion of the poem, Wordsworth's call for revolution itself necessitates violence, recalling Robespierre's terror,⁴⁸ in its prophecy of a terrible community.

Heroes of Truth pursue your march, uprear
 Th'Opressor's dungeon from its deepest base;
 High o'er the towers of Pride undaunted rear
 Resistless in your might the herculean mace
 Of Reason; let foul Error's monster race
 Dragged from their dens start at the light with pain
 And die; pursue your toils, till not a trace
 Be left on earth of Superstition's reign,
 Save that eternal pile which frowns on Sarum's plain. (*SP* 541-549)

Because the poem simultaneously decries and advocates violence, Wordsworth's protest against human suffering is trapped by the same history that links it with the sacrificial rites of the druids, which is meant to remain in the past. Instead, the past ensnares Wordsworth's protest in the very cycle of violence that the poem abhors. Even the narrator questions near the end of the poem: "Oh! What can war but endless war still breed" (*SP* 509)? The poem, then, never moves beyond a negative sense of the past that must be negated, even though it cannot be.

⁴⁸ Recalling Robespierre's deployment of the necessity of violence in a speech he gave on the 5th of February, 1794, "[t]error," Robespierre declares, "is nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue," whereby, to quote from Wordsworth's "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff," "true Liberty" is "obliged to borrow the very arms of despotism to overthrow him, and in order to reign in peace must establish herself by violence" (Robespierre 115, Wordsworth *Prose*, 1: 33). In words where Robespierre might as well be citing Wordsworth, Robespierre's speech commands: "intimidate by terror the enemies of liberty . . . you will be right, as founders of the Republic" (115).

Because “Salisbury Plain” only focuses on the Female Vagrant’s tale, Wordsworth decided that the second version, “Adventures on Salisbury Plain” (1795-99), required a response from the unnamed traveller. Wordsworth gives him a background by making the character into a Sailor, who leaves his wife and children after murdering someone in his village after coming home from the war. The Sailor murders the man, however, for only the smallest amount of coin he can get, as the Sailor returns from the war penniless because his superior officer steals his earnings. This murder causes the Sailor to leave his wife and children, and he wanders for an unknown period of time. But, as in “Salisbury Plain,” he also finds shelter in a ruined shrine where “no human being could remain,” “named the dead house of the Plain” (*ASP* 188-89). When he enters, he hears a sigh “[f]rom one who mourn’d in sleep” that comes from the Female Vagrant, who again recounts her story (*ASP* 188-89, 200). Whereas Wordsworth describes human suffering in the context of protest in “Salisbury Plain,” the Sailor and the Female Vagrant’s misery is presented lyrically and is thus not limited to their historical situation after the war. Instead, their experience is meant to represent something far more widespread, which is represented by their inability to forget. As the vagrant says three times at the beginning of her tale, “Can I forget” (*SP* 235, 244, 262), and, ironically, her story remains unchanged in “Adventures”—because Wordsworth was unable to write a different history for her even though he had the desire to change it for another as yet unknown tale of woe. The Sailor’s wandering upon the plains also exhibits the same inability to distance himself from his past, for he is similarly incapable of forgetting the injustice done to him by his military officer, just as he is haunted by the murder he commits that prevents him from ever returning to his family. But these are only material instances or symptoms of a more

fundamental feeling of alienation that pervades these poems, as traumatic memory becomes the sign under which subjectivity comes to be known.

By the second version of the poem, the inability of these characters to forget their past traumas both informs Wordsworth's protest against things as they are and is a way of letting the unconscious of the text speak of the subject's condition. For though *The Prelude* re-members the *Salisbury Plain* poems to narrativize, in the words of Faflak, "[Wordsworth's] psychic origins into the primal *cultural* scene of a Druidic past," the re-writing of the *Salisbury Plain* poems circles around a traumatic point that cannot be solved by narrative (*Romantic* 106). As opposed to Wordsworth's earlier lyrics, which, to paraphrase Tilottama Rajan, "[mute] the gaps between signifier and signified by conferring on the words the illusory unity of a single voice," the *Salisbury Plain* poems experiment with "narrative" by placing the subject "in the space of difference"; narrative "dramatizes the gaps between what is told and the telling of it, [and] is always already within a world of textuality, of interpretation rather than origination" (Rajan "Death of Lyric" 196). In this sense, narrative becomes a means to both introduce the reader to the Sailor *in medias res*, but an experimental means of producing a subjectivity that must account for itself in relation to both a past and a future that is not available to it. The present, then, becomes a tenuous temporal experience that must constantly be (re)constructed as a result of an ungrounded bare life.

For both the Female Vagrant and the Sailor, the past interrupts any projection of the self into any possible future, as the different endings to all three poems illustrate different figures of the past that represent the inability of the present to extricate itself from the repetition of some unforgettable trauma. At the end of the first version of

“Salisbury Plain,” for instance, Wordsworth argues that all things connected with “Superstition’s reign” must be annihilated in the apocalyptic vision of the future. Yet Stonehenge occupies a space that cannot be eliminated from history: “Save that eternal pile which frowns on Sarum’s plain” (*SP* 579). Stonehenge represents the poem’s psychic crypt that is at once a site that seeks to preserve by destroying the subject but also gives the subject consistency as the lost object of the subject’s origin. But the source of this origin lies in sacrifice; and because sacrifice, as Collings argues, is “conceived as a rite that expels violence and safeguards the cultural body,” it takes on a new meaning in “Adventures on Salisbury Plain” and “Guilt and Sorrow,” as the Sailor’s body, instead of Stonehenge, becomes the indivisible remainder of the text when he is finally brought before the authorities and sentenced to be hung in a gibbet mast (29). In “Adventures” and “Guilt and Sorrow,” whether or not the Sailor should be put to death therefore becomes central to how the body politic constitutes itself.

However, as Wordsworth begins to revise the text, to quote Collings again, revision “threaten[s] the stability of a political rhetoric that would separate the poet of protest from the incalculable misery he wishes to describe” (21). Unlike the impossible community of “Salisbury Plain,” the Sailor becomes at once the representative of both individual and social representations of the past, present, and future of community. For whereas Stonehenge stands in as the forever lost origin of British history, Wordsworth’s revisions are more interested in how the Sailor experiences the past rather than how the past is figured. For the way that the Sailor experiences the past suspends his conscious and present experience because of the effects of what Wordsworth calls the trance. When the Sailor falls into a “trance,” a state Wordsworth describes as capable of making “bones

with horror quake,” it includes within the poem a death-like experience that does not gently suspend subjectivity but rather has the potential to destroy its integration within the Symbolic (ASP 251). In this sense, following Steven Bruhm’s classification of terror and horror in *Gothic Bodies*, the first version remains undecided towards the tactics of “[t]error,” but still turns to terror as what “situates us in the social world, the world of the outside,” while “Adventures” shows that terror emerges from out of the horror of the trance, which “freezes us within the self” by nearly annihilating “the passions which lead to community” (37). As Karen Swann has shown, “‘trance,’ from ‘to pass’ or ‘to cross,’ is traversed by its own fascinating tensions” as both a “movement” and “resistance to movement—a moment of blockage or paralysis, a state of ‘dread’ or ‘defense’” (811). As such, the trance figures in Wordsworth’s poetry in a similar way to J. Hillis Miller’s description of the crypt, which describes its effects as topographical insofar as it reorients the experience of the self as “both there and not there, both unreachably inside the inside and at the same time outside every border, beyond every horizon” (Miller “Derrida’s Topographies” 13). The trance, unlike Wordsworth’s suspension of the self in the Simplon Pass episode of *The Prelude*, appears to be an earlier and explicitly destructive experience of “when the light of sense / [g]oes out in flashes” (1805 6. 536, 534-535).⁴⁹ For rather than connect the present and the future with the past, it literally interrupts and estranges one’s present experience by incorporating the past as present.

⁴⁹ In *The Romantic Dream*, Douglas Wilson describes Wordsworth’s use of the word “trance” as an instance of a larger “poetics of Wordsworth’s unconscious” (xi), wherein trance “means a crossing toward death, a being carried out of oneself” that appears specifically in “Wordsworth’s reverie on Sarum Plain in *The Prelude*, for example, [which] entails an invocation of darkness that involves a loss of will” (15).

The first experience of the trance appears in “Adventures on Salisbury Plain,” when the Sailor comes across a “bare gibbet” where a “human body . . . in irons swang, / Uplifted by the tempest sweeping by” that reminds him of his own guilty past, while foreshadowing his eventual demise (*ASP* 114-115). This renewed within him “[a]ll he had feared from man,” and “roused a train / [o]f the mind’s phantoms, horrible as vain” (*ASP* 120-121). Afterwards, the Sailor “fell without sense or motion lay,” until “the trance was gone, [and] feebly pursued his way” (*ASP* 125-126). The external stimulus causes the subject’s experience of itself to be, for a moment, suspended, until it once again gains composure, but the experience is inexplicably followed up with a sinking “into deepest calm” (*ASP* 130). This calm, however, is accompanied by the feeling of sinking as if into “a terrific dream,” so that while the trance suspends the subject’s experience of itself, coming out of the trance returns the subject to a reality that no longer appears to it like reality (*ASP* 130). This transformative quality of the trance and the accompanying dream has similarities with Wordsworth’s description of the spots of time, which “with distinct pre-eminence retain / [a] fructifying virtue, whence, depressed” (*1798-99* 1. 289-290). Furthermore, both the spots of time and the trance are originally related to the experience of corpses from the past.

For instance, the next time the Sailor falls into a trance is after the Female Vagrant tells him of the death of her entire family.

She paused—or by excess of grief oppress’d,
 Or that some sign of mortal anguish broke
 In strong convulsion from her comrade’s breast—
 She paused and shivering wrapp’d her in her cloak
 Once more a horrid trance his limbs did lock. (*ASP* 396-401)

As Karen Swann notes, Wordsworth makes use of the tropes of “Gothic repetition . . . to transport us out of the individual mind as the privileged arena for phenomena we call ‘psychological,’” for on “recovering from his trance the Sailor demands not ‘where am I?’ but ‘did you see where ‘I’ went?’” (814). Some events cannot be “recollected in tranquility,” because some objects, like the corpse, seem to ground and unground the subject’s embeddedness within a world. As we will see with the spots of time, they are more like partial objects that involuntarily emerge as a result of Wordsworth’s investigations into the past. Rather than ground Wordsworth’s project of self-constitution, the spots of time, like the trance, subvert Wordsworth’s desire for an untroubled representation of the self for future audiences. The trance, like the power that seems “an unfathered vapour” from Book VI of the *Prelude* (1805 6. 527), reveals to Wordsworth the “sad incompetence of human speech” in the poet’s encounter with that “awful Power” that rises “from the mind’s abyss” (1850 6. 594).

This abyss at the heart of language manifests itself throughout Wordsworth’s *Salisbury Plain* poems but remains unnamed because Wordsworth represents it as a suspension of consciousness that arises from the debilitating experience of the trance. But what is interesting about the trance is its mobility. For it not only threatens narrative closure by estranging the subject from itself, but it also submits others to a strange repetition of the past as well. History, then, is not so much a progressive line as it is a repetition that unavoidably interrupts the present lived experience of the Sailor. For instance, after hearing the Female Vagrant’s story, the Sailor’s past takes him away from watching the rising sun. Rather than being filled with hope at the dawning of a new day, the sunrise represents for him a repetition of the same day with the same feeling of dread:

Into his heart a [] anguish threw;
 His wither'd cheek was ting'd with ashy hue.
 He stood and trembled with grief and fear,
 But she felt new delight and solace new (ASP 571-574)

As the female vagrant's retells her story in "Adventures," she transfers her grief and fear on to the Sailor, cancelling his awareness of the vagrant's presence and his surroundings, for "nothing could beguile" the Sailor's thoughts that were "still cleaving to the murder'd man" (ASP 596-597). The Sailor's trance not only interrupts his own sense of self but returns him to his primal scene of murder, which, for the Sailor, involuntarily comes to mind regardless of the objects he views. For not long after the pair leaves the house of the dead, they come upon a father who has just beat his own child that is "not five years old" (ASP 626). When the Sailor intervenes, he notices that "[t]he head" of the beaten child "with streaming blood had dy'd the ground" and "[f]low'd from the spot where he that deadly wound / [h]ad fix'd on him he murder'd" (ASP 643-645). The boy's wound is, as the narrator of "Guilt and Sorrow" glosses, a "[s]trange repetition" of the Sailor's crimes, which also becomes inextricably tied to Wordsworth's writing in these early (un)published poems (491).

Just as the Sailor reads the wound upon the child's head as an unconscious sign of his past, the "Salisbury Plain" poems' textual history repeatedly disfigures Wordsworth's ability to close off his relation to the text. "Guilt and Sorrow," like the previous versions, is also caught in the repetition of a textual history that is a beginning that it eternally is and from which it cannot distance itself. One can therefore see Wordsworth's (un)published writing as a strange repetition of itself, since the cruelty of the past becomes the only means of making sense of the present's repetition of cruelty. Like the

wound upon the child's head, out of repetition "emerges," as David Simpson argues, "something darker and more dangerous than any merely democratic brotherhood of man: a solidarity of dispossession and displacement based not on elected but on imposed equalities that we might prefer to live without" (*Wordsworth* 56). Instead of sympathy, "[s]ubstitutability" becomes a better term for understanding identity in Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plains* poems, because "identity itself becomes impersonal and subject only to the laws of exchange" (Simpson *Wordsworth* 61). What counters this substitutability, however, is the metonymic displacement experienced in the trance, which temporarily suspends subjects like the Female Vagrant and unnamed Sailor from their enmeshment within the text's substitutable identity. Rather than frame identity as the substitution of sameness for difference, the Female Vagrant's re-telling of her story of suffering involuntarily displaces her from within the Symbolic as it transfers her affective sense of her alienation on to the Sailor, exciting within him his own difference from himself and the world around him. Narrative, rather than produce identity, instead re-produces an identity that is itself split, as can be seen in the Vagrant's and Sailor's repeated entrancement by their past traumas. Narrative, therefore, becomes a function of transference and countertransference of the subject's trauma.

Whereas Wordsworth's use of repetition in "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" has been read either negatively by Collings or positively by Swann,⁵⁰ both end their readings

⁵⁰ According to Swann, as a repetition of the Sailor's past crime, the incident of the boy has the potential to "break a cycle of violence," since "witnessing "strange repetition" disarms the battering father" (829). In response to Swann's article, David Collings writes, "Swann's argument implies that Wordsworth depicts culture not as the Symbolic reproduction of the social order but as the imaginary repetition of a disordering rivalry and violence. But if every wound is a repetition, then, the originary act is murder, that is, sacrifice understood as profane rather than sacred violence. Because this violence is fated

without turning to Wordsworth's final repetition of the narrative in "Guilt and Sorrow." For while the repetition of violence in the previous versions "is caught," as Collings argues, "in the process of origination which it never succeeds in bringing about," "Guilt and Sorrow" incorporates the experience of the trance as identity's impossible limit (47). In the Fenwick note to "Guilt and Sorrow," Wordsworth writes that he would have published "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" "as it then stood," but "the Mariner's fate appeared to me so tragical as to require a treatment more subdued & yet more strictly applicable in expression than I had at first given to it" (221 n.1). "This fault was" supposed to be "corrected" in "Guilt and Sorrow," which "is not therefore wanting in continuous hold upon the mind or in unity which is effected by the identity of moral interest that places the two personages upon the same footing in the reader's sympathies" (221 n.1).

But Wordsworth still includes the trance in "Guilt and Sorrow," though negatively, as what Roberto Esposito calls a "counterforce, which, hinders another force from coming into being," so that Wordsworth reproduces the trance "in a controlled form" to serve as an "immunitary protection" from the previous versions' negativity (7-8). This transformation occurs between the writing of "Adventures" and the publication of "Guilt and Sorrow" in 1842, and centers around the body of the Sailor. In the last stanza of "Adventures," the Sailor's dead body becomes the final means by which the trance can be transferred on to yet another individual.

to return with every generation, it is much more than merely profane, merely a random or arbitrary wounding. The necessity of repeating the violence locates it on the threshold between sacred and profane, founding act and murder; failing to mark a great divide between it and the violence that came before, the violent act is caught in the process of origination which it never succeeds in bringing about" (46-47).

They left him hung on high in iron case,
 And dissolute men, unthinking and untaught,
 Planted their festive booths beneath his face;
 And to that spot, which idle thousands sought,
 Women and children were by fathers brought;
 And now some kindred sufferer driven, perchance,
 That way when into storm the sky is wrought,
 Upon his swinging corpse his eye may glance
 And drop, as he once dropp'd, in miserable trance. (*ASP* 820-828)

Gibbets were a truly horrifying and grotesque form of capital punishment. They were cages or chains that were designed to hold the body together while holding it up in the shape of the person for all to see. The gibbet's purpose was therefore practical and representational, as it preserved the body politic by sacrificing and preserving the individual body of the criminal. The gibbet was both a disciplinary structure that contained the disintegrative experience of the trance as well as a spectacle of the scaffold that put this structure on display instead of concealing it. But across Wordsworth's poetry, including *The Prelude*, the gibbet becomes a means of transference by which "some kindred sufferer" could repeat the Sailor's disintegrative experience of the trance. The end of the poem, then, refers to the Sailor's first trance after seeing the dead body swinging from the gibbet at the beginning of the poem, but turns to the Sailor's corpse as that which potentially signals a repetition of history's cruelty and alienation.

In contrast, "Guilt and Sorrow" conceals the corpse from the public at the end of the poem, and Wordsworth even adds a direct address to the Reader in parentheses: "(Reader, forgive the intolerable thought)" (*GS* 659). Ashamed at the very idea that the narrator would depict the Sailor's corpse as it hangs openly in an iron case, this shame

extends itself to the materiality of Wordsworth's revisions themselves. In the fair copy of MS 3 on 48r of "Guilt and Sorrow," which was originally meant for publication, Wordsworth had written the ending from the poem's second version. However, as Stephen Gill writes, "with the notebook inverted" Wordsworth "penciled the greatly revised version of these lines of the last stanza. His version, in a slightly corrected state, was then interlined in ink on the fair copy" (Gill 280n.). The full transcription of the text reads as follows:

His fate was pitied—him in iron case
~~They left him hung on high in iron ease~~
 (Reader forgive the intolerable thought)
~~Warning for Men unthinking & untaught~~
 They hung not—no one on his form or face
~~And such would come to gaze upon his face~~
 Would gaze as on ~~which~~ a show by idlers sought,
~~And to that spot in idle numbers sought~~
 No kindred Sufferer to his death-place brought
~~And now some kindred sufferers driven perchance~~
 W } evening
~~That way,~~ w } hen into storm the sky^is wrought
 his an could
 Upon ~~the~~ swinging corpse ~~his~~ eye ~~may~~ glance
 And drop as he once dropped in miserable trance (MS. 3 *Salisbury Plain* 280)

The difference between the two versions is thus two-fold. From a Foucauldian perspective, by revising MS. 3 and by concealing the corpse in the revised MS. 4 and the published version of "Guilt and Sorrow," such crossing-out reflects the disappearance of public punishment, which reflects a Victorian attitude to governance that was given a voice by Bentham's utilitarianism, which sees pain as something that should generally be

avoided. A little pain is good, as all Victorians knew, but the outright cruelty of the past texts is mollified in the later published version, which represses a representation of history that continuously submits the lives of the poor to destitution and disenfranchisement. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, the incorporation and hence repetition of the past serves as the guiding force of the entirety of “Guilt and Sorrow” and its relationship with “Adventures on Salisbury Plain,” for the changes made to the published version only serve to anaesthetize it from the more destructive points of negativity in the earlier version of the text.

Wordsworth thus writes the ending first as tragedy, then as farce. Publication, therefore, becomes, as Cary Wolfe describes the (auto)immunity of Deleuzian societies of control, “a means to manage conflict by *staging* and *using* conflict” (116). For the suffering of human life remains present in the text, though as an “intolerable thought,” which is staged by means of its parenthetical containment so as not to depict the true horrors of civilian poverty and disenfranchisement that were still present when “Guilt and Sorrow” was published. In place of the kindred sufferer, Wordsworth now directly addresses a reader, who, as the agent *par excellence* of the Victorian public sphere, confirms a biopolitical community, as can be seen in the decision to let the Sailor live rather than let him die. The reader’s presence also signals a changed attitude towards pain, no longer as something that is shared in common but as that which must be avoided at all costs. Wordsworth incorporates the horror of the manuscripts by transforming it into the terror of the published version of “Guilt and Sorrow,” that is a terror that founds community by including that which should be excluded as the community’s limit-experience.

And yet, if on the one side of DC. MS 3 the Sailor's body is hung, while on the other it is alive, the (un)published preserves Wordsworth's two bodies as a problem never to be resolved. For whereas "Guilt and Sorrow" depicts a body politic that appears to have no gaps, openings, or wounds, it does so only through the incorporation of the trauma of Wordsworth's (un)published texts, which he excludes by inclusion; in crossing out the last stanza of "Adventures on Salisbury Plain," Wordsworth's revision instead draws our attention to the material existence of a textual wound that negatively reproduces the Sailor's trance by crossing-out and leaving a gash on the page, leaving the text perpetually open. The importance of turning to the (un)published, therefore, is not to cover up but to maintain this gap as that which separates the material living-dead body of the Sailor from the immaterial representation of a body-in-itself, which attends to the constant presence of a hidden transcript that takes place offstage from the public and published transcript an author provides to the reading public. The (un)published reorients an understanding of textual immunity away from a completely protective integrity towards an understanding of the text's immunitary exposure. This relation is further developed in *The Prelude*, where the (un)published or, to quote Marta Werner, "the draft may disturb the very idea of the still, absolute text, revealing it as only one possible realization of a matrix that precedes and sometimes follows it" (Werner "Reportless Places" 65). This suspension of the text has very real implications for Wordsworth's project of self-generation, as the suspension of the self as an uncertain and undecidable presence proves to be Wordsworth's greatest struggle in writing *The Prelude*, specifically in relation to the work's most traumatic scenes in Book Five.

III. Textual Incorporation: Metaphor and Metonymy in *The Prelude*

While the writing of Schelling's texts was characterized by what to do with the subject in relation to the partial object, Wordsworth's (un)published texts are characterized by an obsessive revisionism that betrays a subject who, as Lacan argues, hides "his desire in an impossibility that preserves its metonymic conditions" (Lacan "The Direction of the Treatment" 528). Biographical sources show Wordsworth's health was always particularly bad whenever he wrote, so much so that his obsession with revision at times required Dorothy's intervention to preserve his health. In a letter to Coleridge, she writes, "Poor William! His stomach is in bad plight. We have put aside all the manuscript poems and it is agreed between us that I am not to give them up even if he asks for them" (Dorothy Wordsworth 335). In her journals, she even records how bad Wordsworth's obsession with the completion of his work was, for even though "William wished to break off composition," he "was unable, and so did himself harm" (Dorothy Wordsworth 83). These physical instances of pain brought on by his obsessive writing complements the psychoanalytic view of obsession. Because obsession delays completion for the process, even at the expense of good health, psychoanalysis understands obsessional neurosis as a means to forestall the completion of desire. As Lacan states, "the subject maintains himself at the level of his vanishing desire, vanishing inasmuch as the very satisfaction of demand deprives him of his desire" (Lacan "The Direction of the Treatment" 531). What Dorothy's remarks about Wordsworth's writing make clear for us is that it was a painful exercise for him. But this fact was largely masked by the smoothness of Wordsworth's published versions, which immunize themselves from the more negative aspects of his (un)published works. Whereas "Guilt and Sorrow" was

brought to publication by silencing the psychological experience of the trance to conform with the biopolitical constraints of the public, *The Prelude*'s self-historicization comes up against the limit of those scenes known as the spots of time that are supposed to contribute to the maturation of the poet's imagination. Turning to how the spots of time relate to the constitution of the mind rather than that of the social, Wordsworth must prolong his encounter with the mind's counterforce if he is to meet the demands of his project as opposed to falling prey to his obsessional neurosis. As we will see, what this prolonged exposure to the *Prelude*'s textual unconscious produces is a fantasy of incorporation that responds to his inability to fully introject the spots of time as separate from the traumatic experiences that inspire them. Because he is unable to repress this association, Wordsworth's revisions become driven by the incorporation of the self as a lost object, thus prolonging his experience of the self as a gap or failure within the text's Symbolic order.

Wordsworth's obsession with the constitution of an authorial persona resists treatment because such treatment would ultimately lead to the destruction of his desire. In order to see how this fantasy was constituted, we must trace its origin back to his relationship with Coleridge and the knowledge that he assumes Coleridge possesses. According to Wordsworth, Coleridge is "[m]ore deeply read in" his "own thoughts," and, thus, is "unblinded by these outward shows," so that "the unity of all" has "been revealed" to him in a way that Wordsworth craves (1805 2. 216, 225-226). As a result, Wordsworth preserves his desire by tying it to Coleridge as a complete subject, or, as Lacan would say, the subject supposed to know. As such, Wordsworth's relationship with Coleridge is no longer only defined by friendship, because Coleridge comes to represent

for Wordsworth the position of the Other so that his desire revolves around the seeming unity of Coleridge's knowledge. The constitution of Wordsworth's ego is, therefore, "something that the subject at first experiences as foreign to him but [also] inside him," precisely on account of the illusion that the Other that is in him is "more advanced, more perfect than he" (Lacan "The Neurotic's Individual Myth" 424). From Coleridge's insistent pleas that Wordsworth write the great philosophical poem of *The Recluse* also arises the fantasy of a complete subject who is capable of incarnating his desire in a written text. Despite the fact that Wordsworth grew apart from Coleridge between writing the Two-Part *Prelude* from 1798 to 1799 and writing the thirteen book *Prelude* in 1805, the idea of incarnating the complete subject in a text becomes for Wordsworth some *idée fixe*, since, by 1805, it is not Coleridge's knowledge that he desires but knowledge of the Other's desire. Caught within the inexplicability of his obsessive desire, Wordsworth is also trapped by what Lacan sees in the irrationality of desire itself: "I want it because I want it, whether it's for my own good or not" (*Transference* 157). Such is the desire of *The Prelude*, since Wordsworth now must seek out a knowledge that grounds him as a subject. But, as Lacan says, since "the subject manifests himself in this gap, namely in that which causes his desire," *The Prelude* constitutes the impossibility of reaching this desired end (Lacan *On Feminine Sexuality* 11). This is why we must especially read Wordsworth's claims of closure as suspicious. Even though he states to Coleridge at the end of the 1805 version that "[w]e have reached / [t]he Time, which was our object from the first" (1805 13. 274-275), or similarly, as he ends the 1850 version, that "this history" has been "brought / [t]o its appointed close" (1850 14. 302-303), Wordsworth still incorporates something within each version that prevents him from satisfying his desire. As will be shown, the text's failure centers around his revisions to the spots of time and

his revision to the scenes associated with them in the fifth book of *The Prelude*. Because he is unable to repress the spots of time as that which persistently trouble his assertion that his “powers [are] so far confirmed” in “building up a work that should endure,” Wordsworth must instead incorporate the more troubling aspects of the spots in Book Five as the limit-experience to his entire project (1805 13. 276, 278).

As opposed to other memories that prove to be more clearly suited for autobiographical self-observation, David Ellis describes the spots of time as “episodes where Wordsworth’s self-understanding appears stretched to its limits” (5). Two episodes are generally understood to be called spots of time: the discovery of the mouldered gibbet, and the episode of Wordsworth’s impatience “for the sight/ [o]f those three horses which should bear” him home towards his father at the Christmas holidays (1798-9 I. 333-34). In the Two-Part *Prelude* the episode of the Drowned Man of Esthwaite occurs just before these episodes, and in sufficient proximity to them to be considered a spot of time, though it lacks the “fructifying virtue” that the two subsequent episodes try to supply (1798-9 I. 290). Other episodes that we may consider spots of time can be grouped into memories of childhood and adulthood, which, granted, goes against Wordsworth’s own description of the spots belonging to moments of “our first childhood” (1798-9 I. 296). Regardless, following the way that these seem to affect Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, the childhood memories generally include the boat-stealing scene and the Boy of Winander, while the Discharged Soldier, the descent from the Alps, the Blind Beggar, and the episode on Mount Snowdon can be said to be adult experiences of the spots of time, since they too, as Wordsworth describes his encounter with the Blind Beggar, “take, with small internal help, / [p]ossession of the faculties” (1805 VI. 627-28).

While we understand that the Arab Dream from Book Five is not necessarily a spot of time, if we follow the logic of these other scenes, it is also a scene that takes possession of the faculties as a fantasy more than as a dream, as its interruption becomes yet another episode that psychically both frustrates and fascinates Wordsworth's project of self-observation and self-constitution. Arguably, the Arab dream even becomes a spot of time, as Wordsworth adopts the dream as his own in the 1850 version of *The Prelude* after having first described it as the dream of a friend in 1805. In this sense, the spots of time are not something that the author possesses but are that which possess the author.

Book Five is especially important for understanding *The Prelude*'s incorporative structure, for it is an assemblage of partial objects that either conflict with each other or do not fit the therapeutic discourse of the spots of time. In the longer versions of *The Prelude* Wordsworth breaks up the proximity of the Drowned Man episode to the spots of time, putting the former in Book Five and moving the latter towards the end of Book Eleven in 1805 and Book Twelve in 1850. It is, therefore, telling that the book about books remains for Wordsworth the only section of *The Prelude* where he believes "much hath been omitted" (1805 13. 279). For "[e]ven in the steadiest moods of reason," as Wordsworth opens the second book of the 1805 *Prelude*, Book Five represents Wordsworth's most genuine doubts over his conviction that the poet is "an agent of the one great mind" that works "in alliance with the works [with] which it beholds" (1805 2. 271,275). That doubt casts itself overwhelmingly across Book Five as its primary affect.

Thou also, man, hast wrought,
 For commerce of thy nature with itself,
 Things worthy of unconquerable life;
 And yet we feel—we cannot chuse but feel—

That these must perish. Tremblings of the heart
 It gives, to think that the immortal being
 No more shall need such garments. . . . (1805 5. 17-23)

These “tremblings of the heart” recall what Freud says about the development of obsessive neurosis in individuals, namely that it is “the domination of *compulsion* and *doubt*” that prolongs the obsessive’s fantasy (Freud *Rat-Man* 120). For, on the one hand, doubt functions as the basis of “the paralysis of” the patient’s “powers of decision,” because doubt “gradually extends itself over the entire field of the patient’s behaviour”; “*compulsion*, on the other hand, is an attempt at a compensation for the doubt and at a correction of the intolerable conditions of inhibition to which the doubt bears witness” (Freud *Rat-Man* 120, 123). These are what Wordsworth calls “[d]umb yearnings” and “hidden appetites” that “must have their food” (1805 5. 506-507).⁵¹ Ironically, Wordsworth’s stomach pains perhaps do have something in common with his incorporation of past elements into *The Prelude*, for an analysis of *The Prelude*’s textual history does not exhibit what Keats describes as the egotistical sublime, as “that which stands alone,” since a part always belies yet another part that stands behind it, a perspective which the *Cornell Wordsworth* provides.

In Wordsworth’s development of the episodes he specifically calls “spots of time,” these, like the trance of the *Salisbury Plain* poems, significantly alter the self’s relation to the past by throwing into question where and when the poet is situated. The alienating effect of the spots of time depends largely on their context within each version of the

⁵¹ While I focus on Book Five’s inassimilable elements, *The Prelude* is full of such moments. One of the most famous among them is in the episode of Mount Snowdon, which, Denise Gigante argues, “when viewed through the overlays of Wordsworth’s ever-shifting text, contains an inassimilable element that will not be absorbed or subjectivized into the ‘egotistical sublime’” (73).

poem, for when the passage is moved around and incorporated into different books its context communicates different affects. The spots of time first appear in 1798 in Wordsworth's notebook now called DC MS. 16.⁵² However, as Stephen Parrish explains, the part of the "manuscript in which these lines were drafted does not survive" so their inclusion within DC MS. 16 is largely the product of inference rather than material evidence.⁵³ The spots are then incorporated into MS. V,⁵⁴ which editors have now called The Two-Part *Prelude*. MS V is already an assemblage of the many other textual parts contained within Wordsworth's notebooks and points to his specific practice of

⁵² DC MS. 16 is notable as it contains parts of *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, as well as parts that will be later included in Book Five of *The Prelude* in 1805, specifically lines 370-388 and lines contributing to the episode of the Boy of Winander. The notebook also contains the closing twelve lines of Part One of the *Two-Part Prelude*, as well as a line count. Other partial drafts for *Peter Bell*, *The Borderers*, "The Discharged Soldier," *The Pedlar*, and *The Ruined Cottage* are also included. All of these, we can assume, were written in 1798 as the notebook was German and can be dated to Wordsworth and Dorothy's trip to Germany in the autumn of 1798. For more information regarding what was included from which manuscripts into the Two-Part *Prelude* see Stephen Parrish's "Introduction" to *The Prelude, 1798-1799* by William Wordsworth. Cornell UP, 1977, 3-36. For more information on the genesis of Wordsworth's works from manuscript to publication, see *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Early Years 1770-1799*. Harvard UP, 1967.

⁵³ Parrish writes of the spots of time that "their inclusion in the fourth state of *The Prelude* has to be inferred from the number 145, which Wordsworth added to the 246 in MS. 16 to get his new total of 391 lines (or roughly 400). We can suppose that he was thinking of the 'spots of time' because there are no other pieces of composition that give the right total" (20-21). MS. U is a similar fair copy of the *Two-Part Prelude* in the hand of Mary Hutchinson. In the Cornell edition, MS. U is used to supplement MS. V as the opening 52½ lines of the second part of V had been torn out. MS. V was also revised before MS. U was copied, hence editors speculate whether U copies V, or whether it copies more from MS. RV. MS. U may be more complete than MS. V, but the *Two-Part Prelude* can be considered an editorial assemblage because MS. U supplements MS. V, which Parrish regards as the version "Wordsworth was closest to, and the one he used for drafting revisions toward later forms of *The Prelude*" as he returns to it later in 1803 (33).

⁵⁴ MS V is a fair copy version of the *Two-Part Prelude* made in 1799 by Dorothy Wordsworth and incorporates earlier parts from DC MS. JJ, DC MS. 141, DC MS. 15, DC MS. 16, DC MS. 33, MS. RV, and from a letter written to Coleridge. Not necessarily a complete text, the Cornell editors assembled the Two-Part *Prelude* out of a combination of MS. U and MS. V, which were themselves already an assemblage of the many other textual parts contained within Wordsworth's notebooks.

incorporative revision.⁵⁵ What we see in this version are the beginnings of what would later become the 1804 Five-Book *Prelude* as well as the Thirteen-Book 1805 *Prelude* and the Fourteen-Book *Prelude* published in 1850.⁵⁶ However, by 1804, we know that the passage on the spots of time had been separated from the passage on the Drowned Man that directly precedes it in the Two-Part *Prelude* of 1798-99. At this point in the text's development, Wordsworth's 1804 revision not only uses the spots of time to conclude his envisioned Five-Book *Prelude* but also puts distance between the spots of time's "fructifying virtue" and the more troubling episode of trauma Wordsworth witnesses at Esthwaite Lake (1798-9 I. 290).

In "The Illusion of Mastery: Wordsworth's Revisions of 'The Drowned Man of Esthwaite,'" Susan J. Wolfson also notes that "Wordsworth's principal reworkings in his narrative of the Drowned Man involve context and commentary, as if he wanted to loosen its sequential relation with [the] 'spots of time,' thereby suppressing, rather than developing, its central, deathly information" (920). There is even a closeness in the

⁵⁵ For instance, MS. V draws heavily from MS. JJ for Part I, which not only contains the "glad preamble" of the 1805 *Prelude*, the opening question—"was it for this"—of the *Two-Part Prelude*, but also many boyhood scenes like bathing in the river, the trap robbing, the Boy of Winander, and the boat stealing episode.

⁵⁶ The Five Book *Prelude*, considered to be drafted in 1804 according to Jonathan Wordsworth's analysis of DC MS. W, consisted of many of the parts from the Two-Part *Prelude*. While the poem does not survive as a fair copy, Jonathan Wordsworth argues that "the full transformation of 1799, I, had taken place by some stage in February" of 1804, as "the Drowned Man . . . appears in Book IV of the five-book poem, and the 'spots of time' sequence . . . forms the conclusion to V" (8). Furthermore, evidence shows that Book Four of the Five-Book *Prelude* consisted of parts that would later be separated in 1805 to form Book IV, specifically parts that described the poet's experiences at Hawkshead and his meeting with the Discharged Soldier, and Book V such as the beneficial influence of books as well as lines that contributed to the introduction to the Arab Dream passage in 1805. The most solid evidence points to the fact that Book Five begins with the Snowdon passage and concludes with the spots of time. For more, see Jonathan Wordsworth's "The Five-Book 'Prelude' of Early Spring 1804."

That Wordsworth revises this scene illustrates his belief in a textual relationship between the earlier and later versions of *The Prelude* that depends on the practice of revision we saw in the *Salisbury Plains* poems. For Wordsworth, revision attempts to distance the self from a past that is entangled with psychic experiences related to figures of death, what Wordsworth calls in the Two-Part *Prelude* “forms/ [t]hat yet exist with independent life / [a]nd, like their archetypes, know no decay” (1798-99 l. 285-87). It is not merely the sight or site of death that provokes anxiety within Wordsworth, but rather the very vulnerability opened up to the subject by the impressionability of sensation. Like the experience of the trance, both the archetypes and forms that know no decay expose language to the limits of representation, for these are experiences that vividly capture self-reflection in an impossible repetition that traumatizes the subject. This traumatic repetition separates the subject from its embeddedness within language, for these experiences illustrate the failure of language to reflect the self’s experience. The indivisibility of these experiences mirror that of the subject’s encounter with a partial object, as the partial object exposes the subject to its experience of itself as lack because its unity represents a surplus within the Symbolic. The spots of time thus leave a permanent impression on Wordsworth that undercuts the idealism generally associated with archetypes. Archetypes are instead absolutely prior to language, like a piece of the Real included within language that cannot be positivized. In this sense, Geoffrey Hartman’s view that the “spots of time” are “the nuclear cell of the whole” poem is correct, but not simply because they illustrate the way memory functions in the service of *poiesis* (211). Rather, Wordsworth’s revisions to those scenes connected with the spots of time, especially the traumatic experience of the self associated with the Drowned Man and displaced onto the Dream of the Arab in Book Five, show a resistance to the

implications of the spots of time as moments of restitutive inspiration; they have more to do with writing's inability to escape the traumatic repetition of scenes that seem to live upon the eye.

It is for this reason that Wordsworth separates the scene of the Drowned Man from his description of the spots of time. This begs the question: what, then, is the relationship between the "spots of time" and these "forms" that "know no decay"? Whereas Wordsworth states in the Two-Part *Prelude* of 1798-1799 that the spots of time belong to the period of "our first childhood," these have less to do with the age in which these moments are experienced and more with the experience of dis-integration associated with Klein's description of the infant's experience of object-relations. In one of the earliest phases of childhood development, which Klein sees as the basis for schizophrenia—which, in turn is the dis-integrative prelude to depressive reintegration—"the ego's power of identifying itself with its objects is as yet small, partly because it is itself still uncoordinated and partly because the introjected objects are still mainly partial objects" (42). During childhood, then, partial objects, in the words of Gilles Deleuze, are not simply good objects but can be "dreaded as toxic substances and sometimes utilized as weapons to break apart still other morsels" (189). Indeed, Wordsworth follows up his description of the spots with a scene where, "stumbling on," he

Came to a bottom where in former times
 A man, the murderer of his wife, was hung
 In irons; mouldered was the gibbet mast,
 The bones were gone, the iron and the wood,
 Only a long green ridge of turf remained
 Whose shape was like a grave. (1798-1799 l. 307-313)

This passage appears to be the reverse of the end of “Adventures on Salisbury Plain” or the mirror-image of “Guilt and Sorrow,” insofar as the corpse is not in view. But this passage metonymically transitions to Wordsworth’s description of yet another “scene which left a kindred power” that was “[i]mplanted in [his] mind” (1798-9 1. 315). He remembers coming across a “naked pool” and a “girl who bore a pitcher on her head”; but this spot, rather than inspire new visions, requires “[c]olours and words that are unknown to man / [t]o paint the visionary dreariness” of the scene (1798-99 1. 317, 321-322). The “spots of time” do not support Wordsworth’s assertion that “our minds” are “nourished, and invisibly repaired,” since, to quote Wolfson again, “‘spot’ suggests autonomy rather than relation, a figure whose boundaries are drawn mysteriously inward to form a piece of lyric concentration and whose very difference from a linear plot is the basis of its definition” (927). Spot also has further connotations that go beyond merely its topographical meaning of a location, since a spot may also mean a stain or a blemish, a glaucoma, something that darkens rather than illuminates. The spot of time, much like the experience of the trance, does not situate Wordsworth in a spot; for after these spots of time, like the Sailor, Wordsworth is left wondering, “did you see where ‘I’ went?” since it is the “I” itself that becomes the lost object that must be found again in language.

To explain why Wordsworth thinks the spots of time are meant to “retain” a “fructifying virtue” that invisibly repairs the mind, these memories represent for Wordsworth what Lacan calls *le point de capiton*. Translated either as “quilting point” or “anchoring point,” Lacan also considers the concept of the *point de capiton* as a “button tie” that functions in a similar way to metaphor, as it is meant to fix language by substituting one thing for another, that is, by fixing it to an object in the same way that

one affixes a button to a piece of fabric. But unlike metaphor, the *point de capiton* articulates that by “which the signifier stops the otherwise indefinite sliding of signification between signifier and signified,” and thus allows the neurotic subject some semblance of stability between the function of language and the object under signification (Lacan “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire” 681). The difference between the two is that metaphor arises out of the endless chain of metonymic signification, whereas the *point de capiton* expresses the constitutive failure of language to represent the object that it signifies. In other words, metaphor repeats in the chain of signification the failure of the *point de capiton*, which Lacan sums up nicely in the statement: “we can say that it is in the chain of the signifier that meaning *insists*, but that none of the chain’s elements *consists* in the signification it can provide at that very moment” (“Instance of the Letter” 419). To borrow from Wordsworth, “[t]here are in our existence spots of time, [w]hich with distinct pre-eminence retain, / [a] fructifying virtue” that quilt the signifier and the signified together, but also reveal that this quilting is not essential but rather constitutive of the subject’s traumatic entrance into neurotic desire. For what occurs in this entrance is, as was noted above, a desire for the “I,” to rediscover where the “I” went. As Lacan says, “I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it as an object,” for “the function of language in speech is not to inform but to evoke” (“Function and Field” 247). Where most critics agree that the spots of time are related to childhood memories that are marked more by trauma than anything else, this reading of trauma also needs to be carried further. For the spots of time give rise both to the function of metaphor and metonymy in Wordsworth’s works, since the failure of the *point de capiton* desperately insists that there must be some metaphoric meaning in the chain of metonymic signification. But because language is not purely informative but is

rather evocative, these moments that resist treatment instead call for a perpetual analysis of the subject's condition within language as the gap that manifests a desire for self-presence.

Understood this way, the spots of time demand in the same sense that writing demands according to Blanchot's discussion of the demand of the "impossible." Blanchot understands "that possibility is not the sole dimension of our existence, and that it is perhaps given to us to 'live' each of the events that is ours by way of a double relation" (*Infinite Conversation* 207). As Blanchot continues,

We live it one time as something we comprehend, grasp, bear, and master (even if we do so painfully and with difficulty) by relating it to some good or to some value, that is to say, finally, by relating it to Unity; we live it another time as something that escapes all employ and all end, and more, as that which escapes our very capacity to undergo it, but whose trail we cannot escape. (207)

The spots of time describe what Blanchot calls a limit-experience, which do not serve as an origin but themselves question the lack of an origin in the first place. Such limit-experiences do not essentially tie things together but also insistently represent intensified points of experience that appear to have significance only retroactively.

For instance, in the next such spot of time from the Two-Part *Prelude*, Wordsworth describes the memory of returning to his father's house after Christmas, only to see his father die. "The event," Wordsworth writes, "[w]ith all the sorrow which it brought appeared / [a] chastisement" (1798-99 1. 353-355). And yet, once again, Wordsworth states that he would return to these thoughts that accompanied this traumatic event later in life:

And afterwards the wind, and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements,

The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
 And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist
 Which on the line of each of those two roads
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes,
 All these were spectacles and sounds to which
 I would often repair, and thence would drink
 As at a fountain (1798-99 l. 361-70)

Between the internalization—“would drink / [a]s at a fountain”—and the “chastisement” that he feels from this memory, this relation implies a debt that is both internal and external to the subject like that which Freud sees in the Rat-Man’s feelings of an impossible debt that he can never complete—a debt, as it so happens, that he incorporates from his father. The guilt Wordsworth experiences in this spot of time signifies something that he cannot cancel, yet, at the same time, makes it into something that he continuously incorporates. Later incorporated in the 1850 version into the Twelfth Book of the *Prelude*, “Imagination and Taste, How Impaired and Restored,” this memory carries with it an “anxiety of hope” that does indeed make it a nuclear cell to the entire poem, but not as something available to Wordsworth in some voluntary form of memory recall, because it is even more traumatic than Proust’s involuntary memory (1850 l. 313). Rather, the spots of time compel Wordsworth to construct a poem that defends against these memories of loss that mirror his own experience of himself as lack. Wordsworth does not repair but instead, in the double valence of the word, re-vises, as he both alters the text but is also repeatedly altered by the repeatedly involuntary occurrence of the spots of time.

IV. The Stone, the Shell & the Kernel

In contrast with his revision to the spots of time, Wordsworth's further revisions to *The Prelude*, especially in Book Five, derange the monumentalization of lyrical language. Because of the potential within lyric to release what Wordsworth calls in his *Essays upon Epitaphs* language's "counter-spirit," revision "unremittingly and noiselessly [is] at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve" (Wordsworth "Essays upon Epitaphs II" 85). Book Five figuratively becomes a crypt that only produces more partial objects that threaten to dissolve the unity of the self. In the words of Joan Copjec, it "is not that the subject is obliterated but that this obliteration constitutes the subject's experience of itself as a separate existence, an 'I,'" so that rather than prove that the subject is not there, Book Five provides insight into the constitution of the subject as a subject of multiple shatterings (*Imagine* 57). By enclosing these disintegrative moments away from the description of the spots of time, Wordsworth instead associates these traumatic episodes with the act of writing itself, so that writing becomes less about metaphor in Book Five than it is about the repression of writing's metonymic dissolution of the "I." Wordsworth's failure to acknowledge these metonymic displacements in Book Five, however, is part of his obsession with metaphorical closure, as he chooses to instead incorporate the failure of writing as *The Prelude*'s secret. As Faflak writes, Wordsworth's inability to accept the fact of the "I"'s exposure gives way to the fantasy of an "endocryptic topography" as a "way of dealing with what it cannot say about itself," resulting in Wordsworth's literal incorporation of what are arguably several different spots of time from the Two-Part *Prelude* into the longer versions (*Romantic* 82). These illustrate how incorporation is "unremittingly and noiselessly at work" in the construction

of Wordsworth's sense of the self as self-enclosed and in control of the poet's song (Wordsworth "Essays" 85).

As has been noted above, the passage that features the Drowned Man is radically transformed in the 1805 version, since it has been separated from the "spots of time." However, another revision occurs in 1805 that transforms this memory. While "the dead Man, 'mid that beauteous scene" still "[r]ose with his ghastly face" in the Two-Part *Prelude*, he has been transformed into "a spectre-shape / [o]f terror" in 1805 and 1850 (1805 5.470-473). As opposed to the horror of seeing the corpse rise bolt upright, the drowned man inspires a terror that contains the trauma within the language of books:

... and yet no vulgar fear,
 Young as I was, a Child not nine years old,
 Possess'd me; for my inner eye had seen
 Such sights before, among the shining streams
 Of Fairy Land, the Forests of Romance:
 Thence came a spirit, hallowing what I saw
 With decoration and ideal grace. (1805 5. 473-479)

What this experience of the representation of past trauma without affect does is reinforce Freud's point about the obsessive's repetition of past traumas without any of the previous ideational content. For what replaces the affect is a description of a "slender abstract of the Arabian Tales" that defends Wordsworth against seeing the Drowned Man, who is now only a "spectre-shape" (1805 5. 484). Excluding the Drowned Man's association with forms that know no decay, Wordsworth instead connects the Drowned Man with a "golden store of books which [he] had left" at his father's house that are "[o]pen to [his] enjoyment once again"; books here fictionalize the experience of trauma so that the

Drowned Man becomes a palatably manageable experience (1805 5. 501, 503-504). By 1805, then, Wordsworth tries to make books, as well as writing, stave off the intolerable thought that there are memories that could not fit within the restorative purpose of the “spots of time,” that they could be anything but a positive influence on the growth of the poet’s own mind.

And yet, death populates the book on books. The dream of the Arab especially appears at odds with the rest of the poem, since it is not Wordsworth’s dream but that of an unnamed “Friend.” Unlike the books at his father’s house, which transform fictionality’s unreality into a defense against the disintegration of a stable subjectivity, the dream involuntarily happens upon Wordsworth’s friend after reading a book in a way that cannot be controlled. Though presented as a dream, its intrusion upon the text fits Maria Török’s description of fantasy as an “inner experience” that is characterized by three criteria: “intrusion, imagination, and misfit” (“Fantasy” 30). Rather than view dreams or fantasies the way that Freud viewed them as unconscious wish-fulfillments, Török views these not as the cause of symptoms but as symptoms themselves, that is, in the words of Abraham and Török’s editor, Nicholas Rand, a “representation of a problem seeking expression” (25). And whereas Török argues that works of the imagination such as the *Prelude* do not fit her description of fantasy because literature is a conscious work of the imagination, her definition of fantasy appears relevant to this instance based on the fact that the dream of the Arab is similar in scope to a “*hypnagogic representation*,” a phenomenon that stands “at the threshold of fantasy proper”; as Török writes, “we can speak of fantasy as a waking dream” (34). Because the dream of the Arab intrudes on Wordsworth just as the assemblage of Book Five’s partial objects intrude upon the larger

aim of *The Prelude* necessitates a review of the specific problem that the dream of the Arab seeks to make evident to Wordsworth.

On the surface, the dream appears to be a reiteration of the beginning of Book Five's lament for the impermanent condition of humanity, as Wordsworth compares human life to "such garments" that Nature will at one point merely cast off without so much as a thought. But books are presented in a contradictory light, as Wordsworth recalls the memory of the Arabian nights to defend himself from the trauma of the Drowned Man in the same book that he laments the failure of books to secure a secular life-after-death. Wordsworth's reflection upon the purpose of books for a writer who is meant to produce books reveals an ambivalence that is once again determined by both doubt and compulsion, as a thought "survive[s] / [a]bject, depressed, forlorn, [and] disconsolate" in Wordsworth's mind, which gives way to the famous exclamation that the mind's seeming transcendence remains at odds with the impermanence of the world (Wordsworth *1805* 5. 26-27).

Oh! Why hath not the mind
Some element to stamp her image on
In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail? (*1805* 5.44-48)

Wordsworth communicates these thoughts to his friend, which then prompts his friend to communicate his dream. This dream qua fantasy, as Theresa M. Kelley notes, "is resolutely metonymic in that the dream transforms the inflexible opposition of the prologue" between traditional knowledge (geometric Truth) and prophetic knowledge (Poetry) "by replacing its key terms with two new symbols": the stone and the shell (565-

566). Kelley's assertion, however, repeats the textual unconscious of Book Five, for the stone and the shell cannot be metonymic and Symbolic at the same time. The speaker would like the stone and the shell to be symbols, which would enclose them, yet metonymy is not a secure but contiguous pointing to the stone and the shell's relation to geometry and poetry.

The setting of the dream, "an Arabian Waste / [a] Desart," further increases the speaker's "[d]istress of mind" to seek out some form of permanence (*1805* 5. 71-72, 74). Such a figure of permanence seems to appear when the dreamer encounters an Arab Bedouin, whom he believes to be a "[g]uide" who can "lead him through the Desart" (*1805* 5. 82-83). But the Bedouin does not offer guidance, and hence cannot be an analyst of the dream. Because both the Bedouin and the dreamer's presence in the dream are related to these books of human knowledge, their relationship to books instead connects their fate to that which is foretold by the Shell's "loud prophetic blast of harmony" that foretells "[d]estruction to the Children of the Earth / [b]y deluge now at hand" (*1805* 5. 96, 97-98). The Bedouin's presence, then, is not therapeutic but symptomatic of the anxiety that both Wordsworth and the friend feel towards the impending extinction of human existence. Indeed, Wordsworth's description of the Bedouin as a "semi-Quixote" marks the Bedouin as yet another obsessive, whose present errand appears to be a mirror image of Wordsworth's own autobiographical project (*1805* 5. 142). For if we recall that Don Quixote de la Mancha's insanity arises out of the hidalgo's reading habits, it is his confidence in the reality of fantasy that leads him on his adventures with Sancho Panza. The dream of the Arab, then, is no mere heuristic device, but is itself a complex scene of fantasy that must be interpreted as such.

Whereas the stone, as the friend relates to Wordsworth, is described “in the language of the Dream” as Euclid’s Elements, the Shell of “a surpassing brightness” is described as a “book” that “[i]s something of more worth” (1805 5. 87, 81, 89-90). In the dream, language takes on a different logic, where objects shift from one signifier to the next, as evidenced by the friend’s testimony: “although I plainly saw / [t]he one to be a Stone, th’other a Shell,” he never doubts that “they both were books” (1805 5. 111-113). But the confusion over the identity of these objects holds a kernel of truth about the subject’s relation to all objects. Clearly partial objects, these fascinate Wordsworth, the friend, and the Bedouin, because the partial object stands in for the Symbolic not as a mere part but as the whole of the Symbolic itself; in other words, the stone and the shell as partial objects are the site of the subject’s overinvestment in Symbolic reality. Within the language of the dream, the stone and the shell lose the veil of fantasy and are no longer simply “consecrated works of Bard and Sage,” since they are objects that are both conveyors of meaning as well as inhuman debris; this uncertain duality thus trivializes human knowledge at the same time that it signals once again Nature’s indifference to man’s hominization (1805 5. 41). If the works of human knowledge, to quote Lacan, are “perhaps the summation of a pile of partial objects,” the dream itself calls into question whether or not it is in fact about the desire to preserve human culture for an uncertain posterity or a means of burying the horrific realization that writing is just trash (*Transference* 144). For if the stone and the shell are not in fact books that the Arab wishes to preserve, it is because they are harbingers of the apocalypse. In fact, it is only when Wordsworth’s friend puts the shell to his ear that he hears “in an unknown tongue” the “loud prophetic blast of harmony” that predicts extinction (1805 5. 94, 96). The choice of words Wordsworth uses to describe the Bedouin’s quest is especially

illuminating in this instance, for the description of the books inspires a fear in Wordsworth's friend that compels him to share in the Bedouin's errand, not because the quest is to preserve the books, but because it is to entomb them; as the Bedouin says, "he himself / Was going then to *bury* those two Books" (1805 5. 102-103; my emphasis).

The dream, then, represents the limit-experience of Wordsworth's obsessive writing, since the burial of the books represents a cryptonymic incorporation of these as partial objects; the burial itself defends Wordsworth from the kernel of truth that nothing will provide him a secular-life-after-death. Like a *mise-en-abyme* of the entire project, Book Five becomes the correlate for *The Prelude*'s non-publication, since it is not only because Wordsworth has not yet created the great Gothic Cathedral of *The Recluse* that *The Prelude* remains unpublished; it is also because he must bury the truth of the text from both himself and the public. Going back to Wordsworth's architectonic for his poetry, if the *Prelude* is meant to be the ante-chapel to the great Work, its writing instead cancels Wordsworth's programmatic intentions, as *The Prelude* becomes an infinite task. As Wordsworth spends the rest of his life either adding parts from previous versions and poems to *The Prelude* or removing parts from it such as those associated with the French Revolution, Wordsworth's revisionary practice instead metonymically connects *The Prelude* not to the Gothic Cathedral of *The Recluse* but to the "little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses" that only point to partial or abandoned projects (Wordsworth *Preface* 5-6). *The Prelude* appears less as an ante-chapel and more like John Keats's description of the "Chamber of Maiden-Thought" in his letter "To J. H. Reynolds, 3 May 1818." It is in this letter that Keats in fact evokes Wordsworth and compares "human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments," wherein Keats describes two apartments, while "the

doors of the rest” appear “shut upon him” (498). Reflecting upon Wordsworth’s representation of human life in this sense, Keats writes,

The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think—We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle—within us—we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is the tremendous one of sharpening one’s vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing ones nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression—whereby This Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken’d and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages. (498)

In his extended exposure to the existence of the stone and the shell, Wordsworth recognizes that his entire project of self-constitution by means of autobiography is not only under threat but is itself undecidable, because writing is unable to account for itself or defend itself against its own textual instability. Rather, writing is that which brings about instability itself.

It is for this reason that de Man uses Wordsworth’s phrase from Book Five, “[o]f these [are] neither, and [are] both at once,” when he discusses the undecidability between fiction and autobiography, since Book Five represents the crisis inherent to writing’s relationship to the self: the impossibility of remaining “*within* an undecidable situation” (“Autobiography as De-Facement” 70). One must decide whether writing represents things autobiographically or if it is merely representing things fictionally. Derrida later takes up de Man’s argument in *Demeure*, as he also sees Wordsworth’s predicament as the problem of literature. For if the self must construct itself by means of narrative, the irresolvable distinction between fiction and autobiography leaves the subject “in a fatal

and double impossibility: the impossibility of deciding, but [also] the impossibility of *remaining* [demeurer] in the undecidable” (16). Such is the issue that Wordsworth finds himself facing in Book Five, for he is incapable of addressing this double impossibility of his own autobiographical project. For this reason, Wordsworth incorporates this double impossibility as the text’s crypt and the text’s own textual unconscious. For whether or not the dream of the Arab was his friend’s, as in 1805, or his own, by 1839 Wordsworth’s revisions lead him to incorporate this dream as his own, which thus displaces the need for him to interpret the dream since its incorporation instead relegates the dream to the level of the text’s “[t]ransitory themes” that briefly take him away from “[t]his Verse” which “is dedicate[d] to Nature’s self, / [a]nd things that teach as Nature teaches” (1805 5. 224, 230-231). Yet it still remains unpublished. Even though Wordsworth revises the poem once again between 1838 and 1839, *The Prelude* was only published after he died in 1850. What becomes apparent, then, is that that which is supposed to be transitory instead seems to captivate Wordsworth, as he describes,

.... Oftentimes, at least

Me hath such deep entrancement half-possess’d,

When I have held a volume in my hand,

Poor earthly casket of immortal Verse!

Shakespeare, or Milton, Labourers divine. (1805 5. 161-165)

That the experience of reading literature half-possesses Wordsworth and returns him to an experience of the trance contradicts his conviction in *Essays upon Epitaphs* that “the excellence of writing, whether in prose or verse, consists in a conjunction of Reason and Passion, a conjunction which must be of necessity benign” (Wordsworth “Essays” 85). Entrancement, as it does in the *Salisbury Plain* poems, takes one away from one’s

obsession with the impossible search for permanence and self-preservation, and instead captivates us with the inevitability of our mortality, that is, our own existential abandonment to a world in which we as subjects are out of place. And while Wordsworth's revision of the above passage changes the experience from one that "half-possess'd" him in 1805 to a "strong entrancement" that he "overcome[s]" in the version finally published in 1850, the revision fails to possess the "I." Wordsworth instead writes "Me," which is the object-form of the "I," as if his subjectivity were something outside him: "Me hath such strong entrancement overcome" (1850 5. 164). Whereas the dream's "psychic threat," as Faflak argues, appears to be "safely immured from his later 'maturer' selfhood," the incorporation "also thus claims the dream's unconscious" as Wordsworth's own, thus "exposing his psychic interior to an analysis that he cannot seem to avoid" (*Romantic Psychoanalysis* 108). Revision, in the end, continues the metonymic displacement indefinitely, since Wordsworth is incapable of substituting the difference that constitutes writing for a unified whole.

It might be said that the tone or condition in which the entirety of Book Five is written is an infinite sadness, one which has similarities with Julia Kristeva's description of the "*depressive affect*," which is "a defense against parceling"; "sadness," Kristeva argues, is felt in order to reconstitute "an affective cohesion of the self, which restores its unity within the framework of the affect" (*Black Sun* 19). In spite of Wordsworth's assertion that "[a] gracious Spirit o'er this earth presides / [a]nd o'er the heart of man," the constitution of his subjectivity seems to originate in a sadness beyond the poet's perfect communion with Nature (1805 5. 516-517). For near the end of Book Five, while Wordsworth speaks of the "delightful time of growing youth" and its relation to the way

“words themselves / [m]ove us with conscious pleasure,” the next stanza begins with a stark indent that interrupts the continuity of reading:

I am sad
 At thought of raptures, now for ever flown;
 Even unto tears, I sometimes could be sad
 To think of, to read over, many a page,
 Poems withal of name, which at that time
 Did never fail to entrance me, and are now
 Dead in my eyes as is a theatre
 Fresh emptied of spectators. (1805 5. 566-575)

Wordsworth’s use of entrancement, here, is obviously different from its previous uses throughout the rest of his texts, and yet its presence does not fail to evoke words such as “Dead” and “emptied” that seem to permanently associate trances with things that are irreparably lost to us. If the words of childhood are supposed to “move us with conscious pleasure,” in Book Five these now only bring Wordsworth “unto tears.” If Book Five suggests anything about the constitution of Wordsworth’s subjectivity, it is that he has always taken refuge in the sadness literature provides. For Wordsworth, the writing of literature is characterized by a “depressive mood,” in the words of Kristeva, that “constitutes itself as a narcissistic support, negative to be sure, but nevertheless present[s] the self with an integrity” (*Black Sun* 19). Because the failure of autobiography reveals that subjectivity must be continuously and fictionally (re)constructed in the face of disintegration, sadness provides a tenuous defense. The alienating experience of the trance, then, is not something that happens externally but rather exposes the constitution of the subject as always already lost in the first place. To experience himself as whole, Wordsworth buries himself in the (un)published just as he buries himself in the sadness of

melancholic incorporation. It is not a whole subject that emerges, but rather a wounded subject that enjoys its sadness because this sadness protects it from total destruction. It is for this reason that the stone and the shell must remain entombed within the dream of *The Prelude*, as they literally encrypt the secret of Wordsworth's desire.

Wordsworth's revision of the (un)published parts of *The Prelude* is thus not only part of the search to find the lost object again and again but also becomes the means by which we can see that he was never able to rid himself of the relation to the work of writing. It is because he never gives up on the work that Wordsworth decides to withhold *The Prelude* from publication while he is still alive. Wordsworth can only ever experience himself as an author by revising the one great work, as publication would only lead to an *aphanisis* of his desire. Non-publication, therefore, negatively authenticates subjectivity in a way that requires us to revise how the eventual publication of *The Prelude* fits both our discussion of Wordsworth's retreat as well as Andrew Bennett's accurate description of Wordsworth's commitment to writing for posterity. If survival is central to Wordsworth's entire poetic project, the publication of the 1850 version of *The Prelude* is not the end of Wordsworth's project but rather its inverted beginning. For the *Prelude*'s publication cannot be untied from Wordsworth's preservation of the texts that precede its publication, as the text's inability to sever its ties to the past metonymically points back to the published text's (un)published history. Because he was unable to complete *The Recluse*, and because Wordsworth and his family preserved the previous versions of *The Prelude*, the publication of *The Prelude* thus invites readers into a complex project of deconstruction to trace Wordsworth's own melancholic incorporation of himself within the revisions he makes to *The Prelude* not as a culmination but as an abyss of revision.

What Wordsworth presents to posterity, then, is not the achievement of a finished and complete work, but the retreat from the demand of the Work itself as *The Prelude* continuously incorporates into itself the sepulchral recesses that make up its partial composition. As such, *The Prelude* is not just an unpublished text that gets published but is (un)published precisely on account of its incorporated structure, for Wordsworth is only ever able to communicate the self by burying it. In so doing, the (un)published functions as an ungrounded ground, a non-being that never allows the subject to immerse themselves in a unified discourse, but must, for ever, fantasize its own incorporation.

"Christabel": Revision Before and After Publication

I. The Retreating Retreat

In an article in the journal *Public*, entitled "Is Retreat a Metaphor?", Catherine Malabou regards retreating as an act, but a negative one that negates even the decision to retreat, because "there can be no retreat," in Malabou's words, "without a retreat of the retreat itself, no retreat without a re-doubling, to the extent that the only gesture or move retreating can perform is to perform nothing, that is, to retreat" ("Retreat" 35). For Malabou, the retreat cannot be economized. Retreating does not, then, perform the move of withdrawing, as in the negative ebb to the positive flow of the ocean, and neither is it a remove from the profanity of the world towards some posited purity in absolute privacy. In contrast, the retreat demonstrates effectively "what it is not, that is . . . [not] a form of presence, be it God, substance, or reality" ("Retreat" 35). In the retreat, as Malabou says, there is "a chance of saying everything without touching upon the secret" of the retreat, for in the act of retreating, the retreat itself remains perpetually barred ("Retreat" 29).

Though not mentioned in Malabou's article, Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe had earlier theorized an alternative version of the retreat in *Le Retrait du Politique* (1997). Their position remains tentatively hopeful, for the "retreat," according to them, "makes something appear or sets something free," not "according to the rule of a nostalgic lamentation for what would have drawn back . . . but according to the hypothesis that this retreat must allow, or even impose, the tracing anew of the stakes of the political" (131). Rather than take a position, they argue for a "*de-position*" as a sort of

Aufhebung or suspension that thinks the limits of the political and the philosophical while still holding both in reserve for something yet to come (94). The hopefulness that is sketched out by this idea of the retreat relies on the possibility of retracing a new ground for the political, as both theorists argue in another essay, “The Jewish People Do Not Dream”: “[t]o draw back [*se retirer*] is not to disappear, and *is* not, strictly speaking, any mode of being. . . . [T]he *retrait* is the action of disappearing appearing,” which means that one does not merely “appear *in* disappearing,” but rather one “appear[s] *as* disappearance” (qtd. in Sparks x).

In her own way, Malabou recognizes Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe by means of Derrida, as she mentions that Derrida notes, in “The Retreat of Metaphor,” that the limits that separate public and private have become “absolutely porous” (Malabou, “Retreat” 37). Malabou continues that this results in an “aporia [that] does not equate [to] an impossibility,” but rather allows for the possibility to “still invent a new meaning for a retreat, . . . open a new possibility of withdrawing . . . [for] something yet to come,” or as Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe would say, clear the ground for a new encounter at “the incision” of the retreat (Malabou “Retreat” 37, Nancy & Lacoue-Labarthe 133). However, Malabou herself withdraws performatively, as her text moves from the conditional tense of the “I would have liked to dwell” towards, as she says, an other Catherine, that involuntarily and “suddenly become[s] motionless and speechless, “one that “would lie in bed often with her eyes open but with a blank facial expression,” only to return again to the anxious hopefulness of the conditional tense (“Retreat” 36). If Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy wish to retreat as a means towards de-positioning, Malabou’s textual performance demonstrates the fragility that underscores de-position’s purposelessness; the retreat

cannot be intentional, according to Malabou, for from where would one have the authority to withdraw, to retreat from the political in order to re-treat it?

While Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe are concerned with re-treating the political as an intentional act,—which Malabou relates to the idea of a voluntary retreat in several past figures such as Maurice Blanchot, Alexander Grothendiek, and Thomas Bernhard—Malabou’s concern is with the retreat as something that is accidental, making retreat impossible as a result of its traumatic immediacy. For Malabou, the retreat, then, is not something chosen, nor can it be a metaphor, because the retreat makes the subject indifferent. She writes that “indifference” is “undecided, unvoluntary, non-chosen,” while its “rhetoric comprises figures of interruption, pauses, caesuras—the blank spaces that emerge when the network of connections is shredded or when the circulation of energy is paralyzed” (“Retreat” 41). She further elaborates this position of indifference in *Ontology of the Accident* (2012), where she distinguishes indifference from sorrow: indifference “is the suffering caused by an absence of suffering,” a suffering in which pain “manifests as indifference to pain, impassivity, forgetting, the loss of Symbolic reference points” (Malabou, *Ontology* 18). Finally, in *The New Wounded* (2012), the retreat’s affective mode of indifference is linked to the indifference that arises after neuronal trauma or the trauma of the accident, as distinct from the definition of trauma offered by traditional psychoanalysis. Trauma, which is associated with “permanent or temporary behaviors of *indifference* or *disaffection*,” “thus designates the wound that results from an effraction—an ‘effraction’ that can be physical (a ‘patent’ wound) or psychical. In either case, trauma names a shock that forces open or pierces a protective barrier” (Malabou, *New Wounded* 10, 6). Whereas Freud may emphasize that trauma is endogenous to the psyche, Malabou

expands on Freud's analysis by reading the exogenous causes of trauma alongside recent studies in neurology. In this sense, Malabou's definition of trauma recognizes that the alterations to the ego that are caused by external trauma have the potential to "manifest themselves as an *unprecedented metamorphosis* of the patient's identity," effectively creating a new person that is cut off from their past selves (*New Wounded* 15). Trauma, then, becomes something "the psyche cannot stage . . . for itself" (Malabou *New Wounded* 9). Because of this change that results in indifference or disaffection, any agency linking the subject to the retreat has been shattered, so that there is no longer any possibility for re-treating the political. In the case of the traumatic event that is exogenous to the psyche, one cannot speak of the intentional retreat; rather, one can only identify the involuntary retreat that is seen in the destructive negativity and unproductivity of trauma, which nullifies the circulation of desire in a way that is significantly different from Wordsworth's fear of *aphanisis*.

Because Samuel Taylor Coleridge withheld "Christabel" from publication for seventeen years, it is not only necessary to re-analyze the act of withholding as a retreat of a voluntary kind, but also to consider the retreat as that which is indifferent with regard to the imperative towards productivity implied by the act of publication. The non-publication of "Christabel" poses a problem because it begs the question: what was Coleridge trying to preserve by withholding "Christabel," and from what was he retreating? Furthermore, it leads us to ask: can we even read the decision to withhold a text from publication? And if so, how can we read the negativity of that which appears only by not appearing, that is the immaterial, which is and is not there? Yet because we cannot read that which is not there, the different versions of "Christabel" before and after

publication provide a means to develop the concept of the retreat not as metaphorical or even metonymical. Rather, retreating is anti-metaphorical, as it does not perform any metaphoric substitution to cancel difference because to retreat is a short-circuit, a self-cancelling act, an act that does not act. If Derrida is correct to state that the line between the public and the private is absolutely porous, so too can this be said of the difference between what is published and what remains unpublished. Reading the versions of “Christabel” that come before the first published edition in 1816 thus marks a way of reading Coleridge’s retreat from publication in the sense of Malabou’s failure of the retreat more than Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe’s re-treating the political. For in Malabou’s sense of the term, we can read Coleridge’s relation to “Christabel” and Christabel herself as part of a repetition compulsion effected by his encounter with the text as his own partial object, which does not so much destroy desire but reveals a textual relation at the level of the drives.

II. A Practical and Theoretical Approach to Revision

Before turning to an analysis of “Christabel,” it is necessary to outline its textual history. Thanks to the work of Jack Stillinger, whose *Coleridge and Textual Instability* (1994) lays the groundwork for all further studies on the versions of “Christabel,” we have available the most well-composed textual and compositional history of the poem. Stillinger outlines the poem’s textual history from its earliest stages all the way to the final versions that Coleridge was involved in revising:

For “Christabel,” which Coleridge began writing in 1798, expanded in 1800, and then tinkered with, but never completed, all the rest of his life, we have or can

reconstruct some eighteen versions, but almost certainly there once existed several more than that in sources now lost. To begin with, we know of nine manuscript versions (or partial versions earlier than the first printed text of 1816: a holograph fair copy of the equivalent of 1–655 (that is, part 1, the conclusion to part 1, and part 2) at Victoria College, Toronto (CoS 52); transcripts of the same span, 1–655, by Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Hutchinson among the Wordsworth papers at Dove Cottage, Grasmere (CoS 51), Sara Hutchinson (at Yale, CoS 53), Sara Fricker Coleridge, the poet's wife (at the University of Texas, Collection, CoS 55 and 58), and an unidentified copyist (at the Bodleian Library, CoS 59); readings from a now-lost holograph reported by John Payne Collier in his preface to Coleridge's *Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton* (1856); and the quotation of 656–77, which later became the conclusion to part 2, in Coleridge's letter to Southey of 6 May 1801 (*CL*, 2:278). The first printed text, in the *Christabel* volume issued by Byron's publisher, John Murray, in May 1816 (1816), can count as the tenth version. There are at least five subsequent versions constituted by changes and additions that Coleridge and others entered by hand in copies of 1816 [(CoS 60, CoS 61, CoS 62, CoS 63, CoS 64)]. The last three versions are the texts in 1828, 1829, and 1834. (*Coleridge* 79)

Stillinger's position regarding the versions is two-fold. First, because Coleridge revised his texts so many times throughout his life, Stillinger argues that "the longstanding practice of identifying definitiveness with 'final authorial intention' is no longer defensible" (*Coleridge* 10). Second, Stillinger suggests that a practical theory of versions should adopt an approach of "textual pluralism," which would make "every separate version" have the right to "its [own] separate legitimacy," so that "all authoritative versions [would be] equally authoritative" (*Coleridge* 121). This position, similar to those propounded by "James Thorpe in the 1960s and then developed and championed . . . in Germany by Hans Zeller, in the United States by Jerome McGann, Donald Reiman, [and] Peter Shillingsburg," would thus displace final authorial intention, and finally take into account the fact that authors revise (*Coleridge* 121).

Revision, therefore, becomes a sign that allows one to read the differences in versions without deeming one version better or worse, because these versions are legitimate, discrete authoritative works in themselves. Stillinger compares writers who

revise—such as Coleridge—to writers who revise very little, for example John Keats. What is most remarkable about the latter is “Keats’s facility in drafting upon, or for, an occasion” all at once, and the fact that “there is practically no evidence that he wrote his longer or more ambitious poems in any other way” (*Coleridge* 102–03). On the other hand, Coleridge’s revisionary practice provides a way for Stillingier, according to his “Old Critical” and “New Textual point of view,” to read authorial intention into the revisions Coleridge made to his texts (*Coleridge* 100). The spontaneity with which Keats wrote his poems stands in contrast, for Stillingier, to Coleridge’s inveterate revising. For instance, Stillingier quotes a letter Coleridge wrote to Joseph Cottle on February 1797: “‘I torture the poem, and myself, with corrections; and what I write in an hour, I sometimes take two or three days in correcting,’ such as is the case with ‘The Religious Musings, [which] I have altered monstrously’ (*CIL*, 1: 309)” (qtd. in Stillingier *Coleridge* 104). In this sense, Coleridge’s mode of composition required of him to become both “critic *and interpreter* of what he had initially created without a plan, and now, in these subsequent stages of writing, *added authorial intention* that was not consciously present in the original composition” (Stillingier *Coleridge* 107). In order to account for revision while still maintaining authorial intention, Stillingier thus states that one can read revision as adding in authorial intention to a text that seemingly showed an unclear authorial intention at the outset of composition.

That Coleridge revised “Christabel” many times is clear from the many versions before and after publication. And yet, the revisions Coleridge made to “Christabel” were

so minimal after the last substantial revision in 1800 that adds Part II⁵⁷—changing a word here, or a comma there⁵⁸—that they lead Stillinger to revise his own thesis in *Coleridge and Textual Instability* (1994) about Coleridge’s revisionary practices. This is made clear in a footnote that Stillinger adds as he theorizes the revisions Coleridge made to “Christabel” and “Kubla Khan”:

If there is a causal relationship—in Coleridge’s not rewriting the two poems [“Christabel” and “Kubla Khan”] to add authorial intention in the way I have described—then perhaps a tentative generalization is in order: the more revision in a Coleridge poem, the greater the likelihood of receiving determinate (authorial) meanings—and, conversely, the less revision, the greater the indeterminacy. (*Coleridge* 246)

However, the differences and repetitions involved in returning, retracing, or re-treating “Christabel” show that there is something that perhaps gripped Coleridge in a third sense that even Stillinger, despite the modification he makes to his own argument, has not yet considered. For if the quantity of revision in a Coleridge poem should indicate more determinate authorial intention, and if less revision indicates a more indeterminate

⁵⁷ In a headnote to the poem, J. C. C. Mays describes the genesis of the text as follows: “The first part grew out of the same nexus of experiences and reading as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and was written even as the earlier poem was undergoing revision and enlargement and immediately afterwards, in Mar-May 1798. C[oleridge] resumed work on the poem on his return from Germany, in Oct-Nov 1799, and perhaps added the conclusion to Part I. Part II was written in the late summer of 1800, in an effort to complete the narrative so as to include the poem in the revised [*Lyrical Ballads*]. The conclusion to Part II was written in May 1801, and not brought into the poem until perhaps as late as early 1816, when the text was being set up in type” (478).

⁵⁸ In fact, Coleridge’s modifications only become more aggressive after publication, that is, after the text is given over to the public. In this sense, Coleridge’s withholding shows a markedly different form of revision than an attempt to maintain a personal connection with the unpublished; rather, by withholding the versions, Coleridge appears to want to remain separate from and yet still maintain a connection with the Symbolic order, as the further revisions after publication attempt to but fail to smooth out the text’s inner contradictions. The effect of publication shows revisionary practices that are more concerned with impersonal pronouns, and increasingly shifts towards a more mediated and generic gothic poem that attempts to retreat from the destructive limits the poem transgresses before publication.

intention, Stillinger does not account for the fact that in “Christabel” there is considerable revision that appears *insignificant* but still compounds the indeterminacy of the text’s meaning. If we invert Stillinger’s argument, this third sense of revision is defined by changes whose negativity turns over and over again around an insoluble secret which retreats from the author, thereby substituting the fetish of revision for clarification.

Despite his claiming that he had a clear intention in mind, “Christabel” appeared to have a libidinal hold on Coleridge that he could not quite shake, as can be seen in his inability to truly revise the poem, that is, not until his first attempt to relinquish it by giving it over to the public by means of its publication in 1816. In this manner, the endless revisions delayed ever having to end the poem, and thus prolonged Coleridge’s libidinal relation to the text, since, in the words of Žižek in *Looking Awry* (1991), desire “does not consist in its being ‘fulfilled,’ ‘fully satisfied,’” but “coincides rather with the reproduction of desire as such, with its circular movement” (7).

III. Revision, Retreat, and the (Un)public Sphere

Coleridge, as many know, had at best an ambivalent relationship with the public sphere in England. “The word ‘public,’ he claimed, was ‘of pernicious effect by habituating every Reader to consider himself as the Judge & therefore Superior of the Writer,’” and Coleridge believed, in the words of Lucy Newlyn, that “readers were . . . appealed to as an infallible judge: he dismissed them himself, sweepingly, as ‘the half-instructed Many’” (qtd. in Newlyn 52). Coleridge’s general dismissal of the growing

reading public⁵⁹ can seemingly be read as a dismissal of his early communitarian ideals such as his scheme with Robert Southey to establish a Pantisocracy; this dismissal, it would seem, is further reinforced by his later desire for the establishment of the “clerisy” in *On the Constitution of Church and State* (1829). As Jon Klancher notes in *The Making of English Reading Audiences* (1987), Coleridge’s “clerics were meant to be . . . masters of interpretation,” that is, they were meant to take possession of what could be read, “to rule in and rule out the possible readings of social and cultural discourse,” effectively mirroring Coleridge’s relationship with his own texts as simultaneous critic and interpreter (5, 136). However, as Newlyn argues, “[i]f Coleridge’s ideas about literary ownership reflected his political ambivalence, more generally, towards the idea of property, they can also be read as paradigmatic of the transitional status of the author at the time *Biographia* was published” (69).

What Newlyn shows is that Coleridge’s anxiety over the reader is not merely an anxiety concerning his work’s reception by the public sphere; his anxiety was also tied to how he felt about his own work. Insofar as “Christabel” is a text whose negativity at once

⁵⁹ Coleridge’s intentional withholding of “Christabel” from publication can be read more generally in terms of Romanticism and its relation to “publics” and “counter-publics.” For instance, the intentional act of withholding a work from publication shows that the unpublished is at times dialectically related to the published in the same way that spheres of the counter-public attempt to respond to the hegemony of the public sphere. Andrew Franta’s argument in *Romanticism and the Rise of the Mass Public* (2007), “that the regime of publicity could be employed to manipulate the very notion of representation—not by transforming debate into consumption but by bypassing debate altogether”—signals that Coleridge’s anxiety over the public’s power to bypass interpretation altogether was an all too common concern (33). For more research concerning the relation of the public sphere and Romantic authors see the special forum issue on Romanticism and its Publics in *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 33, no. 4, Winter 1994; Bennett, Andrew. *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity*. Cambridge UP, 2006 ; St Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge UP, 2004; Franta, Andrew. *Romanticism and the Rise of the Mass Public*. Cambridge UP, 2007.

fascinates and repels Coleridge's attempts to complete it, Coleridge's repeated revisions to the poem point to its unpublishability, which also directly threatens Coleridge's idea of a class of readers that have the ability to rule in and rule out possible readings of texts. More than simply a gothic tale, "Christabel" remains a partial object that has an affectual hold on Coleridge, which appears as a danger to himself and to the very idea of a community guided by the clerisy he later envisions in *On the Constitution*. This idea of the clerisy, or learned class, is already implicit in Coleridge's argument for the tempering power of "Religion" in *A Lay Sermon* from 1817.⁶⁰ Here, Coleridge understands religion in a broad sense as "the Poetry and Philosophy of all mankind; [it] unites in itself whatever is most excellent in either" (197). But this view of religion as the solution to difference is itself ironic. As Deborah Elise White points out, "irony constitutes the crisis of the clerisy" while at the same time, "and as it were ironically, clerisy represents itself as the resolution of that crisis" represented in the clerisy's supervision of the cultivation of the self (6). Coleridge's retreat can then be read as symptomatic of his growing anxiety over the poet's failure to critically engage with and direct the constitution of the self and the public sphere, because "Christabel" is as much about a neurotic obsession over an unconstitutable negativity as it is a repression of that negativity, confronting its readers with a poem that remains consumed with an anxiety regarding its own publishability. We

⁶⁰ *A Lay Sermon* was written in 1816, the same year that Coleridge published the short volume of "Christabel," "The Pains of Sleep," and "Kubla Khan." R. J. White, editor of the Bollingen Series of *Lay Sermons*, also states that *A Lay Sermon* contains the seeds of Coleridge's advocacy of 'the Clerisy,' or a learned class, which were to be nourished to fruition in *On the Constitution of Church and State, According to the Idea of Each* (1830)" (xliii). The set up of the *Lay Sermons* relies on the same class distinctions that are necessary to Coleridge's later development of the clerisy in *On the Constitution*, as "The Stateman's Manual" was meant for those in governance, the "Lay Sermons" themselves were intended for the higher and middle classes, and the never produced third sermon's intended audience was the lower classes.

can read Coleridge's decision, then, to finally publish the poem in 1816 not only as a historical fact, but through the lens of Lacanian anxiety, for, as Žižek argues, "it is not the lack of the object that gives rise to anxiety but, on the contrary, the danger of our getting too close to the object and thus losing the lack itself"; Coleridge's anxious revision and publication thus provides insight into the complex relation that anxiety has to desire, not simply because anxiety is related to reception but because "[a]nxiety is brought on by the disappearance of desire" (*Looking Awry* 8).

Through withholding a work from publication, the negative right to retreat not only disturbs the notion of work as a material object, but also deconstructs the insistence of public sphere theorists—such as Jürgen Habermas and Clifford Siskin—that literature must be interpreted as a work of writing under a discourse of the professionalization of the author. Even in its early conception, "Christabel" was defined by its own unpublishability. From 1798 to 1799, Coleridge drafted *Part the First* and *The Conclusion to Part the First* of the poem and revised it further by adding *Part the Second* in the summer of 1800, the poem being originally planned for the second volume of the 1800 version of the *Lyrical Ballads*. But "Christabel" was instead replaced with Wordsworth's "Michael," which Wordsworth quickly finished off in order to fill in the gap and foreclose the need to include "Christabel." The reason for the replacement is not known, but we do know that Wordsworth, in a letter to his publishers, Longman and Rees, stated, "upon mature deliberation I found that the Style of this Poem was so discordant from my own that it could not be printed along with my poems with any propriety" (qtd. in Gamer and Porter 31). After 1800, Coleridge circulated and performed versions of "Christabel" for friends and family, and, as Christopher Laxer notes, the poem

gained popularity among the British reading public due to the fact that Coleridge “controlled all access to his poem and could frame the perception of it in any way he liked” (169).⁶¹

However, while Laxer argues that Coleridge held on to “Christabel” because “publication itself shines a destructive and leveling sort of light” (176), one could argue that Coleridge began to lose control over “Christabel” well before its publication, at both the level of writing as well as at the level of the poem’s performance. Indeed, Walter Scott did not hear it first from Coleridge, but from Sarah Stoddart in 1802, showing that well before its publication the poem had already begun to circulate outside of Coleridge’s immediate control. Furthermore, the impression that “Christabel” left on Scott was seen not only in its metrical resonances in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, but also in Scott’s recitation of the poem, which, it turns out, was how Lord Byron had “first heard the poem . . . at his publisher Murray’s house on Albermarle street,” which in turn is the reason for Byron’s involvement in putting Coleridge in touch with Murray, who later published the poem in 1816 (Laxer 170). For this reason, Coleridge ends his preface to “Christabel” with a “doggerel version of two monkish Latin hexameters”:

‘Tis mine and it is likewise yours;
 But an if this will not do;
 Let it be mine, good friend For I
 Am the poorer of the two. (*Preface* 162)⁶²

⁶¹ As Tilar Mazzeo notes in *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period* (2007), when Coleridge first wrote the *Preface* to “Christabel” for its initial publication, he “feared his own work would appear derivative of precisely those poems and poetic identities that it had helped to shape” (28). Mazzeo continues, “Christabel” “had been widely circulated in manuscript among the literary coterie, and, as Coleridge knew, the poem had influenced the compositions of some of his more celebrated contemporaries, including Lord Byron and Walter Scott” (27).

By confidentially reciting “Christabel” or by having its multiple versions circulate in and amongst a coterie of friends, Coleridge was already aware that by leaving the poem (un)published his own control over the interpretation and performance of the poem was under threat. And yet, Coleridge did not publish “Christabel” until 1816, even though *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* was published in 1805, thus signalling something else was at play in his (in)decision to withhold the poem.

From one perspective, Coleridge’s decision to withhold “Christabel” from publication can be read as an attempt to preserve the relationship between author and text. But every time Coleridge returns to the text, it signals a further loss of authority. It is important to note that the decision to remove the poem from *Lyrical Ballads* arose out of a disagreement between Coleridge and Wordsworth, allowing us to read this decision to quarantine the poem not only as a means to preserve Wordsworth’s style, but also to preserve Coleridge’s own. While “Wordsworth’s exclusion” of the poem, as Jerome Christensen argues, “registers the threat that [“Christabel”] represented as *text* (and, in the character of Geraldine as performative theory of the rhetorical power of texts) to the *Lyrical Ballads* as book,” the non-publication of “Christabel” was also extended to Coleridge’s other publications, as he decided to not include the poem in his quarto volume containing “Fears in Solitude” (217). When “Christabel” was finally published alongside “Kubla Khan” and “The Pains of Sleep,” it is telling that Coleridge did not try to publish the poems as a book, but rather, as Stillingner has called it in *Romantic Complexity*, “a pamphlet” (163). As a medium of print that, because of the influence of Calvin and Luther ever since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was

⁶² All quotations of Coleridge’s poetry are from Nicholas Halmi’s edition of *Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose: A Norton Critical Edition* (2003), unless otherwise indicated.

overwhelmingly political, the pamphlet has been described, to quote Laurel Brake, as a profoundly dialogic medium because it is in “dialogue with other agents of print and speech,” and to quote Orwell in Brake’s essay, “it is written because there is something that one wants to say now . . . in essence it is always a protest” (3). But the immediacy of the pamphlet remains at odds with “Christabel”’s stunted and stifled dialogues, making the publication of the poem less about its being in dialogue with other agents of print and speech; rather, because the poem is more about what is unspeakable, what is immediately recognizable about its publication is the pressing desire to say now that which cannot be said.

The publication of “Christabel” is thus closer to the publication of a fragment or even a text that is meant to seem like a manuscript than to the publication of a book.⁶³ In this sense, its publication is similar to Donald Reiman’s definition of a confidential manuscript, which is “addressed to a specific group of individuals all of whom either are personally known to the writer or belong to some predefined group that the writer has reason to believe share communal values with him or her: an audience that will receive the communication in the spirit that corresponds to the purpose of its composition” (*The Study of Modern Manuscripts* 39). Yet determining with which audience Coleridge intended to share “Christabel” does not help us discover what kind of publication

⁶³ Laurel Brake argues that pamphlets were “normally unbound . . . [and] not always aimed at public, or *wide* circulation” (Brake 8; my emphasis). Perhaps it is for this reason that Stillinger thinks of “Christabel” as a pamphlet, except that Coleridge did have “Christabel” bound as if it were a book. When “Christabel” was finally published by John Murray, 1000 copies were published as an octavo book, and when the second edition was published, according to William St Clair, 500 copies were published on “special paper” (594). Sold at 4.5 shillings, the volume containing “Christabel” appears intended for a specific audience that could afford more expensive copies or valued specialized editions. In this sense, the volume containing “Christabel” could not be considered a pamphlet.

“Christabel” actually was. Indeed, as is shown in a letter Coleridge wrote to Sarah Stoddart in 1803, Coleridge’s intention to publish “Christabel” remained always in flux. Insofar as he considered publishing it, his plan was at least to never put it in a “guinea volume” for, as Karen Swann notes, Coleridge “[refused] Sotheby and the ten gentlemen [that accompanied him], [so that] Coleridge [stood] on his literary principles” and would rather have “Christabel” published on Ballad paper (397). Thus, on the one hand, if Coleridge had indeed intended the poem to be printed on ballad paper, his intentions for “Christabel” would be aligned with the publicity of print circulation and would be categorically different from intentions associated with the private circulation of manuscript culture because the ballad sheet was itself a form of popular literature. On the other hand, because the volume was finally printed on special paper in its second edition, it also troubles the Habermasian conception of the reinforcing nature of publication and a democratic public sphere, for Coleridge seems not to have intended “Christabel” for a specialized rather than wider public. But upon publication, Coleridge appears to have communicated something of which no one wanted any part if we follow its critical reception.⁶⁴ As he writes in *Biographia Literaria*, before publication, “[y]ear after year, and in societies of the most different kinds, I had been entreated to recite it”; but after publication, Coleridge wrote that he had “heard nothing but abuse, and this too in a spirit of bitterness” that was “at least as disproportionate to the pretensions of the poem” as could be (238-239). The negative reaction to the poem upon its publication, though, can

⁶⁴ The critical reception remains at odds with the actual sales of the “Christabel” volume, since it sold out of all three of its print editions in 1816, according to William St Clair (594). This, however, marks a gap between studies of transmission and studies of reception that only muddies rather than clarifies how to interpret the poem. For more on the discrepancies between reception and transmission, see Chapter 2 of William St Clair’s *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*.

be read as related to the fact that Coleridge publishes that which cannot be shared by a public, because he instead publishes his own partial object. Inasmuch as “Christabel” thematizes its own retreat from the smooth circulation of a Symbolic order by abjecting its title character at the end of the poem, it instead represents something that questions the very form in which the public sphere is constituted. By publishing “Christabel,” Coleridge effectively sends out a text that itself resists being received by its public because it represents the overinvestment of subjects in a Symbolic that establishes itself by including that which would destroy it.

In this sense, we must not only read against attempts at reducing “Christabel” to a pamphlet, we must also resist reducing it to the traditional category of the Romantic Fragment Poem, since both define the text according to their public reception. Romanticists have long approached “Christabel” as a fragment poem, since “Christabel”’s involuntary retreat from any generic or textual position also appears to fit Marjorie Levinson’s description of the English Romantic Fragment poem: “[t]he English Romantics practiced the fragment” because “they generated the form naïvely” (11). As opposed to the German fragment poem, which Levinson calls an intentional form, she argues that the “English fragment acquires its formal distinctiveness *ex post facto*, or after it enters the marketplace or tradition and is found to resemble a host of poems located in the same Romantic slot” (11). Such a publicly materialist view, however, reduces the fragment to its public reception and thus once again makes it an intentional construction on the part of the reader rather than the author. Instead, I argue that “Christabel” evokes the externally unintended, unanticipated, and traumatic sense of Malabou’s use of the term “effraction.” An effraction is a trauma that comes from the outside, which requires a

shift of focus away from the fragment as an internally unfinished project towards something more akin to the project's disintegration, which is radically more negative. An effraction, as Kristeva writes, "tends to fuse the layers of signifier/signified/referent into a network of traces, following the facilitation of the drives" so that rather than "constitute a positing," effraction dis-integrates even the possibility of positing itself, as it is an "explosion of the semiotic in the Symbolic"; effraction thus cancels position, as effraction is a "*transgression* of position, a reversed reactivation of the contradiction that instituted its very position" (*Revolution* 69). Malabou's idea of effraction, though, takes Kristeva's sense of the explosiveness of the effraction as something that cannot be internalised, since it is a wound or accident that is exogenous rather than endogenous. If "Christabel" is a fragment, it is an effracted fragment that also affects Coleridge as much as it is affected by its own disintegration.

"Christabel" can therefore be read as an effraction that both precedes the medium of print while transforming how we see the mediation of manuscript into print. It frustrates any Habermasian view of literature and the public sphere as mutually reinforcing forces by re-figuring the relation between the two into something more unstable and even antagonistic. As opposed to Coleridge's hope that he could himself, like the clerisy, become critic and interpreter for the public sphere, the revisions he makes to "Christabel" before and after publication reveal a sense of the public sphere that is under erasure. Because of the many minor revisions that worry away at the text of "Christabel," as well as the difficulty of positively identifying what kind of bibliographic entity it is, the choice of publishing the text instead blurs the boundary between the

published and the (un)published, or the public sphere and the (un)public sphere, leaving these open to an indeterminacy that ungrounds them both.

IV. (In)conclusions and Indifference

While the published version offers one interpretation of the life of the text, if we go back to the *avant-textes* of the poem, these can be read genetically so as to “reconstruct,” as Bellemin-Noël writes, “the configurations of unconscious desires that [allow] themselves to be seen” in “Christabel”; a genetic reading thus opens the possibility of reconstructing the “unconscious discourse [that] slips into conscious discourse” (*Le Texte et l’Avant-Texte* 6). While it has been noted that Coleridge rarely changed “Christabel” in significant ways after 1800, the one major revision comes in the form of *The Conclusion to Part the Second*, which was originally from a letter addressed to Robert Southey dated May 6th, 1801, and which was later transposed into the first published version in 1816. *The Conclusion to Part the Second* of “Christabel” is so strangely placed that it somehow appears out of place. Indeed, if we compare the 1816 version of the poem with its prior versions, there is no Conclusion of any kind, so that the *avant-texte* provides us with a more formally fragmentary and unstable poem; even the first of two transcripts by Sarah Stoddart ends with the words, “A fragment” (Stillinger, *Coleridge* 214).

In a poem so obscurely uncertain of itself, the *Conclusion to Part the Second* appears as yet another failed attempt made by Coleridge to close off the poem and make it ready for the public. And yet, this crossing-out or repression of the poem’s fragmentary

condition indicates an attempt at “a mechanism of production” (Bellemin-Noël *Le Texte et l’Avant-Texte* 6), because “[n]egation,” as Freud has noted, “is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed” (“Negation” 235–36). Because the transcripts leave the reader with Sir Leoline leading forth Geraldine, and because the speaker of *The Conclusion to Part the Second* appears unwilling to admit the psychological trauma that is central to the text yet exceeds the limits that *The Conclusion* attempts to impose, Christabel seems more abjected in the first published version of 1816 than in the various earlier versions. Rather than concluding the poem, then, *The Conclusion to Part the Second* disfigures the very possibility of completion, for it replaces the thematic of the mother and daughter relationship found in *The Conclusion to Part the First* by substituting the Name of the Father for the Wandering Mother. When Christabel confronts Sir Leoline, entreating him to send Geraldine away, we do not see a resolution, because the Baron is instead revolted by his own daughter, as the narrator explains: “[i]f thoughts, like these, had any share, / [t]hey only swell’d his rage and pain, / [a]nd did but work confusion there” (“Christabel” 625–27). Sir Leoline’s rage is fueled by Christabel’s perceived incongruity with the Symbolic order, which the father wishes to establish by means of exchanging Geraldine for Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine’s renewed friendship, a friendship long lost that left a hole in both men’s hearts “[l]ike cliffs which had been rent asunder” (“Christabel” 410). Since “never either found another / [t]o free the hollow heart from paining” (“Christabel” 407–08), Geraldine functions as a means of re-establishing discourse between the two men that would restore the homosocial bond with Lord Roland by means of the feminine signifier reduced to *objet petit a*. As Kristeva says of the father’s relation to the abject in *Powers of Horror* (1982),

“a representative of the paternal function takes the place of the good maternal object that is wanting,” resulting in discourse “being substituted for maternal care” (45). What *The Conclusion to Part the Second* effectively represses is not merely Christabel, but the conflict that is staged at the end of *Part the Second*, that is the conflict between speech and the unspeakable, the father’s discourse and the mother’s absence. Taken this way, the repression of Christabel’s inability to speak results in the text’s missed opportunity to engage with the retreating retreat, which then haunts the poem in Coleridge’s repeated attempts to revise the poem.

Arguably the narrator of *The Conclusion to Part the Second* is “Coleridge,” inserting himself to limit the poem by means of form and genre. While he does not formally declare his presence in *The Conclusion to Part the Second*, the addition of this unnamed speaker in *The Conclusion* to the first version published in 1816 appears markedly different from the rest of the poem because its concern lies in the register of the father as opposed to that of the daughter or the mother. This narrative voice is separate from the other narrative voices that are present in the poem, of which two more can be discerned. The first voice can be found in *Part the First* as well as *The Conclusion to Part the First*, while the second voice operates in *Part the Second*. All three narrative voices are characterized by a tendency to repress that which they cannot accept, as the first narrator appears at least willing to show the events of *Part the First* and *The Conclusion to Part the First* but cannot tell or understand how or why they occur, while the second narrator knows of Christabel’s experience yet favours the Baron’s discourse, which then leads to the third speaker of *The Conclusion to Part the Second* whose perspective turns to the experience of the father as a kind of substitute for the authority of the writer in an

attempt to close off the text. That *The Conclusion to Part the Second* also originates from a letter Coleridge wrote to Southey is yet another indication of Coleridge's authorial presence at the end of the poem. Much like the way *The Conclusion to Part the Second* focuses on the role of the father as a means of further shifting focus away from "Christabel"'s unfinished ending, the fact that Coleridge replaces the more descriptive narration of the first two voices with a theorization on the "words of unmeant bitterness" indicates a retreat away from the unconscious of the text by attempting to explain away the text's incongruity with itself ("Christabel" 652). For even in *The Conclusion to Part the First*, the narrator appears unwilling to tell but still knows of the "sorrow and shame" that had taken place between Christabel and Geraldine ("Christabel" 296). One can even recognize Coleridge's attempt to repress the poem in the *Biographia*, as he attempts to downplay the spectral presence of the unknown in "Christabel" by describing it rather as a "work [...] that pretended to be nothing more than a common Faery Tale" (238).

Added around the time that he wrote *Biographia*, *The Conclusion to Part the Second* also presents Coleridge explicitly attempting to impose the generic form of the fairy tale on "Christabel," describing her as

A little child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A *Fairy thing* with red round cheeks,
That always finds, and never seeks ("Christabel" 644–47; my emphasis)

But what is it that Christabel finds? For is she not seeking something at the beginning of the poem, thus signalling that she also lacks and desires? Where the first voice admits its confusion as to why Christabel is seeking something that "makes her in the wood so late, / [a] furlong from the castle gate," the second voice describes and even wishes to

intervene into the events of the poem (“Christabel” 25–26). Indeed, when Christabel asks her father to send Geraldine away, the voice repeats the entreaty as if Sir Leoline could hear it: “O by the pangs of her dear mother/ Think thou no evil of thy child!” (“Christabel” 613-614). The third voice, in contrast, seems to have a slightly sadistic relation to Christabel’s desolation, as can be gleaned from the assertion in *The Conclusion to Part the Second* that it is “tender too and pretty / [a]t each wild word to feel within / A sweet recoil of love and pity” (“Christabel” 672–74). But while the conflicting voices of the poem fail to recognize that Christabel seeks recognition—which she finds in the figure of Geraldine, though negatively—they, along with Geraldine as “[a] sight to dream of, not to tell!” and the Wandering Mother that only Geraldine seems capable of seeing and interacting with, are symptoms of Coleridge’s repression of the text itself as a partial object that the text cannot speak (“Christabel” 248). For the first narrator describes the traumatic encounter but does not seem to realize that it has taken place, whereas the second narrator seems to recognize that something traumatic occurs but misunderstands its effects, while the third voice attempts to sentimentalize the poem as a means of containing the trauma that comes through at the level of writing. None of these voices, then, are willing to give voice to the trauma of the text. However if, as Freud says of negation, trauma is recognized negatively, the addition of *The Conclusion to Part the Second*, which represses the ending of *Part the Second*, is itself a sign of Coleridge’s awareness of the text as a partial object. For when Christabel is abjected because she tries to reveal the trauma of the text, which is the exchange of Geraldine for Christabel as the object of the text’s desire, the repression itself of *The Conclusion to Part the Second* signals the illegitimacy of the text’s public transcript because it fails to listen to the obvious hidden transcript that Christabel cannot tell. The unspeakability of the traumatic

hidden transcript instead comes through, and “even contrives,” to quote J.C.C. Mays, “to become a metrical event” in the tale, so “that the true subject of the poem is only part-contained in words” (72). For instance, the em-dash that occurs when Christabel first hears the moan on the other side of the old oak tree, “It moan’d as near, as near can be, / But what it is, she cannot tell,—” (“Christabel” 41–42), represents a break in narration at line 42 that implies the unknown known of the text, that is, in the words of Joel Faflak, the “de-humanizing generation of affect that resists intellectual or textual containment” (*Romantic* 145).

Whereas Coleridge’s non-publication of “Christabel” could be read as a voluntary retreat, a decision to withhold the poem from the public as a means to contain its fragmentary condition, the publication of the poem presents the reading public with the involuntary retreat of Christabel as subject. This involuntary retreat is not the one often assumed by commentators who see the “Romantics” as withdrawing from the world of politics into nature. Christabel’s withdrawal instead signals a way of reading the retreat at a further remove from historicist narratives that read Romanticism as an intentional retreat away from the public, because “Christabel” as text and Christabel as character both present specifically involuntary examples of the retreat that do not conform to preconceived Romantic shelters in the natural or the transcendental, thus forcing us to re-think these issues more generally. The initial and most straightforward retreat of non-publication still implies a will to power, a hope for completion, and for an end to the infinite project of writing that is implied in Coleridge’s *Preface* to the poem. There, he writes,

But as, in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than with the liveliness of a vision; I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year. (*Preface* 161)

Yet it is telling that by the last version that Coleridge revised, which was printed in 1834, this sentence was not included in the text's *Preface*. Instead, what we are left with is Christabel's involuntary withdrawal from language "in the touch" of Geraldine's "bosom" that becomes the "lord of [Christabel's] utterance" ("Christabel" 255–56).

This scene, with its reference to a relationship of lordship and bondage between Geraldine and Christabel, can be read against Hegel's description of the master-slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). There, Hegel argues that once the difference between master and slave is achieved, the dialectic gives way to a new moment when "servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; [because] as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed by independent consciousness" (117). It is then that the difference is negated once again, resulting in a negation of the previous negation, which is meant to provide the grounds for liberated consciousness. Christabel's withdrawal, on the contrary, appears to show that the involuntariness of that retreat presents itself as an effraction that results in disaffection, neutrality, and the inevitability of abjection. Instead of the liberation of consciousness Hegel describes, Christabel is not liberated but is forced to involuntarily retreat into an imposed abjectivity, becoming the unrecognized other side of the text's partial object that is Geraldine. Geraldine is not present for Christabel as a whole object, because she is rather a partial object that is only present in bits and pieces. Christabel's encounter with Geraldine, therefore, cannot even be a total experience since

it instead eliminates and voids recognition as evidenced by the effect of Geraldine's "serpent's eye" upon Christabel.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
 She nothing sees—no sight but one!
 The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
 I know not how, in fearful wise,
 So deeply had she drunken in
 That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
 That all her features were resign'd
 To this sole image in her mind:
 And passively did imitate
 That look of dull and treacherous hate. ("Christabel" 585–94)

Rather than interiorizing Geraldine as other in the way that Hegel expects, Christabel internalizes Geraldine's absence, and hence recognizes that Geraldine is a partial object.

To quote Žižek on the most famous partial object:

[T]he object *a* is always by *definition*, perceived in a distorted way, because outside this distortion, "in itself," *it does not exist*, since it is *nothing but* the embodiment, the materialization of this very distortion, of this surplus of confusion and perturbation introduced by desire into so-called "object-reality."
 (Žižek *Looking Awry* 12)

It is for this reason that the narrator shies away from telling the reader what Christabel herself sees, because Geraldine must never be looked at directly; for if seen, Geraldine could no longer be the "lord of thy utterance" and the mechanism by which language continues to circulate and thus perpetuate the Symbolic order of the text ("Christabel" 256). Christabel herself recognizes that Geraldine's exchange establishes the public sphere by means of a distortion of reality, which she rejects, and it is for this reason that she asks her father to send Geraldine away. However, the distortion has already taken

place. By the end of the poem, Geraldine has made Christabel into the unrecognizable other side of the partial object in order to present herself to Sir Leoline as a whole object.

V. The Textual Object

“Geraldine,” as Coleridge told Henry Nelson Coleridge in July of 1833, “so far as she goes, is successful”; but the success or achievement that is Geraldine stands in contrast with Coleridge’s failure to complete the three parts of the poem yet to come.

[T]he reason for my not finishing Christabel is not that I don’t know how to do it; for I have, as I always had, the whole plan entire from beginning to end in my mind; but I fear I could not carry on with equal success the execution of the Idea—the most difficult, I think, that can be attempted to Romantic Poetry—I mean witchery by daylight. (*Table Talk* 1: 409–10)

The missing parts to “Christabel” have become a kind of trope at the level of composition for reading the poem as a failure, partly due to Coleridge’s habit of constantly telling people that he had “the whole present to [his] mind, with the wholeness, no less than with the liveliness of a vision” (*Preface* 161). But the publication of “Christabel” alongside “Kubla Khan” and “The Pains of Sleep” indicates a thematic ambivalence with respect to making known what is unknown about the partial object that these texts seem to communicate at the level of affect. For instance, the affect in “Kubla Khan” is nostalgic, as the narrative voice asks itself if it is possible to accomplish its desire: “[c]ould I revive within me / [h]er symphony and song / . . . I would build that dome in air” (“Kubla Khan” 42–43, 46). In “The Pains of Sleep,” what is communicated is the affective anxiety that comes from desiring to withdraw from “[d]eeds to be hid which were not hid, / [w]hich all confused I could not know, / [w]hether I suffered, or I did” (“The Pains of Sleep” 27–

29). Until the volume's first printing, one could read the retreat from publication as a desire to withhold—to be with and to hold on to—these poems, both out of a desire for completion and because of Coleridge's fascination with the poems, for Coleridge felt compelled to recite "Christabel" "in societies of the most different kinds" (*Biographia* 238). And yet the act of publication, if we take the verb "to publish" literally in its meaning "to make something public" or "to make something known," can be read as Coleridge's attempt to retreat from his relation to the poem, as he literally gives over "Christabel" to the public.⁶⁵

If the figure of Geraldine is the success of "Christabel," perhaps the failure to write the next three parts is due to the effect of representing "witchery by daylight," which results in a text that is mesmerized by but can never actually speak its desire. As *objet petit a*, Geraldine stands for the absolute negativity of the Real, but, by the same token, remains a part of the text so as to generate desire in all its manifestations. In this sense, Geraldine guarantees the libidinal economy of the text, but one that, as Kristeva argues, "maintains the Symbolic order through exclusion" (Kristeva *Powers* 10).

Coleridge's pleasure in reading aloud can then be read against the grain as the pleasurable pain of *jouissance*, just as he discusses the possibility of pleasurable pain at the end of the poem:

And pleasures flow in so thick and fast

⁶⁵ This would be in line with Peter Melville's approach to reading Coleridge's poetics "through the fort-da mechanism" (107). Whereas Melville does not speak directly about the fort-da mechanism with regard to publication, he sees Coleridge's "Christabel" as a text that "theorize[s] the vengeance and acts of master implicit in every attempt to represent and control the elements of the hospitable encounter," where "Coleridge's work finds itself perpetually deferring or postponing its reflections on the hospitable, and in doing so, theorizes its own inability to master the [fort-da] game itself" (106).

Upon his heart, that he at last
 Must needs express his love's excess
 With words of unmeant bitterness.

.....

Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
 At each wild word to feel within

A sweet recoil of love and pity. ("Christabel" 650–53, 668–70)

Coleridge even remarks in the *Biographia Literaria* concerning the experience of the “enkindling Reciter,” that it “is equally possible” that “a reader left to himself should sink below the poem, as that the poem left to itself should flag beneath the feelings of the reader” (*Biographia* 239–40). As Coleridge was well aware, it was possible for a reader to be enlivened by the performance of a poem, but the affective potential of a poem may also be too overwhelming in solitude; as such, Coleridge’s decision to publish comes from the need for the distance of publication, since by relinquishing the text to a public both preserves the desire for completion by retreating from the poem itself but also prevents the subject from fully crossing the border that separates neurosis from psychosis.

However, the act of publication does not rid Coleridge of his relation to “Christabel,” as is shown in the revisions that he makes in the versions after publication, specifically those found in the five marked copies of the 1816 version, and furthermore from the eleventh version to the eighteenth version. For none of these additions clarify the text. Significantly, the prose glosses, like those added to “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” further obscure and contribute to the fantastic elements of the text: for instance, the annotations that Coleridge made to lines 249–55 in 1824, “As soon as the wicked Bosom, with the mysterious sign of Evil stamped thereby, touches Christabel, she is deprived of the power of disclosing what has occurred” (169). Indeed, Coleridge’s

lifelong revision of the poem does not clarify the text but exemplifies a relationship to the text that is emblematic of what Tilottama Rajan calls the “textual abject” (“Mary Shelley’s” 45). In her article, “Mary Shelley’s ‘Mathilda’: Melancholy and the Political Economy of Romanticism” (1994), Rajan distinguishes the “textual abject” from Kristeva’s concept of the abject, thereby transposing it into a means of reading Romanticism’s tendency to re-cover, “both in the sense of redeeming and of covering up, the abject by absorbing its affect into narrative and explanatory structures” (*Powers* 45). The textual abject, as opposed to the Kristevan abject, is incorporated instead of being cast out, because the relation becomes internal to the subject in contrast to the way that Christabel at the end of the poem is left abjected from the text’s libidinal economy. Indeed, the text itself retreats from the abject by casting it out in so many unreadable moments and repeats Coleridge’s lifelong return and rejection of the poem, whose traumatic core he cannot confront except by retreating from the facticity of Christabel’s final abjection.

While the primary scene of unreadability wherein Geraldine reveals herself to Christabel has been “read” many times as a lesbian fantasy or as a demonic enchantment which threatens Christabel’s purity and innocence, these prurient readings arguably remain under the same fantasy that Coleridge himself perpetuates by re-turning and re-treating the text so as to re-cover a relationship to the Symbolic order. To quote Žižek once again, such readings reproduce “Christabel”’s textual unconscious in the same way that Coleridge spares himself “the encounter with the real of [his] desire” (*Looking Awry* 60). Prior to publication, Coleridge never changed the scene, but neither could he narrate Geraldine’s body. Instead, he leaves us with a fragmented body, a partial object, as the

narrator says: “Behold! her bosom and half her side—” but somehow this body should be “full in view” (“Christabel” 246, 245). Another em-dash gives rise to the narrator’s decision to cover over the encounter, so that this is a “sight to dream of, not to tell” although one that “is to sleep by Christabel” (“Christabel” 247–48).

It is here, after the publication of the 1816 version, that Coleridge makes one of the most substantive changes to the poem, as is shown in marginal and interlinear annotations in copies of the 1816 version of the text, replacing the line “And she is to sleep by Christabel” with “O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!” (Stillinger *Coleridge* 85). In later additions,⁶⁶ the poem would add six lines after “shield sweet Christabel!”

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
 Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
 Deep from within she seems half-way
 To lift some weight with sick assay,
 And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
 Then suddenly as one defied
 Collects herself in scorn and pride,
 And lay down by the maiden’s side!— (“Christabel” [1834] qtd. in
 Stillinger *Coleridge* 255–62)

The most common interpretation of these changes is that they result from a public outcry against the poem; however, if we read the published text against its *avant-texte*, the dramatic interruption of the narrator, “shield sweet Christabel,” covers over the indifference present in the punctuation of earlier versions in the lines such as “And she is to sleep by Christabel,” as well as “And lay down by the maiden’s side” (“Christabel”

⁶⁶ Specifically, CoS 60, CoS 61, CoS 62, CoS 63, CoS 64. See Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability* 79.

248, 250). In contrast to the earlier versions, the later versions intimate a much more dramatic and anxious narration, as the lines are cut vertically with multiple exclamation marks, which constantly interrupt the text. However, the exclamation marks interrupt in a way that is different from the horizontal em-dashes, which present moments of unspeakable silence, in much the same way that Derrida describes the secret as that which “is without content, without a content separable from its performative experience” (“Passions” 24). Reading the versions genetically from the earliest versions before publication to those after publication allows readers to see the changes Coleridge makes to the passage not merely with a view to the public’s reception of the poem. Rather, the revisions themselves stand in for Coleridge’s failed attempts at solving the problem that arises from keeping the encounter of Christabel and Geraldine hidden from the public transcript of the text. Coleridge is prevented from disclosing this moment to the economy of the text, since this economy would be ungrounded by its exposure to the bedroom scene’s negativity. In this sense, “Christabel” itself retreats from that thing which cannot be re-invested in the economy: the secret of the partial object as absolute reserve.

This absolute reserve remains a “sight to dream of, not to tell” and thus arrests Coleridge in such a way that he spends most of the second part of the poem trying to demystify the foreclosed disclosure. Unlike Christabel and Bard Bracy, where the former can see but cannot tell while the latter can tell but cannot see Geraldine for what she is not, Sir Leoline sees “this Geraldine,” and deems “her sure a thing divine” (“Christabel” 463–64). For the Baron, Geraldine becomes the empty signifier upon which he can re-constitute a relation to the public sphere with Lord Roland, thus allowing him to forget the loss of his wife that has made his life “a world of death” (“Christabel” 321). Whereas

Coleridge, in *On the Constitution of Church and State*, outlines the balance of the State by means of three estates, specifically the Barons (the land-owners), the merchants (the distributive class), and the clerics (those in charge of the cultivation of civilization), “Christabel” offers a narrative that shows the limits of reason in the prose text, revealing a much more affective and repressive imbalance than what is foregrounded in the later political text. In *On the Constitution*, Coleridge argues that the state relies on the “balance of the two great correspondent, at once supporting and counterpoising, interests of the state, its *permanence* and its *progression*” (*On the Constitution* 21; my emphasis). For Coleridge, this harmony plays itself out between the two houses, “the first consisting wholly of barons or landholders, permanent and hereditary senators” and “the second comprising the merchants, the manufacturers, free artizans, and the distributive class” (*On the Constitution* 21, 33). The copula that ties these two together, according to Coleridge, is the clerisy. The national clerisy, according to Coleridge, should be made up of people who are to “remain at the fountain heads of the humanities, in cultivating and enlarging the knowledge they already possessed, and in watching over the interests of physical and moral science” should direct their community in matters related to the cultivation of the self and the public’s interest (*On the Constitution* 34).

If we use Coleridge’s schemata from *On the Constitution of Church and State* as an optic for the characters of “Christabel,” we can see corresponding figures of permanence and clerisy in Sir Leoline and Bard Bracy respectively. Indeed, Bard Bracy’s position in the text is to interpret in the same way Coleridge describes the objectives of the clerisy: “to preserve the stores, to guard the treasures, of past civilization, and thus to bind the present with the past; to perfect and add to the same, and thus to connect the

present with the future” (*On the Constitution* 34). In contrast with the “custom and law” that Sir Leoline represents, Bard Bracy’s interpretation of his dreams positions him as a proto-analyst of the internal state of his psyche, but at the same time, seems to extend towards the external as well, as is evident in his desire to delay Sir Leoline’s order to seek out Lord Roland so as to go out and investigate the woods (“Christabel” 326). As Bracy states, “[t]his day my journey should not be,” because the dream is a sign that there is something wrong with the world (“Christabel” 528).

So strange a dream hath come to me;
That I vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest,
Warn’d by a vision in my rest! (“Christabel” 529–32)

When Sir Leoline only “Half-listening hear[s]” Bard Bracy’s dream interpretation, his indifference to the Bard’s request signals the failure of the role of the clerisy as analyst of the mind and of the world (“Christabel” 553). In fact, Sir Leoline exposes the clerisy’s failure even further by mistaking Bracy’s interpretation to mean that Geraldine was “Lord Roland’s beauteous dove,” and vows “[w]ith arms more strong than harp or song, / [t]hy sire and I will crush the snake,” the snake being his actual daughter, Christabel (“Christabel” 557–59). As opposed to the ideal of the clerisy Coleridge sets out in *On the Constitution*, “[t]he bard obey[s]” the orders of Sir Leoline, and thus suppresses the role that balances the order of permanence with that of progress, which leaves the world out of balance and Christabel alone and silent at the end of the text (“Christabel” 640).

That Bracy is able to interpret the dream but fails to intervene in the world demonstrates that the clerisy and the poet alike assume a politics of the future like that of the narrator of the poem: “That saints will aid if men will call: / For the blue sky bends

over all” (“Christabel” 318–19). This is also the cleric’s limitation, as it must restrict itself to a therapeutic rather than psychoanalytic register, thus preventing the cleric from truly understanding the negativity at the heart of the poem itself. For if the cleric’s idea of the future is contained within the prayer mentioned above, it is a future that does not inspire hope, but rather one that echoes out into a poem characterized by what Malabou calls the theatre of absence, “the privileged expression of affective impoverishment and destructive metamorphosis” (“Retreat” 41). The invocation of the social at the end of “Christabel” reveals, on the one hand, an incapacity to move beyond the fantasy that relies on a future-oriented constitution of the public sphere, and, on the other hand, it shows that this attachment requires a sacrifice to the future that Christabel represents as the abject that must be excluded from the public’s future Symbolic. Like the prayer that echoes out into nowhere, Coleridge’s three parts yet to come fail to materialize because “Christabel” returns Coleridge back to the point of abjection and provokes his return to the unspeakable moment at the end of *Part the First* instead of proceeding further into the fantasy of the social. This unspeakable moment, the trauma from which Christabel withdraws, enacts Coleridge’s desire to go back into the past of the text rather than keep moving forward, for indifference destroys the possibility of fantasy, as a result of the deep effraction, the wound from which Christabel suffers but cannot communicate. It is perhaps, for this reason, that so many readers return to “Christabel” because, in the words of Bard Bracy, it “would not pass away—” and “seems to live upon [the] eye” (“Christabel” 546–47).

John Clare's Dissatisfaction

I. Who is John Clare?

It may appear that one of the purposes in returning to the (un)published is to revive those texts that have been considered as merely minor in the canon of British Romanticism. Indeed, John Clare has been included only as a minor poet within the Romantic canon for a long time. As David Simpson points out, Clare's minorness has made it difficult to fit him into the 'old' Romanticism of M. H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* as well as the 'new' Romanticism characterized by such works as Marilyn Butler's *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*; Clare is even "completely absent from Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology*," Simpson writes, "which has received even more attention than Butler's book for its claim to set right the theorization of the Romantic period and its legacies" ("Is the Academy Ready for John Clare" 70).⁶⁷ Many have returned to Clare, especially since ecocriticism's championing of his works. But we must also return to Clare's manuscripts, because Clare's work, as Matthew Rowlinson argues, is not "organized by the topics of mediation and totalization that dominate nineteenth-century lyric," since Clare "is historically determined by the uniquely inassimilable quality of his work to the medium of commodified print in which lyric was undergoing totalization when he wrote" (67). Indeed, Clare wrote thousands of poems that went mostly unpublished and unedited in his lifetime.⁶⁸ Clare's persistent exclusion

⁶⁷ Indeed, McGann's anthology, *Romantic Period Verse*, has only one poem by Clare "To Mary," which completely eliminates Clare from even the published record of Romantic verse. Only recently has Clare been included in Norton, Broadview, or Longman anthologies.

⁶⁸ There is no exact count for Clare's unpublished works. However, of the five volumes of Clare's *Poems of the Middle Period*, volumes 2 through 5 are almost completely made

as a minor poet from both Romantic and Victorian canons thus makes him a prime subject to re-read minorness not as a substantial judgment of his work, but rather in the way that Deleuze and Guattari have described Kafka's works as a "minor literature" (16). "A minor literature," write Deleuze and Guattari, "doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language," and has "a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (16).

But before moving on to an analysis of Clare's work, a brief biographical sketch of Clare's life is necessary, as it helps to outline his singularly minor position. John Clare was born in 1793 to Parker Clare and Ann Stimson, who were farm labourers in the village of Helpston. While his mother could not read, his father both worked the land and read in his spare time, passing on to Clare the joy of reading broadsheets, ballads, and tall tales. Clare was not necessarily a self-taught genius as some would like to believe, since he was relatively well-educated. But this education does not change the fact that Clare's poetry maintains esoteric or misspelled words—which I have chosen not to edit in this chapter—that were either edited by his publishers or sometimes presented unedited in his published works. While little is known about Clare during his childhood, he became somewhat of a *cause célèbre* after the publication of his first book of poetry in 1820, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*. Clare brought out only four books of poetry in his lifetime, three of which he published while in Helpston, where he lived until he moved to Northborough in 1832. After the publication of *The Village Minstrel* in 1821, Clare had difficulty publishing his next book, *The Shephard's Calendar with Village Stories and Other Poems* (1827) because of complications related to his physical and

up of Clare's works that remained in manuscript, and the two volumes of Clare's *Later Poems* were also nearly all unpublished.

mental health that interrupted his ability to complete these longer book-projects. By the time that he finally published *The Rural Muse* in 1835, a book of poetry that reflected a completely different Clare from the one London reading circles celebrated in the 1820s, Clare had been largely forgotten. Traditionally, Clare's output is divided into three stages: the early years between 1820 and 1830 when his poetry was celebrated as the work of a rustic genius; the middle period between 1830 and 1837 when Clare fell out of favour with the publishing industry, fell ill, and was then moved from Helpston to Northborough in 1832 by a group of friends to improve his failing health; and the later years, generally referred to as the asylum years, when Clare was transferred from his home in Northborough to High Beach asylum in 1837, from where he escaped in 1841, which led to Clare finally being committed to Northampton General from 1841 until his death on May 20, 1864.

During the course of his life, Clare stood witness to the disastrous effects of land enclosure, which submitted him and the people of his village to more exacting and circumscribed agricultural hard labour. Much of his poetry details the lives of these labourers and also depicts the sense of loss that results from the enclosure of common land, so that his descriptive poetry, much like Wordsworth's early *Descriptive Sketches*, is tied to a specific socio-historical transformation of labour and landscape, especially in the poetry of the early years. This makes Clare's poetry into a kind of final reflection on the effects of Britain's Land Enclosure Acts, of which The Act for the Enclosure of Helpston took place in 1809. And yet, at the same time, to read Clare's works strictly through the lens of material history misses out on his importance to questions related to the essence of personhood, as his poetry represents an existence that is informed more by

negativity than positivity, since it remains dissatisfied with occupying any one position. For rather than include Clare within the genre of M. H. Abrams's description of the Greater Romantic Lyric as that which "return[s]" the poet "to a sense of community after isolation" or a "renewal of life and emotional vigor after apathy and a deathlike torpor," and rather than include him in the genre of locodescriptive poetry, Clare's poetics of the middle period and later years estranges literature from the place in which it was produced by replacing the lyric "I" of Romanticism with a neutral "third person" or a hollowed-out first-person that relates to everyone and no one at the same time (37). While in the second chapter we explored Wordsworth's failure to stop the sliding of metaphor against the displacements of metonymy, this chapter explores the implications of Clare's intentional shift away from the "I" function's metaphoric substitution in favour of a radically metonymic representation of person and place. Clare's poetry represents the other side of the same coin that Wordsworth occupies, since metonymy also loses out to metaphor because both are caught within an endless cycle of repetition that sees one give up its place to the other. By tracing Clare's experimental poetry from his middle period whilst living in Northborough (1832-1839) to his later asylum poetry (1839-1864), this chapter analyzes how Clare's failure to ground the poet in any person, either first or third, exposes itself to the kind of textual instability that the writers in the three previous chapters resist. For while Schelling's God and Wordsworth and Coleridge's authorial voices draw back into a collapsed sense of self through melancholic incorporation or result in the abjection of an Other, Clare actually transgresses the boundary between personal and impersonal and thus truly ungrounds any notion of a stable subject, signalling a different kind of unpublishability. But whereas the Northborough period of Clare's poetry experiments with the third person by fantasizing an impersonal perspective

as an ungrounded ground, the later period of asylum poetry sees both the personal and the impersonal as positions that are impossible to inhabit. Instead of seeking out the “I” as the end to metonymic displacement as Wordsworth does, Clare instead asks: why is it that I have to have an “I” in the first place?

Understood this way, Clare’s own poetic trajectory results in his exclusion from the nineteenth-century canon, contradicting traditional interpretations of the greater Romantic lyric “I” such as those propounded by M. H. Abrams and criticized by McGann as “Romantic Ideology” and Mellor in terms of a “masculine Romanticism.” While the lyric “I” exposes itself to an instability that threatens to destroy its integrity, the lyric “I” also tends to represent an interiority that meditates upon an external scene or object in order to be transformed by the restorative power of the imagination in the same way that Wordsworth attempts to represent the spots of time as a renovating virtue in the 1805 and 1850 versions of *The Prelude*. Such a representation of interiority does not necessarily question the “I” of personhood as it further substantializes it as a category that grounds identity, even if, at times of uncertainty, such an identity must resort to metaphor to defend against the sliding of metonymy. But drawing on Roberto Esposito’s biopolitical analysis of the history of personhood in *Bios* (2008) and *The Third Person* (2012), this chapter uses both biopolitics and psychoanalysis to show how Clare’s (un)published poems approach the person as a question that is inevitably and fundamentally troubling. Rather than accept, to paraphrase Esposito, the “assumed superiority of the personal over the impersonal,” Clare recognizes that personhood leaves the subject indebted to a distorted reality in which, as Esposito argues of biopolitical personhood, “only a life that can provide the credentials of personhood can be considered sacred or qualitatively

significant” (*The Third Person 2*). According to Esposito, personhood transforms at the turn of the nineteenth century into more than just a legal concept, because it attempts to fill in the gap between the human being as subject (i.e. personal, active, conscious) and the human being as object (i.e. impersonal, passive, unconscious). As Esposito explains, “to be the owner of a body, the person cannot be coextensive with it; in fact, the person is specifically defined by the distance that separates it from the body” (*Third Person 13*). Personhood, then, offers up an abstraction as the solution to the feeling of being out of place, so that what Esposito calls a *dispositif* of the person instead only supplements the experience of the subject as lack in a Lacanian sense. It is for this reason that Lacanian psychoanalysis is so mistrustful of the ego or the “I” in the first place, because the ego, like the person, is the product of a *dispositif* (i.e. a Symbolic order) that does not merely start and end with the production of the person. Rather, as Esposito argues, such *dispositifs* continue to make distinctions so that where “not all human beings are persons, neither are all persons human beings”; the dispositive of the person thus results in a “gradation” or “degradation” from “full person to semi-person, non-person, and anti-person, represented respectively by the adult, the infant or disabled adult, the incurably ill and the insane” where, as Esposito concludes, in “each level of personalization—or depersonalization—there corresponds a different right to determination, and even preservation of one’s life” (*Third Person 13*).

Clare was himself acutely aware of the degradations that were produced out of the category of the person, for he was one among many that found themselves out of place—whether it be socio-politically, biologically, or existentially displaced—in the course of the nineteenth century. After having moved from the country to the city for work in

London's factories or, as in the case of Clare, after being completely uprooted from their homes as a result of the final enclosures of common land brought on by Britain's Land Enclosure Acts between 1760 and 1832, a widespread feeling of displacement was taking place. Clare's poetry, then, does not take the lyric "I" for granted. As we will see in his poem that has come to be known as "The Lament of Swordy Well," Clare deconstructs the superiority of personhood by means of *prosopopoeia*. For whereas the "I" function becomes the main Romantic mode of poetic address, reinforcing a dialogical regime of interlocation between subject and Other, Clare recognizes that to "experience personhood fully," to paraphrase Esposito again, also "means to keep, or push, other living individuals to the edge of thingness" (*Third Person* 10). To situate the "I" in place or to enjoy its body as whole or one, the "I" must enjoy the Other's body as partial to supplement its own experience of itself as a fault, hole, or loss in existence.

This position stands in contrast with recent ecocritical readings that see Clare positing a stable "I" that preserves its place by means of loco-description. This chapter instead reads how Clare involuntarily retreats from any sort of positivization that would enclose him. Ever since John Barrell's seminal work on Clare in *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place*, such 'green' readings of Clare have also attached to him a stable subjectivity from which to critique the expansion of agrilogistic⁶⁹ capitalism. Place for

⁶⁹ Timothy Morton develops the concept of agrilogistics in his book *Dark Ecology: A Logic for Future Coexistence*. Morton writes, "[t]he agrilogistic algorithm consists of numerous subroutines: eliminate contradiction and anomaly, establish boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, maximize existence over and above any quality of existing. Now that the logistics covers most of Earth's surface, even we vectors of agrilogistics, Mesopotamians by default, can see its effects as in a polymerase chain reaction: they are catastrophically successful, wiping out lifeforms with great efficiency" (46-47). Morton lists three "philosophical axioms" that "provide the logic structure of

Clare, according to Barrell, “is a good deal more than a landscape: a place is a manifold of images, not of visual images only, and not only of topography but of the people and living things that work and live in the place” (172). As opposed to the growing view of space through a consumerist and touristic lens during the nineteenth century, ecocritical scholars emphasise that Clare’s published poetry represents the local place as a progressive solution to the devastating industrialization that went hand in hand with Britain’s Land Enclosure Acts. As a result, Clare scholarship traditionally focuses on his published writing before he moved from Helpston to Northborough in 1832.

This focus on Clare’s published poetry is also the result of Barrell’s influential reading of Clare, which ties Clare’s best writing to Helpston. Clare scholarship, in general, thus relegates over thirty years of the poet’s life and writing to oblivion,⁷⁰ something that Clare dreaded throughout his life, as is especially evident in his asylum writings. Because “Clare was successful in expressing his own sense of place,” Barrell argues, “he was writing himself out of the main stream of European literature” (188). Such a reading of Clare’s personal attachment to Helpston, however, misses the most important development in his poetics that transpires after he falls out of favour with the publishing industry.⁷¹ Clare’s poetry, especially of the Northborough period between

agrilogistics: (1) The Law of Noncontradiction is inviolable[;] (2) Existing means being constantly present[;] (3) Existing is always better than any quality of existing” (47).

⁷⁰ This is generally true except for treatments of Clare’s later poem known as “I AM.”

⁷¹ Clare’s earlier poetry about Helpston, while initially popular, suffered the same fate as most verse in the publishing industry between 1820 and 1835. As Stephanie Kuduk-Weiner points out, “[o]ver the course of the 1820s, competition made a difficult situation more difficult for poets and publishers of poetry by radically shrinking the market for new verse” (Kuduk-Weiner “On the Publication of John Clare’s *The Rural Muse*, 1835”). Contrary to Barrell’s claim that Clare’s style excluded him from European literature, Clare’s marginalization had already begun because of the coming-into-vogue of prose, which, in turn, resulted in verse’s less profitable status in the publishing industry.

1832 and 1837, uses parataxis and metonymy to re-envision place as a contingent assemblage of contiguous parts—birds, rodents, ploughmen, churches, and even poets—whose partialness is a condition of possibility for yet other living beings as perceived within an impersonal element. Rather than consider place locally and personally, an impersonal element is that which resists all personhood. Like Blanchot’s concept of the neutral (*le neutre*), the impersonal does not provide knowledge but instead, as Blanchot writes, “reminds us that we must . . . respond to the depth of strangeness, of inertia, of irregularity and idleness [*désœuvrement*] to which we open [ourselves] when we seek to receive the speech of the Outside” (*Infinite Conversation* 72). If Clare did write himself out of the canon, then, it was because his poetry illustrates that taking on the position of the subject is itself disastrous, since it cancels any responsiveness to what is outside of language or personhood. Instead, Clare concludes that subjectivity is lack, a position that one cannot decide for oneself because one is always already involuntarily excluded from it.

I therefore follow Erica McAlpine’s insight that for Clare it is “the poem, rather than nature, [that] is the place we occupy—it becomes the world” (98). Where I differ from McAlpine’s reading, though, is in her view of Clare’s specific relation to poetics, since McAlpine does not argue that Clare’s poetics reveals the world to be unstable; rather, the “poem [only] proves the instability of the perceiver,” so that McAlpine also substitutes Clare for the poetic voice (98).⁷² McAlpine’s position is only tenable if we

⁷² In “Keeping Nature at Bay: John Clare’s Poetry of Wonder,” McAlpine adapts D. W. Winnicott’s concept of the transitional space between the me and the not-me to read Clare’s poetry of the Northborough period. While she argues that it is not nature but the poem that we inhabit, she conflates the poem’s transitional perspective with a perspective that Clare actually occupies. Reading the poem “The shepherds almost wonder where

stay with some of the Northborough sonnets and do not read through to Clare's later poetry, which, I argue, is connected with his experimentation with metonymic and paratactic representation. What the relation between Clare's middle period and asylum poetry makes clear is that his (un)published poetry disintegrates rather than grounds the personalist poetics that readers have attached to him. Instead of being an advocate for a publicly materialist view that the rights afforded by the position of personhood can be expanded to all things, Clare opens up the crisis that the concept of the person initiates.

This is because Clare fully crosses the boundary that separates the personal from the impersonal in his (un)published texts, so that his "final turn inward," as Marta Werner notes of Clare's asylum writing, "is accompanied by a turn towards the outside" ("Reportless" 74). While Clare's earlier poetry was galvanized by his personal relationship to Helpston and by his knowledge of its local topography, plants, and animals, he still attempts to apply the same methods of observation in his middle period in Northborough but ends up with different results. For the move to Northborough alienates him in such a way that, rather than creating a sense of place, Clare observes an impersonal neutrality that becomes the index of not only his alienation from the world but of the self from its own identity. As a result of the disorientation Clare experienced in the move to Northborough, his *Northborough Sonnets*⁷³ represent a transformation in his

they dwell," McAlpine argues that it is Clare that "haphazardly directs his eyes now at the shepherd, now at the maid, now at the dog, now at the maid again, and so forth" (98).

⁷³ *The Northborough Sonnets*, edited by Eric Robinson, David Powell and P. M. S. Dawson are a fabricated short-term for Clare's own experiments with the sonnet form. Clare's adoption of the sonnet form was partly due to pressure from the periodical press to publish modes of poetry that readers found most attractive. However, as Stephanie Kuduk-Weiner notes, "[t]o whatever extent he was responding to market pressures in composing these poems, he was also experimenting with the form in ways that were central to his work during these years. 'A Spring Morning,' for example, one of the

style that still represents people as well as life more generally, but in such a way that there is less room for how these are shaped by the “I” as the main subject of poetry.

This alienation produces a world that is best described as “impersonal,” for it dispossesses, displaces, and dissolves place into space. Drawing on work that has previously been done on the “impersonal” in literary scholarship, especially the work of Sharon Cameron and Branka Arsić, I argue that the aesthetics of impersonality are also tied to Roberto Esposito’s biopolitical critique of the person. This chapter thus reads the impersonal as a concept that lies somewhere in between literature and politics. For instance, in Sara Guyer’s *Reading with John Clare* (2015), she acknowledges the impersonal’s connection with these two fields insofar as her reading of Clare posits a de Manian understanding of literature as the end-goal of the biopolitical subject. In Guyer’s words, “it is poetry that achieves—and names—the kind of figure that Agamben anticipates at the end of ‘Identity without the Person,’ just as it is poetry that offers training or experience for a kind of relation that operates outside recognition and recognisability” (Guyer 77). While Guyer’s reading of Clare does not conclude with how Clare specifically answers Agamben’s desire for an “identity without the person,” it ends by questioning whether or not Clare’s “acts of self-recovery” are simply among many other possibilities that will “occasion another relation to the living” to what she tentatively calls “a life of poetry” (Guyer 77). Taking up Guyer’s call for a continued investigation into Clare’s questioning of existence, this chapter investigates how his writing fits into the overarching theme of this dissertation by tracing the way Clare’s

sonnets that appeared in *The Friendship’s Offering* of 1829, consists of seven rhyming couplets, an idiosyncratic scheme to which Clare returned often in the 1830s, including in the Northborough Sonnets that are among his most important and challenging works” (“On the Publication of John Clare’s *The Rural Muse*, 1835”).

poetry complicates what Abrams sees as the “correspondent breeze” connecting subject and object (37). Rejecting such a correlationist position, Clare’s poetry reveals the way literature auto-deconstructively offers a glimpse of the frame that constantly defends the self from disintegration.

Clare’s poetry is singular as objects are not necessarily connected to the gaze of a subject but are represented metonymically so that each appears to exist in an impossible photograph. And yet, as has been noted above, metonymy cannot evade the trappings of metaphor just as much as metaphor cannot escape the sliding of metonymy, which is something that is largely forgotten by even the most radical ecocritical readings of Clare. For instance, Simon Kövesi reads Clare with Deleuze, arguing that Clare’s infinite sliding seems to reflect the flows that Deleuze and Guattari argue move irrespective of the Symbolic (“Beyond the Language Wars” 71). However, if we read Clare through Lacan, his poetry shows that one cannot inhabit any field of pure flow or production, since the subject uncomfortably dwells in between the Imaginary and the Symbolic because of its dissatisfaction with both. It is for this reason that the impersonal becomes a mode of expression that affects a specific kind of dissatisfaction that is more radical than simply becoming a body without organs. While we can understand that the Symbolic traps us in language, and while the subject of the drive constantly evades being fully enclosed within the Symbolic, Clare’s poetry reveals that both the personal and the impersonal entangle us in a complex debt to the Symbolic that is infinitely dissatisfying. As much as Clare’s poetry represents the radical nature of the third person as unbounded by enclosure, his (un)published poetry also demonstrates that one cannot get rid of the idea of the “I.” Indeed, the “I,” as Clare says in a letter, “is such a presumption ambitious swaggering

little fellow” that as soon as we think we are done with it comes back to haunt us (Clare Letters 504).

Finally, because Clare’s meticulous descriptions are presented by means of paratactic images, his poetry also complicates traditional psychoanalytic readings of literature, because, as Lacan argues, metaphor “is the very mechanism by which symptoms, in the analytic sense, are determined” (Lacan “Instance of the Letter” 431). Without any metaphorical substitution, then, Clare’s descriptive poetry makes it more difficult to determine what is symptomatic about his writing, since a psychoanalytic reading generally relies on the failure of metaphoric substitution as the means to identify what is symptomatic about writing. Reading Clare thus also necessitates a revision to this dissertation’s psychoanalytic reading of metaphor as one of the many crises of the (un)published. While the “substitution of signifier for signifier” involved in metaphor produces a “signification effect . . . that is poetic or creative” and “brings the signification in question into existence,” the “metonymic structure” indicated by the “signifier-to-signifier connection . . . allows for the elision by which the signifier instates [a] lack of being in the object relation” to use “signification’s referral value to invest it with the desire aiming at the lack that it supports” (Lacan “Instance of the Letter” 429, 428). Therefore, if, as Lacan states, metonymy functions by means of “displacement . . . as the unconscious’ best means by which to foil censorship,” Clare’s poetry opens a way to read from the other side of the coin of the metaphor/metonymy dyad. As we have noted, the (un)published is a partial object not because of the failure of metaphor to substitute sameness for difference but rather because of the compulsion to repeat that arises as a result of the permeable boundary between metaphor and metonymy. Like Schelling’s

rotary movement, the (un)published reveals that no position can claim to have being over the other without that position being contested. What is different with Clare, though, is that he does not seek out subjectivity by means of metaphor, but by means of the metonymic deferral of desire to support the subject as a being of lack (Lacan “Instance of the Letter” 425). In other words, the (un)published does not only resist publication because it represses its identity as necessarily partial or because it cannot account for itself as a whole subject; the (un)published, viewed from the side of metonymy, is also characterized by the perpetuation of desire for subjectivity in the knots of metonymic contiguity, as these sustain subjectivity by the very disappearance of the subject as that which is not-all. Such a writing, then, represents the subject not as something that is personal, but involuntarily impersonal, because subjectivity exists in an extimate relationship to itself and to the world because, as Lacan asserts, “I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking” (Lacan “Instance of the Letter” 430).

II. First Person, Second Place

“I wish I was were [sic] I would be,” writes Clare in an unpublished song written in 1845, “[a]lone with beauty & the free/ I wish I was where I have been / [a] lover on the village green” (“Song” 1-4). Contrary to the traditional understanding of the lyric “I,” Clare’s poetry rarely presents itself as self-enclosed or self-present. Being is almost always an aspiration for a future state or for a nostalgic return to being “[a] lover on the village green.” As opposed to Stephanie Kuduk-Weiner who reads the “voice of his poems” as “almost always belong[ing] to Clare himself,” I argue that Clare’s middle period poetry ventures into a representation of the “I” that no longer provides the *point de*

capiton that ties the world's horizon to the subject's voice ("Listening" 377-378). Indeed, even Kuduk-Weiner admits that Clare's voice appears in varying degrees of presence, where in some "poems . . . a highly present, mediating and feeling 'I'" is featured, "while in others he withdraws almost entirely, registering his presence merely by organizing images around his own vantage point or by implying a subject to whom those images are intelligible or meaningful" ("Listening" 378). In those poems where it is at its faintest, Clare's "I" asserts itself not as a subject but rather as an object, becoming simply one more thing among the other things that populate the world. Clare's poetry simultaneously attends to lyric consciousness while it deconstructs the way Romantic lyric consciousness was traditionally conceived.

Romantic lyric consciousness, to quote Rajan, was understood to be "as close as possible to approximating what Sartre calls a 'shut imaginary consciousness,' a consciousness without the dimension of being-in-the-world" (Rajan "Death of Lyric" 196). But unlike this idealist notion of the subject, Clare's poetry saturates itself with so many disparate images from the world that the world becomes, as Wordsworth wrote in 1802, "too much with us," even to the point that the reader loses sight of any original vantage point. For example, in an untitled sonnet from Northampton MS 7, Clare writes:

The tame hedge sparrow hops about for seed
 & painted red cap feeds on grunsel weeds
 The blackbirds [forage] where [the] scarecrows was
 & pecking linnet green as is the grass
 Eats at the cabbage seed till all is gone
 & thrushes fetch the cherries every one
 The pink flies in the bushes all the day

& pecks about the leaves & goes away
 The yellow hammer hops about the beds
 & the young blue cap pecks the poppy heads
 The wagtail wades the sink & willow wren
 Peeps round the currant trees & hides agen
 & sparrows feeding with the hens all day
 Hears the maids shoo & scarcely flyes away (1-14)

The radical paratactic placement of these images implies no vantage point from which Clare sees the variety of birds or a place that the reader could identify Clare. Indeed, the way that the sparrows exist despite the maids' attempts to shoo them away from the feeding hens—the sparrows “scarcely” fly away—indicates a resistance to the agrilogistic restriction that would bar the sparrows from eating food that is readily available to them. Instead, the sparrows exist regardless of the maids' intention to only feed the hens. Even the coordinating conjunction “and” is replaced by ampersands, which show, as Simon Kövesi argues with reference to Deleuze and Guattari, an “affinity with the rhizome in terms of its coordinated, levelled, planar, anti-hierarchical shape” that “attests to a world view which is fluid, de-centred, in flux and always in the process of becoming” (“John Clare &” 85). Consequently, both proponents and critics of the Romantic lyric subject will find Clare to be quite different from the majority of canonical writers of the Romantic period because of his hesitation to make the outside into merely a flat surface for the depth of the internal subject. This also disorients the critic as an autonomous external authority over the text itself. For if, as Jonathan Bate has argued, “Clare’s world horizon was the horizon of things,” what “Edmund Husserl calls ‘thing-experience,’ *Dingerfahrung*,” what place the “I” played for Clare in these poems is still left up for question (153).

Although one can read the voice of the poem as Clare's merely because Clare was the author behind these poems, his metonymic experimentation in his Northborough sonnets only implies a relation to the "I" by its absence. Recently, Michael Nicholson has described Clare's lyric "I" in this way because the "I" is given over to what Nicholson calls an itinerant wandering. However, Nicholson's identification of this itinerancy still betrays a nostalgic longing for the personal attachment to local place.⁷⁴ Nicholson reads the effect the Land Enclosure Acts had on "Clare's poetic 'I'" by tying the way the "enclosure lays waste to the common site of local nature" to the way the poetic "I" "actively understands its loss of place in the present" (648). Read this way, Clare's experience of abandonment and dispossession has the effect of marginalizing the role of the "I" according to what are now canonical understandings of its place in lyric "defined," to quote Nicholson, either "by apostrophe, enclosure, presence, address, or some combination of these terms" (645). In a similar yet different way to how Andrew Bennett conceives Wordsworth's posthumous writing, such readings of Clare's lyric "I" still seek to preserve Helpston after it has been reterritorialized by enclosure. Such projects of recovery turn Clare into yet another melancholic that incorporates his identity precisely as a result of the loss of that identity, thereby making Clare's entire project into one that seeks to provide his home an afterlife that is preserved in his poetry.

Rather than turn Clare's poetry into words that are preserved as if in formaldehyde, one must resist such a reading that would see Clare being dominated by the history of enclosure. Enclosure was a death sentence that had already been signed

⁷⁴ In contrast with a self-enclosed consciousness, Nicholson shows that Clare's "lyric 'I's do not individuate themselves so much as they allow the captive, disciplined, and forgotten life of Clare the poet and his lost community of Helpston to stand in for one another" (652).

because Enclosure had already been carried out between 1760 and 1832; but Clare's writing is not just contained within the limitations of social and ecological protest, as positivist readings of ecocriticism might have it. Such publicly materialist readings forget that Clare would effectively begin to mourn the loss of Helpston at the tail end of enclosure. Therefore, if Clare already understands that enclosure was already a done deal, when he writes poetry that protests the conditions that continue to extinguish his way of life, there is something else at play. In this sense, ecocritical readings of Clare, while recognising his criticism of enclosure, themselves paradoxically enclose Clare's poetry within a discourse of rights. In contrast, I argue that Clare resists all forms of enclosure including those that seek to positivize lyric. For instance, in the unpublished poem "Peti[ti]oners are full of prayers," which has come to be known as "The Lament of Swordy Well," a piece of land adopts a more traditional lyric "I" to vouch for its rights as if it were a person; it is "the first time in literature," as Alan Bewell notes, that "nature appears as a homeless person" (566). In the absence of any legal rights for ecosystems, Swordy Well adopts the language of personhood to appeal its case to the reader of poetry:

I hold no hat to beg a mite
 Nor pick it up when thrown
 No limping leg I hold in sight
 But pray to keep my own... (Clare "Peti[ti]oners" 9-12)

In Swordy Well's entreaty for his preservation from those "who worked" him till he "couldn't stand" ("Peti[ti]oners" 23-24), Clare depicts an anthropomorphism that is inconsistent with much of his descriptive poetry of the same period. However, Clare's experimental poem does not endorse the piece of land's transformation into a person. Rather, it is a deconstruction of the "I," as its compelling use of *prosopopeia* both

illuminates the disenfranchisement of Swordy Well at the same time that it frames this disenfranchisement as the result of the economy of personhood and property that allows for Swordy Well to adopt the lyric “I” in the first place. Though the poem relates how a system of restitution was created for the English peasantry to petition to be recompensed for their losses caused by the Land Enclosure Acts, it also marks how personhood involves gradations and degradations that bar some persons from entering into a Symbolic that does not equally distribute rights to all persons.

In these poems sometimes referred to as Clare’s enclosure elegies, Johanne Clare argues that the use of *prosopopeia* made it possible for Clare to voice his most radical critiques of enclosure as one tied to the larger expansion of property rights versus the rights of the person. As Johanne Clare writes,

Had it been possible for Clare to publish this poem [“The Lamentations of Round-Oak Waters”], the passage . . . would have earned him the reputation of a radical. It was, he believed, a sign of the whole moral perversity of the enclosing class that it not only destroyed the labourer’s access to the land, but made him act as the agent of the very process that victimized him, since, perforce, the labourer and not the property-owner had to do the actual work of draining, levelling, and fencing the old landscape. (46)

Although Clare had written other poems against enclosure such as “The Lamentations of Round-Oak Waters,” “The Mores,” “Remembrances,” and “The Flitting,” “The Lament of Swordy Well” is one of Clare’s only works that appears to actively petition the reader for the restitution of the lost objects which make up the piece of land’s identity. While Johanne Clare’s reading of the enclosure elegies is right to note a socio-political theme, such a reading is limited to only the material implications of a poem that was never published, and hence was not overtly political. As Clare writes, whereas other men “[p]eti[ti]oning for loss / [o]f cow that dyed of ages drink / & spavin foundered horse,”

Swordy Well asks not for “a list of pelf”—a dialect word Clare uses for money—but rather begs for bare life: “But I petition for my self/ & beg to keep alive” (“Peti[tioners” 158-60, 161, 163-164). Going beyond the material, Swordy Well is concerned about identity itself. For though Swordy Well may still appear on a map, its topographical existence is not what makes up its identity. The only way that Swordy Well can even assume an identity is by adopting the language of personhood itself, as it identifies itself by subsuming the variety of life that it sustained before the Land Enclosure Acts as its property, which demonstrates that Clare, though he may have been critical of this, believed that a person’s sense of identity was tied to property. While the “silver springs” have “grown [into] naked dykes” and “[t]he butterflyes may wir & come,” Swordy Well “cannot keep em now,” because enclosure reduces the piece of land to an existence that defines its identity not by those things that thrive in its environment but by its enclosure within an identifiable name (“Peti[tioners” 57, 93-94). Swordy Well thus suffers a fate worse than the labourers with which it used to commonly share its land. For while its petition is based on claims for both human and ecological rights, its life is reduced to a state of perpetual abandonment.

Barrell reads “The Lament of Swordy Well” as a meditation on the identity of a sense of place, where the “identity of Swordy Well is seen to depend on its being left as it was before the enclosure” (117). However, the sense of place that was specific to Helpston before enclosure was, to quote Barrell again, an “open-field sense of place,” an “appalling openness of ... infinite spaces,” or “‘unbroken tracts’ that, according to the Reverend James Tyley, ‘strained and tortured the sight’” (103-4). Barrell seems to contradict himself, then, when he argues that Clare’s most acute sense of “identity

depended . . . on” specific objects such as the spring, the butterfly, or, in the case of the poem “Helpston,” a stile “being there where it was, and remaining there” (118). Before enclosure, Clare did not necessarily see property as linked to identity, since, as he writes in “The Mores,”

Unbounded freedom *ruled* the wandering scene
 Nor fence of ownership crept in between
 To hide the prospect of the following eye
 Its only bondage was the circling sky (7-10)

While a local place would seem to ground the subject in a local knowledge of its topography by pointing to specific objects, “The Mores” illustrates how, as Timothy Morton argues, place is “potentially endless” and “is radically indeterminate,” for “it is intrinsically in question, *is* question” (Morton “John Clare’s Dark Ecology” 185). If the only rule is the unbounded freedom of the circling sky, there is an implicit acknowledgement that the specific locality of place was not encompassing but unlimited. Enclosure, therefore, appears not only as a means to increase the yield of agriculture but also functions as a repression of the viewer’s anxiety when their perspective is not at the center of a world. The subject’s view in the open field instead becomes for it a radically asymmetrical experience of existence. While Clare’s descriptions of specific objects that were local to places such as Helpston or Swordy Well are listed in order to show that these objects make up their identity, these stand in contrast with the openness of space, which results in a further expansion of perspective that shows how the specificity of lists does not ground identity but goes on into infinity in such a way that, to quote Morton again, the “poem *knows* this even as it disavows it, and indeed it cannot present *place* as solid without relying on *other* places (the wider county, other counties, the sense of “over

there” where the train has come from and where it is going . . .)” (“John Clare’s Dark Ecology” 185).

To demand the restitution of lost objects therefore would prove meaningless as the solution to preserve identity, because there is no essential object tied to the identity of the piece of land. Place can change, to quote “The Mores,” since what “hath been once no more shall ever be” (18). There must be another reason, then, that Clare anthropomorphizes Swordy Well, since if Swordy Well’s petition is not organized around the objects that the poem presents as what used to be there before enclosure, this is because the identity of Swordy Well instead emerges out of the metaphoric substitution of the lyric “I” for the metonymic contiguity of those objects and living beings that once dwelled upon the waste. “Though Im [sic] no man,” admits Swordy Well, this forced adoption of the personal “I” inscribes the piece of land within the discursive regime of personhood that would potentially permit it to seek “[s]ome sort of right”; and yet, at the same time, the rights of the person circumscribe Swordy Well’s being within the tyranny of metaphor. Swordy Well’s adoption of the univocal lyric “I” therefore inserts it within an economy of enfranchisement and disenfranchisement. But it also indirectly initiates an involuntary investigation into the very possibility of claiming an identity in the first place, since both lyric and legal uses of the “I” rely upon an aesthetic *poiéin*— that is “to make, to do”—of the *prósopon*—the “face, person”—revealing that both the “I” of the lyric and the law are products that must be continuously reproduced. Indeed, anthropomorphosis is not only used to link Swordy Well to the lost objects in order to create the identity of a place, since it is also used as a discursive tactic that attempts to use the power inherent to language to create personhood for the personless. Anthropomorphism, here, functions like

metaphor, by illustrating that the writing of poetry is not so different from that of the law: “& I am glad if een [sic] a song/ Gives me the room to speak” (“Peti[t]ioners” 41-44).

Nature, then, becomes an unstable prototype for the discourse of the natural person in legal debates that emerged during the Enlightenment. Although there would appear to be a discrepancy between lyric and the law, Barbara Johnson has shown how these “two very different ways of instating [sic] what a ‘person’ is” are dependent upon an assumed “givenness of the essence of the human” (550, 574).⁷⁵ Clare’s anthropomorphism gives Swordy Well a humanity that stands in contradiction with the very real inhumanity of the *homo sapiens*, the “greedy pack” whom Swordy Well declares “rend and delve and tear / [t]he very grass from off my back” (Clare “The Lament of Swordy Well” 150-52). But while “The Lament” appears to lay claim to “some sort of right,” the use of anthropomorphism to appeal to “natural rights” such as freedom from enslavement and the right to life show instead that rights, like anthropomorphosis, are, as de Man claims, “a purely structural definition, devoid of any normative emphasis” (de Man “Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric” 241). Swordy Well only submits itself to a different structure that itself has no guarantee. For when it is faced with the absence of such an essence, Swordy Well’s failed petition for life also illustrates the failure of

⁷⁵ Extending the question of what the human is from lyric to the law, Johnson’s understanding of anthropomorphism comes from Paul de Man’s “Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric.” De Man refers to how “‘anthropomorphism’ is not just a trope but an identification on the level of substance. It takes one entity for another and thus implies the constitution of specific entities prior to their confusion, the *taking* of something for something else that can then be assumed to be *given*. Anthropomorphism freezes the infinite chain of tropological transformations and propositions into one single assertion of essence which, as such, excludes all others. It is no longer a proposition but a proper name, as when the metamorphosis in Ovid’s stories culminates and halts in the singleness of a proper name” (de Man “Anthropomorphism” 241).

human rights to guarantee freedom from death because there is nothing essential about humanity to guarantee those rights in the first place. As Roberto Esposito puts it, the language of rights and of “modern liberty” are only “that which insures the individual against the interference of others,” where such a submission comes at the expense of the individual’s “voluntary subordination to a more powerful order that guarantees it” (Esposito *Bios* 72). Faced with the abyss at the heart of identity, and without any recourse to any “natural rights” beyond the structural order of lyric and legal personhood, Swordy Well’s lyric voice fails to free it from human exploitation because its voice is granted to it by a discourse of rights that must preserve personhood by pushing other living individuals to the edge of thingness.

Clare’s use of anthropomorphism thus shows that rights depend not only on a set of propositions but also on the power of an assumed and actually ungrounded substantialization. For what the assumed givenness of an essence does is bestow a power on to the legal person that would be impossible from a third person or impersonal perspective. Swordy Well’s demand for rights instead reveals that the legitimacy of those rights depends on whether they uphold the power of this substantialization. This is the difference between power and rights, which Jeremy Bentham describes in *An*

Introduction to the Principle of Morals and Legislation:

Powers, though not a species of rights (for the two sorts of fictitious entities, termed a *power* and a *right*, are altogether disparate) are yet so far included under rights, that wherever the word *power* may be employed, the word *right* may also be employed: The reason is, that wherever you may speak of a person as having a power, you may also speak of him as having a right to such power: but the converse of this proposition does not hold good: there are cases in which, though you may speak of a man as having a right, you can not speak of him as having a power, or in any other way make any mention of that word. (205)

Although a man may claim to have a right to something, if he does not have power, the right is only legitimate if it upholds the structure of power. The Enlightenment's argument for the inalienability of human rights would suggest that those subjects would also have access to the power implied by those rights, because, by simply being a person, one should have access to a law that at the very least guarantees a right to life. But who a person is depends on who is not a person. Paradoxically, the impersonal becomes a position from which certain things, as Rajan writes of the rights of the negative, "that cannot be said or done," can be said or done even if a "discourse for them does not, or does not yet, or may not ever exist" ("Romanticism and the Rights of the Negative" 1). "The Lament of Swordy Well" thus figures its loss of its impersonality as what effectively prevents it from declaring its own right to survive. By becoming an "I" that can speak, it can no longer not be an "I." Indeed, the impersonal is that which the "I" prevents, even if personhood presents a sliding spectrum of beings from human to slave, to animal. Personhood creates itself by making those things outside of it partial by submitting thing-like-subjects such as Swordy Well to the full contingency of the person's access to rights. Swordy Well's failure to access those rights, then, illustrates the sliding spectrum mentioned above, that reveals a fundamental indistinguishability between person, thing, and slave in the definition of personhood. Nothing prevents the human from losing access to its rights, especially when it blurs the lines between what is and is not human.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Esposito argues that between the human and the thing, the slave finds itself "right in the middle, or in the passage, between person and thing" and is thus "definable both as a living thing and a reified person" (Esposito *Third Person* 9).

While the poem invites the reader to think of Swordy Well in terms of personhood, the open-field puts any correspondence between subjects and objects under erasure, and thus submits all existents to the contingency of unbounded existence. This unboundedness on the other side of enclosure becomes the condition of possibility for “The Lament of Swordy Well”’s deconstruction of this paradoxical inclusion and exclusion from the discourse of the “I.” By revealing that the only thing about Swordy Well that is recognized is not the fact that it lives but the fact that it has a name, Swordy Well illuminates its complex position within the Symbolic.

Of all the fields I am the last
 That my own face can tell
 Yet that with stone pits delving holes
 & strife to buy & sell
 My name will quickly be the whole
 That’s left of swordy well. (Clare “Peti[ti]oners” 251-255)

In these last words, the personal name is presented as inherently violent because the name ‘Swordy Well’ individualizes the waste while dispossessing it of its ability to unmake the distinctions imposed upon it by personal identity. Identity ties the subject to further seek identity and thus prevents the land from sharing things in common with other things, since the priority of the “I” becomes a *fait accompli*, an imposition that promises but a name. With no essence that points to the existence of any “natural rights” beyond the structural order that assumes human identity without proving it, Swordy Well’s entrance into a system of rights does not positivize identity but becomes that which identity negates to falsely positivize itself.

The genius of “The Lament of Swordy Well” thus lies not only in its innovative use of *prosopopeia*, but in its deconstruction of how *prosopopeia* functions as a tool to legitimize the discourse of the person and the author, as Clare perceives the discourse of human rights to be fundamentally untenable. He instead involuntarily retreats from positivizing Swordy Well’s entrance into personhood. Rather than publish “The Lament” in the 1835 *The Rural Muse*, Clare withholds it from publication, seeing within it the potential for future misreadings of his deconstruction of the “I” function. While ecocriticism gives Clare a public identity for today’s debates in the name of human survival, Clare’s (un)published poetry involuntarily retreats from any public consolidation of ecocriticism. “The Lament” already understands the violence inherent to metaphoric or anthropomorphic substitution, as the freedom of the land lies not in its specificity but in its ability to displace and dislocate itself from enclosure. As opposed to an idealistic universal declaration of natural rights, Clare is only too aware of the limits rights impose upon the freedoms that an open-field space provides:

There was a time my bit of ground
 Made freemen of the slave
 The ass no pindard dare to pound
 When I his supper gave
 The gipseys camp was not affraid
 I made his dwelling free
 Till vile enclosure came & made
 A parish slave of me. (Clare “Peti[ti]oners” 225-232)

This passage condenses the British debate regarding the state of nature and its transition towards a sovereign-subject relation that was worked out in Hobbes and Locke, while it also complicates the power relations between master and slave in the state of nature.

Before enclosure, Swordy Well *made* “freemen of the slave” and *made* the gipsy’s “dwelling free,” thus inverting the way that we distinguish making and unmaking. Swordy Well instead reveals that it makes by unmaking rather than unmaking by making, for the slave and the gipsy are definitely not free within a system of sovereignty. The question, then: is freedom completely negative in the sense that it does not preserve identity? Is freedom merely an un-making, which is itself a form of making? Whereas Clare does not actually give an answer, true freedom appears to be impossible from the perspective of the personal “I.” Rather, the state of the impersonal appears to have some semblance of freedom, because there are no distinctions based on the individuation and codification associated with personhood.

What the above passage also shows is that Swordy Well’s line of thinking could not happen before enclosure, as Clare’s deconstruction of identity was only made possible by enclosure’s creation of distinctions between what is inside and what is outside. If identity is not the solution, Clare sees something liberating about impersonality. In this sense, Clare shares similarities with other theorists of the nineteenth century such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom Sharon Cameron has hailed as one of the great thinkers of the impersonal. Like Emerson, Clare also sees an “anonymous impersonal state” as that which “precedes the formation of a material ‘I’ for whom suffering is a direct consequence of being imprisoned in the experience of personal identity” (Cameron “The Way of Life by Abandonment: Emerson’s Impersonal” 104). The use of the “I” is thus less a voluntary choice for Swordy Well than it is an involuntary imposition, even though it allows Clare to think of a writing that does not continue to make distinctions but rather to inhabit a perspective within a continuous displacement of metonymy. It is thus that

Clare retreats from identity, personhood, or publication after he moves to Northborough and experiments with an impersonal perspective that is indifferent to humanization.

There, Clare begins to write about the objects that once inhabited the waste rather than an “I” that would preserve them. Clare’s depiction of the partial nature of objects reveals, to adapt what Timothy Morton has recently said of objects more generally in *Dark Ecology*, that “the way things affect one another” is “indirect or vicarious” because “causality is aesthetic”; as ““beings withdraw,” this does not take away from how each living being impacts every other but instead reveals that each “influence[s] each other aesthetically, which is to say at a distance” (16). In Clare’s own retreat from personhood and subjectivity, a non-correlative poetics opens up towards a writing of the impersonal that seeks to aesthetically depict how a world without the person might conceivably be possible.

III. Third Person Impersonality

It would be easy to characterize Clare’s writings as a solution to the damaging effects brought about by the assumption that the human is a self-enclosed being, but the (un)published does not offer solutions. Instead, as texts that persist as questions, they rather dissolve and unmake assumptions about the substantial givenness and intentionality of the subject who is fully in control of its words and actions. The intentional fallacy of the subject is something that Clare continuously struggled against in his poetry. Indeed, this is something that makes him profoundly Romantic, as he instead continues to expose the subject to an outside that only further troubles his relationship to a lyric “I.” Clare’s descriptive poetry of the middle period moves away from descriptions of landscape as

told from the position of the traditional greater Romantic lyric “I,” as he experiments with the metonymic quality of language as that which prolongs desire not in terms of what is personal, but what is most impersonal. The impersonal perspective presents a desire that simultaneously denies that desire, as it flows and moves irrespective of the intentional directions of a subject. The difference between Clare’s impersonal “I” and the personal “I,” as Branka Arsić describes Emerson’s poetry, is that “impersonal thinking . . . constitutes the interiority of the ‘I,’ rather than being constituted by it” (134-135). Rather than conceive of perceptions, descriptions, or even moods as belonging to the “I,” Clare’s poetry, to paraphrase Arsić again, asks us to consider “the perceptual field” as made up “not only of what we want to see or hear, but . . . of minute perceptions also, which not only have we not chosen to perceive but which we are not aware of at the moment of perception” (140). As opposed to the assumption that description or even the expression of emotions imply an intentional subject, Clare’s “I” puts such a definition of the Romantic lyric subject in question. For, as Rei Terrada puts it, though the “purpose of expression tropes is to extrapolate a human subject circularly from the phenomenon of emotion,” this only “creates the illusion of subjectivity rather than showing evidence of it” (11). In this sense, Clare does not gaze at the landscape but mirrors what Arsić notes of Emerson’s emphatic use of the “glance.” Whereas the gaze, as Arsić puts it, “is fixed and fixes” because it “idealizes” to assert an “ocular skepticism, aloof and distant from the world,” a “glance spreads over a surface and follows its motions, which is why it is always distracted”; as a result, a glance is always “attracted to what it hasn’t yet seen” (72). As we will see in Clare’s poetry of the Northborough period, even when there is a subject in the poem, it is only ever “there” to be put under erasure. In its place stands Clare’s description of the contiguous assembly of objects, which indicate a subject for

which we have no discourse yet, since their desire moves not by claiming desire but by denying desire as something that belongs to the “I.” These poems resist enclosure by going beyond critique, as they actively represent an unboundedness that reflects the infinite contiguity represented by the open-field.

Whereas the presence of partial objects effected a crisis in the writing of Schelling, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, Clare presents all objects as themselves partial by sliding from one to the other in an infinite displacement that detach them from any association with the subject’s gaze. Clare’s writing may appear passive in the *Northborough Sonnets*, but it represents the way that desire is always already “caught in the rails of metonymy,” as Lacan puts it, which “eternally [extends] toward the *desire for something else*,” what Lacan calls in his later work the register of the drive (“Instance of the Letter” 431). This is even more apparent in those sonnets where the degree of the presence of the “I” is either at its faintest or not present at all. Rather than seek out the “I” in yet more and more objects, Clare’s sonnets provide no relation or connection to each object other than to point out the process of displacement. Out of the arbitrary contiguity of objects described one after another, Clare appears to bypass the need for a subjective position altogether. The non-linear flow of this perspective would seem to align Clare with the aims of Deleuze and Guattari or even object-oriented-ontology. But, as will be shown in the last section of this chapter, the lack of a subject is directly related to Clare’s later return to the “I” function in his asylum poetry. Rather than triumphantly resist being fully enclosed, these poems only delay Clare’s return to the “I” as that which we cannot escape, especially in the declarative poem “I AM.”

Turning to the poetry of his period in Northborough, what the editors of Clare call his *Northborough Sonnets*, Clare's editors note that "[i]t was always" Clare's custom "to jot down couplets or quatrains that he might later work up into sonnets and he also had the habit of writing more lines than he required for a poem" (Robinson, Powell, Dawson "Introduction" X). This writing in pieces contributed to Clare's own experiments with the sonnet form throughout his career, making him one of the most innovative poets of the sonnet form during the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ Clare's own views on sonnets were in fact radical, as many scholars have remarked. In a letter he wrote to James Hessey, Clare comments on what was then the contemporary fastidiousness concerning the Sonnet form, arguing that his contemporaries should "cease from making readers believe a Sonnet cannot be a Sonnet unless it be precisely 14 lines" (Clare *Selected Letters* 24). Clare's choice of the sonnet form is indicative of a concerted experiment between form and content in his poetry. For while the content presents an unboundedness without any centralized perspective, Clare's use of the sonnet form shows that it does not have to enclose but can instead provide a glimpse of an impersonal or neutral relation. Following the editors of the *Northborough Sonnets*, however, we will focus on those poems that still follow the fourteen-line structure of the sonnet form. For while the sonnets Clare wrote during his stay at Northborough may reflect a more dissolute and unmoored experience, Clare was extremely fond of the sonnet form and still traditionally wrote fourteen-line

⁷⁷ According to Sarah Lodge, Clare's "three published collections contain respectively, twenty-one, sixty, and eighty-six sonnets," while his unpublished works contained "over three hundred sonnets," some of which were intended for a work he projected to publish in 1832, *The Midsummer Cushion* (533-34). In 1824 Clare had been planning his own sonnet sequences in a manuscript entitled *A Collection of Sonnets Descriptive of Appearances in the Seasons and other Pictures in Nature*, which, as Lodge remarks, if "Clare had published" these "in the 1820s, he would have been ahead of the curve in what became a sonnet rush: of some 250 sonnet sequences published between 1800 and 1900 only 27 were published before 1830" (534).

sonnets, as evidenced by one of his unpublished sonnets written in 1829, “Sonnet to X X X”:

I walked in poesy in the sonnets bounds
 With little hopes yet many a wild delight
 As timid childern take their summer rounds
 & scarce dare leave their cottage out of sight
 Till field & meadow & the summer light
 Tempteth them farther with their fears to roam
 So from the sonnets little garden home
 I went sweet natures wilderness to trace
 A stretching landscape where the fading sight
 Skimmed like a bird & found no resting place
 Heaths Flats & Sky its undivided blue
 A timid Minstrel thro their varied maze
 I strayd oft cheered in bringing up to view
 The little spots that won thy early praise (1-14)

What these experiments show is that Clare was not only aware of but compelled to renew the sonnet form in a way that did not conform with the more popular Petrarchan sonnet that was resurrected by Wordsworth.⁷⁸ Among many popular sonnets upon sonnets, “Sonnet to X X X” demonstrates Clare’s affinity for and expertise in crafting his own style of sonnet, which revels in the genre’s capacity to allow him to simultaneously trace

⁷⁸ As Sarah Lodge has argued, “Clare, then, approached the sonnet with an awareness both of its historical deployment by a variety of early poets in English and of the current critical strictures that dictated the most approved form (the Petrarchan) and suitable manner of its use. He knew the work of a wide variety of modern practitioners of the sonnet, from Charlotte Smith, whose English sonnets first inspired him in early youth to try the form, to Wordsworth, whose “Lines Written upon Westminster Bridge” he admired. Clare’s own sonnets involved informed choices about structure and style” (540). For more on Lodge’s re-evaluation of Clare as one the nineteenth-century’s major practitioner’s of the sonnet form, see Sarah Lodge. “Contested Bounds: John Clare, John Keats, and the Sonnet.”

the expanse of “stretching landscape[s] where the fading sight/ [s]kimmed like a bird & found no resting place” all “from the sonnets little garden home.”

Let us consider, for instance, how each object is glanced in Clare’s poem that begins “The early snail slow paced & never brief.”

The early snail slow paced & never brief
 Has done a journey on the cabbage leaf
 The old sows out & crawling on the trees
 Rolls up as soon as touched & turns to peas
 The maiden early starts away from bed
 The spider clicks like watches oer her head
 She milks the cows & sets the buckets down
 & pulls [thorns] that tear her gown
 The shepherd journeys early with his dog
 Who frights the startled bird & sniffs the frog
 & pulls the grass & whistles like a bird
 The blackbirds chirp & answer from the yard
 The boy with merry face & horses come[s]
 Pelts & fills his pockets full of plumbs (1-14)

As in many of his sonnets composed while in Northborough, Clare writes in what become signature rhyming couplets, where sometimes each couplet, or even sometimes each line, ends abruptly in such a way that the line takes flight from the rest of the sonnet, offering no real relation to the line that follows it. As Clare writes, “The early snail slow paced & never brief/ Has done a journey on the cabbage leaf,” where the second line of the sonnet marks its own end—“done a journey” (Clare “The early snail” 1-2). However, the poem continues with further descriptions of a pill-bug (what Clare calls “the sow”), “The maiden,” “The spider,” “the cows,” “the buckets,” “the thorns,” “The shepherd,” “the

startled bird,” “the frog,” “the grass,” “The blackbirds,” as well as “The boy.” Clare’s use of the definite article appears paradoxical, here, since these living beings all appear indefinite, unconnected, or radically contiguous as opposed to being concretely related or stable objects for the reader. Indeed, whereas Tim Chilcott has argued that “Northborough and the indefinite article” are linked for Clare, the use of the definite article here does not stabilize the placement of these objects within the poem, because each object appears to “speak of the indefiniteness of ‘a life,’” in the words of Jacques Khalip, which is “seemingly undiscovered and yet, at the same time, cannily resistant to the slightest difference that a claim of identity would otherwise make” (Chilcott 41, Khalip 3). Clare therefore uses the definite article to bring into focus the arbitrariness of each of these objects, an indefiniteness that is further enhanced by Clare’s use of rhyming couplets which emphasize the radical contiguity of the objects from couplet to couplet.

While the first objects appear unrelated, the sonnet’s fifth and sixth rhyming couplets would appear to communicate with each other, but in a way that reverses Clare’s earlier use of anthropomorphism in “The Lament of Swordy Well.” When the shepherd ventures out with his dog, he also pulls a blade of grass out of the ground “& whistles like a bird” to which “The blackbirds chirp & answer from the yard” (Clare “The early snail” 10-12). What seems to emerge out of this estranged and unlocatable perspective that moves from one object to another is an asymmetrical communication between species, where the shepherd’s affected birdcall is seemingly answered by the blackbirds; but this demonstrates that there is not so much a subject-object relation between these two, but a relation that, as Ian Balfour says of the possibility of a state in-between subject and object, hints at a “subjectivity beyond the subject, a subjectivity whose objectivity is not

given and yet is not simply subjective either” (4). Indeed, Clare’s placement of this call and answer does not conclude the poem, but appears as merely an occurrence, a moment of distance between the shepherd and the blackbirds, which, as fast as it occurs, moves on to the final couplet of the sonnet: “The boy with merry face & horses come[s]/ Pelts & fills his pocket full of plumbs” (Clare “The early snail” 13-14). It is obvious that despite it being the closing couplet to the poem, the boy is not its privileged subject since the couplet does not sum up the sonnet’s theme at all. Rather, Clare’s descriptions demonstrate an impersonal perspective that provides no hierarchy through which any being is privileged over another. Only the arbitrary placement of these images entails a dynamic that unfolds something hidden in plain sight, because it discloses a relation that does not purport to be anything beyond a response that is not constrained by linguistic reasonableness but by aesthetic influence.

By frustrating any and all relation between subject and object, and by refusing to simply make living beings in the poem a foil for the human subjects or even for the human voice that describes the scene, Clare effectively presents what Blanchot calls a “neutral relation,” which is the true “experience of language” that is present in “writing”: a relation that “leads us to sense a relation entirely other, a relation of the third kind” (*Infinite Conversation* 73). As Blanchot writes,

In this relation that we are isolating in a manner that is not necessarily abstract, the one is never comprehended by the other, does not form with him an ensemble, a duality, or a possible unity; the one is foreign to the other, without this strangeness privileging either one of them. (73)

Blanchot understands the very fact of writing, the literary act, to be a neutral relation, or what he calls a “relation without relation” that is “doubly dissymmetrical” because what is shown in the relation without relation is not the closeness but the distance between

what is presented (73). In Clare's works, each glance is itself a manifestation of this distance, as each object does not point to other objects but to the distance that separates them. The neutral, therefore, frustrates the demand for intimacy and enclosure that one would expect of the sonnet form. For while a relation could take shape, Clare's sonnets of this period do not affirm any one object in the poem but instead affirm the outside that cannot be written. In a sense, then, Clare's voice does not occupy the impersonal, but rather catches wind of it as that which does not stop not being written, even if he wishes it to be.

As Clare argues in his unfinished "Essay on Landscape," objects should "not [be] placed for effect or set off by other dictates of the painters fancys but there they are just as nature placed them—& as long as nature exists will the merits of their labours grow into familiar excellence & increase in value & in fame" (Clare *Prose* 212). Objects, according to Clare, hold perspective simply because nature has placed them there as they are, and not for the narcissistic pleasure of the viewer. Rather than impose a view to how things are placed, Clare's description of animals, specifically birds, leads to a writing that not only presents the reader with partial objects but with the vanishing point of a neutral relation. Such a neutral relation can best be described in terms of an analogy provided by Clare's own depiction of the complex flight pattern involved in the murmuration of starlings. As Clare describes it, "crowds of starnels wiz & hurry bye/ & darken like a cloud the evening sky" in a breath-taking aleatory ballet, which researchers have discovered occurs as a result of "scale-free correlations" that imply that the group is, in a loose sense, different from and yet less than sum of its parts (Clare "The wild duck startles like a sudden thought" 5-6; Parisi 11866). Just as the murmuration of starlings does not necessarily cohere into one identifiable whole, so too do Clare's sonnets allow

us to glimpse how all relations have no connection. They are just like the murmuration of starlings, avalanches in the sky. Clare therefore transforms the sonnet form itself to deconstruct the priority of the “I,” just as he dissolves the “I” in the following poem:

I love to hear the evening crows go bye
 & see the starnels darken down the sky
 The bleaching stack the bustling sparrow leaves
 & plops with merry note beneath the eaves
 The odd & lated pigeon bounces bye
 As if a wary watching hawk was nigh
 While far & fearing nothing high & slow
 The stranger birds to distant places go (“I love to hear the evening crows go
 bye” 1-8)

Out of the arbitrary definitiveness of these contiguously assembled objects the impossible perspective of an impersonal element is also glimpsed, best captured by another of Clare’s sonnets.

The shepherds almost wonder where they dwell
 & the old dog for his night journey stares
 The path leads somewhere but they cannot tell
 & neighbour meets with neighbour unawares
 The maiden passes close beside her cow
 & wonders on & think her far away
 The ploughman goes unseen behind his plough
 & seems to loose his horses half the day
 The lazy mist creeps on in journey slow
 The maidens shout & wonder where they go
 So dull & dark are the November days
 The lazy mist high up the evening curled
 & now the morn quite hides in smokey haze

The place we occupy seems all the world (1-14)

While the world should be a comfort to us as that which encompasses us in its spherical stability, such a notion of the world is itself an illusion of place that seems to be all when it only points to other endless places beyond the singularity of the world. There is always more there, over there, over there, over there. But such is the power of Clare's poetry, since it does not naively declare the subject to no longer be needed because the "I" can inhabit some transcendental perspective; rather, Clare's sonnets show that this impersonal perspective is itself an illusion or a frame that engages us, to quote Slavoj Žižek, "in a hermeneutic endeavor to render visible the frame that, precisely by staying invisible, by eluding the subject's grasp, predetermines its field of vision" ("Why does a Letter Always Arrive at its Destination?"). For Clare, just because we are still hooked on being in place does not mean that the vital contiguity of metonymy must be subordinated to the tyranny of metaphor, nor should we delude ourselves into becoming, like Emerson, transparent eyeballs. Rather, Clare continuously questions how we find ourselves both indifferent and yet ultimately present.

IV. (Im)personal (Dis)satisfaction

Clare's estrangement from the "I" is not a solution to the problem that the "I" poses, as much as it is simply a way of avoiding the question of self-identity. For while Clare was distrustful of the "I," it would be irresponsible to celebrate this effacement as an emancipatory position. Indeed, we cannot read Clare's retreat from publication in the same way that we did Coleridge's retreat in Chapter 3. Not long after the composition of these poems in Northborough, Clare was admitted into High Beach Asylum from 1837 to

1841 and was finally committed to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum until his death on May 20, 1864. Clare's mental and physical health thus had a significant effect on his non-publication. Clare's situation was therefore somewhere in between a forced and voluntary retreat from publication. Indeed, Clare believed himself at times to be Lord Byron, Lord Nelson, or Jack Randall the boxer, and he suffered from severe depression and swung between states of euphoric activity and absolute melancholy. The illusion of identity might have alleviated some of that suffering. But to reduce Clare's writing to a biographical reading is also irresponsible, since the third person in Clare's poetry opens up an impersonal view beyond Clare's depression and points to a more profound form of dissatisfaction, which prevents Clare from returning to the "I" as a safe haven against disintegration. Indeed, the schizophrenic or psychotic behaviour exposes such an identity as a fantasy. Unlike metaphor, "metonymy" allows us to "imagine a desire that is based on no being—a desire without any other substance than that assured by knots themselves" (Lacan *Encore* 126). In this sense, one can read Clare's exploration into the impersonal not as a cause but as a contributing factor to his poetry of the asylum years. For what predominates in Clare's poetry of this period is the contradictory impulse between remembering and dis-membering the self. Unable to fully espouse the rights of the person or to completely disappear into the impersonal, the asylum poetry offers us a glimpse into a conflict that arises when the subject tries to break away from its indebtedness to the Symbolic. But because Clare's imposed disappearance prevents him from further exploring a *jouissance* that is not related to the "I" and its enjoyment of the *objet petit a*, what is most tragic about the poetry of the asylum years is that precisely when we think Clare has escaped the Symbolic, he finds himself once again inside it.

What becomes difficult to determine in Clare's later work is how much its reflections upon the "I" are the result of his institutionalization and how much was the result of the direction in which his poetry was already heading. As Simon Kövesi has shown, Clare was distrustful of the egotism of the first-person singular pronoun well before his institutionalization, as can be seen in an unsent letter he wrote to Eliza Emmerson between March and April 1830:

for that little personal pronoun 'I' is such a presumption ambitious swaggering little fellow that he thinks himself qualified for all company all places & all employments go where you will there he is swaggering & bouncing in the pulpit the parliament the bench aye every where even in this my letter he has intruded several times already who can tell me where he is not or one of his family that's his brother or from how many pen points he is at this moment dropping into his ambitions on humble extances he is a sort of Deity over the rest of the alphabet being here there & everywhere he is a might vapour in grammer he grows into a pedantical nuisance & often an O would be a truer personification in philosophy a juggling gossip in oratory a consequential blusterer & in fashion a pretender to every thing. (Clare *Letters* 504)

This letter shows a robust distrust for the use of the first-person singular, demonstrating, as Kövesi puts it, that "Clare is more hesitant to put himself in the frame than his contemporaries," much more so because "it may be the radicalising act of an ecologically aware social leveller who never places humanity above nature" ("John Clare's 'I'" 87). But Clare's distrust for the "I" should not just be read in ecological terms, for the letter has repercussions for how we think of the author-function. By not reading this letter as connected to Clare's later writings, Kövesi misses the connection between the Northborough period of Clare's poetry with his later asylum works. For nearly thirty years, Clare spent his life in an asylum, writing poetry that most clearly expresses the effects of glimpsing the impersonal, not as something that can be occupied, but as something that alters Clare's understanding of the self as external to rather than internal to

the subject. Clare's mistrust for the personal, therefore, moves towards an outside or an "extroversion into an exteriority that calls into question and overturns" the "I" function's "prevailing meaning" (Esposito *Third Person* 14). The "I" no longer becomes a defense but rather a position from which Clare's dissatisfaction objects to his entanglement with the "I."

As Sara Guyer puts it, "at more or less the same moment that Francis Galton and Alphonse Bertillon develop biological profiling as a means of radical identification, Clare invents another form of identity, self-identity, by which he means not only the identity of a self, but identification by a self beyond recognition" (57). In "Self-Identity," an unfinished and unpublished essay written in 1841, Clare appears not only to dread the possibility that he has lost touch with the self but that the self can also be forgotten by the world: "A very good common place counsel is *Self Identity* to bid our own hearts not to forget our own selves and always to keep the self in the first place lest all the world who always keeps us behind it should forget us altogether" (Clare "Self-Identity" 271). "[F]orget not thyself & the world will not forget thee—forget thyself & the world will willingly forget thee," writes Clare (271). Written at the crucial juncture between his stay at High Beach and his later committal to Northampton, Clare's anxiety over what to do with the "I" comes to the fore; contradicting his previous dismissal of the "I's" presumptuousness, he states that "a person who denies himself must either be a madman or a coward" ("Self-Identity" 271). This fear of being forgotten elicits an anxiety within Clare that he either truly is mad or the fear of being multitudinous, both as different persons and different genders. To quote the final long paragraph of the piece, Clare writes

I am often troubled at times to know that should the world have the impudence not to know me but willingly forget me whether any single individual would be honest enough to know me—such people would be usefull as the knocker to a door or the Bell to a cryer to own the dead alive or the lost found there are two impossibilitys that can never happen—I shall never be in three places at once nor ever change to a woman & that ought to be some comfort amid this moral or immoral ‘changing’ in life—truth has a bad herald when she is obliged to take lies for her trumpeters—surely every man has the liberty to know himself

Tis Liberty alone that gives the flower

Of fleeting life its luster & perfume

& we are weeds without it (Clare “Self-Identity” 271)

Clare’s radical anxiety towards change, metamorphosis, and towards the radical contiguity of life is far from his poetry of the Northborough period, as it raises a specific question that returns us to how the impersonal functions as a concept that leaves literature and politics in question: what is the relation between the world forgetting Clare and Clare’s becoming-multitudinous? and how is this condition related to “this moral or immoral ‘changing’ in life”?

According to Clare’s logic, recognition comes in three forms: self-recognition through self-identity, recognition from an external individual, and recognition from the world. Whereas self-identity would appear similar to traditional conceptions of the Romantic lyric subject, it is instead related to Clare’s belief that self-recognition is the condition of possibility for recognition from a greater public—“forget not thyself & the world will not forget thee.” However, Clare also writes that he is often “troubled” by the possibility that the world would willingly forget him, which prompts him to hope that an individual would still be honest enough to know him. Individual recognition, though, is practical at best or would be merely “usefull as the knocker to a door or the Bell to a cryer to own the dead alive or the lost found,” meaning that recognition by an individual

equates to merely an acknowledgment of what amounts to what Esposito calls “existence without life,” a condition that “does not have the . . . qualifications necessary to integrate . . . the individual body with that of the collective” (Esposito *Bios* 159). Self-identity, then, appears less as the condition of possibility for a recognition of the self by the world than it is a recognition of the self that could prevent a total loss of the self. This is different from a merely melancholic incorporation of the self as the lost object, since self-identity refuses to re-find a self that is lost in order to constitute a mournful relation to the lost object; instead, Clare’s self-identity treats the self as one object among many other objects that can achieve some sort of objectification that is self-identical. The short verse at the end of the essay, which distinguishes an existence of liberty from that which is without liberty clarifies this object-existence by functioning as a gloss on that which precedes it. By linking liberty with recognition in the figure of the “fleeting life” of “the flower,” a life without recognition entails that “we are weeds without” recognition, for we would be multitudinous and not autonomous. To be a flower is to have liberty, which, we can assume, means to be autonomous.

Clare’s pre-occupation with whether or not he is a flower or a weed thus shows that the concept of self-identity is not the solution to but the problem that still troubles him. Having previously crossed the boundary that separates the personal from the impersonal, Clare recognizes the risk of being forgotten, a risk that is reinforced by the act of writing, which once again pits metaphor and metonymy against each other. For in Clare’s work of this period, the writing of metonymy is also haunted by the promise of metaphor to preserve self-identity for an uncertain future. In “Old times forgetfull,” Clare writes:

Old times forgetfull memories of the past
 Are cold & drear as snow upon our graves
 In books less then a shadows doom will last
 But Fragments there each stranded volume saves
 Like some rich gems washed up from ocean waves
 But now no summer dwells upon the spot
 Nor flower to blossom—the eternal blast
 Oblivion leaves the earth in which they rot
 Darkness in which the very lights forgot (Clare 1-9)

Whereas “memories of the past/ [a]re cold & drear as snow upon our graves,” Clare also recognizes, like Wordsworth, that books can serve as a defense against oblivion.

However, only fragments are preserved in “Old times forgetfull,” and these seem preserved for a future without life, thus showing that the world remains an imperfect place for the “I” to seek out some form of recognition. And yet, if the outside world should forget him, one can see how the act writing becomes the means by which Clare might objectify his self-identity.

The closest that Clare comes to describing this self-identity is in his poem “I AM,” which alternates between a state of suffering and melancholy. The asylum surely left Clare unable to experience and experiment with an impersonal perspective beyond merely representing it as a total loss of self. Instead, coming back to the “I,” the first three lines of “I AM” show Clare to be uncertain of what to write or even what to do with the “I”: “I am—yet what I am, none cares or knows; / My friends forsake me like a memory lost:—/ I am the self-consumer of my woes;—” (Clare “I AM” 1-3). Clare, rather than (re)collect himself in the way he sets out in “Self-Identity,” describes the brute facticity of his existence in terms of a self-consuming and empty “I” in the same way that Denise

Gigante re-reads Wordsworth's "feeding mind," where the end product of self-digestion is not self-identity but the subject's abjection of itself (69). Where "[e]ven the dearest, that I love the best / [a]re strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest," writes Clare, "I AM" shows that the declaration of being itself is what estranges the "I" from any claim to be for itself, so that "I AM" presents a subject that is incapable of deciding whether it wants to be an "I" in the first place (Clare "I AM" 11-12). Instead, the poem sees the "I" as a necessary though undesirable position. For though the "I" is spoken—as Clare writes, "[a]nd yet I am, and live—like vapours tost"—its existence is tost, thrown into a Symbolic that is indifferent to the subject's wholeness (Clare "I AM" 6). Indeed, Clare's "I AM" represents a subjectivity, like the psychotic subject of psychoanalysis, that has lost its bearings within the Symbolic and instead seeks to reconstruct a world for himself out of the wreckage of his psyche: "I am the self-consumer of my woes" (3).

Whereas all that is left of this life is "the vast shipwreck of" the voice's "esteems," the qualification of "and yet I am" is also accompanied by desire, denoting that there is some object that keeps the voice here (10, 6). As Clare concludes the poem:

I long for scenes where man hath never trod
 A place where woman never smiled or wept
 There to abide with my Creator, God,
 And sleep as I in childhood slept,
 Untroubling and untroubled where I lie
 The grass below—above the vaulted sky. ("I AM" 13-18)

What the "I" desires here is important—"scenes where man hath never trod"—but what is more important to the poem is the continued presence of desire. If the primary conflict of Clare's poetry has been what to do with the "I," it is because it also has to do with the

trouble with the “I”’s pleasure. For if Clare desires some kind of self-identity in his asylum poetry, the only thing that he can resort to is desire itself. As we argued above, the biopolitical “I” enjoys its wholeness by hollowing out the Other, that is, by pushing Others to the edge of thingness. In contrast with the biopolitical subject, Clare appears to reverse this relation in “I AM” by dissolving the “I” into “vapours tost/ [i]nto the nothingness of scorn and noise / . . . [w]here there is neither sense of life or joys” (6-7, 9). By hollowing out the “I,” Clare has not made the world any more whole. Indeed, it is the absence of such a whole world, unspoilt by human intervention, that is missing for Clare and seems to leave the “I” similarly impoverished. The only thing that remains in “I AM,” then, is desire. It is desire that appears to trouble this poem, but a desire that robs the subject of any satisfaction. Ironically, even the desire for an “untroubling and untroubled” existence is what troubles the self. Therefore, if we consider the speaker’s longing for “scenes where man hath never trod” to be a longing for the impersonal elements depicted in Clare’s Northborough period, the writing of the poem itself excludes Clare from becoming impersonal, for a position that longs for anything must come from what reluctantly declares, “I am.”

What kind of “I” is left, then, and what, if any, is the payoff? For if the goal of self-identity is to find a form of autonomy that is liberated, “I AM” refuses to satisfy this desire for self-identity, so that Clare appears to fail to find a means by which he will not be forgotten. This refusal, though, is tied instead to a more complex recognition that recognizes the structure of desire itself and is still dissatisfied. The “I,” then, can perhaps serve another purpose beyond its desire for completion, as it can instead serve as the site from which the subject preserves its connection to its desire as a complaint or as an

objection. For if metonymy, as was argued above, only delays Clare's return to the self, the impersonal gives Clare a reason to complain: why do I have to an "I" in the first place? Such a form of desire can thus be considered as the personal version of the impersonal, a pure complaint, because it amounts to the subject's continued relation to the failed desire of becoming impersonal: "I wish to have never been born." In this pleasurable pain of complaint, Clare's "I AM" illustrates an "I" whose main objection is itself tied to the medium of complaint itself: "speech" or "writing"; as Blanchot says, because writing "always mean[s] attempting to involve the outside of any language in language itself," the writer is always related to an impossible task (*Infinite Conversation* 78-79). One cannot become impersonal, then, because there will always be an "exigency," as Blanchot writes, "to which it would still be necessary to respond by speaking," if "only to interrupt oneself and to render possible the impossible interruption" of a neutral relation (*Infinite Conversation* 78-79). In trying to write what is outside language by bringing it within language, Clare realizes that there is something more in writing from the first-person than there is in writing from the impersonal. This something more, however, is not liberating, but painful. Only desire can preserve the subject, even if the subject is abandoned to live out a life perpetually out-of-joint with itself. That Clare needed to lose the self in order to come to this conclusion thus transforms how we understand Clare's relationship with the "I." For even though he ultimately succumbs to a despairing cynicism concerning the subject's place in the world, Clare's poetry allows us to catch a glimpse of the importance of staying with the trouble, because it resists being won over by any magical thinking about subjectivity or personhood. Clare's Romanticism, therefore, lies in his commitment to suffering for this trouble of the

essential demand of the work, leaving him to be perpetually dissatisfied with the impossible and yet inevitable task that, really, is nothing personal.

Chapter 5: *Mathilda* or There is No Textual Condition

I. Nothing is Missing

In the final chapter of *Anonymous Life*, Jacques Khalip opens with a long quotation from a letter Mary Shelley sent to Edward Trelawny from April 1829 where she writes, “[t]here is nothing I shrink from more fearfully than publicity—I have too much of it. . . Now that I am alone in the world, [I] have but the desire to wrap night and the obscurity of insignificance around me” (quoted in Khalip 133). Reading Shelley’s desire for obscurity, for *anonymity*, puts her work at odds with a desire for publication. In the context of Shelley’s literary career, the letter, as Khalip argues, represents “an ethics of reluctant affirmation that is cultivated or ‘performed’” by a woman writer “who experiences loss as a condition of her being—a social anonymity that contests the Enlightenment pressure to resolutely *be* and *act*” (139). No work would seem to express the “desire to wrap night” around itself more than *Mathilda*,⁷⁹ which itself did not see the light of day until Elizabeth Nitchie first published it in 1959. Yet *Mathilda* differs from the other involuntary withdrawals from publication that have been analyzed in the previous chapters, since Shelley does not choose to withhold it intentionally or unintentionally. As I will show, Shelley chooses a third option by sending it to her father, William Godwin, the only person who will not publish it. In keeping with Tilottama

⁷⁹ There is a strange issue that pertains to the presentation of the novella’s title. As the editor of the second volume of *The Novels And Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, Pamela Clemit claims that “although the heroine’s name is spelled ‘Mathilda’ in rough draft and fair copy, Mary Shelley in her published remarks refers to the work’s title as ‘Matilda’, so this spelling is adopted here” (2). In keeping with the manuscript evidence, from here on we will instead refer to both the title and the character as Mathilda.

Rajan's ground-breaking analysis of Shelley's *Mathilda*, which reads the novella as a text that resists the Romantic economy of reading itself, I argue that the novella's transmission of what Rajan calls an "unusable negativity" stages Romantic melancholia and its associated economy of incorporation as the frame by which Romanticism continues to enjoy a relation to a (w)hole subject (Rajan "Mary Shelley" 44). Unlike Clare, who crosses the barrier that separates neurosis from psychosis and thus cannot help but despair in the face of our inevitable debt to subjectivity, Shelley's *Mathilda* luxuriates in a dissatisfaction that critiques any grounding of the Romantic subject either through melancholic incorporation or through a re-integration into the Symbolic, which, as *Mathilda* shows, amounts to the same thing.

Just as in Chapter Three we designated Coleridge's "Christabel" a "textual object" because it was caught in a rotatory movement of projection, introjection, and abjection, *Mathilda* similarly occupies a place within Shelley's corpus as a text that calls attention to itself as a textual object; but because Mathilda writes her letter in a posthumous voice, she does not speak from the position of the subject but rather from the position of the partial object. As such, she intradiegetically thematizes the (un)published as an ethical act that does not withdraw from the Symbolic but triumphantly claims to be the part of no part within it. In other words, *Mathilda* not only illustrates that objects are just objects in waiting but that the partial object goes beyond the notion of the object. For while Kristeva states that "the object" "settles" what is "me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning," whereas the "object" as "the jettisoned object" is "radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses," the partial object is both and neither at the same time because it is not a part of any object (Kristeva *Powers of Horror*

1-2). In the same way that the partial object is not the abject, the textual abject is also different from Kristeva's concept because it is not cast out; rather, as Rajan argues, "the writer submerges in some trauma or affect from which she will not separate by constructing an objective correlative for it in the Symbolic order" ("Mary Shelley's" 45). The difference between the abject and the partial object is thus related to the partial object's indivisibility.⁸⁰ Unlike the abject, it does not only signal incompleteness or disintegration; there is, however, *something* incomplete in the subject's encounter with the partial object. A useful way to think of the relation between the subject and the partial object is to take up Lacan's mirror stage. As Guy le Gaufey argues, "nothing is missing" in the subject when it faces the mirror, "yet it is going to encounter 'something' in its mirror image that it neither knew nor held before: its unity" (95). This unity is the partial object's indivisibility, which is not the image in the mirror nor the fully realized subject but a third element that exists by not being there for the subject in its body. Unlike the abject, the partial object is not excluded but rather pursued by the subject to constitute its wholeness because the partial object's (dis)appearance is precisely that which constitutes the subject as lack.

As will be shown, the difference between "Christabel" and *Mathilda* revolves around Mathilda's affirmation of the letter's indivisibility, which is sent to the Symbolic itself. One can understand the difference between Coleridge and Shelley's texts by referring to Lacan's distinction of the two failures of masculine and feminine sexuality. As two sides of the same coin, the masculine, much like exclusionary abjection, fails by

⁸⁰ I will refer to *Mathilda* as a partial object over a textual abject. While the two terms are nearly the same thing, the partial object connotes an aim that is not only textual but also libidinal.

incorporating the self as the lost object to falsely experience itself and its relations with others as wholes. In contrast, the feminine position, like the textual abject, recognizes the subject's alienation from its own place within the Symbolic to be constitutive of subjectivity and thus reveals that relations are not between whole subjects but rather between collections of partial objects. Whereas "Christabel" is about Christabel's need to communicate this feminine position, Coleridge represses what cannot be said, so that we can only tell that "Christabel" is a textual abject by means of Coleridge's relationship to it as a text that he must inveterately revise. *Mathilda*, in contrast, negates the desire for wholeness by affirming her partialness, and thus reveals a more fully committed version of the feminine position than what is present in "Christabel" stifled exclamation: "By my mother's soul do I entreat/ That thou this woman send away" (Coleridge "Christabel" 604-605). This chapter therefore serves to highlight the different valences of the textual abject, for, by the end of the novel, Mathilda does not become statically objectified like Christabel at the end of Coleridge's poem but instead invites us to see the frame that frames the Symbolic from the perspective of a partial object. By narrating the text "posthumously," *Mathilda's* narrative perspective speaks as if the subject is already dead and is thus able to lay bare how the frame of subjectivity fails to account for the *jouissance* of the other. The third option, then, succeeds by failing.

This chapter on *Mathilda* thus also addresses previous psychoanalytic readings of Shelley's text by extending these to include possibilities opened up by contemporary revisions to object relations. Mary Jacobus's *Psychoanalysis and the Scene of Reading* (1999), for instance, also takes as its point of departure Rajan's reading of *Mathilda* as textual abject, and yet she chooses to "draw on a range of ideas associated with *British*

object relations psychoanalysis” (Jacobus *Scene* 9; my emphasis). While it has also been the aim of this study to study Freud with Klein, Winnicott, as well as Abraham and Török, Jacobus’s choice of object relations analysts limits her reading of object relations to Britain only, and thus hinders her intention to determine what “points beyond the narrative of incest trauma to the scene of literary transmission” (Jacobus *Scene* 200).⁸¹ If it has not been made clear yet, *Unread* sees Lacan play a significant role in re-imagining the role object relations plays in psychoanalysis and how psychoanalysis re-shapes both our understanding of literature and textual history not only in terms of what scholars have understood to be Lacan’s “subject of the signifier” but also in terms of the “subject of the drives (or the subject *as* jouissance)” (Fink “Knowledge and Jouissance” 23). If Jacobus avoids Lacan because his emphasis on the phallus appears to diminish the role of the feminine for object relations, this arises more out of the false division between Anglo-American and continental approaches to psychoanalysis than anything else, for British object relations clings to literature as a form of therapy whereas continental approaches see literature as part of the subject of the signifier and the subject *as* jouissance.

⁸¹ Jacobus states that she makes “an implicit case for the literary and critical uses of British object relations psychoanalysis, particularly the version of object relations associated with contemporary post-Kleinian thinking, and with some continental theorists who have managed to sustain a dialogue with British object relations.” However, Jacobus chooses to downplay Lacan, since, “[l]ike other literary and feminist critics of [her] generation,” she takes issue “with Lacan, if only because of his comparative downplaying of issues involving affect and the realm of the imaginary, as opposed to language and the Symbolic” (9-10). Jacobus therefore gives voice to many of Lacan’s most vocal critics and one-time students, specifically André Green and Jean Laplanche. It is important to note that Lacan’s *Seminar XX Encore* (1998) was only translated one year prior to the publication of Jacobus’s *Psychoanalysis and the Scene of Reading*, as were many of Lacan’s other more elaborate counter-arguments to Green and Laplanche’s criticisms of his treatment of affect. For Lacanian responses to affect and subjectivity, see Colette Soler’s *Lacanian Affects: The Function of Affect in Lacan’s Work*, translated by Bruce Fink, Routledge, 2016, or Lacan’s own *Seminar XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, translated by Russell Grigg, Norton, 2007, p. 144.

Whereas British object relations considers childhood in terms of stages of development that move from a more turbulent infancy towards the stability of adulthood, Lacanian object relations leaves open a space for a return back into dis-integration. As is the case with many Lacanian formulations, one must be attuned to the way he puns on the word ‘object.’ Every object—whether it be whole, partial, or *objet petit a*—concerns the subject not just because of its objecthood but because it is an object as aim, goal, or end. Lacan's endgame plays with the word since psychoanalysis understands the subject to be enmeshed in a game of ends, wherein the subject's aim accomplishes itself precisely through its failure to be satisfied. As Lacan says concerning “what is related to what's good (le bon), the good (le bien), and to what Freud enunciated”: “the essence of the object is failure” (Lacan *Encore* 58). Objects, therefore, never take on a fixed meaning but are rather surfaces upon which desire fixates or displaces itself. This chapter, thus, also serves as a means to show that Lacanian psychoanalysis always intended to be a feminist project by turning to *Seminar XX: Encore*, which has something to say about the feminine that does not subsume it under a predefined sexual relation under the phallus. As Lacan states in *Encore*, “there's no such thing as a sexual relationship,” something *Mathilda* makes evident in its depiction of a virtually incestuous father-daughter relationship (*Encore* 57). Because Mathilda's desire is tied to telling her tale in the form of a letter, Lacan's formulation can also be applied to literature and textual studies; as *Mathilda* is always addressed to both Woodville and to strangers, its (un)published nature shows that even a direct address can reveal that there is no textual condition, that is, that the text is unbound or indifferent to its socio-historical production.

This chapter therefore stands in contrast with previous psychoanalytic readings. For Jacobus, *Mathilda*'s "scene of literary transmission" shows that "in the very process of attempted repair" writing instead re-enacts its own trauma and "refuse[s] the exit line offered by the literary as the representation rather than repetition of affect" (Jacobus *Scene* 200). *Mathilda* is a failure because it does not take the exit that Jacobus sees literature provide; if *Mathilda* could only move past the trauma of the father's incestual desire and realize its own literary condition, literature would allow Mathilda to transform her unconscious guilt into a conscious guilt which she could therapeutically work through. Therefore, Jacobus's reading—which "prefer[s] to define *Mathilda*'s peculiar unreadability effect as a difficulty endemic in 'hearing' trauma"—is "an allegory of reading only so far as it involves a text or a life traumatically cut off from itself" (Jacobus *Scene* 201). In other words, for Jacobus *Mathilda* remains traumatized because Mathilda cannot work through what she puts in her letter to Woodville. But what happens if it is not Mathilda who is traumatized but the economy of reading that is intradiegetically figured in the text? What if it is not the collection of unreadable signs that points to the text's trauma but rather the trauma of the economy of reading that makes the text a site of unreadability? Moreover, what if we seek out trauma as a defense against disintegration because trauma bars those signs that point to the Symbolic's incompleteness? Mathilda's trauma, then, is not just what cuts her off from repair because the novella aims to show that there is no condition in which the subject is cut off from a unity that should be available to everyone, since trauma rather points to the subject as precisely and fundamentally not-whole and existentially abandoned.

Much of the scholarship on *Mathilda* connects *Mathilda*'s unreadability to the structure of the social, for example the analyses by Joel Faflak or Jacques Khalip. Both agree that *Mathilda* and *Mathilda* remain outside the Symbolic as a result of her transmission of some fundamental unreadability that is either related to how the social must exclude affect or identity in order to constitute itself. This unreadability, in turn, becomes the sign under which *Mathilda*'s incongruous relationship with the Symbolic has been read. For instance, Faflak reads *Mathilda*'s rejection of communal sympathy in terms of a wider rejection of the possibilities offered up by the talking-cure of psychology and psychoanalysis, since *Mathilda* "refuses to join in the political economy of Romantic life" by rejecting Woodville's sympathy for the negativity of misanthropy (Faflak "Beyond" 48). Khalip goes even further, stating that Shelley's novella depicts how a "dispossessed femininity" is figured by *Mathilda*'s "anonymous female body," which posits a "loss that cannot be textually or affectively recovered" (139, 159). Khalip states that *Mathilda*'s anonymous female body—"transformed by and folded into" a quote from Wordsworth's "A Slumber did my Spirit Seal"—is "reduced to a quotable, *lyrical* identity" that suffers an "expropriation from the text and *by* the text" (159 Khalip's emphasis).⁸² But if the text expropriates *Mathilda*'s "anonymous female body," what Khalip effectively shows is that the loss that cannot be textually (Jacobus) or affectively (Faflak) recovered is itself complicit in the foundation of the Symbolic of reading itself.

As such, Khalip makes Shelley's text another iteration of the anonymous function of all

⁸² Whether or not Khalip meant to use the "expropriate," I mean to take hermeneutic advantage of this contradiction, which inserts a loss that cannot be recovered within a text that is therefore expropriated as in something private that is taken away and used for the public's interest. As opposed to Khalip, *Mathilda* has no room for a public because its position withdraws from any position, since it is a position that falls out of the relation between subject and object. Therefore, there is no possibility of expropriation but only of further dejection.

texts as that which reinforces an anonymous public since *Mathilda*, according to the definition of ‘expropriation,’ is destined to be “lost in a crowd of other selves to which it bears an ethical obligation” (6).

While Faflak and Khalip follow Jacobus by reading *Mathilda* as an abject subject, Jacobus’s reading leaves open the possibility that *Mathilda*’s exclusion outside the Symbolic awaits reparation by a reader who can read the text’s unreadability in a way that neither Faflak or Khalip’s reading allows. Jacobus’s position assumes the nature of literature and psychoanalysis to be therapeutic, but such a view would make both serviceable only if they reintegrated *Mathilda* into a literary history that is also masculine. In this sense, I take Khalip’s analysis to be illustrative of the scene of psychoanalytic readings of *Mathilda* more generally. For there is a fundamental uncertainty over the place *Mathilda* occupies within the Symbolic at the end of the novella. This uncertainty outlines one of the fundamental undecidables that Rajan herself notes in Kristeva’s elaboration of the abject. For if, as Rajan argues, “Kristeva defines the abject as that which does not fit and associates it with waste material or threshold substances that are neither inside nor outside,” *Mathilda*’s non-publication is itself involved in showing how the partial object is necessary to the foundation of the Symbolic itself as the threshold between the Symbolic and the Real (Rajan “*Mathilda*” 44-45). The (un)published is always such a threshold substance, since its undecidable quality has the potential to either constitute, re-organize, or destroy the social that must exclude *Mathilda*’s unreadable desire. However, in the same way that Schelling describes non-being’s subjugation as only "relative" to God, *Mathilda* "maintain[s] the possibility that what does not now have being could endeavor to emerge from out of the state of potentiality and elevate itself

again to what has being,” not in any positivized sense of that which has being, but in the sense that the potential to destroy what claims to have being is always contained within it (Schelling *Ages* 3 48).

Mathilda's non-publication is thus important for how we understand the concept of an unusable negativity because this negativity is not nothing but rather represents an intensified point of non-being from which the Romantic economy of reading averts its eyes. By never actually publishing it, Shelley makes *Mathilda*'s desire into both the economy's lack and surplus. The textual object and the partial object, in this sense, are related because they both constitute this unusable negativity, not because they *represent* something more than themselves but because they *are* objects that are always more than themselves. Both retroactively stand in for nothing because they are in fact the subject's most intensified point of desire, that which is at once indivisible and disintegrated. Rather than resort to the depth psychology that defines Romanticism's incorporation of those objects for which, as Abraham and Török argue, "*words* fail to fill the subject's void," Shelley's novella employs lyric, melodramatic, and elements from ancient Athenian tragedy to destroy the fantasy that protects the subject from their extimate relation to the Real to declare being as not-whole or not-all ("Mourning or Melancholia" 128-129). Like *Mathilda* at the end of the novella, Shelley chooses to break with the melancholic incorporation passed down to her by her father and mother that still ties one to the demands that the social imposes upon literature's "earthly task," as Woodville puts it in the novella, to seek out "some good beyond us," which "bid[s]" us "to live and hope" (59).

If we take Jacobus at her word and read *Mathilda* “beyond the narrative of incest trauma,” the novella calls attention to itself as a letter that communicates its dissatisfaction with Romanticism and Romantic melancholy *tout court* by disclosing that the economy of Romantic reading sustains itself through the auto-immunity of melancholy. In order to do this *Mathilda* becomes a partial object that is not a part of any object, be it the foundation of community or part of the negative process of the reparation of the whole subject. Rather, *Mathilda* communicates the singularity of Mathilda and her desire for what Copjec calls “(impossible) presence” (130). In order to represent the (w)hole subject of melancholy, Shelley represents Mathilda’s father as the foil against which Mathilda rejects the constitution of the subject by the incorporation of a part that exceeds it; this is because melancholia still prevents the subject from engaging with its own psychoanalysis, as melancholia preserves the subject’s relation to itself via the lost object. Such a subjectivity repeats both an affirmation and rejection of the “good” in a structure that always defers redemption for a future-yet-to-come, because it denies desire’s repetitive structure in favour of a fantasized end point in an interminable search for the lost object. Mathilda rejects melancholia, because her “posthumous” voice gets detached from subjectivity altogether to leave a voice without a subject, a non-voice that declares itself, via a letter, as a partial object that always arrives at its destination.

Mathilda, therefore, offers a critique of the figuration of both the good and collapsed subjects of Romantic community, to quote Esposito, “not by the law of [its] works, but by the messianic principle of its deactivation” (Esposito *Immunitas* 65-66).⁸³

⁸³ In *Immunitas*, Esposito argues that community reproduces itself according to an immunitary paradigm, a process by which a body “submits itself to an alien force that, if

As such, it points beyond the fantasy of the good community that comes together in harmonious immanence, a fantasy that lingers even in Jean-Luc Nancy's inoperative community; in the novella, Mathilda seeks the destruction of community, because she sees that community sustains itself precisely by means of its failure to constitute itself, that is by a future anterior that deactivates both its present and future constitution. Mathilda's rejection of Woodville's offer to write for a future community is thus not representative of her failure to embody a kind of literary sovereignty that therapeutically heals a broken society because her rejection is part of the novella's larger critique of such an idealized position. Her hope lies in "the turf [that] will soon be on [her] grave" (67). There is no hope in communicating via writing. Rather, writing is a gift, which offers a glimpse of the Symbolic from the view of the partial object, involuntarily drawing readers into a retreat to dwell upon rather than listen to the voice that speaks the language of what Lacan calls the feminine not-all. *Mathilda*, to quote Copjec's reading of Sophocles's *Antigone*, is thus not about "setting another place at the table" for "the one . . . who was formerly excluded from the rites of the community, but of destroying that community in the name of what is impossible in it" (Copjec *Imagine* 40).

II. A Third Glance

What kind of analysis is opened up by the possibility that Mary Shelley chooses a third option of non-publication when she writes *Mathilda*? Whether or not one considers Shelley's text within a differential structure that sees it as either withheld unintentionally

not entirely hostile, at least inhibits its development": a body can only constitute itself as a body or "prolong [its] life . . . only by continuously giving it a taste of death" (8-9).

or intentionally, passively or actively, or whether one sees it as a failure or success, such dualisms fail to apply to the novella. For the third option is ethical insofar as it does not fall into the duality that supports a Symbolic that revolves around the imperative demand towards the 'good.' To illustrate the difference in these positions, Lacan describes three glances in his "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" that accord with three ways the subject relates to the pure signifier of the letter. The first is "based on a glance that sees nothing," the "second is based on a glance which sees that the first sees nothing and deceives itself into thereby believing to be covered [by] what it hides," and the "third is based on a glance which sees that the first two glances leave what must be hidden uncovered to whomever would seize it" (Lacan "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" 10). As will be shown, *Mathilda* illustrates all three positions. But the third position is fundamentally related to Shelley's decision to revise the text from a dream to a letter, since the transmission of the text as (un)published becomes the means by which *Mathilda* accepts itself as a partial object that glimpses what the first two glances leave hidden. For the *Fields of Fancy* still attempts to deny itself as a partial object by framing its narrative within a dream, which excludes it from the world, whereas *Mathilda* affirms its position as a partial object and thus is not excluded from the world but finally includes itself within it as that which both destroys and constitutes the world's consistency. This third position is ethical insofar as it does not participate in the Symbolic's attraction towards wholeness, because it instead reveals that the nature of the attraction towards wholeness deceives itself about its partial nature. While this ethics may appear to be a means towards re-assembling the structure of this social, this third position cannot destroy the order but only destroy the subject's entanglement in that order. Becoming the partial object instead leads to the subject's (dis)appearance while affording a glance of the

Symbolic's illegitimacy, to see the suffering that the subject is required to experience in order to experience subjectivity. Rather than just unity, the partial object also promises a different affective position in which one can suffer: ultimate dissatisfaction.

An analysis of *Mathilda*'s textual history shows that Shelley's decision to revise the text from its first version as *The Fields of Fancy* revolves around the decision to eliminate the opening frame narrative of the Dantean daydream. This elimination results in the decision to write a novella that is at once narrative and autobiography while also being neither.⁸⁴ In the previous frame narrative, an unnamed narrator is brought against her will to the Elysium Fields to attend mystical group therapy, where she must listen to the tale of those inhabitants, Mathilda amongst them, whose "chief care ... is to acquire knowledge & virtue" (353).⁸⁵ The goal of this therapy is the reintegration of partial subjects into a whole. In the second version, however, *Mathilda* has been transformed from a narrative answerable to its frame into a letter that not only re-organizes Mathilda's tragedy into an authentically private communication, but also into a letter that always arrives at its destination. The narrative's revision shifts the central problem of the novella from the first version's occupation with what Mary Jacobus calls "the science of herself" to the second version's delving into the movement of feminine subjectivity and feminine desire; in other words, the novella is no longer about knowledge but about the conflict between the subject of the signifier and the subject of the drives ("The Science of Herself" 240). *Mathilda*, then, is not only a letter written from a dying friend to another that will outlive her but is also sent to another destination, as Mathilda says to Woodville

⁸⁴ See Rajan, "Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*."

⁸⁵ Rajan notes that this framing narrative "conventionalizes suffering as purgatorial" by providing an "apparatus of temporal and narrational distancing, which mimes what one is supposed to do in shaping "life" into "art" (Rajan "Mary Shelley" 46).

at the beginning of the novella: “I do not address [these thoughts] to you alone because it will give me *pleasure* to dwell upon our friendship in a way that would be needless if you alone read what I shall write. I shall relate my tale therefore as if I wrote for strangers” (5-6; my emphasis).

While the first version echoes the late eighteenth-century novel of education’s use of narrative to introduce young women into what Mary Wollstonecraft called “the school of adversity,” where through suffering and disappointment women “learn knowledge as well as virtue,” *Mathilda* is a novella of desire that, as Derrida says, “acknowledges a right to absolute nonresponse” (quoted in Jacobus 255; *Passions* 29). Indeed, *Mathilda*’s traumatic narrative rejects the idea that negativity leads towards self-knowledge or even a knowledge of the world, for negativity is modified by being placed under the register of love, or, more appropriately, mutual affection: “I did not desire sympathy and aid in ambition or wisdom, but sweet and mutual affection I wished for one heart in which I could pour unrestrained my complaints, and by the heavenly nature of the soil blessed fruit might spring from such bad seed” (46). Following Copjec’s reading of Lacan, to associate negativity with love is an important modification for psychoanalytic thought, and a point to which we will return later. However, for now, it is sufficient that we understand that the text is itself as much about the conflict between love and desire as it is trauma. For, on the one hand, the text is indeed full of traumatic scenes and melancholic reflections upon death, and therefore appears to be a text marked solely by trauma; but, on the other hand, these have less to do with what could be mistaken for Mathilda’s desire for suicide, which would be more of a death-wish, and more with what psychoanalysis calls the death drive.

It is in this way, I shall argue, that we must attend to the novella's representation of Mathilda's narrative as the ethical act of the (un)published.

This ethical act is related to the same question that Lacan locates in Bentham's utilitarianism: why is the constitution of the self related to 'the good'? Lacan's question serves to illustrate that the way that we frame what we look for in the subject is located as part of the larger frame that is the Symbolic, which is why the unconscious is structured like a language. Lacan locates identity, all identity, as a function that is part of the structure of the Symbolic. The elegance of Bentham's model, according to Lacan, is its ability to measure identity as locatable in the "dialectic of the relationship of language to the real so as to situate the good . . . on the side of the real," which thus puts identity in a position that is always cut off from 'the good' just as the Real is necessarily the limit to the Symbolic (Lacan *Ethics* 12). Lacan reframes Bentham's utilitarianism from that of a social project into the social's problem, for the 'good' is somehow simultaneously the source and goal of the social as a result of one giant leap in Bentham's interpretation of pleasure, which, as Lacan shows, is vastly more troubling than its relation to the 'good.' The 'good,' then, is nothing but a substitute that stands in for the goal of all subjective activity, which is nothing more than the attainment of pleasure, so that Bentham's revision of pleasure into the 'good' then aims to re-organize pleasure as utilitarian.

What Lacan's analysis shows is that Bentham's account of utilitarianism also becomes an excellent frame for analyzing the current structure of the social and its relation to desire, as this new understanding of utilitarianism points beyond the basic notion of the greatest utility for the greatest number towards the specific discursive production of reality out of the repetition of seeking out pleasure. As Lacan argues,

[t]he long historical development of the problem of the good is in the end centered on the notion of how goods are created, insofar as they are organized not on the basis of so-called natural and predetermined needs, but insofar as they furnish the material of a distribution; and it is in relation to this that the dialectic of the good is articulated to the degree that it takes on effective meaning for man. (Lacan *Ethics* 228-229)

In Lacan's formulation, the good is not something pre-determined, but is rather the absent center around which discourse produces reality. Because of the barred subject's lack of identity with itself, what falls into place instead is the idea of 'the good.' What is good would appear to fulfill the needs of the world, but the good is also divided in itself, and thus gives rise to an economy of distribution where the Symbolic is structured so that subjects assume that some people will have access to the good, while others will not. But the good according to Lacan is something else entirely. If "[i]t is a fact of experience that what I want is the good of others," best expressed by the phrase, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' the pursuit of the good shifts the subject's aim away from pleasure towards the other's pleasure, and thus remains defined by what the other desires, that is, by what the subject lacks (Lacan *Ethics* 187). In Lacan's sense of the good, which is unachievable, subjective activity remains ultimately determined by its relationship to the achievement of pleasure, which is something separate from the good. Pleasure, as defined by what Freud always describes as beyond the pleasure principle (i.e. the death drive), is intertwined with the death drive's satisfaction, a satisfaction that achieves its aim precisely by *not* achieving its aim. Thus, if 'the good' sustains the subject of the Symbolic order by forever dispossessing it of any real ability to achieve 'the good,' this is only because human desire was already the roadblock that denied access to subjective *jouissance*. In other words, the good is only a stand in for the subject being constantly enthralled by the failure to achieve its desire.

To read *Mathilda* as a critique of the ‘good’ requires that we understand the framework around which the Symbolic is ordered within the novella. Much of it centers around the death of Diana, Mathilda’s mother, whose loss initiates the novella’s dramatic unfolding of events. After her death, Mathilda’s father leaves Mathilda with her aunt, and hence also contributes to her worldview as one that revolves around a central lack: “I clung to the memory of my parents; my mother I would never see, she was dead: but the idea of [my] unhappy, wandering father was the idol of my imagination” (14). Mathilda’s anticipation of her father’s return also shapes her identity as she repeatedly re-reads his last letter to her, which communicates his need to quit their home because “every thing [sic] breathes *her* spirit,” ‘her’ referring to the identity of his departed wife that he later transfers to Mathilda (10). Jacobus argues that this is a sign of intergenerational trauma, making Mathilda’s relation to her father the particular reason for the text’s unreadability.

Mathilda’s tragedy is not just her father’s guilty passion for her, nor is it her paralysing, idealizing, and finally murderous love for her father. It is the fact that her father’s story becomes hers (he is actually the one who has loved his mother in Oedipal fashion, and who sinks into mute despair when his wife dies). Incest is structured in *Mathilda* as the intergenerational repetition of a prior romance and as an always prior trauma; the second generation takes on the burden of this past. (Jacobus *Scene* 174)

In the novella, the father’s incestuous passion for Mathilda is the result of his melancholic incorporation of his wife as the lost object of his desire that gets encrypted along with his own ego after she dies: “buried in the deepest melancholy he took no notice of any one All outward things seemed to have lost their existence relatively to him and only one circumstance could in any degree recall him from his motionless and mute despair: he would never see me,” that is, Mathilda (10). The father, in this sense, serves no further purpose in the narrative than passing on his own melancholic incorporation of the lost

object on to Mathilda, dooming her to inherit the auto-immunity of a passion that effectively unmans him as an effective father.

If Mathilda's mother becomes the lost object for both Mathilda and her father, the novella frames this subjectivity in order to explore the ways in which desire deviates from the 'good' towards whatever desire wants. Such is the case with the melancholic, who shares many similarities with Lacan's definition of the masculine structure of the failure of sexuality. As Bruce Fink explains, "to enjoy in this way, reducing one's partner to object *a*, is to enjoy like a man" ("Knowledge and Jouissance" 37). If Mathilda's father passes on to her the ability to enjoy like a man, Mathilda inherits her father's identity as trauma, since at least melancholia would allow her to enter into the Symbolic. As Jacobus argues in a previous article, "The science of herself," women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft understood melancholia as a means to achieve a kind of public voice, and thus claimed "the right to melancholic subjectivity . . . on behalf of women" (Jacobus "Science" 248). Since women were denied any semblance of a civic- or socially-autonomous subjectivity in the typical female novel of education, women learned, according to Jacobus, "that they are deprived even of the right to melanchol[ic] subjectivity, since, culturally at least, melancholia is defined as a masculine prerogative" (Jacobus "Science" 248). But when Jacobus equates melancholia with "abjection" as that which "is enforced by the cultural process" and dispossesses feminine identity, she does so because she sees that women writers of the Romantic period used "the claim to melancholia" as "a stage en route to vindicating women's rights" (Jacobus "Science"

248).⁸⁶ Yet while this may apply to some novels of the Romantic period,⁸⁷ Jacobus omits any talk of a feminine vindication via melancholia in her reading of *Mathilda*. Instead, the father's transference of melancholic incorporation "in *Mathilda*" by means of incest trauma "deflects mainline political and feminist critiques," and represents "a specific instance of what it means for a text or a life to be cut off from itself and its past" (Jacobus *Scene* 201). Jacobus's analysis of Shelley is not critical here, but it does mark a peculiar mis-reading since she instead reads *Mathilda* as a completely traumatic rather than an intentionally partial text. The question, then, is what is it about melancholia that has changed for Jacobus between Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley? And why does melancholic incorporation fail to provide the luxury of subjectivity in *Mathilda*?

Because *Mathilda* does not choose her condition but is instead forced by a "fate" that governs her as if by "hideous necessity" (6), she initially inherits her father's melancholic incorporation of the lost object and thus represents how one must deal with the burden of melancholy when one has no choice. Rather than allow for a constituted subjectivity in *Mathilda*, melancholy destroys the desire for subjectivity in a way that is akin to the experience of a traumatized subject. For in reaction to the traumatic realization of her father's incestuous desire, *Mathilda* performs what Jacobus calls a "(de)formation"

⁸⁶ As Jacobus writes, "[i]f women can attain to melancholic subjectivity, they may at least be permitted to enter the Symbolic by the back door, the space of affect associated with the mother and hence with Kristeva's archaic, place-holding father. An abject becomes a proto-subject, however improperly, by means of this melancholic identification with the lost mother and her desire. Melancholia constitutes at once a feminine counter-culture—a contestatory position from which to vindicate the rights of woman—while at the same time providing the basis for the (de)formation of Romantic feminine subjectivity in the face of enlightenment sexual indifference" (Jacobus "Science" 257-258).

⁸⁷ In her article, Mary Jacobus reads the novels of Wollstonecraft, Inchbald, Radcliffe, and Edgeworth.

of her previous feminine subjectivity, as she fakes her death and assumes a new identity, “dressed ... in a whimsical nunlike habit which denoted that [she] did not retire to solitude from necessity, but that [she] might indulge in a luxury of grief, and fanciful seclusion” (52). This indulgence of grief is at once an attempt to separate herself from society and also a sign of Mathilda’s desire to become an object of desire for her dead father: “My father, to be happy both now and when again we meet I must fly from all this life which is mockery to one like me. In solitude only shall I be myself; in solitude I shall be thine” (42). Jacobus is thus right to read Mathilda’s attachment to her father as a sign of what Abraham and Török call “endocryptic identification,” a form of inclusion in which the lost object—in this case, Mathilda’s father—“*carries the ego as its mask*” (Abraham and Török “The Lost Object—Me” 142, 141). But while Mathilda’s ego stands in for her father as the lost object because he abandons her at birth, it is arguable that this identification changes drastically once Mathilda’s father reveals his love for her and then commits suicide.

Whereas melancholia, which is the impossible mourning for the lost object, appears at first glance to be the same as endocryptic identification, for Abraham and Török, endocryptic identification extends a specific aspect of Freud’s metapsychological formula that he developed in “Mourning and Melancholia.” For Freud, a second more “puzzling” function of melancholia is related to “what it is that is absorbing” the melancholic subject; the “melancholic,” Freud says, “displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning—an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a *grand scale*” (245-246; my emphasis). Whereas in “mourning,” according to Freud, “it is the world which has become poor and empty,” a

secondary and more destructive process occurs “in melancholia, [for] it is the ego itself” which becomes lost to the melancholic subject (246). When Abraham and Török speak of endocryptic identification, then, what they are essentially defining is the secondary process of ego impoverishment, or, more appropriately, the destruction or loss of the ego to the subject itself. Indeed, as they write, “[t]he identification concerns not so much the object who may no longer exist, but essentially the ‘*mourning*’ that this ‘object’ might allegedly carry out because of *having lost the subject*” (Abraham and Török “The Lost Object—Me” 141; my emphasis). Mathilda’s attachment to her dead father necessarily entails something greater than the loss of a loved object, for the lost object itself carries the ego as its mask. Because the mourning for the lost object mourns the loss of an ego-ideal that never had any whole or stable existential support besides its desire, Mathilda’s love for her father becomes a defense against a complete shattering of her sense of her place in the world.

What at first appears destructive now appears conservative, since what is prevented is not the loss of the deceased or its incorporation into a crypt but rather the loss of the subject which is prevented by identifying itself with the mourning of the lost object that mourns the loss of the ego. Melancholia, then, reveals something hidden within the function of subjectivity, or at least, something that civic- or socially-autonomous masculine subjectivity hides. Rather than provide an entrance to the Symbolic by the back door, melancholia reveals the very structure of the Symbolic itself by illustrating that subjectivity veils the truth of itself because it is a function of what Bentham terms the “fictitious.” It is Bentham’s opposition of the real to the “fictitious” that draws Lacan’s attention to utilitarianism in the first place for “[f]ictitious does not

mean” something “illusory or deceptive as such,” since, as Lacan notes, Bentham rather develops it “in the sense that every truth has the structure of a fiction” (Lacan *Ethics* 12). The truth about subjectivity, then, is not that it is anonymous but rather that it is impersonal since nothing is ever substantive about subjectivity. This is not to say that there is no subject. Rather, subjectivity, like the Symbolic, functions fictitiously because the Symbolic functions in the same way that endocryptic identification works, since it is instead a product of signification, or, more accurately, the failure of signification. In the same way that there is no substantive link between signifier and signified, the failure of signification itself gives way to subjectivity.

Except the text does not present Mathilda at the end of the novella from the position of the melancholic. By dramatizing the incorporative fantasy as an involuntary transference of the father’s desire on to Mathilda, *Mathilda* instead presents subjectivity from a different and more challenging position to the Symbolic: from the position of feminine subjectivity. *Mathilda* therefore enacts melancholia only to subvert it as inadequate to the suffering that the title character experiences. This is not to say that women cannot be melancholic. Rather if melancholia functions by reducing the other to the *objet petit a*, *Mathilda* illustrates how feminine jouissance can experience both phallic jouissance and the jouissance of the other. The masculine position, therefore, only represents one side of the subject’s castrated relation to the *phallus*, because it can only take a position that is either/or (i.e. masculine only or feminine only), whereas the feminine can assume one, the other, or both at the same time. For this reason, *Mathilda* remains a textual abject, rather than a text that is either melancholic or cut-off from itself,

since it figures the masculine position in the text but does not adopt it in order to transmit the secret of Mathilda's suffering. Instead, as Rajan has argued,

[i]n accepting her abjection from the Symbolic order, Mathilda constitutes through her melancholy "a primitive self—wounded, incomplete, empty" (9)—of which her father becomes the unsettling and abjected rem(a)inder. From this point of view the text seems to mourn the loss of a relationship to a "masculine Romanticism" (10) figured in the father and Woodville as discarded images of Shelley and Godwin. De-jecting each of these narrativizations, or con-fusing and retaining the trace of each, *Mathilda* is neither this nor that and is instead a textual abject. (Rajan "Mary Shelley" 45)

Shelley does not choose to present at the end of the narrative a fully realized historical subject or a melancholic subject that is cut off from itself and from literary history more generally, since these are present in the novella to mourn the masculine position's failure to present a stable and ethical subjectivity.

Because the masculine position cannot accept its inability to rise to what Lacan has called the name-of-the-father, Shelley chooses a third option, which opens Mathilda's story towards the feminine position of the not-all that is closely associated with what Lacan has called the position of the partial object of the gaze. Although the gaze has been largely understood according to Laura Mulvey's influential "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) as the scopophilic function of the male gaze, Lacan elaborated it as one of several partial objects in the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: gaze, voice, breast, phallus*. To illuminate the difference between Mulvey's male gaze and Lacan's partial object of the gaze, one can understand it not as a vulnerability to being gazed at by a subject but rather, as Slavoj Žižek describes it otherwise in *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, as an "obscure point, the blind spot, from which the object looked upon returns the gaze." By the end of the narrative, we can finally decide where Mathilda is in relation to the Symbolic once we consider her as a partial object rather than

a lost object. The partial object illustrates a logic of the Symbolic's overinvestment in an object that is both lacking and in excess of what the Symbolic invests in it. It is, in a sense, in plain view and yet not present at all. Just like the letter in Poe's "The Purloined Letter," the partial object can only be seen as that which either fascinates the subject or threatens it, because as the third glance shows, the partial object does happen on the scene but rather reframes the scene as that which revolves around it. Like the third glance in Lacan's analysis of the Purloined Letter, Shelley chooses a third option of non-publication. She does not aim at publication only to fail because *Mathilda* is not published, because, as Rajan argues, she successfully reaches her aim by having William Godwin reject it for publication, thereby creating something that withdraws into a privacy that remains unreadable.⁸⁸ But whereas Rajan reads *Mathilda*'s transmission of an unreadable negativity as an intertextual engagement with William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and the economy of Romantic reading itself, Shelley is already performing this at the level of the text's own complex entanglement with a world of which it wants to have no part that it yet reaches out to in her final letter. The text's privacy transmits the destruction of place that results from its own death-drive, for once it is placed within the Symbolic, it forces the Symbolic to retreat into the partial object. This retreat, however, unveils how the Symbolic hides itself, because the partial object is not a

⁸⁸ Rajan also does not read the transmission of *Mathilda* to Godwin as evidence that Godwin frustrates her plans for publication. Rather, Rajan argues, "[t]he transmission of the manuscript to Godwin is, rather, a part of a highly overdetermined psychic text. . . . In sending the manuscript to Godwin, she does not so much seek the normal participation in the literary community signified by publication, as introject the need for community by locking her text within an incestuous mode of transmission. On another level, desperate and bitter as this gesture is about the (im)possibility of publication, it is also (self)protective. Mary protects her story from the publication she also wants by sending it to Godwin; like Mathilda [sic], she accuses and thus abjects her father, but also protects him and rejects her own work by sending him the manuscript and thus deferring its publication" ("Mary Shelley" 49).

part of the whole but is instead the part that structures how the partial scene presents itself as whole.

III. The Hysteric's Oblique Offering

At the beginning of the novella, Mathilda describes “a feeling that” she “cannot define” that pushes her to communicate her story to Woodville: it “leads me on and I am too weak both in body and mind to resist the slightest impulse. While life was strong within me I thought indeed that there was a sacred horror in my tale that rendered it unfit for utterance, and now about to die I pollute its mystic terrors” (5). Although this feeling goes unnamed, it is tied to the function of a different and more destructive incorporative fantasy than those we have analyzed up until this point in *Unread*. Derrida describes this as a passion that can only be termed “eucharistic,” otherwise known according to Jesus Christ’s words at the last supper, ““this is my body which is given up for you, keep this in remembrance of me”” (“Passions” 19). The eucharist, Christianity’s partial object *par excellence*, is understandably the object of community’s overinvestment in something that stands in for the loss of the absolute whole that is Christ’s body, which also stands in as the absolute correlative for the organic body of the all into one; at the same time, the eucharist gives rise to a promise that will be teleologically made real some time later in the future, yet it remains all the while irreducible to the elaboration of the immanence of community. What *Mathilda*, therefore, gives over to the reader in its transmission of her secret is the gift of the sublimated body of its author, a substitute that takes the shape of a text that goes beyond its own narrative conclusion to figure an afterlife that suitably follows the text’s own publication history. The rem(a)inder, then, of the existence of the

partial object shows that there is an element of the Real that remains within the Symbolic. For the partial object's existence points out that there is still a space that remains undetermined or irreducible, because it is a surplus area of production that, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, "unquestionably ha[s] a sufficient charge in and of [itself] to blow up all of Oedipus and totally demolish its ridiculous claim to represent the unconscious, to triangulate the unconscious, to encompass the entire production of desire" (*Anti-Oedipus* 44-45). "It is," as Mathilda writes to Woodville, "as the wood of the Eumenides none but the dying may enter; and Oedipus is about to die" (5).

Mathilda comes to occupy this space of *jouissance* not without her own trauma, as the adoption of a masculine position does not adequately fit her suffering. For it is not merely the loss of an object that Mathilda feels but a loss of being. Not merely another dissatisfied subject caught in the throes of a melancholic hope for the realization of a totalized object of pleasure, *Mathilda* allows the reader to see how the partial object becomes for the Symbolic what the lost object is for the melancholic subject of psychoanalysis. Mathilda embodies this function by adopting the hysteric's position in the novella, as her tale reveals the very real inadequacies of phallic *jouissance* in the figures of her father and of Woodville. For Mathilda cannot be satisfied with her relation to her father as the lost object, nor can she substitute Woodville's more sentimental, yet positive, sadness for her desire for her father's melancholia: "He was younger, less worn, more passionless than my father and in no degree reminded me of him" (52). While Mathilda first experiences the masculine position because her father passes it down to her, she does not accept it and thus rejects melancholia as the only means of expressing her desire. Following Copjec's reading of Lacan's masculine and feminine positions in

psychoanalysis, we can argue instead that *Mathilda* shows how “each side of the table describes a different impasse by means of which this question of the outside of language is raised, a different manner of revealing the powerlessness of speech” (Copjec “Supposing” 28).

The failure of the masculine position becomes apparent earlier in the novella at the moment Mathilda is approached by a “young man of rank,” whose presence causes Mathilda’s father to become “restless and uneasy whenever this person visited” (19). The introduction and sudden cessation of this intruder into the relationship between Mathilda and her father sets in motion the maelstrom of emotions that culminate in the revelation of the father’s incestual passion. Once the father realizes that the lost object can be taken away this results in the emotional violence he and Mathilda suffer. For when Mathilda’s father “imagined that” she “might be loved otherwise than as a sacred type and image of loveliness and excellence” and that” she “might love another with a more ardent affection than that which” she held for him, “then the fiend woke within” him (34). Characterized from the beginning of his life by “a secret”—simply, that “he loved”—the “intensity of his passion” also becomes his undoing, since the misery that he suffers and to which he submits Mathilda is driven on by his desire “for greater emotion than that which already tore him” (7, 22). Because her father exhibits no control over himself, and is completely given over to “involuntary feeling,” he instead submits to more “contrived” ways “to nurse his melancholy as an antidote to wilder passion” (24). What becomes evident, though, is that the two are interrelated, for the wilder passions do not seem to come on until the arrival of the young man of rank. When Mathilda as the *objet petit a* of his identity falls under threat, the father cannot assume any other identity than that of the

masculine position, which results in him doubling down on his use of melancholia in order to secure his place in the world as a whole subject, just as he did after the death of Diana seventeen years prior.

But the limitations of the masculine position are further reinforced by the father's failure to meet the logical demands of speech, that is, the demand that words succeed at producing their intended meaning. Nowhere is this clearer than in the father's declaration of love for Mathilda when he inverts what love means for her. For while she was still a child, Mathilda's father was the "idol" of her "imagination," as she writes:

My imagination hung upon the scene of recognition; his miniature, which I should continually wear exposed on my breast, would be the means and I imaged the moment to my mind a thousand and a thousand times, perpetually varying the circumstances. Sometimes it would be in a desert [sic]; in a populous city; at a ball; we should perhaps meet in a vessel; and his first words constantly were, "My daughter, I love thee"! (14)

When her father finally says the words that Mathilda had repeatedly imagined as a child, "My daughter, I love you!" cuts rather than binds language and meaning. As Jacobus rightly argues, the inversion of language "signals her recognition that her girlhood day-dream has become an incestuous phantasy, at once originating from outside as an impingement, and lodged with her as something guiltily known" (Jacobus *Scene* 183). Language, then, is transformed into a missed encounter with Mathilda's fantasy, and therefore collapses the entirety of Mathilda's perceived notions of recognition.

The father, rather than the young man, instead becomes the locus of Mathilda's desire, not because incest is acted upon but simply because it is spoken; as such, the incestuous avowal only further serves to illustrate the father's impotence and ungrounds Mathilda's sense of self within a Symbolic whose only consistency is guaranteed by the

possibility of recognition by the Other. In this sense, the “name of the father” literally ceases to function as that which prohibits incest and in turn destroys the fictitious veneer of the Symbolic. Because, as was noted above, Lacan equates the “fictitious” with “precisely what” he calls “the Symbolic,” we can understand the name-of-the-father as the function that smooths out the inconsistencies of the Symbolic (Lacan *Ethics* 12). As Lorenzo Chiesa points out, the name-of-the-father “stands for the Law of sexuation that prohibits incest,” so its role “is what one discovers at the root of any historically determined Other of the Other” (114).⁸⁹ The loss of her father as the support of the scene of recognition thus initiates the destruction of the order of appearances. Her father’s “phantom,” thereafter, “seize[s]” Mathilda, as she describes the feeling of the phantom’s “fangs on [her] heart”; furthermore, the transference appears in Mathilda’s ambiguous feelings for her father once he admits his incestuous passion for her: “I tore my hair, I raved aloud; at one moment in pity for his sufferings I would have clasped my father in my arms; and then starting back with horror I spurned him with my foot. I felt as if stung by a serpent, as if scourged by a whip of scorpions which drove me—Ah! Whither—Whither” (28). Unmoored without an Other of the Other that would permit even an ungrounded ground from which Mathilda could orient herself, in the words of Jacobus, Mathilda’s “[u]nspeakable happiness becomes a grief that dare not speak its name” (Jacobus *Scene* 183). But while Jacobus sees this as the moment in which Mathilda becomes traumatically cut off from herself, I argue that this grief that dare not speak its name reveals to her the female’s position within the Symbolic. As such, Mathilda is faced

⁸⁹ The importance of the prohibition to incest for psychoanalysis cannot be overemphasized, here. As Lacan argues, “Freud contributes what some call the discovery and others the affirmation, and what I believe is the *affirmation of the discovery*, that the fundamental or *primordial law*, the one where culture begins in opposition to nature, is the law of the prohibition of incest” (Lacan Seminar VII 66-67).

with the conclusion that Lacan understands as the feminine not-all of being, “that the woman is a product of a ‘Symbolic without an Other’” (*Encore* 36). While her father can no longer misidentify Mathilda with his deceased wife—“in my madness I dared say to myself . . . her mother’s spirit was transferred into her frame, and she ought to be as Diana to me”—once he recognizes that she is not ethereal or sacred but rather a finite, historical being, Mathilda similarly becomes incapable of viewing him as merely her father: “a lover, there was madness in the thought, yet he was my lover” (35, 37). For after her father’s suicide, the text explicitly figures a highly complex desire that can neither easily be understood as a melancholic incorporation of the lost object nor as an actual erotic desire for incest. Mathilda’s longing for death, therefore, cannot simply be read as a death-wish, but instead re-figures the text’s libidinal motivations into a writing that can only be what psychoanalysis calls the death drive.

The undefinable feeling that leads Mathilda to relate her story is therefore characterized less by feeling than by the undefinable quality of repetition that is brought on by the death drive. As Lacan has shown, and as was argued in Chapter 1, desire is essentially identical with the partial drives. To be perfectly clear, I say partial drives since, as Chiesa argues, “every drive should ultimately be regarded as a *death* drive,” since the “death drive is . . . a name for the irrevocable antisynthetic trait that forever separates the mythical undead (which is “killed” by the signifier) from its Symbolic designation” (143). The drive is itself always partial, since it is never able to complete its goal. This is the reason that Freud equates the death drive with the organic drive of biological life in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, not because the death drive is associated with “an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things”; rather this

urge to return to a previous state transforms repetition into the failure to re-find that which came before (Freud *Beyond* 30). In this sense, the death drive's destruction of its own goal makes it ultimately a conservative principle, as Freud writes:

Every modification which is thus imposed upon the course of the organism's life is accepted by the conservative organic instincts and stored up for further repetition. Those instincts are therefore bound to give a deceptive appearance of being forces tending towards change and progress, whilst in fact they are merely seeking to reach an ancient goal by paths alike old and new. (Freud *Beyond* 32)

In answer to Mathilda's initial question, "What am I writing?", one response that has not been considered is that Mathilda quite literally assumes the position of the partial object that substitutes itself for the actual satisfaction that she desires (5). What she is writing, then, produces a representation unlike any other that Freud calls *Vorstellungrepräsentanz*, which Copjec translates as ideational representation; ideational representation "is not any ordinary representation (insofar as representation is thought to be what causes the loss of being as well as the loss of the jouissance of the incestuous relation), but a peculiar kind of representation that permits us to grasp hold of some nonbeing, some jouissance, or satisfaction" (Copjec *Imagine* 35). The partial object, then, is the hysteric's oblique offering, a secret that, as Derrida says, "remains silent, not to keep a word in reserve or withdrawn, but because it remains foreign to speech" (Derrida "Passions" 27). It is according to this mode that Mathilda decides to "relate" her "tale . . . as if [she] wrote for strangers," for hers is a secret that tells itself in the terrifying tense of the posthumous voice that, in spite of the death of the author, remains as if the body were still present, undead and persistent.

IV. “For it will be the same with thee, who art called our Universal Mother”

While Mathilda, on the one hand, repeatedly “pray[s] for death,” and would “willingly have exchanged” her “state of mind . . . for nothingness,” on the other, there is an overriding and more pressing drive that prevents her from committing suicide, which is manifest at the level of the text itself: the desire for writing (45). For while it is true that Mathilda collects her thoughts into an autobiographical narrative to reveal a secret that was, as Blanchot says, “spurned by history, literature plays a different game” (Blanchot “Literature and the Right to Death” 57). As was shown with Wordsworth, autobiography forever remains caught in an undecidable situation, forcing the writer to assume a position on one side of the undecidable: fiction or truth. Whereas Wordsworth incorporated *The Prelude*’s secret in Book Five to prevent the shattering of his subjectivity, Shelley transforms *Mathilda*’s story into an act that affirms the immortality of the object as an impossible aim over the immortality of the mind as a represented object, thus overturning Wordsworth’s anxiety over these frail shrines that function as better substitutes. In other words, Mathilda escapes the economy of substitution and metaphor altogether by sublimating the body into the text. This is why Mathilda claims that her “hope and expectation” lies in her grave, an object of desire that neither she nor the reader can enjoy. Indeed, this is because her death as the object of desire does not conceal its nature. By affirming the object rather than herself, Mathilda becomes capable of affirming a truth that is as close as possible to the satisfaction of the drive with its object, what is ultimately the negativity of love. For Lacan, love is always illusory because there are no real encounters but only missed encounters, which is why Mathilda only achieves her encounter with her father through the sublimated act of writing: “I am in love with death;

no maiden ever took more pleasure in the contemplation of her bridal attire than I in fancying my limbs already enwrap in their shroud: is it not my marriage dress? Alone it will unite me to my father when in an eternal mental union we shall never part” (65). The affirmation of this truth, however, necessarily leads her to her own destruction, revising for us our concept of love in a way that also revises the humanist belief that love occurs in the recognition the Other’s otherness. *Mathilda* instead reveals that love is always “melodramatic,” since, to quote Copjec, melodrama “conceives love as necessarily entailing” missed encounters, because the very constitution of “amorous relations” brings “with them the annihilation of one or the other of the lovers” (Copjec *Imagine* 128). Mathilda’s love, therefore, is a gift of destruction, which also leads to the destruction of the world that excludes her. While this result is secondary to Mathilda’s act of communicating her letter, its relevance allows us to identify Mathilda with another character from classical Athenian tragedy who recuperates the writing of her letter into an ethical act: Antigone.

Long a subject of monumental readings of Athenian tragedy, specifically Hegel’s reading in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Antigone* is taken up by Lacan to explain “the essence of tragedy” not in terms of who was right and wrong, but to explain the specific wrong that tragedy “reveals to us”: “the line of sight that defines desire” (Lacan *Ethics* 247). For Lacan, both Antigone and Creon illustrate the opposition that separates the ethical act of Antigone (feminine position) from Creon’s reproduction of the good (masculine position), since the play shows that the “good cannot reign over all without an excess emerging whose fatal consequences are revealed by tragedy” (Lacan *Ethics* 259). By reading *Mathilda* via *Antigone*, not only can we highlight the differences between

Mathilda and Woodville's relationship with the 'good', we can finally understand what is ethical about the third option of the (un)published. To do so, let us look at the difference between Creon and Antigone. What distinguishes Creon from Antigone is that Creon exists to promote the good, while Antigone exists to go "beyond the limits of the human" by re-burying her brother against Creon's explicit edict, transgressing the limits imposed by the social good (Lacan *Ethics* 263). In Lacan's analysis, going beyond the law affirms that which is proper to love while being irreducible and unrelated to the law. Such an act is what Lacan identifies in *Antigone* with the word *Até*, an untranslatable word which Copjec reads in terms of "that point of madness where the family lineage is undone and overturns itself" (Copjec *Imagine* 42). While it would be simple to read *Mathilda* as a tragedy simply because Mathilda is traumatized by her father's incestuous passion for her, this conclusion would only see Mathilda's death in light of her father's desire rather than her own. Because Mathilda is not a melancholic but instead assumes the position of the not-all, her decision to revise the text into a letter rejects her father's story as that which becomes hers; rather, she affirms her own desire for her father and unbinds the totality of existence for herself by claiming a desire that goes beyond the law. In a similar way, Mathilda's transgression also affirms *Até*, just as Antigone "affirms the advent of the absolute individual," by affirming a desire best summed up by the phrase, "[t]hat's how it is because that's how it is" (Lacan *Ethics* 278). What most interests us for the moment, however, is that this madness is seen by Lacan not only as destructive but as an act of love, and thus requires us to transform how we understand love by attaching to the "word charity a savage dimension" (Lacan *Ethics* 278). This revised form of love, which both Mathilda and Antigone embody, illustrates the tragic dimension of what it means to act in conformity with one's own desire, to occupy the space that the social covers over

since it can never occupy it. *Mathilda*'s existence thus represents what Lacan sees in the "invocation of something that is, in effect, of the order of law, but which is not developed in any signifying chain or in anything else" (Lacan *Ethics* 278). In this sense, by taking on the "hideous necessity" of her existence as truly her own, Mathilda's desire becomes inextricably linked to her identification of herself as "a tragedy," a reflective surface from which "a character" like Woodville "comes to see [her] act" (6, 56).

Insofar as Mathilda's hope lies in "the turf [that] will soon be on [her] grave," the "[t]here" of her grave marks the autonomy of her "hope and expectation" against Woodville's hope which remains "in this world" (67). Immediately, one recognizes Mathilda's desire as distinct from Woodville's because he stands for a belief in poetry as a medium for 'the good.' When she asks him to accompany her in a suicide pact, Woodville's response has been correctly read in terms of a Shelleyan defence of poetry, for his rejection is framed in terms of the posthumous good done by the poetic work.

Let us suppose that Socrates, or Shakespear [sic], or Rousseau had been seized with despair and died in youth when they were as young as I am; do you think we and all the world should not have lost incalculable improvement in our good feelings and our happiness thro' their destruction. I am not like one of these; they influenced millions: but if I can influence but a hundred, but ten, but one solitary individual, so as in any to lead him from ill to good, that will be a joy to repay me for all my sufferings, though they were a million times multiplied; and that hope will support me to bear them. (59)

Woodville's defense, and its additional exhortation of Mathilda to "bestow happiness on another," operates on the assumption that the good can be achieved only in relation to those that surround him, since his mother and his friend all represent a duty towards the social "good" that is always directed towards the field of the Other (60). The application of this logic can essentially be summed up in Žižek's inversion of the oft-wrongly-attributed Dostoevskian phrase: "If there is a God, then everything is permitted." By

imposing the good as the limit to the world, one includes everything within a structure that thus redirects everything towards the good as its goal. But what is excluded, then, that resists the Symbolic order? What, as Rajan has rightly argued, becomes the good's "unusable negativity, a crucial part of which is its resistance to productive reading" (Rajan "Mary Shelley" 65)? In suffering for the good, what Woodville's insistence on the social aspect of poetry prevents is precisely *jouissance*, for the good places *jouissance* instead on the side of the Other, just as Woodville himself describes. Woodville's Romanticism, therefore, shows the fault in Woodville's idealism, for when describing his superior model of the world's "beautiful creation," Mathilda notes that there is no place for evil in a world that serves the good. In the words of Woodville, "evil is more easily separated" from "the good," which is "rewarded in the way they themselves desire; the evil punished as all things evil ought to be punished, not by pain which is revolting to all philanthropy to consider but by quiet obscurity, which simply deprives them of their harmful qualities" (52).

In declaring her love for her father, then, Mathilda can be said to occupy the position of Schellingian non-being, which is a desire defined by the "wild frenzy of inspiration in which nature found itself," and that embodies the unsupportable suffering of *jouissance*'s surplus enjoyment, best illustrated in Lacan's phrase, "I love in you something more than you" (Schelling *Ages* 3 102). Whereas this could be read in terms of the inaccessible core of the Other, Lacan's interpretation of something more depends upon how we understand love. For recall that it is the nonexistence of the Other for the subject that directs Lacan's reading of feminine sexuality. Therefore, what Mathilda loves in her father that is more than her father involves what Lacan calls "[t]he object" that "is

elevated to the dignity of the Thing,” that is, the partial object that is reconstructed retrospectively as that which is both lacking and in excess of the subject’s desire (Lacan *Ethics* 112). The Thing is something that is produced retroactively from within the cryptonymic topography of the Symbolic as the lost object of a complete and satisfied desire. As such, the Thing is the absence and presence of the Real within the Symbolic, occupying the register that Chiesa has called the Real of Language. As a result of its non-existence, this Thing is itself a product of the death drive (i.e. love). *Mathilda*, in its persistent framing of lost and missed encounters, dramatizes the function of desire, which constantly substitutes objects for the Thing in its rather than loving the Thing itself. But, unlike her father’s and Woodville’s transference of their desire on to Mathilda, which substitutes her for her mother or for Elinor, Woodville’s deceased wife, Mathilda idealizes her father in such a way that it can only be seen to idealize his melancholic position as a representation of a masculine Romanticism that Shelley both desires and rejects. That Mathilda’s father commits suicide signals for us the failure of masculine Romanticism’s project, and, therefore, negates any possibility that Mathilda or Shelley herself thinks of adopting the masculine position. But Mathilda holds on to this desire until the end of the novella to reveal how it veils its own fictitious nature, so she can finally embrace the death-driven conclusion of her fate.

The text frames Shelley’s ambivalence towards the masculine position within an illusory scene that Mathilda imagines once Woodville leaves her to rejoin his family. Inspired by his words of encouragement, Mathilda begins to dream of a “time” that “would come when [they] should all four, [her] dearest father restored to [her], meet in some sweet Paradise” (62).

I pictured to myself a lovely river such as that on whose banks Dante describes Mathilda gathering flowers, which ever flows And then I repeated to myself all that lovely passage that relates the entrance of Dante into the terrestrial Paradise; and thought it would be sweet when I wandered on those lovely banks to see the car of light descend with my long lost parent to be restored to me. As I waited there in expectation of that moment, I thought how, of the lovely flowers that grew there, I would wind myself a chaplet and crown myself for joy. (62-63)

What follows is one of the text's most crucial missed encounters, which sees Mathilda, who "was so entirely wrapt in this reverie," bend "down to gather a flower for [her] wreath," only to find herself "on that bleak plain where no flower grew," a place completely foreign to her: "I knew not where" (63). The illusion is made apparent in the barrenness of the plain, so that the melancholic fantasy is equally left without any external support. Mathilda's words are simple yet devastating: "I had lost myself, and in vain attempted to find my path" (63). The scene, therefore, precipitates both Mathilda's illness and the realization that her fantasy cannot escape the finitude of her death. However, these final nature scenes do not simply go the way of Wordsworth's Lucy poems, which Mathilda quotes: "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course/ With rocks, and stones, and trees" (64). Shelley, instead, provides her most forceful critique of the masculine subject's illusory at-homeness within a world of signifiers, as she finds the world of fantasy fails to provide Mathilda an object that would satisfy either mourning or melancholia, but also finds failure in the history of literature itself. For not only is *Mathilda* a text that does not find its place within a masculine Romantic canon, but it also does not accept the kind of writing presented within a literary canon populated by men such as Dante, Spenser, and Wordsworth, nor does it accept the kind of life posited by her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Indeed, as Rajan argues, the "[e]choes" of these poets "remain, but instead of being incorporated into the text's structure, they survive only on

the level of affect, where they protect a desire for idealization that the text is unable to use,” or even does not wish to use (Rajan “Mary Shelley” 46).

Mathilda’s feminine position, therefore, differentiates itself from masculine positions by transforming the way Mathilda’s body relates to the world psychoanalytically rather than merely existentially, which, in turn, alters the body’s position from incorporating itself in an outside towards a body that is, as Copjec says, “capable of *incarnating* what is other to it” (50). The partial object is crucial here since it radically transforms how we understand the posthumous voice of the text. For the partial object is not simply any object, but rather an object that does not coincide with itself, that is, an object that is both itself and that which exceeds it. Rather than incorporate the object to support the illusion of a unified ego, Mathilda recognizes that the split in the object itself reveals further splits and fractures that she is herself as a subject. It is in this regard that Mathilda’s paean to Nature addresses the fundamentally split nature of desire, in which both nature and the subject function as reflective surfaces that co-implicate subject and object in the construction of a recursive and unstable identity, as Mathilda writes to Nature itself:

You will exist to reflect other images in other minds, and ever will remain the same, although your reflected semblance vary in a thousand ways, changeable as the hearts of those who view thee. One of these fragile mirrors, that ever doted on thine image, is about to be broken, crumbled to dust. But everteeming Nature will create another and another, and thou wilt loose nought by my destruction. (65)

What remains the same about nature is the thousand different ways in which objects are experienced in ever-varying parallax views, so that the world is only ever the same when it is viewed as a universal hall of mirrors. No image, therefore, is ever original, but is always part of a complex distortion of the Real which Mathilda calls “our Universal

Mother” (65). That Jacobus fails to read this line in her reading of the “loss of the child to the mother and the loss of the mother to the child” in the novella is remarkable (Jacobus *Scene* 175). It is not that there is a repression of an idealized mother-child relationship that the novella fails to mourn, because Mathilda recognizes this only as a retroactive construction of a forever lost moment in existence because it never existed in the first place. The “Universal Mother,” then, is yet another name for the void of experience when the subject encounters itself as split from itself, recognizing the subject as yet another fragile mirror about to be broken and crumbled to dust. While this process of reflection might imply a shattering of the self, Mathilda takes pleasure in the unchanging nature of the parallax drive, since this recursive movement describes the movement of the death-drive’s satisfaction in never achieving its aim. Therefore, in this missed encounter, the failure of the encounter is not because there are two, a subject and the *objet petit a*, but rather because there is only one: Mathilda and her partial object are one. In other words, the aim of her desire is not merely to be with her father but with what is in her father that is more than him, that is, love.

Mathilda, therefore, ends with a different missed encounter because it comes to stand in for Mathilda’s body. As such, the text circles around the impossibility of narrating Mathilda’s own death so that the narrative conclusion itself produces an excess that is beyond its reach. This is the reason that the novella’s ending is tragic, but in such a way that requires a re-definition of how we conceive tragedy. For Mathilda desires to tell Woodville to “congratulate” her for she has “triumph[ed] now” and is “most happy,” but checks herself so that her story can allow Woodville to see her as he would like to, since “these may not be the consolations of the living” (66). But since Woodville is not the

text's only addressee, for Mathilda has written her life "as if [she] wrote for strangers," there is thus another message being communicated that goes beyond the narrative's conclusion (6). What role, then, do these strangers play at the end? Does this letter arrive at its proper destination? And if so, what destination are we meant to envision as its readers? If Mathilda's triumph is not written for the living, it must instead be written for the dead, or perhaps, more accurately, that which is undead in the human, that which is inhuman. For, unlike that which is excluded from the human (i.e. what is not human), the inhuman is that part which exceeds humanity and yet is inherent to being human. These two readers, Woodville and the unaddressed strangers, reveal a more radical opposition that condenses the issue of humanity to one that asks what is the difference between the human and the inhuman? Woodville, as the representative of the masculine position, is a veil for a teleological destination of the text, and acts, to paraphrase Žižek's words, as the text's "*logos*" which provides a view of "reality that relies on the constitutive exception of some mystical ineffable X ("there are things one should not talk about")" (Žižek *Less than Nothing* 748). Woodville's function, then, is to fill in the role of the narrative's apparent recipient so that it is left in question whether or not the letter arrives at its destination. But because Mathilda also writes as if for strangers, or other fragile mirrors of the world, the letter does arrive at its destination, because the recipient of the narrative's perspective is the Symbolic itself, since by even writing the letter, the text incarnates Mathilda's body as what is other to it, a partial object included within what would want to exclude it.

These inhuman reflections frame a world that is inconsistent with itself and cannot be veiled with any further supplements, and eliminates any question of whether or not a

letter arrives at its destination. The true destination of the letter shows that Woodville's concerns with posterity and the good veil the meaninglessness which Mathilda's death forces him to face. By comparing herself to Shakespeare's players in his famous "All the world's a stage" speech from *As You Like It*, Mathilda identifies herself as a partial frame for the world, for the "earth was to [her] a magic lantern and [herself a] gazer, and a listener but no actor" (66). That Shelley sent *Mathilda* to Godwin so that he would send it out for publication is thus an act that draws attention to the text as a partial object that questions the whole scene of literature itself. Like the involuntary withdrawal of Coleridge's relationship to "Christabel," *Mathilda*'s non-publication represents the failure of literature to transmit its message as constitutive of literature itself, regardless of its status as a published or (un)published object. Dissatisfied with the options available to its female heroine, Shelley chooses to send out the (un)published into a world that forces its characters to always adopt a masculine position when faced with the failure of the Symbolic. The (un)published, like the partial object, insists the world take notice of it and shape itself around it, because the partial object cannot be destroyed. Rather than cover over or be excluded from the Romantic economy of reading, *Mathilda* is included within it as the economy's most intensified point of the Real, a partial object that excessively rises up to contest the truth of the entire system of which it is supposedly only a part when it is in fact the whole.

Unlike Wordsworth's Lucy, who "neither hears nor sees," and whose existence provides no discernible "motion" or "force," *Mathilda* manifests the immortality of *jouissance* in the same way that Antigone identifies herself with Niobe, whom Schelling also refers to in his description of God's footstool. From their position, these three

daughters of equally wretched fathers occupy the position of the gaze, reminding their audience that our perspective on reality is inconsistent, but not because of the multitude of views with which the reader brings to reality; instead, these multiple views exist because reality is inconsistent with itself, an inconsistency which is made apparent in Mathilda's love for her father and his love for her. As her father says to her in his letter, "I saw the lovely and I did not love," for it is not the object itself but that which is in the object more than itself, the "except[ion] that" "led [Mathilda's father] ever to dwell" upon her (33). As Lacan says about love, it does not occur between two subjects, but, rather, between the barred subject (\$) and *objet petit a* in its missed encounter with that which it brings about. The novella, therefore, succeeds precisely by not succeeding, for Mathilda realizes that her hope and her expectation lies in the "turf" that "will soon be green" on her grave rather than "in this world" (67). For the hopes of the world put forward a future in which that hope may be redeemed, whereas the novella realizes that the only hope Mathilda desires is impossible, that is, a reunification with her father. Hence, like the Universal Mother that Mathilda addresses at the end of the novella, this hope will "exist to reflect other images in other minds, and ever will remain the same" to produce other "fragile mirrors" that will, eventually, crumble into dust (65).

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