ROMANTICISM'S MOVING BODIES: LITERARY

EMBODIMENT AND AFFECT

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Romanticism's Moving Bodies examines the centrality of the material body to poetry, prose, and visual culture of the so-called Romantic project in British Literature. In this project, I bring together the movement of body representations (how bodies move) and affect theory (how bodies move each other) to demonstrate that movement characterizes much of the thinking in the period about the problems and potentials of embodiment. I first explore body displacements and fantasies of disembodiment in Burke, Percy Shelley, Radcliffe, and Byron, which I posit as aesthetic experiments that hesitate to locate knowledge in a mutable, subjective body or that want to mount an imaginative escape from a body that feels too much. Next, I turn from individual concerns with embodiment to social anxieties about embodiment in public spaces and in the changing landscape of labor by analyzing "indeterminate," or unpredictably affected, mob and worker bodies, whose corporeality is emphasized because their embodied reactions to new circumstances are unknown. Thereafter, I explore the conceit of the hand to identify movements toward inter-subjective connection by reading *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* as Mary Shelley's projects of sympathetic inquiry, and I argue that these novels make a case for the centrality of tactile sympathy to human experience and the distress caused by its failures or foreclosures. Finally, I provide an extended reading

of William Blake's *Milton* to examine the body's potential as an affective and transformative strategy that can engage and challenge the reader to contemplate their own transformation. Methodologically, this project merges corporeally-focused theories of affect with phenomenological theories of embodiment, a number of which are drawn from dance studies, to account for the circulation of affect in and among bodies and inside and outside of the text. This approach seeks to uncover examples of how sustained attention to the material body produces illuminating readings of canonical and non-canonical texts of the period, to help advance affect theory as an important intervention in literary criticism, and to better understand how British Romantic literature *moves* its readers.

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ROMANTICISM'S MOVING BODIES

Wordsworth's (Languid) Body in Motion

In Wordsworth's well-known lyric poem, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," the

speaker offers a scene teeming with poignant detail. In purportedly friendly competition

with the waves of the lake beside them, the main object of contemplation in this poem,

the "crowd… of golden daffodils," entertains and captivates the speaker with a

"glee[ful]" dance (l. 6, 14). Wordsworth's shrewd attention to a natural environment

animated solely by a breeze—to the floating clouds, the fluttering trees, and the dancing

waves and daffodils—makes the primary scene of the poem so memorable that we might

almost forget about the speaker's odd self-introduction in the first line. Indeed, the poem

begins with an "I," but that self-awareness is immediately displaced into the simile

"wandered lonely as a cloud" (l. 1). To be able to recount this scene, the speaker is

registering powerful environmental stimuli; though, by definition, the poem's speaker is

just a voice rendered by the text, we should approach that voice as being part of a body

that can feel and experience an event since no human speaker can produce language

outside of this corporeally-mediated framework that informs consciousness. Yet, we

might be tempted to lose track of the embodied consciousness of the speaker amidst the

text's deep interest in the surrounding environment until the third stanza, when the

intrusion of the self-reference to "the poet" reminds us that this poem is not ultimately

about the scene itself at the moment of experience, but about a poet who absorbed the

details of it and then later physically took pen to paper to form it into a masterpiece. That

this poem has been—and continues to be—read as the chief example of Wordsworth's

poetic philosophy hardly needs mentioning. In the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth famously states that poetry should have its source in "emotion recollected in tranquility," which suggests that the best poetry comes not from a hurried or haphazard reflection on an event but a thoughtful and intentional reflection at a future time, and this process is followed with precision by the "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" speaker (611). Consequently, Wordsworthian speakers are often primed to soak in the minutiae of experience, and they also have the special gift for re-living those moments later in writing so as to strategically mine them for their poetic potential.

Because these recollections from tranquility very frequently entail metaphoric indexes of the experience to express the varied connections that the poetic speaker has drawn, critics often take a sudden leap into memory as a function belonging only to cognition and language. This connection has been implicit in critical literature that talks about Wordsworth's understanding of perception, memory, and "spots of time," but has become more explicit as critics have increasingly turned to studies of language that are inflected by cognitive studies. For example, Gerard Steen's analysis of metaphor in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" draws on the categories derived from cognitive linguistics (distinctions between linguistic and conceptual metaphors) and communicative metaphor analysis to posit that the natural elements of the poem (the flowers, the trees, and the waves) produce a literal framework to which non-literal elements (like "dancing") are tied (509). The strength of Steen's approach is locating webs of literal and non-literal referents across the poem that help us to make sense of the breadth of imaginative possibilities about this scene that might be drawn out in textual interpretation. But on the other hand, his approach is limited by its own conceptual strictures, such as frequent

attributions of verbs like "dancing," and "stretching" to the realm of the non-literal

because their referential register is in human movement rather than nature's. Steen relies

heavily on Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) without acknowledging

that Johnson went on to significantly expand work on metaphor by arguing that it has a

bodily basis in *The Body in the Mind* (1987),[1] and so we see no mention of the "non-

literal" actually registering as quite "real" in the poem.

Literary theory and criticism's lack of attention to both representations of the

body and the embodied consciousness of the feeling reader that comes into contact those

literary texts has, up until the last few decades, resulted in relative confusion about what

corporeality and embodied experience means for the study of literature; though many

scholars are now working at the intersection of what we might call "embodiment studies"

and literature, there is still much work to be done to illuminate why material bodies

matter in our textual readings. To demonstrate what is lost by this inattention, or, in

Steen's case, a kind of linguistic obscuring of the body, I will briefly return to

Wordsworth's poem to show just how embodied its representation of experience is, even

if his poetic speaker's best work is done while lying—languid—on a couch (l. 19).

Wordsworth's concerns with "nature, solitude, and the imagination" are, for

Michael Wiley, "material concerns" because of his deep investment in geographical

places, but this investment can also extend to the body's grounded role in a particular

landscape (3). The first line of the poem, "I wandered lonely as a cloud," initially seems

to disembody the speaker, but actually frames a network of physical referents that will

link the speaker's externally-focused experience of the scene to referents that can only be

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[1] Mark Johnson also writes about the bodily basis for metaphor in *The Meaning of the Body* (2007), but the volume was published after Steen's article.

understood through pre-existing experience of sensory perception including—most importantly—what movement *feels* like. The speaker can project simile onto the cloud only if he knows what it means to wander while feeling lonely; likewise, the "literal" referents of flowers and water moving may not be through dance, but the speaker can better understand and enjoy nature in motion if he can visually recognize aestheticized movement and recall what it feels like to dance. Perhaps the most unusual movement-oriented verb of the poem, "tossing," is syntactically connected to the heads of the flowers, which perhaps works to humanize nature's movement more than any other image in the poem. (I say "humanize" rather than "personify" because philosophically there is more at stake here than the aesthetic choice of assigning human qualities to non-human things.) Consider the basic anatomical structure of a flower: it has a head, a stem, and leaves; so, imaginatively, an individual human flower might be said to resemble a miniature human body and a field of flowers becomes a "crowd" (l. 3).

Somewhat unexpectedly, the acuity with which the speaker takes in the scene is interrupted by the repetition of "I gazed—and gazed—" (l. 17). Suddenly, the speaker's gaze seems not to be realizing its full potential, which he admits: he "but little thought / What wealth the show to me had brought" (l. 17-18). Framing the experience as a show with himself positioned as a (capitalist) spectator undervalues the speaker's centrality to the scene; in fact, the fourth stanza's explanation of the moment of recollection places the narrator at a distance (albeit an intentional one via the "bliss of solitude") from the time and space of the experience (l. 20). But critically, in the poem's final couplet, the speaker finally comes to terms with the effect that the experience had on him and he becomes a co-participant in the dance when his "heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the

daffodils" (l. 23-24). The tensions of metaphoric language have been borne away here:

he identifies an emotion that leads to a physical reaction wherein his heart doesn't dance

like the daffodils, but *with* them. The absolutism of this connection and the referents to

corporeal experience throughout the poem are strong enough that we might choose to

revise the earlier assumption that the speaker is a spectator rather than a participant (or, at

the very least, we can safely say that he becomes a fully-immersed spectator). For

Wordsworth, then, "recollection" may refer to a combination of ideas, phenomenological

experience, and cataloging how one was touched by affective influences.

I have chosen to take a corporeally-oriented approach to understanding this poem

both because it offers a reasonably straightforward example of the registers of embodied

experience in literary representations that can be easily ignored and because, somewhat

ironically, this poem features many of the core concepts and figures of my project:

physical motion, affect, crowds, and dancing. In this project, I will bring together the

movement of material bodies in texts (how bodies move) and affect theory (how bodies

move each other) to demonstrate that movement characterizes much of the Romantic era

thinking about the problems and potentials of embodiment. To do this, I will draw on

historically-oriented phenomenologies of movement, materialist accounts of emotion, and

theories of affect that are attentive to embodied experience. I locate this work within a

larger trajectory of cross-disciplinary, humanistic inquiry into the role of the body within

our perceptions of literature and of art as well as a vein of literary criticism that appeals

to the need for more holistic knowledge of material bodies. In the remainder of this

introduction, I will elaborate the stakes of the inquiry, the refrain of critical vexation to

which it responds, and the innovative way that I will draw in dance theory and philosophy to understand material bodies in their representations and performances.

The Death and Rebirth of Affect

In two preliminary chapters in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley attempt to show the pitfalls of critical approaches to literature that are not rooted in what the text itself means or suggests. First, the well-known chapter "The Intentional Fallacy" posits that interest in what the author intended to say or intended to mean is not a legitimate subject of inquiry; second, "The Affective Fallacy" chapter challenges frameworks for textual inquiry that consider readers' emotional reactions on the premise that this path leads to relativism and subjective conclusions. Wimsatt and Beardsley make only one concession to this claim, noting that historicists will always be interested in the reactions of a text's contemporary readers as a way of better understanding the culture of other periods and places; we want to know more about Shakespeare's audiences, for example (27-28). Otherwise, emotion is denigrated as a kind of obstacle or distraction from the work that literary criticism is supposed to do: "Emotion, it is true, has a well-known capacity to fortify opinion, to inflame cognition, and to grow upon itself in surprising proportions to grains of reason" (26). Of course, to fortify "opinions" rather than arguments hints at the problem of relativism, and the other two examples depict emotion as—in sequence—an inflammation or a kind of tumor.

These metaphors of emotion-focused criticism as bodily disease are amplified and further dramatized by a longer list of analogues, which surfaces later in the chapter:

Poetry is characteristically a discourse about both emotions and objects, or about

the emotive quality of objects. The emotions correlative to the objects of poetry

become a part of the matter dealt with—not communicated to the reader like an

infection or disease, not inflicted mechanically like a bullet or a knife wound, not

administered like a poison, not simply expressed as by expletives or grimaces or

rhythms, but presented in their objects and contemplated as a pattern of

knowledge. (38)

Aside from the fact that the series of violent corollaries do more to undermine than

support their premise that objectivity comes into question under any claim about all

readers being affected in a particular way, I would admit that their starting point presents

a reasonable question. It is true that if literary criticism only dealt with the reader's

personal feelings—particularly if little is done to anchor those feelings in particular

elements of the text that produce them—then criticism will lapse into relativism. But

ultimately, Wimsatt and Beardsley's claims about the perils of trying to assess emotional

responses to literature overstates the case, suggesting in turn that a kind of formalist

approach that largely ignores what is outside of the text is a more productive form of

criticism. Moreover, this implied conclusion problematizes any attempt to consider the

role of the reader/critic in literary inquiry, which has the further effect of treating the text

as if it exists in a vacuum, entirely divorced from its consumers and aficionados (and

authors).

Since Wimsatt and Beardsley, literary criticism, and the criticism of Romanticism

in particular, has found more productive ways to address emotion—and, indeed,

embodiment more generally—without spiraling into subjectivity. New Historicist critics,

for instance, have offered many objective inroads into embodied subjectivity by very carefully locating characters (and the textual representations of their bodies) as historically and culturally-specific productions. My work in this project is implicitly and explicitly indebted to the methodological work and findings of scholars who have been more attentive to the material stakes of thinking about bodies in history than previous generations of historicists. Perhaps more than any other critical work in recent years, James Chandler's ambitious *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* exemplifies the value of the recent "return to history" in literary criticism, which involves "an effort to read texts in representative relation to the dated historical situation in which they were produced and once consumed" (5). Chandler's attention to the historical facts and figures that we know (and his admission of those we do not) illuminates greater cultural trends that have bearing on historical bodies and their representations, like political tensions that led to the Peterloo Massacre. Alongside Chandler, Saree Makdisi's *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* and John Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* both do exceptional work in elaborating the historical circumstances with which Blake's works and his own political ideology were intertwined; and bridging New Historicism with studies of affect and form, Miranda Burgess' "On Being Moved: Sympathy, Mobility, and Narrative Form" considers how the rise of global transportation provided increasing awareness of the tension between interiority and the possibility of external affect, which Burgess argues was expressed as anxiety in representational forms.

Aside from the connections between affect and form that Burgess elaborates, other critics working on accounts of form and rhetoric in Romantic-era literature have also impacted the way we conceptualize embodiment. Poets of the period were, of course, deeply invested in thinking about form and language, and texts that include phenomenological experience necessarily implicate some degree of thinking about how best to portray perception (real or imagined) in a chosen formal structure and under their admitted limitations of language. The concentrated attention to the embodied practice of reading in Susan Wolfson's *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* produces such insight as "a reader's eyes must turn from one line to the next, an action that releases the poet's apostrophe from the fictive space of invocation into phenomenological agency" in Blake's "To Spring" (38); additionally, she considers how form can provide the poet with a conscious (but formally dangerous) vehicle for emotional content in Wordsworthian and Keatsian ballads when she says that "it is the power of ballads… that these senses do not contradict one another so much as enact their own strange fit: the way form bears passion, even as passion threatens form" (183). Additionally, Laura Quinney's recent book *William Blake on Self and Soul* unlocks previously obscured rhetorical choices across Blake's texts, particularly on the subjects of narrating subjectivity and consciousness, which marks a very important new contribution to long-standing critical conversations about issues that affect Blake and other romantic poets.

Recent affective criticism has, better than any other distinct strain of criticism, taken the material body and its representations seriously. Before the mid-nineteenth century saw a division between men of letters and men of science, many writers were

philosophizing what we would now call terms related to affect—feelings, moods, sensations, emotions, and passions—so this line of thinking can be traced back to and clearly located in Romantic literature (Favret 1159). In the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," William Wordsworth puts forth a theory of poetry as a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and the poet as a man "possessed of more than usual organic sensibility" (598) while Immanuel Kant elaborates careful differences between what has been translated as affects and passions in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Viewpoint*.[2] In the twentieth century, scholars have been careful to distinguish among affect's range of terms, and there is some agreement in usage. According to Rei Terada: "by *emotion*, we usually mean a psychological, at least minimally interpretive experience whose physiological aspect is *affect*. *Feeling* is a capacious term that connotes both physiological sensations (affects) and psychological states (emotions)" (4). I will observe these definitions, but with a few additions: feelings are often classed as subjective and interior, whereas emotions are socially-coded and named, and affect is a category of intersubjective resonances.

In the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, however, there have been—and continue to be—two definitive directions of inquiry within the field of affective literary studies, each with a unique emphasis on corporeality: on the one hand, a cognitive approach to affect that centers affective processes in the mind (such as Rei Terada's articulation of a post-structuralist approach to feeling *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject"*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's assemblage of threads from psychoanalysis, psychology, and speech-act theory in *Touching Feeling:*

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[2] For a detailed and accessible discussion of Kantian theory of emotion, see D. Williamson's *Kant's Theory of Emotion: Emotional Universalism*.

Affect, Pedagogy, and Performativity, and Sianne Ngai's exploration of negative feelings in *Ugly Feelings*); and on the other hand, an embodied approach to affect that centers consciousness in a holistic mind-body relationship (Teresa Brennan's exploration of affect as a contagious mode of inter-subjectivity in *The Transmission of Affect*, Paul Redding's historically-oriented study of philosophies of embodied affect in *The Logic of Affect*, and Brian Massumi's argument for affect as a system that functions in tandem with but is separate from cognition in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*). Both routes of affect theory continue to offer a different array of insights into our contemporary understanding of what it means to live in, through, and with a material body, and both have also been adopted as frameworks through which to revisit representations of cognition, the imagination, and subjectivity during the Romantic period.

In his review of affective criticism since Wimsatt and Beardsley, John Hughes suggests that their work "exemplified an institutional need for a paradigm of the literary work as a cognitive object, a construction that justifies the professionalized editing out of what has become … seen as occult, all-determining, psychological processes of intention or affect" and that this impulse toward the "cognitive object" to some degree underpins the continued interest in affect via cognitive studies (5). I find this to be a persuasive account of developments in literary criticism and theory because the efforts of contemporary literary critics working with cognitive studies often posit the brain as the controlling mechanism of the body and of consciousness and, consequently, give significantly less—and almost passing—attention to anti-dualistic cognitive theories. Scholars Alan Richardson, Mark Bruhn, and Ashton Nichols are at the forefront of

Romantic studies that use cognitive models of affect, and have offered countless new readings of texts that illustrate an intense scientific and aesthetic interest in the processes of cognition and how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century "brain science" provided new ideas about the inner workings of the brain. I do not want to underemphasize the magnitude of these contributions to our understanding of some of the central figures of Romanticism—imagination, consciousness, etc.—but I do want to point out how this approach tends to underemphasize the body. As a means of brief illustration, in Alan Richardson's *The Neural Sublime*, Richardson very plainly states his theoretical relationship to embodiment, which he casts in a historical light: "All of this [concern with psychology] is not to imply that the (scientific) fact of the mind's embodiment is trivial. Avoiding the relativistic extreme… we can reliably assume that human minds have always and everywhere been instantiated in brains and required reasonably intact brains in order to function reasonably well" (13-14). This conception of the brain presents a very practical view to human biology and cognition, of course. But then Richardson continues: "What we see is conditioned by what we already think, the 'background' that forms our largely unquestioned assumptions and beliefs, the discursive systems that give form to our thoughts and expressions, and, not least, the species-specific cognitive equipment that may favor some thoughts and modes of thoughts over others" (14). This "conditioning" and "background" knowledge (Richardson is possibly hinting at heuristics here, too) are all primarily cognitive processes to him, whereas I would argue that we are conditioned by what we have *experienced*, and by the naturalized affect that has resonated in our bodies, which would be embodied processes. I present this example not to suggest that Richardson is wrong but to show that my emphasis on representations of

embodied experience ultimately departs from his emphasis on representations of cognition and that this pattern of departure is more widely true when I characterize my project and its aims as something other than the critical work on affect in cognitive studies.

As an alternative to this cognitive model, a number of critics are now taking up body-centered affective criticism, often with an eye toward not only the stakes of bodily representation in literary texts but also in the affective relationship that readers have to reading these texts. Addressing both British and German Romanticism, Thomas Pfau's *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790-1840* traverses a number of the categories I have mentioned in its attention to the history of affect, the affective implications of form, and its attention to material embodiment. Though Pfau opens with an announcement that his aim is to "map a psychohistorical narrative of European romanticism in three successive stages," he underestimates his own ability to suspend issues of cognition and closely interrogate how "moods" affect the body. Mary Fairclough's *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy, and Print Culture* considers how sympathy (and the sympathies dispersed through print culture) are primarily figured as contagions, which implicates reading bodies as potential sites of infection and problematizes bodies en mass on the street. Additionally, two recent scholarly monographs stand out as exemplary models of reading literature for the stakes of corporeality in representations of bodies and for their intentional and explicit self-distancing from cognitive models. First, John Hughes' *"Affective Worlds": Writing, Feeling, & Nineteenth-Century Literature* considers how authors from Blake to Hardy understand subjectivity and individual "becoming" in a Deleuzian sense. One of his most

interesting interventions is a chapter on two of Wordsworth's pedestrian inclinations, "walking" and "wandering," and how these different types of movement clue us in to different explorations of subjectivity and feeling (44-45). Second, Erin Goss' *Revealing Bodies: Anatomy, Allegory, and the Grounds of Knowledge in the Long Eighteenth Century* provides extraordinarily clear readings of the predicaments of knowing a potentially unknowable body and the tension created between the allegorized universal body and the particularities of individual bodies. Perhaps most notable about these works is the combination of their sustained attention to textual bodies and meaningfully objective discussion of how the effects of affect seep beyond the frame of the text.

But the most important work in recent years on affect in Romanticism is Steven Goldsmith's *Blake's Agitations*. His introduction, entitled "The Future of Enthusiasm," begins with "an assumption not every reader will share: that it is exciting, even viscerally exciting, to read William Blake" and then goes on to propose three bold claims:

> (1) to turn the academic study *of* emotion—a topic at the center of scholarly concern for two decades now and across multiple disciplines—into a study of emotion *in* acts of criticism themselves; (2) to situate historically the emergence of emotion as a constitutive element of critical engagement by examining the surprisingly representative case of William Blake; (3) to consider why the work of emotion persists in post-Romantic criticism—and specifically, why it calls for but does not ultimately yield to demystification. (7)

With these ambitions, Goldsmith takes on the project of tracing the threads of emotional and sympathetic inquiry (a body of work that continues to be important for all studies of affect) and surveying the current landscape of affective inquiry through the framework of

Blake's concept of enthusiasm; he then uses Blake as a case study for how emotion and affective relationships to texts have been underpinning literary criticism all along and are, in fact, necessary for the kind of rigorous and "enthusiastic" critical engagement that Blake makes a case for (and, indeed, demands of his own readers). Though Goldsmith is primarily interested in Blake, his work has the wider implications of promoting the study of affect across Romantic texts as well as for attention to affect as part of all critical frameworks. (For these reasons, *Blake's Agitations* will be instrumental to my work on Blake's own affective claims on the reader in Chapter Five.)

The relatively nascent vein of corporeally-attentive affective literary criticism seeks to answer the question that continues to vex critics of literature (in spite of Wimsatt and Beardsley's legacy): how do our favorite literary texts *move* us? This question has become a refrain in recent Romantic scholarship. Jonathan Mulrooney, in his article "How Keats Falls," expresses his "own commitment to exploring how Keats's poetry *moves*" with the implication that, in expressing this personal commitment, he is also interested in how Keats's poetry affects him as a reader (264). Likewise, in her article "The Study of Affect and Romanticism," Mary Favret points out that a recent return to esthetics provides the opportunity to examine "the study of feelings, sensations and their value as the encounter with what *moves* us" (1160). With this project, I hope to extend the body-attentive work in literary studies that Pfau, Hughes, Goss, and Goldsmith have begun by calling our attention to the range of affective processes that do not solely reside in the mind; at the same time, I seek to further advance this methodology by showing that literature's potential for circulating affect inside the text (among characters) and outside

of the text (with and through the reader) can be identified through a close attention to movement among and between real (historical) bodies and their literary representations.

Movement's Movements

Amidst models of literary and cultural criticism that are now more amenable to thinking about material bodies than at any previous time in history, Brian Massumi makes what still seems to be a radical claim about conceptualizing human embodiment in his book *Parables for the Virtual*:

> When I think about my body and ask what it does to earn that name, two things stand out. It *moves*. It *feels*. In fact, it does both at the same time. It moves as it feels, and it feels itself moving. Can we think a body without this: an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons the other? (1)

To say that a body feels is not news to humanistic critical frameworks; the annals of thinking on feeling and emotion are immense in depth of inquiry, disciplinary breadth, and sheer quantity, and continue to be necessary for any holistic treatment of embodiment. But, the uniqueness of Massumi's intervention is that the body moves— *and* that it moves and feels. To move is to feel movement happening, and to feel is to sense that something has been moved or transformed in the body. These two processes may seem familiar enough, but being able to name the body, which requires conscious attention to the fact that moving is central to corporeal experience and to what we can possible know about the body (our own or someone else's), is somewhat more perplexing; we then must consider, too, how to apply this embodied knowledge to reading representations of bodies in literary and cultural texts. As inheritors of the

Cartesian legacy, we are still conditioned to privilege the rational mind over the "dumb" body—we ignore it except to assuage basic needs and desires, we endlessly seek to transform it, and we treat it more like a tool for our use than as a central component of everything we have ever experienced and thought. Thus, to take up Massumi's approach in literary studies requires unlearning some of our traditional habits of thinking about the body; yet, to seek greater understanding of embodiment and affective interaction between bodies through the confluence of movement and feeling is just unsettling enough to encourage us to rethink our assumptions about corporeality without losing touch with the material stakes of our own embodied condition as contemporary readers.

With this project, I propose that employing movement as an index for what it means to know and represent embodied, affective experience allows us to better understand the problems and possibilities of the material body in literature of the British Romantic period. To do this, I will draw on both the methodologies and foundational ideas of many of the aforementioned literary critics and theorists who push back against cognitive models and seek to reintroduce the role of the body into all facets of lived and imaginative experience (and their literary representations). This project, however, takes a unique approach to the study of movement and affect because it will look to dance theory and philosophy as an important site of expertise at the intersection of materiality, aesthetics, affect, cognition, ability/disability, history, performativity, and cultural norms about embodiment. While a few scholars—including Ellen Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy in their introduction to *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance* (1995)—have explicitly asserted the value of bringing literary and dance studies into communication with each other, I am the first to do so with the intention of closely

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interrogating the stakes of embodiment in poetry and prose. This interdisciplinary inflection underpins the entire project (indeed, the project began with my interest in what dance studies could offer literary studies) but will be most apparent when I investigate the affective potential of Blake's dancing figures in Chapter Five.

I launch the project, however, not with affective strategies for reader engagement but with the problems and hesitations about embodiment that prompt a number of Romantic writers to fantasize about movement *out* of the body to further the aims of critical objectivity or to escape the weighty feelings associated with embodiment. Chapter Two, "Disembodiment and Displaced Bodies," investigates two particularly acute problems of embodiment. In this section, I begin by surveying the modes of knowledge about the body that were actively being built in the late-eighteenth century as a result of increased access to corpses for anatomical study but before the cultural discourse of bodily norms took hold in the mid-nineteenth century. Under these historical considerations, Romanticism's representations of the human body bear the dual burden of eagerness to better understand the body and of fearing its enduring mysteries. I then pose two (admittedly unlikely) author pairings: first, Edmund Burke and Percy Shelley to explore the use of the body as a kind of "prop" for aesthetic experimentation that hesitates to locate any objective knowledge in an unstable, mutable, and subjective body, ultimately leading to the displacement of that body; and second, Ann Radcliffe's novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Lord Byron's drama *Manfred* as windows into the problematization of sentimentality, or feeling too much, and a consequent escape into a state of disembodiment as a means of relief from the distress of the feeling body. Yet, as I argue in my attention to both of these problems, these narrative and aesthetic flights

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from the body pursue an impossible aim of divorcing cognition and reason from embodied experience because, as Mark Johnson claims, literary figures of metaphor are necessarily rooted in corporeality.

The third chapter, "Indeterminate Bodies: Mobs and Workers," considers corporeal movement as indeterminate potential made manifest in public spaces and in the changing landscape of labor, drawing on Massumi's term "indeterminate" to signal the unpredictability of the affectively moved body. This chapter is framed by a close reading of *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë's 1849 novel reflecting on the 1811-1812 Luddite uprisings in Yorkshire, in which mob threats and destruction underscore the powerful material implications of collective bodily action—to the extent that the novel employs a *deus ex machina* plot device to resolve the tensions between workers and management before the social order is torn asunder. Returning, then, to the roots of this anxiety about mobs in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, I argue that depictions of "mob mentality" equally exhibit the threat of irrational thinking and a fear of the sheer physical force that can be inflicted by a mob. In Percy Shelley's poem "The Mask of Anarchy," for example, the militia is figured as a mob that inflicts unjust violence; but since the last stanza implies that this oppressive force can be turned back upon itself if the populace rises up, Shelley suggests that a bodily response (a new "mob" without the blinding "mob mentality") could effect significant political and social change. The importance of this kind of response has immediate ramifications for the historical context about which Shelley was writing, but I argue that it also suggests that effective political and social resistance can be bodily and not simply intellectual in nature. Furthermore, under evolving circumstances of labor in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century,

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literary depictions of hard physical work deploy bodily indeterminacy to depict the threat these new pressures pose to bodily integrity and selfhood, resulting in a collection of texts that protest modern work. I argue that Charles Lamb's consideration of effects of modern business on the laborer in "The Superannuated Man" and "Work" suggests an integrated mind-body consciousness framework wherein an individual's mental and overall well-being depends on the state of the physical (working) body; William Blake's two "The Chimney Sweeper" poems from the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* make similar suggestions about the connection of mental and physical health, even though certain ideologies (for Blake, primarily religious ideology) depend upon divisions between mind and body (or body and soul).

The fourth chapter, entitled "Sympathy and the Ministry of Physical Touch," uses the conceit of the hand to identify movements toward tactile sympathetic connection inflected with ethical obligations to respond to suffering. This chapter draws on the history of touch and affective literary studies to understand the ways in which inter-subjectivity can be activated by feelings of sympathy literalized through tactile gestures of sympathy. Considerations of touch in conduct literature and Keats' poem "This Living Hand" provide a sequence of points of departure, since ideas about touch were governed both by rules of conduct and developing knowledge about sensitivity of the nerves in the hand and fingers. As a precursor to the "invisible hand" of economics, Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* foregrounds questions about the role of sympathy in social relations and how it is produced situationally when we imagine the feelings or the subjectivity of another individual; Smith also makes provocative links between the "passions" and the sensations concomitant to the experience of the material body, such as

hunger and bodily pain, and his elaboration of the ethical impulse to empathize with others is bound up in a shared knowledge of bodily experience. I then turn to two of Mary Shelley's novels, *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*, which I argue are texts deeply interested in the centrality of sympathy to human experience and the distress caused by its failures or foreclosures. *Frankenstein* has long been acknowledged as a narrative about the failure of sympathy, but my close readings of scenes where touch (or its refusal) is at play demonstrate how these moments of lost sympathy are turning points in the novel. *The Last Man*, I argue, further interrogates the circulation of sympathy and the importance of touch as a mechanism of sympathetic feeling—an affective act that is, in fact, dangerous in the face of the plague since contagion is spread by physical contact. My reading complements and extends previous criticism on the novel, which has predominately focused on its narrative of "lastness," since I posit that the novel ends in a collapse of sympathetic relations and intends to show the devastating consequences that such a barren world has on the last remaining human being; Lionel's desolate world is paralleled by Walton's accidental witnessing of a desperately lonely Creature holding Frankenstein's body and mourning the loss of his creator.

The final chapter of the project, "Blake and the Sympathetic Strategies of Movement in *Milton*," provides an extended reading of William Blake's *Milton: A Poem* to examine the body's potential as an affective and transformative strategy that can engage and challenge the reader to contemplate their own transformation. Among the Romantic poets, Blake presents the most immediately tangible engagement with the body due to the sheer quantity of bodies in the written text as well as in his illuminations. While I draw on the long history of Blake scholarship's critical engagement with varied

aspects of embodiment (particularly his explicit repudiation of Cartesian dualism and his promotion of enthusiasm), I also consider the narrative value of moving bodies that populate the written text and the illuminations of *Milton: A Poem*. I use the lens of phenomenological approaches from the field of dance studies to better understand the always-in-process nature of movement as well as the concept of "kinesthetic sympathy," which posits that viewers of dance experience a sensation of movement in their bodies without actually moving, as a means for investigating Blake's affective designs on his audience. In the movement of the character Milton, Blake constructs not only the potential of an integrated mind-body consciousness but also the ability to develop shared kinesthetic understanding with readers by the way the text describes Milton and through the different visual perspectives on Milton as he moves through his journey of transformation. By setting up a framework of shared bodily experience so that readers can identify with the movement taking place in the text, Blake deploys the means for readers to imaginatively inhabit Milton's moving body, and consequently, to understand the importance of the "self-annihilation" that Milton undergoes by moving through a space that signifies the completion of that process.

The final chapter, which functions as the project's coda, provides final commentary on the process and stakes of the project. First, I discuss the embodied experience of literary critique, extending Steven Goldsmith's idea of enthusiasm as a central to the critical engagement process by acknowledging the embodied labor that goes into academic work. Second, I discuss some of the practical and methodological challenges of doing the kind of interdisciplinary research required for this project since, in addition to the lingering scholarly doubts about the body, there are also remaining

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hesitations about what a field like dance studies can contribute to the study of literature. Finally, I return to one of the founding questions of this project—why does literature of the British Romantic period *move* many readers? —to offer a few proposals for future lines of inquiry that embrace the affective relationship between text and reader as they are constituted through Romantic literature (but also as they might be applied to the texts of other literary periods that different groups of readers find *moving*) by thinking about how texts are positioned to elicit responses from readers. Attention to these affective circulations inside and outside of the text can illuminate literary and cultural texts in new ways, continue to teach each of us about our own practices of reading, and—perhaps most importantly—help to remind us of the importance of minding the body.

CHAPTER II

DISEMBODIMENT AND DISPLACED BODIES

Projects of Bodily Knowledge

In *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism*, Paul Youngquist sets up one of

the foundational premises of embodiment in the modern era: "one of the cultural projects

of a liberal society, with its individualist and capitalist commitments, is to build a proper

body that circulates a norm for human health and wholeness" (7). Toward this end,

during the latter half of the eighteenth century, the notion of a building scientific

knowledge about the body was well underway through anatomical and medical study.

Though dissection was still socially stigmatized on religious grounds, The Murder Act of

1752 enabled surgeons to take possession of the corpses of executed criminals and to

dissect them, though scholars have argued that this policy was intended to add the threat

of a gruesome punishment to particular crimes rather than to advance scientific

knowledge about the body (Youngquist 16); as we see in *Frankenstein*, grave robbing

also allowed those interested in science to experiment with corpses and delineate human

and animal distinctions. Aside from investigating anatomical differences between

species, one of the great eighteenth-century fascinations was the notion of "vitality," or

the mysterious spark of life that made the difference between a corpse and a living

being,[3] which contributed to the general desire to know how bodies were "supposed" to

work.

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[3] Three excellent studies of vitalism inform the way I consider the implications of "the principle of life" in Romantic understandings of embodiment: Sharon Ruston's *Shelley and Vitality*, Denise Gigante's *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism*, and Robert Mitchell's *Experimental Life: Vitalism in Romantic Science and Literature*. While vitalism does not play a central role in this chapter —historically-oriented examinations of contemporary scientific about the body in the eighteenth century do a much better job of articulating the nuances of this concept than I can here—I will say more about Shelley's relationship to vitalism later in this chapter.

As Lennard Davis has pointed out, corporeal "norms," as we term them today, were not fully an object of study until the 1830s (3), so studying embodiment during the Romantic period pre-dates the cultural circulation of terms like "normal," "normalcy," and "abnormal."[4] Neatly observing these terminological developments, Youngquist's fascinating book explores the precursor to cultural norms about bodies through what he calls the "proper body," and to define what this term meant during the Romantic era, he explains what categorically *did not* count: the "freak" and "monstrous" bodies that were measured against "a rule of health," but were also made into public spectacles of entertainment (9). For example, Youngquist considers narratives of abnormal bodies put on display to underscore the language of fascination used to describe them, such as an exceedingly tall man described as "a stupendous mass of flesh" even when his height was moderately obscured by him sitting rather than standing (39). The Romantics did not yet draw a close association between physiology and psychology—a connection that arises in *Frankenstein*, but is not literalized to the extent that it would later be in Victorian literature like *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; so, according to Youngquist, interest in extreme examples of body diversity, abnormality, and disfigurement during the period was more of a somatic nature, though assumptions were certainly made about the morality of physically deviant bodies (9, 13).

Methodologically, Youngquist's approach to investigating the "proper body" through monstrosities implicitly subscribes to a prevalent trend in embodiment studies: it is so difficult to say what the body *is* that it is often easier to approach the problem by articulating what it *is not*. While the notion of language's limitations has a long history

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[4] See also Ellen Adams' "Defining and Displaying the Human Body" for more information about the new wave of discourse around "normal" and "abnormal" bodies that would shape cultural and medical discussions about the body (74).

and arises often in the context of studies of language and literature, discourse about the body wades into even murkier territory since the body resists fully objective and universal treatment in language (an issue which will be one of the central focuses of this chapter). Out of necessity, I will take the same methodological approach in this chapter: as a way to begin investigating the stakes of material embodiment in Romantic literature, I will look to moments of disembodiment and displaced bodies as a means to uncover the predicaments of corporeal experience and representation that writers faced. The goal, here, is to understand why authors sometimes chose to elide the body's representation, even in the midst of the difficulty of doing so. More broadly, I will propose that we should read material bodies and their connection to the mind both as part of the network of new knowledge cultivated during the Romantic era and as part of the series of problems of embodiment in which its literary productions are entangled. In essays, treatises, novels, and poetry of the period, we can find a new emphasis on sensation and holistic forms of "feeling" that implicate the body in knowledge of oneself and connections to the world, which will be the subject of subsequent chapters; yet, at the same time, the body is often elided because it produces subjective (rather than objective) states of feeling and because of its perceived submission to cognition and intellectual forms of imagination, and it is to these problems that I will turn first.

To demonstrate two particularly acute problems of embodiment, I will take up two pairs of Romantic authors whose works help to unearth some of the peculiarities and nuances of thinking about bodies during this period. First, I will discuss Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which puts on subtle display an approach to the body as a kind of "prop" for aesthetic

experimentation and investigation, alongside the work of Percy Shelley, an author who was also more interested in the idea of the body rather than the material body itself; taken together, Burke's and Shelley's work disclose serious hesitations about rooting any knowledge of artistic practice in the body and provide aesthetic reasons for displacing bodies in a retreat to mind-centric language. Second, I investigate Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, which insists on cognitive control over the body's tendency to feel too much and sets up as praiseworthy a kind of "disembodied" approach to decision-making, and Lord Byron's *Manfred*, whose titular character wants to become disembodied to try to escape the persistent pain and guilt that he feels; taken together, Radcliffe's and Byron's texts articulate the Romantic backlash against sentimentality, or feeling too much, while also hinting at a cognitive world of disembodiment providing relief from the distress of an emotional body.

These pairings are admittedly unlikely—particularly Burke and Shelley, whose oppositional politics often prevent their comparison, though they have recently been connected by Andrew Stauffer's investigation of indignation in *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism*; Radcliffe and Byron, too, are an improbable duo, and have only been connected through Alison Milbank's recent study of the explained supernatural, and even Milbank admits that "At first sight, it may seem somewhat comical to associate the sceptical and famously transgressive Lord Byron with the productions of a middle-class novelist of non-conformist origins, who classed protagonists of his aristocratic arrogance and incestuous predilections alongside her darkest villains" (165). But, discourse about bodies does not abide by the traditional generic, ideological, and formal classifications of literary studies; so, in some ways, the improbability of my chosen pairings (and the

relative diversity of literary forms that these four writers cover) ultimately produces more illuminating findings about the vexing problems of embodiment in the period. These writers reach unique conclusions about the role of the body even as they struggle with the same difficulties of understanding and representing corporeal knowledge and the experience of human embodiment. Standing alone, these texts also represent some of the most vibrant and nuanced examples of approaches to bodily displacement and disembodiment in Romantic literature.

Movement One: Strategic Displacement

We might fairly call Edmund Burke the Romantic man of contradictions. His mode of enquiry usually sets concepts in opposition so as provide a means for drawing out their difference, as he famously does with the Sublime and the Beautiful (though, of course, he is careful to note when two concepts are not exact opposites). But Burke's works also belong to a history of scholarly contradictions, namely, that Burke has often been located on both sides of his own political arguments—what C.B. MacPherson has deemed the "Burke problem."[5] Burke's reliance on and alternating repudiation of the body in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)[6] participates in this same vein of contradiction: the body is absolutely central to his understanding of sensory experience and is called upon both literally and metaphorically as he attempts to define taste, the imagination, the Sublime, and the Beautiful, and yet sometimes he opportunistically disconnects the mind from the body with the apparent intention of elevating the status of these (cognitive) ideas out of the material realm. Indeed, despite its uneven reputation in scholarly history as a serious

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[5] See the chapter by this name in *Burke*.
[6] *A Philosophical Enquiry* was first published in 1757, but the second edition, which I will reference here because of the added "Preface" and "Introduction on Taste," was published in 1759.

Burkean work, *A Philosophical Enquiry* demonstrates a real attention to and fascination with the body. Though many scholars have noted Burke's tremendous influence on the Romantics' understanding of the Sublime, I want to also suggest that, with this text, Burke elucidates problems with representing a body that is both objective and feeling.

A Philosophical Enquiry is, in some ways, an immense catalog of the operations of various passions which are rooted in material experience, thus providing a source of concepts that will be elaborated in further bodily detail later in the text. In opposition to his usual tendency toward differentiation and grouping, Burke considers all of the passions representative of different states of mind, though they can vary in degree and power. Pain and pleasure are discussed early as regulators of the other passions and Burke meticulously details their functions so as to underscore that they are more complementary than oppositional. His descriptions of both rely on a sense of bodily autonomy, which for Burke straddles the line between viewing the body as boundary between self and environment and humans as inherently social beings. For instance, pleasure, he says, has to be "stolen" (60), suggesting that it does not originate in the individual's body but must come from somewhere else, whereas pain can be imposed onto the body by as outside force. Yet, Burke also maintains that pain is the strongest of the passions since it causes the body to focus on self-preservation, which suggests the mind seeking to protect the vulnerable material body from those outside physical or social forces (79).

The passion of tragedy is the first to approach mingling both pain and pleasure, thus making it worth of special attention for Burke. Though the rhetoric and imagery of

A Philosophical Enquiry frequently tend toward the theatrical,[7] this section stages an example of a tragedy and steps back to observe the result: "We delight in seeing things, which so far from doing, our heartiest wishes would be to see redressed" (44). Redressed, here, perhaps takes on a dual meaning: in spite of our inevitable attraction to view the brink of (or fall into) disaster from afar, our proclivity toward sympathetic feeling immediately wishes to revoke that pain from others should we have the means to do so; yet, Burke also implicitly divulges his apprehension about this strange intersection in its equal possibility as a re-dressing—in other words, the too-easy ability to take pain and pleasure off, like a costume, at will. The feeling of pain is otherwise so intense that to willingly play with its consumption marks a curious tension between attraction and repulsion. Burke then painstakingly sets out strict conditions under which this scenario is possible—for instance, he feels compelled to identify that "it is absolutely necessary that my life should be out of an imminent hazard before I can take a delight in the sufferings of others, real or imaginary"—seemingly with the intention of making sense of and delimiting the dangerous possibilities of this bizarrely attractive phenomenon of tragedy (44).

Tragedy functions as an ideal precursor to Burke's discussion of the Sublime by presenting minor (and often temporary) incursions between individual bodies and their passions. The Sublime is characterized by an overlap between pain, pleasure, and some measure of the terrible, but Burke paints the Sublime's relationship to the body as a full-scale invasion. The aspect of terror that is embedded in the very nature of the Sublime "robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning," and yet its transgression is as much bodily as of the mind (53). Burke's continual reliance on bodily descriptors of

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[7] Adam Phillips describes *A Philosophical Inquiry* as having a "muted sense of theatre" throughout (xxi).

feeling prevent a clear separation of the body and mind wherein the body would be any less paralyzed than the mind in the face of the Sublime. In fact, mind-body paralysis seems to be exactly what Burke is getting at: temporarily, there is no sense of movement as time continues to pass, which oddly makes the body's paralysis more apparent since the feeling of motional embodiment stalls. Maggie Kilgour helpfully points to how Burke's vision of the Sublime includes a sense of "prolonged suspense," or a "tension between a desire to prolong and defer the inevitable and an impulse towards the revelation of all mysteries" (32). For our purposes here, "prolonged suspense" gets at both the suspension of the body's motion and the uncomfortable sense of the body pulled in two directions: to stay or to go, to know or to not know, to relish the pleasure or to reject the pain—and what to do with the equally enticing and frightening sense of terror? Burke's understanding of the Sublime on the body might be likened to an overloaded circuit board, and while he wants to place considerable value on this type of disorienting experience for its aesthetic possibilities, the individual's loss of control under the imposition of the Sublime seems to be cause for concern.

By contrast, the Beautiful, often figured as a tempting woman, also involves a kind of submission on the part of the individual that resists being tamed by reason, but the Beautiful does not invade the individual's sense of being. Burke likens the Beautiful to an "agreeable relaxation" whereas the Sublime has greater powers: "There is something so over-ruling in whatever inspires us with awe, in all things which belong ever so remotely to terror, that nothing else can stand in their presence. There lie the qualities of beauty either dead and unoperative; or at most exerted to mollify the rigour and sternness of the terror, which is the natural concomitant of greatness" (142). Beyond

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the implication here that the Sublime can overpower the Beautiful, Christopher Reid

underlines the "room for manoeuvre" that Burke leaves himself here in the form of

allowing the Sublime and the Beautiful to be complimentary in restricted cases (in which

case the Beautiful would serve to temper the aspect of terror), but even in this

circumstance, the powers of the Sublime are more formidable (60).

Burke's arguments rely on the assumption that humanity has common

mechanisms and comparable aptitudes for perceiving and understanding the world and

that, thereby, the categories that he elaborates are functional in all (or almost all)

individual cases. Consequently, he locates this commonality in a universalized human

body and its senses rather than looking to individual variation (an attempt at objectivity).

First, when he articulates his idea of taste, he draws on human sensory apparatuses as the

shared framework for immediate perception:

> We do and must suppose, that as the conformation of their [sensory] organs are
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> nearly, or altogether the same in all men, so the manner of perceiving external
>
> objects is in all men the same, or with little difference. We are satisfied that what
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> appears to be light in one eye, appears light to another; that what seems sweet to
>
> one palate, is sweet to another; that what is dark and bitter to this man, is likewise
>
> dark and bitter to that; and we conclude in the same manner of great and little,
>
> hard and soft, hot and cold, rough and smooth; and indeed of all the natural
>
> qualities and affections of bodies. (13)

The repeated parallelisms between "this man" and "that man" are striking here, and they

work to corroborate similarity rather than difference in each of the sensory realms. This

supposition of similitude is necessary, Burke continues, so as to avoid making "every sort

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of reasoning on every subject vain and frivolous" and thereby radically subjective in a way that would only prove unhelpful for making sense of the world (13). From this relative commonality of sensory organs and perceptions, then, Burke transitions into applications—bodily metaphors whose extension of meaning into different domain relies on shared experiences with sensory perceptions. Long before twentieth century cognitive philosophers expounded the bodily basis of metaphor,[8] Burke identified the confluence of physical experience and linguistic expression. He notes: "[Men] all concur in calling sweetness pleasant, and sourness and bitterness unpleasant. Here there is no diversity in their sentiments; and that there is not appears fully from the consent of all men in the metaphors which are taken from the sense of Taste. A sour temper, bitter expressions, bitter curses, a bitter fate, are terms well and strongly understood by all" (14). Though Burke's list of body-based metaphors is strictly limited to the senses (and only two of them), it is insightful in its understanding of the importance of the body for enabling common understanding across unique human experience. Imagination, too, draws from this common well of the senses as it reorders existing information into new forms, and has "the same power pretty equally over all men" (16-17). Burke does not assume, however, that the senses provide exact referents of feelings; under his discussion of imagination, Burke notes that individuals perceive and are affected in essentially the same "manner," but their experience tends to differ in "degree" (20-21), and this awareness seems to apply to all the senses since "imagination is… representative of the senses" (17).

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[8] See, for example, Mark Johnson's *The Body in the Mind* and *The Meaning of the Body*.

If Burke understands language to be primarily a system of signs,[9] then his

discussion of metaphor implies that such a device has the potential to narrow the field of

interpretive possibilities by creating a connection between bodily experience and the

cognitive functions of the mind. In fact, if we approach Burke as an author intimately

attuned to "and" and "or" as conjunctions signaling connection or detachment, then

another mind-body connection comes to light in "Of the SUBLIME." He says, "Without

all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer, are much greater in their effect

on the body and mind, than any pleasure which the most learned voluptuary could

suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible

body could enjoy" (36). Here, we discover two cases of "and" that place the body and

mind in concert with each other. In the first case, the torment in question equally moves

the body and mind to suffering; in the second, the respective qualities of the mind and

body ("liveliest" and "most sound and exquisitely sensible") are characterized differently,

but, via the connective tissue of the "and," the effect is essentially the same (that the

pleasure of the body *and* mind is secondary to the torments it could feel). Although

beauty is primarily rooted in the physical nature of the body (and its ability to be

observed by the eye), Burke also posits that the physiognomy "is capable of joining the

effect of certain agreeable qualities of the mind to those of the body" (107). Though

Burke takes some liberties here with generalization, it was not uncommon in the

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[9] *A Philosophical Inquiry* posits three categories of words that the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
describes as aggregate words, which "signified groups of simple ideas united by nature, e.g. man, horse or
tree," simple abstract words, "each of which stood for one simple idea involved in such unities, such as red,
blue, round, or square," and abstract compound words. Abstract compound words are the most
complicated because they do not have a referent that could be observed in nature. As such, "the obvious
inference from Burke's philosophy of language was that to use abstract compounds words was less to
discuss ideas than to raise images which touched the affections of the listener or reader." Given that Burke
has a sense of the "gap" between sign and referent that semiotics theorists would later elaborate, his
understanding of bodily referents and their ability to create a degree of shared understanding is significant.

eighteenth century (and even into the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries) to make judgments about a person's character by their outer body; thus, physiognomy also works to bridge the (oft perceived) divide between the mind and the body.

However, Burke undermines these points of mind-body connection near the close of *A Philosophical Enquiry* in the section entitled "How the Sublime is produced." His characteristic recapitulation of logical premises is worth quoting in full:

> Having considered terror as producing an unnatural tension and certain violent emotions of the nerves; it easily follows, from what we have just said, that whatever is fitted to produce such a tension, must be productive of a passion similar to terror, and consequently must be a source of the sublime, though it should have no idea of danger connected to it. So that little remains toward shewing the cause of the sublime, but to shew that the instances we have given of it in the second part, relate to such things, as are fitted by nature to produce this sort of tension, either by the primary operation of the mind or the body. (121)

This particular outlining of Sublime effects marks a shift from earlier discussions of an individual's response. Previously, the mind and body worked as a holistic unit; here, Burke employs the decisive conjunctive break between the mind and body, with a number of significant consequences. First, it is important to remember that—despite any credence that Burke might lend to the body in his discussion of the human senses—he is ultimately more interested in a cognitive understanding of aesthetic categories (he never goes so far as to reason that his body must become acquainted with the distinctions between the Sublime and the Beautiful). Under this view, we might read this passage as an indication that the body has served its lowly purposes and Burke has returned to the

Cartesian philosophical framework that privileges the mind as the ruler of the body. On

the other hand, the tension between "the primary operation of the mind *or* body" gives

the body a larger measure of control than we might expect, suggesting that the body has a

series of operations all its own that perhaps lie outside the jurisdiction of the mind. In

light of the mind-body relationship being both "and" and "or," the Burkean view of their

connective possibilities seems to be left in contradiction—not in opposition, but certainly

with tension between inputs of perception and mechanisms of cognitive response that

Burke makes no attempt to theorize in full.

By the end of the text, it becomes clear that Burke set up the material body as a

kind of prop or testing ground for a wide-reaching exploration of aesthetic judgements.

In Erin Goss' recent and very convincing analysis of Burke's invocation of the body, she

makes two important conclusions: first, "Burke's consideration of the body reveals a…

troubling insight into a notion of bodily experience that resides within and yet also fails

to be comprehended or circumscribed by the general or universal body that his text has

sought to describe" (83). As such, Burke's theory of the body necessarily ends

incomplete and unstable in its claims, underscoring the various competing pressures

simultaneously in play within this text. Second, Gross claims that "by the end of the

Enquiry, as Burke turns away from physiology to a discussion of words, the body on

which Burke bases his theory is revealed to have always been a rhetorical imposition"

(57). To connect these two ideas, we might observe that Burke's investigation of the

body's role in perception runs up against the problem that the body is not entirely

thinkable or knowable; as such, it is like a vessel through which perception (and thinking)

passes through to re-enter the realm of the purely cognitive.

In his influential study *The Discourse of the Sublime*, Peter de Bolla marks this problem another way in an approach that is not antithetical to mine and to Gross' but helps to clarify why Burke turns away from the body and back to language. Burke leaves a perplexing phrase at the end of a study of moving language, "We yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description," and de Bolla remarks:

> … what is unusual in the sentence is that 'we' refuse to description, when it is the indistinctness of certain *words* that is being exemplified. Taken in another sense the sentence refers to the general inadequacy of language; we may feel things, may be in sympathy with the outer world, but refuse to place these feelings within the confines of a restrictive language. On this reading language is a poor medium for expression, at least when we are in elevated states of experience. Having said this the use of 'we' remains problematic, for on the second reading, it is language's inability, its 'refusal' to convey the sublime experience, and not the language user's… Something excessive is at work here, since the connections between language and experience, experience and the subject, and the subject and language are all put into question, and it is the inadequacy of the theory to theorize those relations which is exposed. (64-65)

De Bolla's analysis is worth quoting at length here because it gets at the complicated duplicity of Burke's articulation of these connections and, most importantly, that it is not just language that fails but theory itself. Language's failure to capture experience forces Burke away from wrestling with corporeality and back to the security of theorizing within and about language itself; but, I disagree somewhat with the implied agency of the "we" in de Bolla's reading. Burke's use of the word "yield" suggests some degree of

passivity—namely that the process of yielding to sympathy cannot be avoided—and yet the potent activity of the refusal reconstructs a subject in full control again. In other words, "we" give over to the body what "we" cannot (or will not) name with language, because the realm of the body—and its concomitant perceptions and sympathies – cannot be adequately named *or* theorized. Yet, in the midst of this retreat to language, the "excess" that de Bolla describes surfaces as a kind of bodily excess that cannot so easily be borne away, just as Burke tries to engage the body in his *Enquiry* but ultimately leaves it behind.

Burke's presentation of the body might therefore be characterized as a kind of prop: something worth thinking about and thinking through, but only as a means toward the greater end (in Burke's mind) of theorizing aesthetic judgement. The seemingly central body of the *Enquiry* is a displaceable body that was perhaps always more rhetorical than material, and when it has obliged its rhetorical purpose, it can pass back into obscurity. Now, in turning to Shelley, whose writing serves very different ends, I will show that he is also only interested in the idea of bodies and that his approach to embodiment and corporeal knowledge likewise circumvents sustained engagement with the materiality of the body. While Burke is interested in the field of perception for aesthetic judgement, Shelley is interested more in the connective through line of perception between an individual and the world, a framework which by its very setup prompts initial discussions of the body and then a move beyond it.

To begin, investigating Percy Shelley's fragmentary essay "On Life" provides important insight in his attitude toward corporeal knowledge. In this text, Shelley attempts to encapsulate what he sees as the inherent mystery of life and to critique

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philosophical stances that he formerly held. He begins by characterizing life as an "astonishing" miracle that (fortunately) eludes our understanding in perpetuity. He says: "It is well that we are thus shielded by the familiarity of what is at once so certain and so unfathomable from an astonishment which would otherwise absorb and overawe the functions of that which is its object" (505).[10] The familiarity of our immediate environment is comforting but also deceiving, as it naturally curtails inquiry. As we will see later, for Shelley, one of the primary responsibilities of the poet is to penetrate into aspects of the unknown and unfamiliar and to then communicate that knowledge to others; but even so, the opening of this essay acknowledges the impossibility of anyone— even the poet—reaching full knowledge of human life and experience. Accepting this limitation and, in spite of it, developing what is at best a limited range of knowledge about life, then, is the poet's first challenge. Shelley also readily concedes the problem of linguistic representation, asserting: "How vain is it to think that words can penetrate the mystery of our being. Rightly used they may make evident our ignorance to ourselves, and this is much" (506). Though he will take up this issue of linguistic representation in much more detail in the "Defence of Poetry," here he takes the opportunity to qualify the power of language in articulating whatever mystery the poet (or individual) may discover. Specifically, this "mystery" is not just of the world but of "our being." Though Simon Haines has argued that Shelley's poetic project is to think about "Life" rather than "lives," where "Life" is a transcendent subject and "lives" is an engagement with lived materiality (47, 53), Shelley sometimes appears to be interested in both, such as when he indicates language's insufficiency to get at "our being," as if this failure of language

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[10] Except where noted, all references to Shelley's texts and manuscript variants are from *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, Eds. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat.

creates a lost opportunity for self-knowledge at a personal and very experiential (non-transcendent) level. Thus, for Shelley, any literary representation is only a small approximation of the actual wonder that his poetry envisions, including but not limited to the body.

In his attempts at defining life, Shelley often relies on mind-centric imagery and diction, which will help us to anticipate and understand the distinction between mind and body that he so often draws upon in his works. Life, he says, is a series of "thoughts and feelings that arise, with or without our will" (506). Avoiding strict measures of temporality, Shelley seems to say that life is not marked by thoughts and feelings but is filled by them, perhaps in a cyclical manner. But the qualification at the end of the sentence suggests that life *happens* to an individual rather than is actively created by him or her; the notion of thoughts and feelings occurring "with or without our will" is at least half passive, suggesting that the mind marks the relationship between the outcome and the lacking subject's "will," while the body is simply the vessel of feelings or the agent of action. Later, Shelley notes that he now rejects the materialist views of his younger days so as to "disclaim alliance with transience and decay" and avows his belief in "a spirit within [man] at enmity with change and extinction" (506). We will continue to see that focusing on the transcendent spirit often equates to a rejection of the material body in part or in whole, and for Shelley, his justification for doing so is in part related to the body's fragility[11] and in part an attempted move toward alluring visions of objective Truth. Sharon Ruston points out that this mutability is the prime indicator of life for Shelley (138-139)—all animal and vegetable life is subject to change, but humans just happen to

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[11] Like the "forgotten lyres" (l. 5) of the poem "Mutability," bodies are subject to "each varying blast" (l. 6) and have a "frail frame" (l. 7), which underscores their constant fragility.

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be more conscious of the effects—but Shelley clearly has concerns about a philosophical framework of understanding the world that focuses on the physical which, he will reiterate again and again in his poetry, is a realm subject to troubling fluctuation.

A move toward lesser acknowledgement of the body in articulations of life and subjecthood becomes evident in Shelley's grammar at the end of "On Life." In his discussion of a singular or communal mind and of which he is "but a portion," he replaces identification of individuals' whole personhood with only their minds:

> The words, *I, you, they* are not signs of any actual difference subsisting between the assemblages of thoughts thus indicated, but are merely marks employed to denote the different modifications of the one mind. I am but a portion of it. The words *I,* and *you* and *they* are grammatical devices invented simply for arrangement and totally devoid of the intense and exclusive sense usually attached to them. (508)

With a tone of insistence, Shelley awkwardly tries to describe an interesting distinction between highly differentiated individualism and a more community-minded approach to human thought—one which asserts the interconnectivity of ideas and perceptions rather than constraining knowledge to what each individual knows from his own relative experience. But the consequent implication that personal pronouns represent only thoughts and minds may impose a limit on Shelley's scope of embodied human subjectivity. If we take the implications of his statement at face value, to be an "I" or to be a "you" or to be counted collectively in a "they" is simply a function of syntactical "arrangement" rather than an indication of personhood, which obscures the borders of

bodies and individual subjecthood in the midst of such an intense focus on the value and significance of the workings of the mind.

But, on the other hand, Shelley does not uniformly elide acknowledgement of the body in his wider articulations of poetic life, the arts, and human communication; in spite of the exclusion of the psychosomatic body in "On Life," he includes gestural movement—a type of communication that is impossible to divorce from the body—in his examples of art in "A Defence of Poetry." He first mentions gesture in association with his description of the "savage" who, like a child, expresses emotions through a seemingly haphazard combination of "language and gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation" intended to create an image of the world as he apprehends it (511). "Man in society," on the other hand, is more discriminating with his selection of communicative tools and choice of subject. Shelley says that, for this man, "language, gesture and the imaginative arts, become at once the representation and the medium, the pencil and the picture, the chisel and the statue, the chord and the harmony" (511). Though gesture was at first humbled by a racial and class-based judgement, here, Shelley underscores that man in society has a kind of self-reflexivity about the interrelatedness of medium and its representation, suggesting that the art produced is more thoughtful and meaningful; it is also significant that he names gesture alongside art (as opposed to being among the unnamed other "imaginative arts") in the list of man's creative possibilities.

These early references to gesture soon shift into more specific examples of dance. Dance is perhaps categorically different than gesture for Shelley, but this shift may also simply signify his move toward examples and terms indicative of established modes of art. He again affords a place of significance for moving bodies when he includes

"authors of… the dance" in his elite group of poets "who imagine and express this indestructible order" and who "are the institutors of laws and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life and the teachers" (512). This reference to choreographers (and perhaps dancers, too) resists a disembodiment of the poetic arts more fully than references to architecture, statuary, and painting wherein the body implements the tools of the medium but is not itself the medium. Moreover, Shelley uses dance alongside music to point out the centrality of rhythm and order to art and to develop a notion of taste wherein all men observe an "order" that is "similar" but "not the same" (512). He says that those who have an "excess" of these gradations of sensibility toward the beautiful, or an extremely heightened sense of taste, are "poets, in the most universal sense of the world," and the universality of this vocation seems to speak not to geography but to the vast domains of art (512). And yet, Shelley says that the poet's language is "vitally metaphorical":

> …it marks the before unapprehended relations of things, and perpetuates their
> apprehension, until the words which represent them, become through time signs
> for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and
> then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have
> been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human
> intercourse. (512)

This passage discloses Shelley's vision of language—a language that is "vitally" metaphorical because it gets to the heart of life itself (to the extent that life can be comprehended) and makes visible connections between different ideas and types of knowledge that had not yet been apprehended. As such, language is both discovery and

creation; language assists the poet in framing abstract concepts and yet the poet is active

in the process of creation wherein language will communicate that knowledge to others.

Yet, as "vital" as this language seems to be to life, we see an emphasis here again on

mind-centered processes. Shelley's turn to examples of language that tend toward

intellectual or cognitive categorization without further reference to gesture suggests that

he has somewhat narrowed his scope to thoughts in the mind and words on the lips or on

the page. Perhaps gesture may still be a vitally metaphorical language, but its recession

into the background of his primary examples seems to place it in a category of

communication of lesser merit than written or spoken language.

Jerrold Hogle's important study *Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the

Development of His Major Works* provides an alternative view to subjectivity that is well

worth consideration, both in light of "On Life and "A Defence of Poetry." Hogle's

premise is that Shelley's work must be considered with an eye to transference between

different states. He points out that this process applies to both Shelleyan perception and

thought: first, "any distinguishable perception or memory has already been reflected

upon, interpreted from an alien perspective, in a way that determines what the perception

is by transposing it into another configuration"; likewise, "each basic thought is still a

motion between at least two 'externalities.' It is a drive toward a counterpart rising ahead

of it and a harkening back to a different one receding in its wake" (10). Worth noting,

here, is Hogle's emphasis on movement and a kind of perpetually-negotiated spatial

relationality between polarities. These relationships are intrinsically characterized by

motion, and yet there is little sense of the movement being attributed to embodied

perception or corporeal dynamics on the part of the speaker. Instead, the abrupt shifts

seem externally motivated, as if the poem was being perpetually wrenched away from the personal and subjective. If part of Shelley's philosophy of making aesthetic experience available through poetry is to persistently move between different subject-like states, we are left with a quality of movement that registers best in the body but is negated by the continual taking up and abandonment of discrete positions and orientations that each differ in their degree of embodied representation.

Later in his study, Hogle goes on to posit that Shelley's sequences of transference portray a complicated relationship of the distinction between subject and object states, and his analysis of "On Life" helps to explain Shelley's perpetual turn away from the body even though he frequently engages it to some degree. Hogle sees this poem as rife with building tension as the poem stages a duel between the "inner or 'subjective' and outer or 'objective'" selves:

> Because the supposedly objective 'signs' are backed and held out by the [outer, objective] Other as entrances into a Truth existing outside the self and defined according to the Other's master text, the psyche is now in the position of seeking those depths as part of the search for the essence of itself *and* being governed by those distant 'cores' even while, indeed because, their actual natures remain distant and hidden from observation. (164)

In other words, the onus of endless reaching toward an unattainable Truth lies with the subjective self. The Other has (and will always) outpace the self/psyche in its attempt to fathom the depths of knowledge, and so, like a series of nested boxes, knowledge is always obscured from the subjective self in a "veil after veil" continuum. If, for Shelley, material embodiment is the essence of subjectivity, then it is hardly surprising that, as his

poetry drifts between various states, we never really remain in the body; as in "A Defence of Poetry," even if the text begins in the body or with important metaphors that implicate it, a series of shifts usually draw the poem's speaker away from corporeality and towards aesthetic and linguistic ones in search of Truth.[12]

Under this framework of a particularly acute subject-object tension motivating his poetic choices, we might say that Shelley struggles to theorize and represent imaginative and creative thought without any ties to the material body. Yet, a consequence of the subject-object tension is that even in disembodied flights toward accessible truth, subjectivity is always implicated. As Ross Woodman points out in his study of bodily metaphor in Romantic poetry, "Language constitutes a break, a fissure, a representation that is other than what is represented which is nevertheless unknowable except as it is represented" (116). Embodied perception and experience is our only means to understand linguistic referents, even though language and experience must always bridge the semiotic "fissure." But if language is always tied to the body to some degree, the relationship between the body and metaphor is even more certain. In *The Body in the Mind*, Mark Johnson takes a philosophical approach to metaphor's connection to the body:

> [Another] type of embodied imaginative structure central to my inquiry is metaphor, conceived as a pervasive mode of understanding by which we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind. So conceived, metaphor is not merely a linguistic mode of expression; rather, it is one of the chief cognitive structures by which we are able

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[12] Beauty, for example, comes in a kind of cyclic phenomenon that Shelley elsewhere calls "visitations," so these shifts may not always be a result of the speaker's will. See also the fragment "Visitations of Calm Thoughts," *The Poems of Shelley: Volume Four: 1820-1821*, pg. 91.

to have coherent, ordered experiences that we can reason about and make sense

of. Through metaphor, we make use of patterns that obtain in our physical

experience to organize our more abstract understanding. (xv)

Johnson's description of the goals of metaphor is not at all inconsistent with Shelley's

own elaborations; indeed, the similarities are startling. Both understand metaphor as

more than a linguistic mode of expression; Shelley certainly did not view metaphor as a

gimmicky poetic accoutrement to famously assert that "Poets are the unacknowledged

legislators of the World," and thus focuses on the kind of cognitive structuring power that

make poets indispensable to the world of knowledge (535). But Shelley relies on a

theory of language wherein it can originate in itself rather than be mediated through the

body because he does not believe in the bodily foundations of language; but nevertheless,

a kind of irony results in his poetry: in using metaphorical flights of the imagination to

attempt to transcend materiality, he can only ever effect a partial displacement of the

body.

This phenomenon is apparent in Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." As

Michael O'Neil points out in "Shelley's Lyric Art," this poem reveals a "concern with

poetic voice, or with the operations of consciousness, [that] is nearly always in Shelley

twined round concern with the ends to which poetic voice and the operations of

consciousness might be put" (617). However, what O'Neil posits as the first concern

may actually be two separate but interrelated issues at stake: Shelley is interested in the

operations of consciousness (specifically, the limitations of them with and without the

influence of the spirit of intellectual beauty) as well as with how this range of knowing

and perceiving shapes the poetic voice (not to mention the ends to which each voice may

be employed). But, in situating beauty strictly in the intellectual realm—the beauty taken up as the central interest of the poem is not physical—the poetic speaker of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" takes up a stance on consciousness that yet again attempts to eschew the body's role in it.

The speaker characterizes the immateriality of intellectual beauty as early as the first line of the poem. Intellectual beauty is called an "awful shadow" (l. 1) and it is "unseen amongst us" (l. 2), thus making it intangible and inaccessible to the eye of human viewers; intellectual beauty is worthy of human awe in spite of (or perhaps because of) its enigmatic quality. Subsequent lines encapsulate its description in similes that mystify rather than clarify; it is "like" a series of intangible natural phenomena: "summer winds" (l. 4), "moonbeams" (l. 5), and "hues and harmonies" (l. 8). But Shelley's changes from an 1816 copy of the poem that was retained by Byron's friend Scrope Davies (hereafter abbreviated *SDN*) to the 1817 published version in the *Examiner* further underscore an attempt to widen the gulf between intellectual beauty and the material world.[13] In *SDN*, the "Lovely shadow of some awful Power" (l. 1) "walks" (rather than "floats") among us (l. 2), visiting a "peopled" (rather than "various") world (l. 3). These differences in diction suggest that Shelley was attempting to create an increased separation between the spirit of intellectual beauty and the material realm in which the speaker is trapped. To "float," for example, is an action which we can only really imagine, unlike the more pedestrian (but knowable) to "walk," so the shift from literal to imaginative disembodies the spirit; furthermore, Shelley's un-peopling of the world that the spirit may munificently choose to visit results in a perplexingly empty

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[13] The British Library's copy of the *Scrope Davies Notebook* is included in *The Complete Poetry of Percy Shelley, Volume 3*, edited by Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat.

scene. We might ask, are there living human bodies—or just thoughts—in this "various" world?

The speaker, of course, uses the hymn form to plead with the Spirit of Beauty to bring light back to a world that is "vacant and desolate." This vacancy—a term that has important philosophical resonance for Shelley but is also inextricably bound up in physical connotations—seems to contribute to the problem that the speaker has identified. Something is missing from the speaker's world of "dark reality" (l. 48) that only intellectual beauty can provide. This need is expressed most poignantly in metaphor when the speaker addresses the Spirit saying "Thou—that to human thought art nourishment, / Like darkness to a dying flame! / Depart not…" (l. 44-46). The first line draws a metaphorical relationship between an emptiness of the mind and an emptiness of the stomach—a gnawing feeling that the body knows most immediately as hunger but whose meaning can be inferred when it is transferred to a different domain. Yet, this metaphor is complicated by the simile that follows; "like darkness to a dying flame" suggests that darkness makes apparent the soon-to-be extinction of light, so the preceding metaphor actually intimates that the Spirit does not literally feed human thought but makes apparent its inadequacies. John Watkins reads this line as an indication that intellectual beauty turns out to be no light at all, undermining the speaker's other references to such effect (399-400).[14] If this is the case, then the Spirit of Beauty cannot resolve the speaker's problem of vacancy, and we are left to wonder if the speaker's problem really lies in a need for his cognition and thought to be re-enlightened or if the

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[14] Michael O'Neil, in *The Human Mind's Imaginings: Conflict and Achievement in Shelley's Poetry*, also notes that "the paradox of 'like darkness to a dying flame' exposes Shelley's awareness that his invocation of a 'Thou' may be falsifying and absurd" (39). Under this view, the speaker's calling upon the spirit reinforces the vacancy that he feels and, perhaps, the desperation to fill that void.

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hunger he reveals has been mis-identified as of the mind rather than of the body. If the speaker admits the failure of language when he declares his hope that the spirit "Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express," then what if that failure includes only a partial displacement of the body, resulting in an inability to know and speak of a body deprived of its wholeness? The narrator seems to evade this question—and the problem of representing the messiness of material experience more generally—but also chooses not to retreat into what Forest Pyle has called the "theologizing charms" of the aesthetic (665); so, the poem concludes in an uncomfortable sense of alienation: the speaker neither seems to belong to the world of fully-embraced embodiment nor the figurations of the aesthetic realm.

"Mont Blanc" reflects a similar partial displacement of the body that manifests in confusion over internal and external feeling. Although much scholarly attention has been given to questions of epistemology and language in this poem, the speaker's encounter with the sublime must also be considered in terms of a whole-body experience. Unsurprisingly, Shelley again obscures the body as early as the opening lines of the poem: "The everlasting universe of things / Flows through the mind" (l. 1-2). "Flow," an action experienced in the physical realm and here transferred into an action of the mind, would seem a more reasonable metaphorical device if it did not attempt to capture the experience such immense possibilities as "the everlasting universe of things"—things which, by their quality of being "everlasting," imply the very stability that the mind might exhibit but that the body always lacks for Shelley. The speaker omits any mention of a feeling, subjective body in the subsequent lines, though much physical description and activity is attributed to the ravine and to Mont Blanc.

The speaker's moment of metalepsis is perhaps the most revealing moment of confusion about narrating corporeal experience. In the poem's second section, the speaker exclaims "Dizzy Ravine!" before attempting to articulate the effect that the sight has on him (l. 34). This exclamation, however, confuses cause and effect, inappropriately attributing a quality of "dizzy" to the ravine rather than acknowledging the dizzying effect that the scene has on the speaker himself. John Pier, drawing on the work of Gérard Genette, Douglas Hofstadler and Brian McHale, points out two important consequences of metalepsis: first, the device violates syntactically defined levels of language by confusing referents. Here, the result is that the transgression calls attention to the phrase, and the reader is more likely to detect the speaker's confusion about the psychosomatic effect of the environment on his body. Second, Pier discusses that metalepsis undermines distinctions between narration and story, or of fictional representation and the ontological reality of the author. Though this poem seems not to attempt a realist approach, the poem's narrative system is still affected by the disruption of the narrative trajectory and the pause to (mis)identify psychosomatic experience. The misidentification of "dizzy" calls into question the speaker's ability to represent an experience from a single, coherent perspective. Though this dizzying effect can be attributed to the influence of the Sublime, we should not write it off as such quite so quickly. Rather, we might question if Shelley's attempt to disembody the poetic voice enables this narrative predicament; without being rooted in a singular material body (or acknowledging one), the speaker's own feelings and perceptions are unavoidably entangled with stimuli from the surrounding environment. In this case, Shelley runs up against Burke's problem of making an aesthetic attempt to divorce the body from the

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Sublime encounter: the cause of the Sublime effects may be external, but the source of the pain, pleasure, and terror trifecta is in the feeling body.

The poem's conclusion returns to the issue of vacancy, but again avoids the weighty physicality of such a word. The term is couched in an inquiry that has sometimes been interpreted as a rhetorical question: "And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea, / If to the human mind's imaginings / Silence and solitude were vacancy?" (l. 142-144). Alternatively, I would propose a more serious reading of the question in which the "human mind's imaginings" take less prominence so as to not entirely elide the body. The surface reading would indicate that the speaker is again contemplating a vacancy of mind, but the additions of physical spaces ("and earth, and sea, and stars") yet again grounds this reading in a material world. At the same time, the vastness of these three phenomena suggest an overwhelming effect of the sublime in the same way that the ravine and the sight of Mont Blanc undo the speaker's coherence. Thus, it seems that the speaker postulates here that the individual must assume a state of "vacancy" in order to fully appreciate sublime power. If so, the ideal vacancy is both mental and physical: mentally open to the possibilities of new knowledge and devoid of the material body's tendency to precipitate thoughts that turn inward rather than outward. In other words, the concluding question seems to romanticize the displaced body, envisioning instead a largely disembodied brain might engage with the universe unencumbered by the distractions of subjectivity.

The alternating engagement with and skirting of embodied discourse in these texts (a dizzying alternation which I have captured here in my choice of chronology) divulge Shelley's struggle to represent experience beyond the body; his approach of subjecthood

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anticipates the tension between subjectivity and objectivity, but attempts to push toward knowledge completely outside of the self cannot ever be brought to fruition (which might well be his point). Metaphor, strictly speaking, allows Shelley's poetic speakers to move beyond the realm of the material by transferring that knowledge into a different domain, but this move results in awkward displacements of the body that leave traces of the body within the construction of new meaning. The "forgotten lyre," perpetually reverberating, can never in fact be erased from cognition or its creative pursuits.

Movement Two: Disembodiment as Retreat from Feeling Too Much

For Byron and Shelley's masculine characters, the fact that feeling itself poses obstacles to objectivity is of more concern than degrees of feeling. Conversely, for women writing in the Romantic Age, bodies present a set of concerns that are particularly feminine. Writers regardless of gender were concerned about the fragility of the body and—as we saw in Burke—the body's unknowability derailed the possibility of its objective treatment, but female bodies were subjected to even more intense charges of fragility and emotional subjectivity than male bodies. In Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 essay *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she outlines the assumptions about woman's mental and physical weakness that yet pervade discussions of gender in the latter half of the eighteenth century:

> My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead
> of flattering their *fascinating* graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of
> perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. I earnestly wish to point out in what
> true dignity and human happiness consists—I wish to persuade women to
> endeavor to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that

the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt. (286)

It is telling that Wollstonecraft draws on the analogy of children to describe women's state of weakness, alluding to ongoing dependency that causes them to lean on men in their lives—both mentally and physically. The implication is that women's growth is stunted at the end of childhood; so while narratives of male lives are marked by significant transformations into adulthood (as in the *bildungsroman*), females are not afforded such opportunities because of the cultural limitations (and limited expectations) under which they must operate.

Wollstonecraft's choice of words that women are "unable to stand" are literalized in the fainting heroines of the eighteenth century's sentimental novels (and, to some degree, may develop some comic relief around women's plights). In these women, as Lucy Newlyn writes, "the feminine language of sentiment traditionally associated with heroines in novels—sobbing and fainting—is taken to its extreme, suggesting a species of sympathy so contagious that it reduces rational human beings to insanity" (319). Yet, as Newlyn points out, there were both advantages and disadvantages to these excessively emotional women: they were intended to cultivate the sympathies of young female readers, but they also presented the danger of readers over-identifying with these characters and becoming "tainted by escapist fantasies in which conventional codes of morality were suspended" (320). Thus, in the literary representations of fainting women, we see a number of tensions in play: of striking a balance between feeling enough but not

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too much, of strength and weakness, of negotiating fantasy and reality, and of sanity and insanity. Daniel Cottom suggests yet another conflict at issue when he asserts that fainting (or some other state of unconsciousness) is the only way for women to reconcile the strict rules of decorum associated with femininity in the 1790s and their own feelings of desire (55). The nature of these contradictions leave open both serious and comic possibilities with the figure of the fainting woman—either to draw out the very beliefs about women that Wollstonecraft was seeking to undermine or to make jest of their extreme silliness and the dramatic spectacle that they produce.

The heroine of Ann Radcliffe's gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily St Aubert, repeatedly finds herself in the uneasy space between these tensions, and as such, is intriguing case study for commentary about women's struggles against the (fictionally) real and perceived limitations of their minds and bodies—a concern that extends to male bodies as well but, as I have noted, is particularly acute for women. *Mysteries of Udolpho* was published just two years after Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and Radcliffe's Emily inhabits an uncomfortable position between the pervasive societal assumptions about women's mental weakness and a father who seeks to instill in her a firm education in sensibility and rationality. Consequently, Emily faces immense mental struggle to overcome emotional excess and bodily tendencies toward fainting to satisfy her father (his principles are also furthered by the expectations of Montoni and Madame Cheron). As we shall see, Radcliffe often leverages a distinct separation between body and mind in the representations of Emily's challenges toward the ends of promoting the mind conquering the body.

A significant portion of Emily's conversation with her father, St Aubert, in the first book of the novel centers around her education into sensibility, likely indulging the preoccupation of writers in the 1790s to "distinguish excessive from 'natural' feelings" (Pinch 111). For St Aubert, the notion of sensibility merges rationality, virtue, and— perhaps most importantly—mental restraint against excessive feeling located in the body. In one of his lessons for Emily, he says:

> I have endeavoured to teach you, from your earliest youth, the duty of self-command; I have pointed out to you the great importance of it through life, not only as it preserves us in the various and dangerous temptations that call us from rectitude and virtue, but as it limits the indulgences which are termed virtuous, yet which, extended beyond a certain boundary, are vicious, for their consequence is evil. All excess is vicious; even that sorrow, which is amiable in its origin, becomes a selfish and unjust passion, if indulged at the expence of our duties—by our duties I mean what we owe to ourselves, as well as to others. (20)

Maggie Kilgour has drawn attention to the similarities between St Aubert's philosophy for Emily's education and Rousseau's education of Emile, both of which involve "learning to find a middle course of balanced self-government, in which sentiment in not repressed into cold, unfeeling stoicism but controlled by the higher faculty of reason" (115). Each draws from the premise that education should prevent the student from taking a callous stance toward others, which ultimately benefits the individual as well as the community; both also predicate emotional response of the appropriate degree and kind relative to the object. But to have sensibility is to also be sensitive in the sense of

being able to acutely perceive one's surroundings. In another of St Aubert's lessons, he cautions Emily:

> …sensibility… is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery, or delight, from every surrounding circumstance. And since, in our passage through this world, painful circumstances occur more frequently than pleasing ones, and since our sense of evil is, I fear, more acute than our sense of good, we become the victims of our feelings, unless we can in some degree command them. (79-80)

Here, the necessity of conducting oneself with a moderate degree of sensibility becomes more clear: finding an appropriate middle ground invigorates the inner life of the individual and also protects her from vulnerability to tumultuous and intense emotional states. It is hard not to read this characterization of sensibility primarily in its reference to bodily senses, as St Aubert characterizes it both as dangerous (and bodies, particularly the female body, were still considered mysterious and full of danger) and as in need of "command" by mental faculties that prevent the individual from victimization. As St Aubert knows and as readers witness, Emily's tendency toward excessive feeling is both a strength and a weakness, and for this reason, E.B. Murray argues that the novel is not a record of Emily's growth as a person, but instead a series of tests for her ability to respond reasonably and virtuously (133).

Emily is not immediately prepared to pass these tests. Variants of "faint" appear in the novel well over one hundred times, and they almost always characterize Emily's state. She often feels faint, has a faint voice that divulges that she is on the verge of fainting or has just awoken from a fainting spell, or she is discovered unconscious by

another character. The source of her faintness varies, but can frequently be attributed to her capacity for too much feeling in combination with her vivid imagination and propensity for imagining the things that she fears most (like banditti). Particularly at times when strong emotions begin to accumulate, such as after her father's death when she secludes herself in grief, Emily becomes vulnerable to these imaginings. The narrator tells us:

> The solitary life, which Emily had led of late, and the melancholy subjects, on
> which she had suffered her thoughts to dwell, had rendered her at times sensible
> to the 'thick-coming fancies' of a mind greatly enervated. It was lamentable, that
> her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the
> reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination, which deceive the
> senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness. (102)

Here, the description of her mind as "enervated" conveys a sense of weakness usually felt in the body, and that weakness opens the floodgates to the "thick coming fancies." The narrator's commentary of this lamentable process that ends in madness paints a contrast to Emily's "excellent understanding"; in other words, the narrator implicitly critiques her for these lapses. Nelson Smith locates this kind of critique as part of the "attack on the cult of sensibility" that Radcliffe mounts in this novel; "far from being an advocate of sensibility," Smith says, Radcliffe, "like Jane Austen two decades later, shows its weaknesses and flaws" (577). Sensibility, as St Aubert tried to earlier warn, enlarges the body's capacity for feeling at the same time that the mind's control over consciousness is reduced, leading to a treacherous state without reason. Bodily feelings overwhelming the

force of reason can be marked in a physical effect of fainting, or more subtly, in an "enervated" mind.

But, as two scenes in the novel illustrate, fainting is not a phenomenon exclusive to the female gender. In the first book, after St Aubert learns and reveals to Emily that he has been financially ruined and must return home, he becomes ill on the road and faints. St Aubert tells Emily that he is "very ill" just before his fainting episode, and this sequence of events seems to locate the cause of the fainting in the easy explanation of illness (64). However, just before, St Aubert is startled by the surroundings through which they pass and imagines danger where it may not exist; his fear is compounded by their driver, Michael, expressing concerns that the figure of a person they see in the distance may be a robber (63). Thus, we are left to ponder if St Aubert's illness is related to the still recent news of his financial straits, to giving into the superstitions of roadside robbers, or the Michael's reckless driving to safety. Later, Montoni wounds Morano with his sword in a dispute over hospitality and his niece, and though Morano at first seems "insensible both of pain and loss of blood" as he continues to fight his opponent, he ultimately faints (267). Unlike St Aubert's fainting spell, which may or may not be excused as an unavoidable acquiescence to too much fearful feeling, Montoni's fainting spell is still linked to the hypermasculine space of the battle. He is sensible of the fight he engages in with his opponent, but to be "insensible" to pain and blood loss suggests that his mind already governs his body to such an extent that only in an extreme circumstance would the body overtake the mind. Consequently, Montoni demonstrates perhaps the only acceptable scenario for a man to faint. Contrasting these scenes, then,

demonstrates that fainting can equally affect both genders and that the rules and expectations for bridling the body are also not exclusive to women.

Emily's increasing ability across the novel to control her excess emotions ultimately affords her the mark of feminine sophistication and, consequently, a kind of temporary "disembodiment" that is characterized by noticeably less discourse about her body. First, she develops a more discriminating sense of taste, which springs from the intersection of her predisposition for observation and feeling and her emerging (cognitive) restraint. For instance, she accompanies the Montoni family to the opera, "where Emily was not so charmed but that, when she remembered the scene she had just quitted, she felt how infinitely inferior all the splendor of art is to the sublimity of nature" (189). In true Romantic fashion, Emily has learned to distinguish between art's splendor and the great Sublime in nature, which is the source of her affected heart and moderate "tears of admiration" (189). These transformative feelings seem not to wound Emily in the same way that her other passions can; instead, she better processes them at a cognitive level so as to appreciate what surrounds her rather than allowing it to overwhelm her. Moreover, Emily's restraint allows her to better cope with the challenges of adulthood, such as experiencing the death or loss of loved ones. Upon St Aubert's death, she has the chance to fulfill promises made to her father and to practice the kind of moderation he taught her, even when to do so means rejecting sensibility in the name of fortitude: "'Alas!' said she, 'I do indeed perceive how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude than the grace of sensibility, and I will also endeavor to fulfill the promise I then made; I will not indulge in unavailing lamentation, but will try to endure, with firmness, the oppression I cannot elude" (214). In this moment, Emily demonstrates a fuller

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understanding of her father's lessons as she chooses to not simply apply knowledge but reflect on its usefulness for approaching a deeply emotional trial; moreover, her valuation of "fortitude" seems a rather polite way to describe her increasing mental strength among the apparently more modest virtues of "grace and sensibility," though it really connotes her strength against succumbing to the fluctuations of her own bodily feelings.

But her occasional success does not prevent her from ever fully overcoming or escaping the bodily feelings that she must control. She continues to have "fainting spirits" (314), perhaps because an inherent part of her character is a wild imagination and superstitious nature. Superstition, she admits, is like a "contagion" that she cannot ever elude entirely, but likewise, strong emotional undercurrents that run between Emily and other characters equally speak to the physicality of feeling (490). Burke's declaration that "It is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration, and chiefly excites our passions" seems to be borne out to its fullest in Emily, but as she gains an increasing awareness of the world, her ignorance is less likely to suddenly produce unchecked fantasies and emotions (*A Philosophical Enquiry* 57). Indeed, the structure of the novel, in which mysteries are identified and then explained with rational causes, mirrors the cycles of training that Emily must undergo to learn to practice restraint. However, Emily's sleuthing does not so much seek to demystify the body as to attempt to rise above its ability to feel too much and situate her conduct firmly on the side of reason. If Emily's journey speaks to the challenges of a young woman at the close of the eighteenth century, then her task was to become the governor of her own body—not because of the dictates of social norms or to take a feminist position against woman's perceived weakness, but rather to better determine her own fate. As a result, Radcliffe is able to

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effect a partial "disembodiment." The novel's language is able to shift away from repeated narration of the fainting spells that make Emily look like a silly young girl and toward a more mature Emily whose ability to check her feelings gives her more self-respect and respect from others.

Though not engulfed by gendered norms of feminine excess of feeling, Byron shares Radcliffe's concern about the ability of the body to feel too much, which leads not to fainting or public embarrassment but to intense suffering. In order to locate this concern, we have to first wade through Byronic theatricality so as to acknowledge the complications of any of his highly staged representations of the body. As John Watkins points out, Byron's critics often focus on his nihilism (395), which has consequently led a number of scholars to call into question the seriousness of his works, particularly those which feature autobiographical elements. Susan Wolfson, for example, discusses both the serious and comic potential of Byron's ghosts (776); Jerome McGann, on the other hand, focuses on aspects of Byron's works that he calls masks, or creations of fictional self-projections that can speak truth, and differentiates masks from masquerades: "Where masking is personal and introspective… masquerade is interpersonal and social. In the masquerade, Byron's creative or constructive self moves into a space where he can no longer imagine or control the range of interactive relations that the masquerade makes possible" ("Hero with a Thousand Faces" 308). For McGann, *Manfred* moves "beyond the device of masks and into the dangerous scenarios of masquerade"—dangerous because "the knowledge that emerges from this dynamic is neither subjective nor objective, it is social: an objective display of interpersonal relations lying open to an indefinite range of alterations from within and without" ("Hero with a Thousand Faces"

308). In the sense of narrative structure, this tumultuous nature of outside social

influences might be then seen to parallel the kinds of exterior stimuli that an individual

body is subject to from the natural environment. Read as a masquerade, then, Byron's

Manfred uses the voices of the spirits that he calls upon in addition to the rustic Chamois

Hunter, the Abbot, and his servants Manuel and Herman to comment on his wretched

state.

Elsewhere, McGann has characterized *Manfred* as "a nakedly autobiographical

piece in which Byron tries to represent what sort of life can remain for a man once he

knows not only that his soul is a sepulcher, but that he himself has made it so" (*Byron

and Romanticism* 29); but, I will suggest that this drama not only centers on Manfred's

soul but also his tormented psychological state and the restless body in which he finds

himself trapped. In fact, Manfred's bodily state has largely been neglected in its critical

assessments. McGann's otherwise excellent assessment of Manfred as a representation

of "the self-deceived and self-destructive Romantic imagination" takes for granted that

the narrative tension of Manfred's "life" triumphing over "the long disease of his

imagination" is the only issue at stake in the play (*Byron and Romanticism* 64). The text

does not always seriously engage discourse of the body, which has perhaps contributed to

readers of Byron passing over the very scene where Manfred desperately desires to be

disembodied, and which I will read as a central feature of the play's entanglement with

the problem of the body feeling too much.

Manfred opens with a monologue detailing his troubles, the first of which is his

inability to sleep. His slumbers are disturbed by "a continuance of enduring though, /

Which [he] can resist not" (l. 4-5) and these thoughts draw his attention to a "vigil" like

self-examination (l. 6). "And yet," he notes, "I live, and bear / The aspect and the form

of breathing men" (I.i.7-8). The phrase "and yet" highlights what is for the speaker a

paradox between his mind and body: in his failure to sleep—a necessity for the

continuance of human life—his idea of self turns inward and yet, on the outside and to

any other observer, his bodily state seems intact, just as any other breathing man. This

paradox also influences the subsequent lines, where Manfred contends that "The Tree of

Knowledge is not that of Life" (I.i.12). He claims that he has studied "the wisdom of the

world" (I.i.14) in philosophy, science, "and the springs / Of wonder" (I.i.12-14), "but

they avail not" (I.i.19). Also of no comfort are his good deeds and the falling of his foes

(I.i.17-20). He concludes with a litany of emotions he can no longer feel:

> … I have no dread,
>
> And feel the curse to have no natural fear,
>
> Nor fluttering throb, that beats with hopes or wishes,
>
> Or lurking love of something on earth. (I.i.24-27)

Though the root cause of his numbness is yet to be revealed, his incapacity for these

feelings suggest that Manfred feels less than human, if to be human is to be able to

experience fear, a fluttering throb in the breast, and love. "And yet," we may remember

from a few lines before, his material human body is still intact, leaving him in the

predicament of feeling like a hollow shell of a man. Jerome Christensen calls attention to

the fact that, in Byron's texts, links between the body and meaning must also consider

that the "body is more than physical, that an incurable limp may be an inimitable style"

(47), but this body is not a costume. Rather, Manfred's inability to take off the corporeal

cloak that simultaneously leaves him numb and too sensitive to pain works to heighten our sense that his immediate discomfort is felt acutely in his body.

Manfred reveals an awareness of the limitations of his body later in the scene as he converses with the Seven Spirits that he has summoned to assist him. In his frustration with their mocking, he retorts:

… Slaves, scoff not at my will!

The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,

The lightning of my being, is as bright,

Pervading, and far-darting as your own,

And shall not yield to yours, though coop'd up in clay! (I.i.152-156).

William Melaney argues that this reference to Prometheus and to the transgressive symbol of lightning— "in the sense of breaking down the barriers between what dwells in nature (as force or power) and what appears in nature (as pure phenomenon)" —suggest that Manfred "proudly insists that he belongs to Heaven as well as to the Earth" (462). Yet, I would argue, Manfred seems not to "proudly" announce his earthly citizenship; he threatens the Spirits by intimating that his lineage hearkens back to Prometheus, but since Prometheus himself was confined to the earth after his transgression of bringing fire to man *and* Manfred confesses that he is "coop'd up in clay," the body functions as a mode of imprisonment rather than a badge of honor. Yet, what Manfred is really after in his discussion with the Seven Spirits is "Forgetfulness" (I.i.135) or "Oblivion, self-oblivion" (I.i.144). He wants to be able to let go of the culpability he feels about the event that he refuses to name, but to ask for "self-oblivion" seems to tie his entire being to this guilt. The Spirits suggest that death may be an option for Manfred—a possibility that he seems

to seriously consider—but then they remind him that, though time for them is not demarcated into past, present, and future, even they perpetually remember (I.i.148-151). Though the spirits undermine their own suggestion (much to Manfred's annoyance), raising the possibility that death would free Manfred from his guilt heightens the implication that the body is the actual trap that prevents him from experiencing peace.

John Watkins reads these references to death differently, maintaining that "Manfred stands apart from temporal process and longs for the liberation and renewal that come with the negation of an earlier experience of selfhood" (401). Yet, it seems that Manfred never really attempts to erase the unmentionable experience from his consciousness but rather seeks to erase it from his body. Even after the Seven Spirits hint about the persistence of eternal memory, and even after Astarte curses him to a state without "slumber, nor to die" (I.i.254), Manfred still feels at odds with his body in Act I's second scene. He observes that: "…my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm; / There is a power upon me which withholds / And makes it my fatality to live" (I.ii.22-24). Here, Manfred feels an odd conflict where his foot is firm in spite of his mind reeling; it is as if his body is under outside control (it is, more or less, because of Astarte's curse). But the irony of his words that is it his "fatality to live" suggests again that death would be preferable over life. Manfred's experience of materiality seems to be premised on the body as a physical index of experience, in which case the embodied transgression of crime he has committed and the guilt that he feels is marked upon the very body that he cannot forsake. Given the textual references to incest that are also reminiscent of the charges of incest between Bryon and his half-sister Aurora Leigh,[15] this punishment

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[15] See II.i.24-27 and II.iv.122-124. I hesitate to draw too much attention to autobiographical parallels with Byron's life, just as I am wary of taking too seriously any parallels between disfigured characters and

being written on and contained in the physical dimension of the body ironically underscores the nature of the supposed crime.

Manfred's increasing resistance against the prison of his body is staged across the remainder of the play. Linguistically, at the closing of Act I, he wishes to be "The viewless spirit of a lovely sound, / A living voice, a breathing harmony, / A bodiless enjoyment" (I.ii.53-55). The turn of phrase "bodiless enjoyment" reflects Manfred's perception that he might despise life a little less if he could transcend his marked body and yet live as a "living voice" or "breathing harmony." This train of thought prompts him to undertake a reckless hike approaching a suicide attempt on the side of the mountain, and though we know he cannot die, the Chamois Hunter is not privy to this knowledge and rescues him (I.ii.100-113). Yet even the hunter seems to notice the disjuncture between Manfred's mind and body: at the opening of Act II, the hunter tries to dissuade Manfred from leaving the safety of his cottage. He cautions: "No, no—yet pause—thou must not yet go forth: / Thy mind and body are alike unfit / To trust each other, for some hours, at least" (II.i.1-3). Not realizing that Manfred's condition of "unfit" mind and body is a long-term affliction, this new acquaintance unknowingly makes an apt (and revealing) comment about the mis-alignment of Manfred's dangerous hike with the progress of his disintegrating body: Manfred resists pausing or discontinuing his forward trajectory because he would rather end his life; however, as he was forewarned, he is not allowed an unnatural death. Ironically, it is the hunter's

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Byron's own experience of disability. Though I do not wish to negate the contributions of these biographical readings, in *Manfred*, the tone of the drama (particularly given its persistent monologues) seems so self-consciously staged that I prefer to treat Byron's central character as theatrical rather than personal.

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sympathy that rescues Manfred—introducing a juxtaposition with Manfred's inability to self-sympathize and make peace with his past.

Wholly unable to afford himself any sympathy, Manfred repeatedly bemoans his fate across Act II and Act III. He tells the Witch of Atlas, for instance, of his increasing feelings of isolation from humanity "though [he] wore the form" of the human body (II.ii.56). Now near to death, the human form is suggestively more like an ill-fitting costume (or, perhaps more appropriately, ill-fitting chains to material experience). This gulf between him and others is only resolved at the end of the play, as the Manfred grasps the Abbot's hand just as he dies (III.iv.148); at the same time, upon Manfred's release from the bonds of materiality, the Abbot proclaims that, finally, "his soul hath ta'en its earthless flight," signaling a resolve of the mind-body contradictions that he has faced (III.iv.152). Only in death can Manfred achieve the separation of body and mind/soul, which completes the disembodied transformation that he has longed for. Consequently, this moment of closure also finally realizes an erasure of the weighty guilt that he has suffered as the result of living in a marked body.

First Finale: Temptations to Move

Burke, Shelley, Radcliffe, and Byron have now pointed us in the direction of two critical problems of embodiment: theorizing aesthetic judgement or the poetics of life on the worryingly unstable ground of subjective experience, which initiates the displacement of the body as a means to access more transcendent ideas, and the possibility of excessive feeling, which initiates flights to disembodiment as a coping mechanism intended to circumvent succumbing to that which cannot always be controlled. Faced with these corporeal problems, the texts' common attempt at resolution is imagining or enacting a

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shift in states—a kind of narrative movement that displaces our sense of situatedness in a character's consciousness. While I cannot fully address the implications of textual representations of embodiment on the reader's experience until Chapter Five, the perpetual starts and stops of engagement with embodied discourse and representation call our attention to the dis-ease with which these writers represent corporeal experience. I have called all of these movements flights and retreats because they each pursue the impossible act of moving away from a full recognition of material, embodied experience.

The problems of embodiment discussed thus far have each been localized in some way to an individual: the individual desires to operate objectively from an inescapably subjective stance, an individual seeks access to transcendent ideas and fuller communion with life writ large and yet at best must endlessly shift states to try to collect many discrete glimpses into it, or an individual bears the burden of feeling too much grief, pain, or guilt. The individuation of these problems again underscores the problems of subjectivity and the sense that each of these problems results in a literary speaker feeling trapped by their own body. In the next chapter, I will turn toward social problems of embodiment, namely the uncertain potentials of mobs and workers in public spaces and under new conditions of work. As might be expected, the concerns that arise about collective groups of subjects are augmented by the already uncertain ideas about mutable and unpredictable individual bodies.

CHAPTER III

INDETERMINATE BODIES: MOBS AND WORKERS

"Your hellish machinery is shivered to smash on Stilbro' Moor, and your men are lying

bound hand and foot in a ditch by the roadside. Take this as a warning from men that are

starving, and have starving wives and children to go home to when they have done this

deed. If you get new machines, or if you otherwise go on as you have done, you shall

hear from us again. Beware!"

--Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*

Re-Imagining Worker Mobs in *Shirley*

In Charlotte Brontë's 1849 novel *Shirley*, the narrator looks back to "the

beginning of this century" to reflect upon the Luddite uprisings in Yorkshire between

1811 and 1812 and the conditions that both produced and were produced by these events

(5).[16] Both historically and in the representation in *Shirley*, the Yorkshire factory

owners' introduction of machinery into the mills sparked riots among workers in

response to their jobs being threatened or cut; and in these riots, workers usually pillaged

factory property or set the factory on fire, thus putting their bodies to work in a symbolic

act of protest. John Plotz argues in *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics*

that "virtually any text about crowds will have something to say about the odd gray space

between crowd as thing and crowd as action," and this process certainly applies to *Shirley*

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[16] Brontë loosely bases the protests in the novel on the real historical events of William Cartwright and the Luddites who attacked his Rawfolds mill in April 1812. The Yorkshire community in *Shirley* and the problem centered on its mill are also contextualized in the midst of the Napoleonic War and the consequent trade difficulties that ensued due to the conflict with France. The 1807 Orders in Council had prohibited allied and neutral countries from engaging in trade with France, and one economic ramification of this legislative action was that America restricted the importation of wool in a countermove, thus cutting off the primary market for the Yorkshire woolen trade. It was this impetus that put pressure on Yorkshire mills, such as Moore's mill in *Shirley*, to cut expenditures by using machinery for the production processes that they had formerly paid workers to do by hand. Hence, Robert Moore is "very rich in cloth that [he] cannot sell" because his warehouse is "piled to the roof with pieces" (25).

(7); the novel's mob quickly progresses from just a thing to an embodied collective corpus with physical potential awaiting activation (the "odd gray space"), needing only a spark to ignite public action.

Early in this activation process, the struggle of human labor against the coming age of machine labor surfaces. As a response to the impending delivery of machinery to Robert Moore's mill, the protesting workers leave a note on the wagons filled with the "hellish machinery" —wagons that ultimately arrive empty at Moore's factory—detailing what actions the workers have taken against the infernal machinery and the men transporting it (341). The workers' two-fold attack serves both literal and symbolic functions in this scene: first, the destruction of the machinery literally forestalls the conversion of the mill from manual to machine labor while the labor being performed in "shivering [it] to smash" calls up both the literal act of breaking the machines to pieces as well as the embodied connotation of human bodies that are quaking with adrenaline as they engage in violent protest. In this moment, human bodies are depicted as being fully poised *against* machines. The second component of the attack, in which the workers forcefully bind Moore's assistants "hand and foot" and leave them in a roadside ditch, underscores the desperation of the soon-to-be displaced workers and accentuates the collective power of their bodies against other bodies (341). The workers establish that they are motivated by their own and their families' starvation and that they are willing to take further action to prevent Moore from implementing the labor-saving machinery in his mill.

The workers' threat of additional retribution in the form of bodily action (the activation of the laborer mob) comes to fruition when Moore fails to satisfy their primary

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demand to make small, gradual changes to the way the mill functions.[17] Hundreds

descend upon the mill in response, break open the gates, and wreak their frustration about

Moore on the mill itself: "A simultaneous hurled volley of stones had saluted the broad

front of the mill, with all its windows; and now every pane of every lattice lay in

shattered pieces and pounded fragments. A yell followed this demonstration—a rioter's

yell—a north-of-England, a Yorkshire, a West-Riding, a West-Riding-clothing-district-

of-Yorkshire rioter's yell" (343). The narrator catalogues the physical actions of the

workers that take their toll on the mill building—smashing windows first and, soon after,

firing shots and setting the building on fire—but the narrator also becomes increasingly

specific in locating the yell as belonging to a certain kind of body. This vocalization

helps to embody the worker who is otherwise anonymous and invisible under the cover of

night during this riot by calling attention back to the bodies of the crowd. As the singular

voice comes the represent the mob, the singular body of the Yorkshire factory worker is

synechdochally linked to all of the bodies that have experienced their own individual

suffering and the bodies that, collectively, are pushing back against the middle class's

attempt to further disenfranchise them; at the same time, the significant geographical and

social markers attributed to this worker accentuate his yell as a dynamic response to the

impending loss of work at the factory.

As tensions between textile mill workers and the owner of the mill escalate in the

novel, the narrator's sympathies are torn between the men who are desperate for work

and Robert Moore, the industrialist who voices logical motives for making changes to his

mill in order to make it profitable. The narrator weighs the extent to which the workers

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[17] The workers also plot against Moore because one of the leaders of the initial attack, Moses Barraclough, was convicted and sentenced to transportation (236).

and Moore are each deserving of sympathy; and while affluent characters' prejudices against the lower classes characterize the workers as "low scoundrels" on occasion, the narrator's objective discussion of workers with bad intentions as well as workers who are sincerely attempting to make their way in the world counteracts any oversimplified labeling of the working class. Moore, too, seems to have honest intentions in some ways, but his stubbornness to forge ahead with changes in production without heed to the consequences for his employees paints him in an only partially sympathetic light. The narrator characterizes the resulting problem that Moore poses to the community in this way:

> … it is not to be expected that he would deliberate much as to whether his
> advance was or was not prejudicial to others. Not being a native, nor for any
> length of time a resident of the neighbourhood, he did not sufficiently care when
> the new inventions threw the old workpeople out of employ. He never asked
> himself where those to whom he no longer paid weekly wages found daily bread;
> and in his negligence, he only resembled thousands besides, on whom the starving
> poor of Yorkshire seemed to have a closer claim. (29)

This assertion frames the problem as an issue of failed sympathy: as a recent transplant to the neighborhood, Moore is not sufficiently embedded in social relationships to understand the growing consequences of his seemingly personal business decision to evade his own sense of poverty and push "forward" (29). Moreover, Moore is situated as even more of an outsider by the narrator's exploration of his "hybrid" European heritage that can classify him as "but half a Briton, and scarcely that" (27).[18] Framing sympathy

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[18] The narrator also points out that one line of Moore's family, the Gerard line, were once wealthy merchants who got caught up in questionable business transactions, whose credit fell into disrepute after

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as a feeling cultivated through generations and within the bounds of a community gives this passage a distinct Victorian sensibility in its reflection on past (semi)historical events; but the focus on the absence of this important sympathetic relationship consequently obscures class conflict: the factory owner pitted against the workers. Yet, by emphasizing community dynamics over class issues, this strategic approach highlights the fact that choices within a community have interrelated and material consequences for the individuals that belong to and depend upon community-mindedness, such as Moore's workers who are now struggling to provide food for their families.

The transition to machinery is branded as necessary "progress" by a factory owner like Moore, but it has dire consequences for the workers, whose limited agency as cogs in the factory system is further reduced when they are denied the opportunity to work. The narrator in *Shirley* points out that, for these workers, their "sole inheritance was labour" (30). Here, the narrator underscores that their livelihood is entirely dependent upon their ability to work and to secure employment, delineating a contrast to other forms of inheritance (property, business ownership, etc.) that wealthier families could rely upon to help them withstand the harsh realities of difficult economic circumstances. Yet, the agency of putting their own bodies to work lies not with the workers (they welcome the opportunity to work, even for meager pay), but with the factory owners who must choose between using workers and using machinery. When the factory owners no longer chose to use workers, the workers "consequently could not get wages, and consequently could not get bread—they were left to suffer on" (30). Thus, there are immediate bodily

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problematic speculations, and who were ultimately ruined financially by "the shock of the French Revolution" (28). This economic down spiral in his family history seems to undergird Moore's desperate quest to make his factory profitable, while at the same time relating Moore's predicament to another historical circumstance in which mob action played a significant role in political, social, and economic instability.

ramifications—such as hunger—for workers and their families when working

opportunities diminish and they lose agency in their own employment. This emphasis on

grounding the novel in the material realities of life accords with the narrator's

announcement in the first chapter, which undercuts generic expectations of a romance

and instead asserting something "real, cool, and solid," comparing the forthcoming

narrative to "something unromantic as Monday morning, when all who have to work

wake with the consciousness that they must rise and betake themselves thereto" (5). The

narrator's sympathetic acknowledgement of the workers' hard realities as they wake to

begin another work day lends a sense of textual agency to their plight and calls attention

to the working potential of these bodies and the dramatic distinction between bodies that

are working and bodies that are not working in this new kind of labor system.

Yet, what is so haunting about this riot in *Shirley* is the body's inability to effect

real change through rioting—and this holds true for both the individual bodies and the

collective body of the "moving mass" (341). The workers seem to be able to release

some pent-up anger through their actions against Moore and the mill, but then their

agency is foreclosed; they still go home to starving wives and children "when they have

done this deed," so there is certainly no immediate relief from their troubles (341).

Moreover, Moore has been actively preparing his defensive strategy and the riot is

ultimately unable to resolve the demands of the workers with the choices that Moore feels

bound to make for the sake of his own financial security.[19] The narrator associates the

aftermath of the riot with a battlefield, thereby locating the tragic importance of this

spectacle in bodies that have experienced "death," "pain," and "exertion" (346). The

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[19] Moore's conversations with Shirley and various workers suggest that he is quite attuned to their
arguments and their preparations to attack him; Shirley and Caroline, the witnesses to and primary narrators
during the riot scene, also note that he has soldiers and his own group of men defending the mill (342).

combination of the early destruction of the machinery and the damage inflicted by the rioters puts Moore in even more desperate financial circumstances that are only resolved at the end of the novel by the conclusion of the Napoleonic War and the reopening of the American market for Moore's goods.

In *Shirley*, emotional bodies are subsumed into the community; the goal is to dampen the potential for material bodies to erupt in significant and often unpredictable ways, resolving that unpredictability by turning mob energy into industrial labor and reasserting the need for separate public and private spheres. Indeed, John Plotz argues that *Shirley* "stages a drama of incorporation that subsumes the former logic of the quasi-organized crowd to the overpowering logic of the fully organized factory. That subsumption presumably aims to allocate to the novel the power to overcome crowds, but to retain them as well, to gather their perilous strength into a text that is itself publicly circulatable" (179-180). Thus, for the purposes of the novel's ideological stance, the worker mob energy is diverted into a more socially and economically orthodox application. Plotz goes on to assert that the function of the crowd in *Shirley* is as a catalyst: through the crowd, "undisciplined liberty [passes] away and [is] replaced by a posited liberty within structure" (185). Plotz's account of the crowd stresses its importance as a mechanism of change within Brontë's narrative structure, but it does not fully engage the powerful image of embodied action that *Shirley*'s mob conjures. These powerful worker bodies, always lurking just in the background of the other narrative threads and seemingly poised for action, are difficult to subsume into the almost-too-easy narrative resolution in which Moore can continue to employ them. The novel suggests that this peaceable arrangement will hold fast, but the continued background presence of

these worker bodies and their unpredictably dangerous potential throughout the novel cloud what appears to be a certain settlement with lingering suspicion. Brontë's representation of the Luddite uprisings ultimately diverts the workers' embodied actions of protest back into structured labor, but for much of the novel, the implicit stance on worker protest teeters between endorsing this type of action (the workers do garner attention for their cause) and rejecting its disruption of social order. Despite Brontë's partiality for reinstating a sympathetic community, the inability of the novel to entirely quell the continued presence of and unpredictably dangerous potential of worker bodies through anything less than a *deus ex machina* plot device accentuates the material implications of the power of groups of bodies acting collectively.

When mobs or active working bodies appear in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century texts, the collective or individual bodies frequently exceed signification as only a "thing" to house the cognitive and emotional features of a character. Affective characteristics are transmuted between individuals—this process, we will see, raises serious concerns—and the active body becomes a visible response to cultural discourse about what constitutes proper bodies and how citizen bodies and working bodies should be disciplined and controlled. New social, political, and workplace changes rendered the British subject's body vulnerable to previously unknown affective pressures, which produces fascinating literary and visual depictions of an activated body whose next act is unpredictable and unknown; consequently, these bodies often become a viable site for protesting the changing cultural landscape of their communities and nation. Indeed, the crucial moment of affective potential unfolds as an individual body encounters an opportunity and capacity to act (or to be acted upon) in

response to particular conditions. Brian Massumi calls this potential "indeterminacy," and it is intrinsically related to movement, for "in motion, a body is in an immediate, unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary" (4) and in this motion, it maintains an "openness to an elsewhere and otherwise than it is, in any here and now" (5). Within this openness, too, is bodily potential primed for reaction (or for holding back); for movement (or for restraint into stillness); and perhaps most worrisome, for dangerous or riotous action when subjected to certain circumstances or pressures. This indeterminacy and its attendant potentials are always active, but not always visible, and both the invisibility and the unknowingness about the type, force, and direction of the action proves to be unsettling for the Romantics.

For some writers, activating bodily indeterminacy was a frightening phenomenon that should be suppressed through real-world legal action or through literary models representing the disorder that could ensue and that fear was a proper response; but for other writers, heightening attention to the indeterminate material body in their textual representations could also validate social concerns about poor working conditions, starvation, illness, and other embodied consequences of modern living and working conditions at the turn of the nineteenth century and in the early decades of that century. In this latter sense, texts that give narrative weight to this publicly active, material body call attention to social issues and promote embodied action toward social or political change through protest. These bodies in motion make their motion visible in a way that calls attention to the actual materiality of the body and what it is capable of doing.

Echoes of the Enlightenment throughout the Romantic period underpin calls to reason and other cognitive models of response to significant social and political issues of

the time; yet, prominent examples from literature and visual culture engage the stakes of emotions and affects that circulate in the public sphere through crowds and mobs and through the economic sphere through working bodies. The two following sections of this chapter will address the significance of eruptions of indeterminate bodies in textual and visual representations of mobs, riots, working bodies, and worker protests. The first section will consider the anxieties and possibilities surrounding the "mob body" in political activity, and the second section will examine the working body as a more individualized but equally potent site of resistance to unfavorable modern labor conditions. These two categories of bodies are connected by what I argue is the indeterminate affective potential of bodies that need only activation to be potent sites of agency in the public sphere. In this discussion, I will consider a variety of texts, each with different degrees of subscription to "real" representations of historical events and change, to demonstrate that inconsistent value judgments about the indeterminacy of material bodies give way to an underlying understanding that bodies do, indeed, matter in the construction or deconstruction of public order and labor.

A number of critics have provided influential accounts of crowds, mobs, and labor during the Romantic era—such as Marilyn Butler, John Plotz, Mary Fairclough, Ian Haywood, John Seed, and Andrew Todd Harris—and these accounts provide the historically- and culturally-situated framework for the discussion I will undertake about large public gatherings in this chapter. Critics that discuss the changing nature of work because of mechanized factories and due to the Enclosure Act, including E.P. Thomson, Theresa Adams, and Tim Fulford, likewise inform my discussion of workers and laborers. I will extend these accounts methodologically by orienting textual

representations of bodies historically as well as with attention to affect. I will also seek

to emphasize the affective qualities that these bodies have as they circulate in public

space, which is to say that emotions are not the only subject at play, but material bodies

that have the physical potential to labor (or resist it) and to become the agent of a protest

by forming a mob group, destroying property, lighting fires, waving flags, etc. In

contemporary approaches to affect, emotion is often represented as being either a somatic

experience or ethereal thing that evades description; I will draw from the former strains

of theory because the literary and visual culture texts that take up protests, mobs, and

working bodies strongly register the materiality of experience and these strains of theory

also better complement the holistic approach to the body that I have been advocating

for—one where the mystery of human experience is not displaced out of the material in

an attempt to make it governable or explainable by the intellect.

Though I use Massumi's terminology and theory of corporeal potential always in

motion, this chapter's argument is also indebted to the work of Roland Barthes, who

provides us with a way to theorize the potential of bodily action that is particularly *potent*

in the moment before the action itself gets underway and begins to generate an outcome.

This moment—just one in an on-going present that quickly passes into the past—is a

moment rife with possibility for the material body and appears regularly in Romantic-era

accounts of crowds and mobs. In *The Neutral*, Barthes calls for "a hyperconsciousness of

the affective minimum, of the microscopic fragment of emotion… which implies an

extreme changeability of affective moments, a rapid modification, into shimmer" (101).

Barthes' appeal to this "hyperconsciousness" underscores the critical moment where

something that was invisible may become visible—the tipping point, so to speak, of

emotion spurring action (or, as it may be, affective reaction). As it comes to fruition in the form of an action, the "fragment of emotion" gives rise to subsequent emotions and actions that are unpredictable; moreover, the mood or "shimmer" of that affective moment can also continue to shift or re-orient at any time. The "extreme changeability" (or indeterminacy, as I will call it, following Massumi) of this potential, especially because the body is located in a material world with material repercussions, can either be fraught with fear or hope for social transformation.

The Mob Body's Indeterminacy

Staunch proponents of social order in the late-eighteenth century express anxiety about the ill effects that can result from dissent, particularly when the oppositional action is undertaken by individuals who are perceived to be behaving irrationally. Edmund Burke reveals just this sort of reservation in his influential *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). He takes issue with the conduct of the individuals who were swept up in the aura of the Revolution, asserting that they might have proceeded in a more civilized manner. So, when Burke writes early in this letter that he "heartily wish[es] that France may be animated by a spirit of rational liberty," this characterization of a national spirit informed principally by *rational* liberty suggests he believes that the main objectives of the revolutionaries were undercut by their inattention to a rational means to achieve them (145). In stark contrast to the more subversive and tumultuous approaches to revolutionary change that were undertaken in France, Burke's ardent support of rationality denotes a subdued approach to "status quo" political and social agendas that, by definition, attempt to preserve and enforce existing normative body behaviors. Burke's endorsement of bodies guided by rationality—where rationality suggests slow,

calm, and deliberate actions rather than actions that are hasty, violent, or beyond the boundaries of polite behavior—is an example of Burke's well-documented conservatism.

To account for necessary innovation and improvement in social and political systems over time, Burke inserts a kind of pressure release valve to carefully channel this otherwise unpredictable energy to productive use while still preserving tradition and unity within these systems, both of which are critical priorities. Unsurprisingly, he holds up British legal codes and documents such as the Magna Carta as laudable examples: "the people of England well know that the idea of inheritance [of the crown, peerages, privileges, etc.] furnishes a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission, without at all excluding a principle of improvement" (184). For Burke, this system works much like the order and patterns seen in nature, which justifies it without recourse to systems of morals or rights, and thus the revolutionaries' attempt to swiftly overhaul their system of governance will fail because of its abstraction from shared value structures and its inability to focus on practical and guarded change (185). Thereby, Burke's stance on how citizen bodies should engage in actions pertaining to social or political change does not simply re-authorize existing sociopolitical structures; rather, it values ties to tradition and touchstones of national unity while recognizing that sociopolitical structures must have some internal adaptive mechanism via "improvement." But Burke's sense of the timeline and scope in which these changes ought to unfold is incremental, both in the sense that he sees cultural changes happening gradually and systemic change responding in like fashion, so any changes must be inflected by the cautious and circumspect influence of rationality.

Inasmuch as Burke's argument has an institutional focus, at its core, it also relies on an argument about national unity and attempts to preserve the kinds of social bonds that are required for a peaceful (and rational) society. After rehearsing the complicated lineages of monarchy, aristocracy, property, and power in Britain, Burke says that the Constitution in particular "preserves an unity in so great a diversity of its parts" (184). Any provision that sustains this collective unity helps to keep a nation in rational order. As Michael G. Cooke suggests in his essay "Romanticism and the Paradox of Wholeness," Burke only gives nominal credence to the original aims of the French Revolution, noting that the outcome of rebellion starkly contrasts the kind of unity that he believes the British enjoy:

> Burke, shifting the emphasis from geography to civil constitution, makes a cornerstone of his *Reflexions on the Revolution in France* the idea of society as an organic whole, comparable to Linnaean ecography or the Newtonian cosmos. Not to belong, obediently and conveniently, is for Burke to be cut off, and to fall into "madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing sorrow." (443)

Burke's anxiety about mobs and riots stems from the kind of social bond that is broken in the wake of rebellious behavior—when an individual or group is "cut off" from the "organic whole" of the functioning system of society and government through their actions. His emphasis on obedient citizen bodies as the ideal mode of belonging to this greater collective also seemingly precludes the possibility of finding a sense of belonging within a dissenting group, such as within a mob. In other words, to be cut off is to be doomed to isolation and alienation from the fabric of society and its attendant history and traditions. Yet, the kind of discrete event that Cooke discusses will, in Burke's view,

have further ramifications beyond the individual that is cut off: the fabric of society could

begin to unravel as one and then another individual is cut off during a situation like a

mob event.

Burke's concern about the fate of this dissenting individual is located within a

larger discourse about the relationship between society and its members; Marilyn Butler

uses Burke to characterize this troubled relationship when she says that Romanticism

"had to do with the characterization of the central state—that way of coming to terms

with the 'platoon' to which we belong, in Burke's word, when the degree to which we *do*

belong is in real doubt" (134). Consequently, Burke raises an important question: can

disruptive public behavior be transformative, or is it simply destructive? Like Butler,

Cooke argues that the Romantic period is marked by "the conception of wholeness… as a

problem," and consequently demonstrates that there is a wider concern in the Romantic

period with what he calls partitive and synecdochic relationships—terms that may be

productively applied to help uncover underlying philosophies of the promise or

consequence of public embodied action and aids in clarifying Burke's concerns (444).[20]

A partitive action between an individual and his or her society denotes a breaking away

from (or simply an attempt to break) the political order in a kind of temporary or

permanent severing. For Burke, partitive actions and behaviors would undermine

societal order, unity, and tradition, thereby dismantling the social bonds that undergird a

peaceful and productive society. In contrast, a synecdochic action would denote that a

group or individual could effect (slow) change from within the system rather than acting

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[20] In this article, Cooke uses the "partitive" and "synecdochic" terms to unpack the complex connections between Blake's prophetic characters, but employing these same terms helps to distinguish between kinds of bodily potentials that can emerge from responses to social change and the way that Burke and others interpret these potentials in literary texts and visual culture.

as separate from it (or against it). The former inspires fear; the latter could provide the means for productive change.

Burke's ultimate fear seems to lie not just in the possibility of the individual's tie to society being severed but in a cascading effect of social fissures. After all, the effects of this severing may extend beyond the single individual; affective states have often been described as an intersection between a body and the world, where the individual is undergoing some sort of perpetual "becoming" in the philosophical sense and this "world" is often taken to mean the immediate environment (one can walk into a room and perceive a sort of "mood," for example).[21] The affective nature of the environment can and very often does include the contributions of other individuals, particularly in public situations: one individual's affective potential activates another's, sometimes with a mimetic result (the second individual now feels the same way as the first), sometimes with an entirely different result.[22] The affective resonance of an individual on other individuals certainly plays a role in Burke's criticism of the mob because of the possible domino effect of affective states that could intensify and magnify the already terrifying potentials of the mob. The action of one individual mob participant may move another individual—participant or non-participant—to (re)orient and (re)activate their own bodily potential toward mob participation. In the essay "An Inventory of Shimmers," Melissa

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[21] While the matter of "becoming" is most often attributed to Nietzsche or to Deleuze and Guattari, the conception of an individual interacting and interfacing with a world as part of this "becoming" process is perhaps most poignantly outlined in the work of Jakob von Uexküll, and this idea has been further delineated in contemporary scholars such as Giorgio Agamben and Brian Massumi who conceptualize embodied states of existence as always in process.

[22] The immense complexity of the influences of an environment's affective dimensions on an individual and how individuals feel emotions differently necessarily makes any single attempt to theorize this process reductive. My intention here is to underscore the fact that within groups, individuals certainly affect each other in ways that we are still attempting to understand, and for Burke, the sheer instability and unpredictability of this kind of relational influence is particularly dangerous in the context of the public crowd or mob.

Greg and Gregory Seigworth describe the power of this increasingly "sticky" kind of

affect: a "relationality… that persists, in adjacency and duration, alongside the affects and

bodies that gather up in motley, always more-than-human collectivity" (13). Their

particular terms work well to elucidate what Burke is trying to describe: he sees the

collective affective possibility—initially between individuals but ultimately subsuming

those individuals into a larger, "motley" group via the unavoidable "sticky" quality—as

being undesirable because its resonance could lead to further and further partitive actions

between citizen bodies and their society. In another approach, Mary Fairclough names

this contagious transfer of feeling "sympathy," and calls it the "pathological medium of

unrest" during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries using examples as early as

Hume and as late as De Quincey (3). But Fairclough is careful to point out that this

notion of "sympathy" isn't easily characterized by consistent ideological qualities; it "is

not a passion, a feeling, or an opinion in its own right, but rather, as the language of

'contagion' suggests, a medium for the transmission of energies, ideas, and emotions

within a collective" (3).[23] Like Fairclough, I want to posit that mobs and rioting crowds

are a particularly ripe site for this medium, but I want to also emphasize that attending to

the medium and the "energies, ideas, and emotions" does not fully capture the root of

Burke's fear; instead, it is both the medium of transmission *and* the bodies that are

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[23] Affect theorist Anna Gibbs also uses the language of contagion (and what she deems an epidemiological approach to affect) in her two essays "Contagious Feelings: Pauline Hanson and the Epidemiology of Affect" and "After Affect: Sympathy, Synchrony, and Mimetic Communication." In the latter article, she characterizes this project as discovering "continuities between things that were once held to be discrete, and discontinuity and difference where once there was sameness" (187). While I want to acknowledge the resonance of this epidemiology-inflected approach that both Fairclough and Gibbs take up, I have chosen not to use the term of contagion because of its negative connections—just the kind of metaphor that Burke may have appreciated in discussing mob affect, but too loaded for a more neutral approach to the sociopolitical consequences *and* possibilities of mobs. Epidemiology as a methodology also tends to be interested in tracing backward to a source—a "patient zero"—while my work here is more interested in the diffusion of affect and its potential outcomes.

impacted by the sympathetic contagion and that pose the material threat to the social and physical environment. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Burke supports only quiet approaches to sociopolitical change that are unlikely to stir up that potential of transmission and captivate bodies with disruptive fervor.

Romantic-era anxiety about the partitive aspect of demonstrative bodily actions such as mobs or riots can be partially attributed to memories and accounts of the French Revolution, but the Revolution was only one of a number of sources of this apprehension. As recent historicist critics such as Ian Haywood and John Seed have pointed out in the introduction to their edited volume *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, in the writing of history, the French Revolution has overshadowed other major events in the eighteenth century—the Gordon Riots of 1780 in particular—when these other events more directly impacted the early British Romantic writers (8).[24] The Gordon Riots involved significant mob action in response to Parliament's refusal to hear a petition to repeal the Catholic Relief Act of 1778, and they occurred at a time when the nation was already embroiled in political crisis over the American Revolution.[25] When the mobs first broke out, their targets were the homes and places of worship of Catholics. But, on June 6th, 1780, the rioters set fire to the newly rebuilt Newgate Prison and released approximately four hundred prisoners (at least four of whom were set to receive the death penalty). Rioters notably left a painted message on the wall of Newgate that the inmates had been freed by "His Majesty, King Mob" —a

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[24] We might add that the historical significance of the French Revolution may have also impacted the subsequent formation of the literary cannon around texts that take up this event.

[25] The Catholic Relief Act was enacted in an effort to enlist Catholics into the army to fight in the American Revolution. The act also granted modest rights to Catholics, largely to allow them greater access to education. Catholics were still not permitted to hold public office (and would not gain this right until 1829).

term that thereafter referred to any unruly and threatening group of rioters. Other prisons

were also attacked around the city, as was the Bank of England, though rioters did not

successfully gain access to the bank. The city of London was slow to restore order,

though they later dispatched 10,000 troops and, in effect, imposed martial law.

Londoners who witnessed this mob action firsthand or who followed its coverage in

newspapers were struck with fear.

George Crabbe's personal journal provides a poignant personal account of the

mob's violence and destruction and describes his own disquiet about the riots. Crabbe

scholars have repeatedly emphasized his "hostility toward religious enthusiasm," and so

it is with this framework that we should interpret his writings about a series of event

equally imbued with enthusiasm (Rossington 119).[26] In his entry from the 8th of June,

1780, Crabbe recalls that he was on business in Westminster on the 6th of June when the

House voted on the repeal of the Catholic Act and he witnessed the heightening emotions

of the mob gathered outside the House of Lords, though he returned home soon after.

But later in the evening, about seven o'clock, he says, he again ventured out into the city

and witnessed the storming of Newgate Prison, which he calls "the first scene of terror

and riot ever presented to me":

> By eight o'clock, Akerman's [the prison keeper's] house was in flames. I went
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> close to it, and never saw anything so dreadful. The prison was, as I said, a
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> remarkably strong building; but, determined to force it, they [the rioters] broke the
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> gates with crows and other instruments, and climbed up the outside of the cell

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[26] Michael Rossington's article "Crabbe's Times" does not discuss Crabbe's coverage of the Gordon Riots in his personal journal (this topic is only footnoted in scholarly work on Crabbe), but provides interesting analysis of Crabbe's poetry (particularly his later poems) demonstrating the concerns and hesitations that Crabbe felt against nonconformist ideas and actions.

part, which joins the two great wings of the building, where the felons were

confined; and I stood where I plainly saw their operations. They broke the roof,

tore away the rafters, and having got ladders they descended. Not Orpheus

himself had more courage or better luck; flames all around them, and a body of

soldiers expected, they defied and laughed at all opposition. (83)

Crabbe's entry for the day comes to an abrupt end soon thereafter, as leaves are missing

from the journal, and it is unclear if he witnessed the riots on subsequent days; however,

he reflects again on this first eventful evening in his June 11th entry:

But I must not omit what struck me most. About ten or twelve of the mob getting

to the top of the debtor's prison, whilst it was burning, to halloo, they appeared

rolled in black smoke mixed with sudden bursts of fire—like Milton's infernals,

who were as familiar with the flame as with each other. (84)

Crabbe paints a disturbing picture in this series of fiery, smoky, violent, and chaotic

scenes and that highlight the "phrensy of the multitude" (83). Not only do the rioters

infiltrate the seemingly impenetrable fortress of Newgate, which demonstrates their

remarkable individual and collective strength, but they do so while shouting and laughing

in the faces of the law-abiding onlookers. Writing in his typically unsentimental style,

Crabbe's initial reflection seems to be hint at disbelief that this could happen—in a city

as civilized as London, no less; and he only seems to be able to make meaning of his

experience by comparing the rioters to something as otherworldly as Milton's infernals in

the June 11th entry. This simile reveals the wickedness that Crabbe sees in these events

and that continue to influence him after the riots in London subside. As René Huchon

argues in his 1907 study entitled *George Crabbe and His Times*, after this event, Crabbe

"understood more clearly the necessity for an unquestioned hierarchy, for a strict social discipline, able to curb 'the wild wish' and check 'the strong desire'" (104). Thus, Crabbe's views on the Gordon Riots seem to pave the way for Burke's later assessment of the French Revolution: riots are unpredictable, violent, and terrible. Crabbe does not see any immediate good come from the rioters' reactions to Parliament; and in fact, they act in such an extreme way that they ultimately isolate themselves from other Londoners. Here again, then, is a fear of mob behavior as partitive, though this fear precedes the more lasting and gory images of the French Revolution.

London newspapers also figure the Gordon Riots mob as a dark and unpleasant phenomenon in their individual and collective bodily actions on the city streets. The *General Evening Post*[27] reports on the possible causes for the actions of the "riotous and unruly mob" on Saturday, June 3rd: "This [behavior] certainly was not to be attributed to religious motives, neither was it to be defended on the ground of aversion to Popery, which was said to be the sole cause of the people's assembling in such large numbers; it was a daring violation of law and of the peace of the city of Westminster, which called loudly for the most serious and immediate interposition of Parliament" (1). This report suggests that there *could* have been a reasonable motive for protest—either from Protestant religious conviction or on the grounds that Parliament was becoming too lenient toward Catholics' rights—but it concludes that the original "seed of emotion" that was fraught with uncertain potential was in fact turned into sheer flippancy toward the law in its "daring violation of law and of the peace." Ironically, this increasingly frightening potential of citizen bodies to act in unpredictable ways caused enough panic

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[27] The *General Evening Post* was an evening paper distributed on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and published on Paternoster Row (Bessant 394).

in Parliament to make them take action (as opposed to their initial passivity about revising the Catholic Act), and members engaged in tense debates about how to respond. The *Whitehall Evening Post*[28] reports that, just as the riots were beginning and large groups assembled outside of the House of Lords, Lord Shelburne advocated for allowing the public disturbances to subside before calling out the military (as others, such as Lord Denbigh, had suggested) because they did not have the resources to control the mobs (4); Lord Shelburne was either concerned with the practical obstacles to controlling the mobs or he did not believe that the potential of these citizen bodies could continue to come to violent and destructive ends. But, those who were more apprehensive about the immediate consequences of this collective bodily potential—including journalists whose language betrays their alarm at the sheer capacity of the masses—insisted that some form of immediate action by Parliament was necessary to curb the way these bodies were allowed to circulate and behave in public space. [29]

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[28] The *Whitehall Evening Post* was an evening paper distributed on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and published in Peterborough Court (Bessant 394).

[29] The city of London was initially slow to respond to the violence and destruction of property, and riotous behavior continued for a number of days; but it was soon followed by London authorities dispatching 10,000 troops, who essentially imposed martial law. According to Ian Haywood, conflicts between the troops and civilians led to hundreds of civilian deaths and twenty-five rioters were hanged for their crimes (7). Of course, the hanging of criminals who rebelled against institutionalized power endeavors to reestablish that central power by making a public spectacle of their punishment; however, as Matthew White points out in his article "'For the Safety of the City': The Geography and Social Politics of Public Execution after the Gordon Riots," these same public executions invited trouble from the thousands of remaining discontented individuals, but by framing each execution as a "local event," disorder never materialized (214). Nevertheless, both the fear expressed in the Gordon Riot news reports and the actions taken by Parliament and city authorities to attempt to restore order all stem from an anxiety about the power of the individual mob participants rallying into the "mob body" and how they could be controlled.

Partially in response to the tumult of the Gordon Riots, Prime Minister William Pitt also proposed the London and Westminster Police Bill of 1785 in an attempt to reform the system of policing. Prior to this bill, London was divided into local wards that directed their own priorities in handling disturbances of the peace and crime. Night watchmen and constables were familiar to those they served and could try to provide extra surveillance on request or could address a problem with a local resident, but they were also notoriously inefficient and undependable. Even at the outset of the mobs forming outside of the House of Lords on June 2, 1780, the Lords were discussing this problem. In the *London Chronicle*'s reports on the proceedings of the House of Lords, Lord Shelburne argued that while London had very few robberies and still fewer riots, in Westminster and Middlesex, "the administration of justice was a trade, exercised by the

A number of influential prints, appearing in early July 1780, depicting the destruction of Newgate reinforce this disturbing potential for partitive bodily power that Parliament and London administrators ultimately chose to restrain. In his article "'A Metropolis in Flames and a Nation in Ruins': the Gordon Riots as Sublime Spectacle," historian Ian Haywood claims that three of these images—regardless of their actual adherence to historical "fact"—shaped the way that the public remembered that particular event and the Gordon Riots more generally: the *Burning and Plundering of Newgate and Setting the Felons at Liberty by the Mob*, by an anonymous artist, was published by Fielding and Walker on July 1, 1780; *The Devastations Occasioned by the Rioters of London, Firing the New Gaol of Newgate, and Burning Mr Akerman's Furniture etc. June 6 1780*, designed by William Hamilton, engraved by T. Thornton, and published by Alexander Hogg at an unknown date in 1780; and *An Exact Representation of the Burning, Plundering and Destruction of Newgate by the Rioters on the Memorable 7 June*, designed by O'Neil, engraved by H. Roberts, and published by P. Mitchell and J.

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lowest class of men; and hence it was fair to conclude that the many riots that disgraced Westminster, the daring robberies that intimidated the people from frequenting the roads in Middlesex, ought to be ascribed solely to the want of proper Magistrates, and a proper police" (3). Lord Shelburne makes a valid point that the independent wards were free to determine who filled these policing roles: some wards employed "respectable" men while others used the positions to employ those who would otherwise have been without jobs. Yet, while this generalization about crime patterns may have seemed true to members of Parliament at the time, with the benefit of hindsight, historical analysis has determined that the changing attitudes toward policing and the gradual reform that occurred in London policing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was much more complex. Nevertheless, historians do not deny that the Gordon Riots had a significant impact on the debates about creating a centralized police force in London, which was one of the central features of William Pitt's 1785 Police Bill. The bill ultimately was defeated because of protests by local authorities who feared the loss of their own autonomy and power, but it would have included a unified police force across the metropolis, government control of magistrates, and would have made a provision for the police to respond in the case of a riot (Harris 38). The ostensible need for this kind of bill, especially in the decade following the Gordon Riots, suggests that Parliament was evaluating ways to limit individuals to "legal" expressions of the body, particularly in public spaces. Of course, the embedded question in this issue is what defines "legal" bodily actions and behaviors, and this was certainly at issue in London in the 1780s when wards were still responsible for defining these terms for themselves. Ironically, these debates underscore the same indeterminate power associated with individuals and, collectively, with groups that Parliament was seeking to curb, and London became a progressive model for other cities and regions in England as authorities continued to forge a new system of policing.

Fielding on July 10, 1781 (119-121).[30] These titles give insight into the common features included in each print: in the foreground, rioters, released prisoners, and onlookers are assembled in a large group, engaging in a variety of activities, and a burning Newgate ominously fills the background. But of these three prints, only *An Exact Representation of the Burning, Plundering and Destruction of Newgate* prominently features the mob by positioning Newgate, the flames, and the pluming smoke squarely in the background, thereby emphasizing the mob figures gathered outside of Newgate more prominently than the spectacle of the building itself burning (see Figure 1). While we should consider that
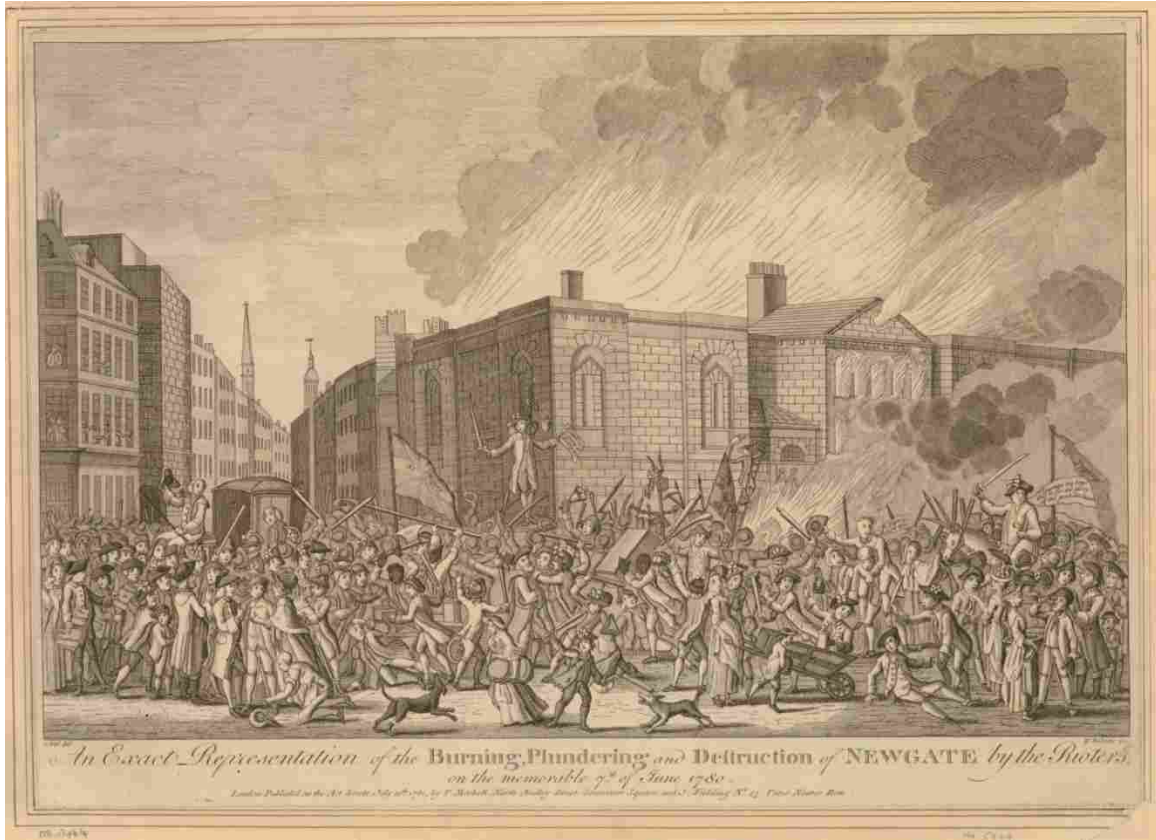
Figure 1: *An Exact Representation of the Burning, Plundering and Destruction of Newgate.* © Trustees of the British Museum, Used with Permission.

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[30] Haywood's study of these three prints is noteworthy for its careful consideration of the diversity of the crowd members portrayed and for its attention to the various kinds of appeals that each print could make to viewers with a range of political views—details which inform my argument about the *Exact Representation* print but do not need to be recounted in full here.

this representation may not be as "exact" as it claims, *An Exact Representation* is notable for underscoring the collective energy of the mob in action. Many different forms of participation are depicted here: a man is on a ladder set again the prison wall holding a torch and a hammer, a number of individuals hold "No Popery" flags, a man on horseback addresses the mob and prompts the mob to further action, saying, "Courage my boys this is for the glory of the good old Cause," a man hands out pamphlets directed against the government, a woman wheels an intoxicated man away in a wheelbarrow, and various civilians assist escaped prisoners by carrying them on their shoulders, taking off their irons, etc. In the main body of the mob, few if any figures are simply onlookers or bystanders—at the very least, each individual body adds to the visual expanse of the crowd. Even if a large majority of the individuals here are not actively engaging in setting Newgate on fire or releasing prisoners, jointly, all of their actions contribute to the "mob body" that has formed to overtake the prison.

The print is highly structured to emphasize the distinction between those who have joined and those who abstain and function as witnesses. First, the emphasis on diagonal lines across the print suggests energy and action, and this is another significant difference between *An Exact Representation* and both *Burning and Plundering of Newgate* and *The Devastations Occasioned by the Rioters of London*. These latter prints feature predominately vertical orientations of the mob participants, of Newgate's walls, and of the flames rising over the prison. Conversely, in *An Exact Representation*, the largely vertical outlines of Newgate and surrounding buildings are traversed by the diagonal lines of the countless sticks, canes, clubs, lances, axes, and swords of the mob participants and by the sweeping diagonal lines of the fires in the street and inside the

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prison. Moreover, most of the bodies within the mob are inclined rather than standing

straight. These diagonal lines visually suggest chaos and also lend an element of energy

to the print by representing its members in mid-action, leaving viewers with an

impression of active movement that belies the stillness of the actual image. On the other

hand, the secondary and non-participatory figures visible from street-facing windows in

buildings on the left side of the print create a crucial visual contrast to the diverse "mob

body" below. A few of these figures are gesturing toward the blazes at Newgate; the

others are looking down at the mob (literally and figuratively). But because these figures

are strictly non-participants (their affective bodily potential has not been activated), they

situate the mob as "other," which in turn gives rise to the same partitive distinction that

critics of the mobs have feared. While the print neither explicitly supports nor explicitly

condemns the Newgate mob, it illustrates the social bond-breaking that can occur when

dissention takes a violent and unruly turn—leaving at least two nominally different

groups in the wake of the spectacle of fanatical protest.

In terms of composition, the engraver has employed a horizontal variation of the

Renaissance compositional technique of "rabatment," which creates vertical divisions in

a rectangular space based on the so-called "golden proportions"[31]; this variation would be

named "the rule of thirds" by English engraver John Martin Smith in his 1797 *Remarks

on Rural Scenery*.[32] Since the Renaissance, the effect observed by this visual

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[31] For a discussion of the history of the rabatment technique, see Birch Fett's "An In-Depth Investigation of the Divine Ration" in *Interdisciplinarity, Creativity, and Learning: Mathematics with Literature, Paradoxes, History, Technology, and Modeling*.

[32] In *Remarks on Rural Scenery* (1797), John Martin Smith says: "Analogous to this "Rule of Thirds," (if I may be allowed so to call it) I have presumed to think that, in connecting or in breaking the various lines of a picture, it would likewise be a good rule to do it, in general, by a scheme of proportion; for example, in the design of a landscape, to determine the *sky* at about two-thirds; or else at about one-third, so that the material objects might occupy the other two […] In short, in applying this invention, generally speaking, to

organization was increased dynamism if people or objects of primary interest were located along the vertical and horizontal thirds. Accordingly, the engraver has placed the horizon line at the top one-third division, and rioters are largely contained to the bottom third—not *along* the bottom one-third line, but *below* it. In addition to making visible the social segmentation that I have already noted, this organization underscores the futility of a containment strategy. Though the bodies of the frenzied rioters are visually contained in the bottom third of the print (with the exceptions of the man standing above the crowd and the man on the ladder), the effects of their energy have already infiltrated the other segments of the scene. Spectacles draw an audience, and observers stand watching in the windows of the buildings above; and, of course, the flames bursting from the roof of Newgate and obscuring the view of the sky demonstrate the effects that this disruptive and destructive group in the square has already wreaked on the prison. Thereby, *An Exact Representation* both emphasizes the social consequences and the cascading effects of the mob that Burke would later warn against while also insinuating that these effects and the rioting individuals—for better or worse—cannot be easily contained.

This frequent emphasis on a mob's partitive behavior may seem to suggest that the mob behavior could only have partitive consequences, but the work of William Blake —another observer of the Gordon Riots, though his biographers disagree about his involvement in them—provides an alternative model of how a *non-partitive*, or synecdochic, relationship could exist between mob participants and society. [33] Blake's

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any other case, whether of light, shade, form, or color, I have found the ratio of about two thirds to one third, or of one to two, a much better and more harmonizing proportion, than the precise formal *half*" (16).
[33] Alexander Gilchrist suggests in the *Life of William Blake* that Blake was swept up in the mob, whereas Jerome McGann argues in "Did Blake Betray the French Revolution?: A Dialogue of the Mind with Itself" that Blake would have been disgusted by the reactionary nature of the Gordon Riots. Additionally, Erdman suggests that the phrases in *America* "fierce rushing" and the participants' "howls of anguish" are

well-known assertion in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that "Man has no Body

distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discrnd by the five Senses"

already situates Blake as one who is not interested in categorically separating

embodiment from mental states (Erdman 34: 4). This intrinsic interrelatedness of the

mind and body generates immense possibilities for action in the world. Emotions, for

example, are not to be dismissed as a base effect of embodiment; rather, as Steven

Goldsmith argues in *Blake's Agitation*, for Blake, "emotion lies at the origin of

transformational energies that are one intellectual *and* embodied" (11). In Blake's

corpus, emotion is also not something to be restrained or contained; rather, it is

something to be felt fully—in an intellectual and an embodied way—and to be oriented in

a way that it can effect productive change. Goldsmith's book is committed to tracing the

effects of Blake's enthusiasm and how his texts work to agitate readers into action, but he

best summarizes one of the central features of Blake's project in his introduction:

> … we already see in Blake's enthusiasm the work many progressive artists and
>
> critics will continually ask of emotion for the next two hundred years: that it
>
> supply immediate, experiential evidence of a transformative agency whose effects
>
> cannot otherwise be measured. Rousing the faculties into action, enthusiasm aims
>
> to convince the mobilized reader that critical engagement does not merely
>
> interpret a needy world but (as Marx would urge) changes it, widening its
>
> possibilities—even when no empirical evidence exists to confirm that outcome.
>
> (11)

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reminiscent of accounts of the Gordon riots, though this parallel does not necessarily provide further insight
into whether that "account" is Blake's own (7-9).

Emotion, then, has a two-fold function: first, it can be employed as a way to critically read the world. This approach to emotion characterizes it as a kind of mediating device between an individual and the world around them that needs interpretation. But because Blake considers emotions to be limitless without the shackles of materialist perception and Enlightenment reason, this heightened emotion of enthusiasm also opens up the possible interpretations of and possibilities for change that surrounding world. Goldsmith also importantly notes that the mobilization of the reader happens without any guarantee of success. This remark is reminiscent of both Massumi's indeterminacy and Barthes' premise of the neutral affective potential: prior to the activation of its potential, what a body will do is entirely uncertain. Blake does not necessarily disavow this possibility: in fact, many of the major figures that populate his texts initially fail to activate their own affective potential in a transformative way, and some never achieve any transformation, either on a personal level or in relation to others (in *Milton*, which will be the central focus of Chapter Five, the narrative begins with Milton finally realizing that he has been to consumed with himself, and Theotormon, in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, utterly fails to open his eyes to the transformative possibility of forgiving Oothoon for her expression of sexuality). Thus, what Goldsmith calls a lack of guarantee should not suggest that Blake is unduly optimistic about how often affective potential will be transformative; rather, Blake's texts try to activate a certain kind of response in the reader, namely that the sticky emotions we have been tracing can be experienced in a transformative way.

Blake's *America a Prophecy* (1793) uses this premise of transformative affective potential to make a case for a particular kind of response to social ills and oppression—

perhaps against the backdrop of his experience with the Gordon Riots. In this text, Blake creates a clear distinction between riot and revolution, even though revolution is often marked by fervor, while also emphasizing that it is the crowd that actually creates revolutionary change. In *America*, the revolutionary impetus (that ultimately leads to violence) is figured as a fire that has built up under pressure: "Intense! Naked! a Human fire fierce glowing, as the wedge / Of iron heated in the furnace" (Erdman 53: 4, 8-9). Later, this energy source is given the name Orc, who symbolizes the spirit of revolution in Blake's mythology and provides a poignant symbol of (indeterminate) affective potential brewing but not yet in action (Erdman 53: 4, 8-9). This revolutionary spirit ideally responds to oppression (political, religious, etc.) in an intentional and directed way, whereas the quick spark of unrestrained violence and destruction is reactionary and unproductive. Furthermore, revolution must be a unified action. Orc's success in leading America to take a stand against British oppression is rooted in initially discrete actions on the part of individuals who have been inspired to rise up: "the citizens of New York," "the mariners of Boston," "the scribe of Pennsylvania," and "the builder of Virginia" leave their lives and occupations behind and become a collective force such that they "all rush together in the night in wrath and raging fire" (Erdman 56: 14, 13-19). This collective embodied action of the workers is a powerful image of solidarity. Saree Makdisi reminds us that "In *America* it is only 'the fierce rushing of th'inhabitants together,' who 'all rush together in the night in wrath and in raging fire,' and not the frozen and almost comic posturing of the revolution's 'real' leaders (who never come to power in Blake's prophecy) that apparently could keep Earth from 'losing another portion of the infinite'" (35). This reconfiguration of power rejects how prior social movements

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had proceeded and demonstrates Blake's interest in the "micropolitics of revolution" (Makdisi 38).

Aside from the political potential of this crowd, we can see that for Blake, the power of the body lies not in the individual but in a unified response to oppression—a momentous gathering up, so to speak, of individuals. Makdisi provides some profound insight on this point: "the individuals are absorbed into the crowd that they constitute, not simply losing but altogether detonating their prior individuality... The condition of possibility for the constitution of the rushing multitude is, in other words, the loss—the annihilation—of the individual specificity of the little units, the citizens, who together make up the revolutionary crowd" (39). To recall the earlier framework I employed, Makdisi's analysis points to this crowd function as an iteration of the synecdochic relationship rather than a partitive one. The emphasis is not on the group's isolation from their leaders, from society, or from the source of their oppression; rather, the scene focuses on what political strides are possible when individuals band together and collectively activate their potential for a cause greater than their individual desires or needs.

Percy Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy*, which he was moved to write in response to the horrific violence inflicted on innocent victims during the Peterloo Massacre, [34] amplifies this transformative affective indeterminacy of citizen bodies, but through a different iteration of mob behavior. Turning the assumption of the mob necessarily

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[34] On the 16th of August, 1819, 50,000-60,000 people rallied at St. Peter's Fields in central Manchester, and this gathering was part of a series of well-publicized large events to seek government reform. This event made manifest authorities' ongoing fears of mass assembly and reinforced the public's ongoing fear of how authorities would respond. Historian Robert Poole notes that "the meeting was transparently peaceful, but the frightened magistrates sent in the troops. Under the noses of the national press, 11 people were killed (a toll which later rose to 17) and over 650 wounded, a quarter of them women, some of them children, and many of them by sabre wounds" (254-255).

involving civilians on its head, Shelley's poem figures the militia as mob-like. This upending of expectations about who participates in mobs upends the ethical compass of the poem; as we have seen in other period texts, mobs are either classed as inherently "bad" or they are at least recognized as being in need of redemption through their transformative potential. Here, however, the militia—a group usually responsible for *enforcing* order—actually annihilates order when it violently charges into the assembled crowd in a state of frenzy. Readers are immediately tasked with the interpretive challenge of discovering the means and motives for this reversal (and the fact that the indeterminate bodies whose activated potential is under consideration are not the members of the crowd).

I read this formal choice as a deliberately disorienting strategy on Shelley's part and one intended to move his readers to political action against all forms tyranny can take. While this assessment runs contrary to critic Susan Wolfson, who concludes that this poem finally rests in "aesthetic ideology" rather than "political potency" (204), a more recent reading by Marc Redfield lends some support to a politicized message. He argues that in this poem "… we discover a reiterated, self-reflexivity" (158). The "real political work," he continues, "as described by the clarion-toned but indeterminate voice that speaks the second part of the poem, lies ahead, beyond and outside the poem, in the extratextual futurity of political struggle (159). Redfield traces critics' ongoing concern with the ambiguity of personifications in this poem and who its speaker is in an attempt to show how that speaker ultimately collapses and is replaced by a mechanical reminder that "Anarchy, capitalized, masks anarchy—masks, that is, the materiality of an uninsurable inscription" (160).

Much has been said of Shelley's seemingly paradoxical choice to write this text in the form of a masque, which includes elements of masking and, as Stuart Curran has pointed out, elements of the "antimasque" tradition of incorporating "the grotesque, the vulgar, [and] the chaotic into the [court] pageantry" only to resolve all social struggles within a system of order by the end of the performance (190). Jarrold Hogle extends this argument by providing analysis of the cycles of mimetic violence in the poem that, by the "maneuver of masking," "keeps us from seeing the local interchange between rival desires that actually brings social violence about" (136-137). Yet, there is something even more at stake here than rival desires (which do not necessarily require an embodied representation) since the poem is so caught up in the onslaught of violence and the slaughter of bodies. In a gesture toward the literal performance analogy of the masque, where players do not reveal their identities, Shelley suggests that the systemic oppression of anarchy is inescapable because anarchy itself can never be entirely unveiled and brought to account. If the only destination in the poem is a point about mechanical repetition, signifying through the narrative device of repetition that the system within which this drama takes place is circular and enclosed, then the only potential for overthrowing Anarchy within the poem must come from within the system itself. In a speaker-less poem, the reader's attempt to re-orientate herself in respect to the invocation of the mob images calls attention to the two portrayals of the affective potentials of groups in this poem—the militia/mob and the assembled citizens—and the efficacy of their affective potentials put into action.

The entrance of the militia or soon-to-become-mob is ceremoniously preceded by Anarchy riding in "On a white horse, splashed with blood" (l. 29), his brow is marked

with "I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!" (l. 37). Anarchy is the first to trample "to

a mire of blood / The adoring multitude" (l. 40-41), but the "mighty troop" follows in suit

(l. 42). Like most mobs, the troops get caught up in a kind of "mob mentality." Thus, in

the poem:

> … with glorious triumph, they
>
> Rode through England proud and gay,
>
> Drunk as with intoxication
>
> Of the wine of desolation. (l. 46-49)

Here, power is an extremely "sticky" kind of affect that is passed between militia

members until they are all "drunk" with the power bestowed upon them by the supreme

triad of power in God, King, and Law. This intoxication prevents them from rationally

considering the orders that they are given, so they blindly follow absolute power with no

heed to the consequences of their actions. Consequently, the affective potential that has

been gathered in and amongst these bodies spills over in violence, almost to the point of

absurdity. Shelley and Blake, then, share the same aversion to unquestioningly following

authority, especially when it leads to the oppression of others; but Shelley initially

undercuts the positive potential of the mob by figuring the militia as a mob that exploits

their power on the innocent bodies of citizens.

Just as the militia's insatiable appetite for power and violence seems to cast the

affective potential of groups into an irredeemable state, the figure of Hope, who enters in

the middle of the poem, provides a new model of informed response to the militia's abuse

of power by unmasking anarchy and "dissipate mimetic violence and so rob the

government of the base on which it depends" (Hogle 137). She encourages the

assembled citizens to stand their ground:

> Stand ye calm and resolute
>
> Like a forest close and mute,
>
> With folded arms and looks which are
>
> Weapons of unvanquished war. (l. 319-322)

The image of standing "with folded arms and steady eyes" (l. 344) is a common refrain in

this text and underscores the power of bodies simply occupying a space in a stance of

resistance; but, in the passage above, the comparison of individuals replicating this stance

to a "forest close and mute" also suggests both solidarity and physical proximity in

"close" and the unnecessity of speaking their message via "mute." Hope intimates that

this embodied response is needed until the day when the tyrants' "rage has died away" (l.

347) and the possibility emerges to revise "The old laws of England – they / Whose

reverend heads with age are grey" (l. 331-332). Only by this approach will the bloodshed

rest on the heads of the tyrants and not on a people tempted to retaliate with equal

violence (l. 338-339).

But the voice of Hope also closes the poem with a refrain that crystalizes the

rallying cry for justice and liberty in the form of a new kind of mob, capitalizing on the

strength of the mob's physical presence without conceding to the problems posed by

"mob mentality." *The Mask of Anarchy* concludes with the refrain:

> Rise like lions after slumber
>
> In unvanquishable number—
>
> Shake your chains to earth like dew

Which in sleep had fallen on you—

Ye are many—they are few.

These lines imply that the oppressive force of governmental power and of the militia can be turned back upon itself if the populace rises up—but the critical qualification is that the populace would have to do so without returning violence with more violence. This new kind of mob can be powerful in its "unvanquishable number" —after all, the civilians "are many" and the oppressors "are few," creating a demonstrable statement with just the sheer physical presence of hundreds or thousands of indeterminate bodies. Perhaps what Shelley suggests here discerns a middle ground between Burke's conservative approach and Blake's unquenchable belief in energy, even though there is always a possibility that such energy can turn violent. Shelley proposes that an effective response to social ills can be bodily and not simply intellectual in nature by linking "rise up" to the already-present figure of the crowd; and while in Hope's call to action, the possible effect of embodied resistance is suggested rather than shown, it is touted as the appropriate reaction to oppressive circumstances. Moreover, the awaking from sleep symbolizes a persistent consciousness that could mitigate the effects of mob mentality.[35] Shaking off their chains, which institutionalized power had unknowingly bound them up in during their "sleep," assembled groups could attend to their cause in a unified and productive fashion rather than getting carried away by the uneven, heightened, and unpredictable emotions usually inherent to conflict and demonstrations. This qualification could render mobs productive rather than destructive. Their collective affective potential, developing or actualized, could still pose a perceptible hazard to

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[35] Hogle maintains that the text's proposed alternatives are rhetorical, but Shelley's attention to the bodily implications of violence in *The Mask of Anarchy* suggests that any kind of citizen response has to be more than rhetorical.

oppressive social or political forces, but the mob would not gain detractors or weaken their own cause by acting foolishly or causing what could be construed as unnecessary destruction—an affective resonance that could turn others against the cause of the group.

The common thread among these varied representations of mobs and riots in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century is the subtle acknowledgement of affective potential: of that "in-between" moment when the body's indeterminacy is in motion and anyone watching is not quite sure what is going to happen next (Gregg and Sigeworth 1). The efficacy of the mob as a tactic of response is clearly at issue during this period when possibilities for embodied social change pushed against normative body behaviors as dictated by decorum, law, and habit; and while some heavy emphasis falls on mobs as frenzied, emotional, and irrational groups of malcontents wreaking havoc and destruction on their targets, Blake and Shelley redeem the mobs by concentrating on the transformative nature of the mob's collective affective potential. Perhaps ironically, Blake and Shelley's respective calls to action for their contemporary readers fell largely flat in their political aims to inspire action,[36] but affective potential cannot guarantee particular outcomes. Affect proceeds unevenly and unpredictably, much though Burke was as convinced of the mob's impending threat to society as Blake was convinced of the potential for an individual's or a group's affective state to produce transformative possibilities in their understanding of the world (and their consequent actions). Nevertheless, these representations of the affective body highlight writers' awareness of the real consequences and potentials of inhabiting material bodies. The mob's threat as

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[36] Blake's readership, especially beyond his patrons, was limited during his lifetime; Shelley's *Mask of Anarchy* was not published by Leigh Hunt until after the Reform Bill passed in 1832 out of fear of political consequences. But, as Mark Redfield claims, texts like *The Mask of Anarchy* needed "futurity" to be redeemed (159).

well as its opportunity for change is located in its engaged, embodied potential and what comes to pass when indeterminacy unfolds in public spaces.

Indeterminacy At/Against Work

Due to the ongoing effects of the Industrial Revolution, the category of physical labor underwent significant transformation in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. For instance, a pre-industrial distinction between mental and manual labor proposed by the Georgic economist Adam Smith, in which the gentry were responsible for the thought and invention that enabled them to direct others and "where gentry and laborers work[ed] together on the land for the common good," could no longer accurately describe categories of labor or the relationships between those classes of workers (Murdoch 189). Emerging factory labor hierarchies consisted of many classes of workers and the overseers who managed them, and workers could labor far removed from the individuals whose mental labor directed the daily operation of the factory. Furthermore, as rural families moved to the cities for work and encountered new kinds of labor experiences and requirements, distinctions emerged between rural and urban work. Many Romantics' distaste for cities and preferences for the rural lifestyle also called them to idealize rural work (such as Wordsworth's poem "The Solitary Reaper"), but cities generally offered more work opportunities. Finally, as more employers instituted more rigorous work hour requirements (such as the standardized eight-hour workday), the rigidities of labor were framed in total opposition to leisure. John Clare's "The Village Minstrel" posits that rural laborers can engage in leisurely entertainment and a kind of community-building effort that affords them respite from the exhaustion of labor. While the speaker, Lubin, seems to prefer solitude much of the time, he joins a group of old

women who are tired from working in the heat to exchange stories and take their mind off of their labor (stanza XLIII). [37] This kind of leisure makes a return to labor on the next working day possible, thereby underscoring just how grueling labor felt for workers.

Yet, in distinct opposition to the way that leisure soothes the mind and body, depictions of both urban and rural work in the period demonstrate that modern working conditions threaten bodily integrity and individual selfhood; in these cases, the body's potential seems less in the control of the subject and more under the strict control of the institution of labor (the indeterminacy of these bodies is foreclosed). As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, Michael Cooke argues that Romanticism uses a number of strategies that are "part of the search for forms that survive at the juncture of personal integrity and personal wholeness" (438); but the often politically-motivated representations of labor that appear in texts of the period purposefully work against this model of wholeness to show how bodily integrity can be disrupted by modern working conditions. Both urban and rural work environments have important commonalities here: long working hours drain mental and physical energy, and repetitious work, whether in the form of hard labor in the fields or in routinized tasks in the city office, dulled the brain and wreaked lasting effects on the body. Writers thus harnessed literary forms and the body's affective power to voice these concerns about modern labor and to resist the disciplinary practices that sought to control working bodies.

Among the Romantics, the poet Charles Lamb was perhaps the most exasperated by the obligations of modern work. In a letter to William and Dorothy Wordsworth on

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[37] See *The Village Minstrel and Other Poems*, pg. 24-25. Also, for a brilliant analysis of leisure in *The Village Minstrel*, see also Theresa Adam's article "Representing Leisure: John Clare and the Politics of Popular Culture."

September 28th, 1805, Charles Lamb laments his financial affairs (he has been out of

work for some time) and the necessity of finding a new job:

> As to our special affairs, I am looking about me. I have done nothing since the
>
> beginning of last year when I lost my newspaper job, and having had a long
>
> idleness, I must do something or we shall get very poor. Sometimes I think of a
>
> farce—but hitherto all schemes have gone off, —an idle brag or two of an
>
> evening vaporing out of a **pipe**, & going off in the Morning—but now I have bid
>
> farewell to my **"Sweet Enemy"** Tobacco, as you will see in my next page. I
>
> perhaps shall set soberly to work. Hang work! I wish that all the year were holy
>
> day. I am sure that **Indolence indefeasible Indolence** is the true state of man, &
>
> business the invention of **the Old Teazer** who persuaded Adam's Master to give
>
> him an apron & set him a houghing—. **Pen & Ink & Clerks, & desks** were the
>
> refinements of this old torturer a thousand years after **under pretence of**
>
> **Commerce** allaying distant shores, promoting & diffusing knowledge, good &
>
> c—. (177)[38]

The comic effect of Lamb attributing the appurtenances of labor to Satan is heightened by

his wistful farewell to a sweeter enemy, tobacco. Yet, at the same time, he earnestly

challenges the system of labor that he has been coerced to take part in, perceiving that

this system was not set up for man's benefit and instead serves some other masked

master. He also takes particular issue with cultural prescriptions that individuals must

engage in commerce and aspire to build knowledge—knowledge which has no ends to

legitimize its necessity because Lamb's sentence trails off. Taken together, these features

of work are not sufficient to overrule Lamb's (only somewhat sarcastic) belief that

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[38] Emphasis original. See *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*.

indolence is "the true state of man." (We might add here that indolence may be Lamb's best parallel to a state of quiet indeterminacy where the individual *could* do anything he likes, and yet chooses to do nothing at all.) Yet, in the modern economy, work is essential to avoid the kind of poverty that can deprive the body of essentials like food and shelter—and also, more luxurious items like tobacco, which Lamb tried many times to give up, but seems to have quit at this time for financial reasons. Work, for Lamb, is sobering in its uncomfortable inevitability.

Lamb's short essay entitled "The Superannuated Man" (1825) describes in more detail his vexation with work and with the regimented work day in particular, reflecting on his tenure as a clerk for the East India Company. He recalls that the forced transition from unstructured days of playtime to eight, nine, or ten hour days of schooling occurred for him at age fourteen and that this transition was met with much melancholy (64). Lamb's inclusion of this anecdote implies that these long school days were intended to prepare him for the adult work world. But when he reaches adulthood, these regimented schedules wear even more heavily on him. He notes that other than Sundays, he does not have to work on Christmas day and he receives one much-anticipated week off during the summer. Yet, the pressure of working a regimented schedule haunts him during this precious week of vacation: "But when the week came round, did the glittering phantom of the distance keep touch with me? or rather was it not a series of seven uneasy days, spent in restless pursuit of pleasure, and a wearisome anxiety to find out how to make the most of them? Where was the quiet, where the promised rest? Before I had a taste of it, it was vanished" (65). The work week has so thoroughly structured Clare's sense of time that he has difficulty letting go of this system when he does not have to work. Tim

Fulford points out in his article "Talking, Walking, and Working: The Cockney Clerk, the Suburban Ramble, and the Invention of Leisure" that "This is one of the earliest expressions of that internalization of bureaucratic discipline that Melville, in *Bartleby*, and Kafka, in *The Castle*, would identify as the imprisoned soul of modernity. It is not just that Lamb works to the rhythm of an external order; it is also that this order becomes what he is" (90). This analysis captures the extent to which Lamb's personal life is affected by his professional obligations; his participation in modern labor has restructured his sense of time and, accordingly, his sense of being in the world. In contrast to what E.P. Thomson calls framing a working day's tasks according to "task-orientation"— where a worker can follow more "'natural' work rhythms" without oversight—Lamb's life has been restructured to best fit the needs of modern capitalism (60). His work day is set according to the preferences of his employer—not by the changing patterns of daylight or crops that nature would have dictated for a rural farmer in previous generations. Lamb, unable to discover some natural logic in these work day expectations for workers, is thus severely strained under the psychological weight of them. Even his precious week of leave in the summer seems to be scheduled somewhat arbitrarily. What Lamb's account implicitly suggests is a critical disjuncture between his own time and time owned by his employer. As Thompson points out, "the employer must *use* the time of his [employee's] labour, and see it is not wasted… Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent" (61). Lamb seems so psychologically disoriented that he doesn't recognize that he has become such a cog in the labor machine that his time no longer belongs to him and that owed time will be well-structured and well-accounted for.

The regimentation of work time seems to generate a further consequence: Lamb's perception that he is ill-fitted for business and, by inference, ill-fitted to this more regimented mode of controlling (and seeking to make productive for labor) the body's indeterminacy around labor. He denies the connection of cause and consequence but describes the effects: "Independently of the rigours of attendance, I have ever been haunted with a sense (perhaps a mere caprice) of incapacity for business. This, during my latter years, increased to such a degree, that it was visible in all the lines of my countenance. My health and my good spirits flagged" (65). He declines to elaborate on other potential causes for this anxiety. Perhaps he had strong competition in his field? Perhaps he did not have a good working relationship with supervisors? In any case, the unease that he feels is not simply psychological but literally manifests in seemingly acute bodily reactions to the stress of modern work expectations. Lamb approaches this point less as an opportunity to solicit sympathy for his plight than to point out the "natural" logic of his deteriorating health as a result of working within a labor system that indifferently asks so much of its workers. In doing so, the failure of his own body's potential to adapt to the modern work environment becomes pertinent evidence of the unnaturalness and rigor of that environment.

"The Superannuated Man" focuses on Lamb's work in the city, but his other poem about labor, entitled "Work" (1819), makes more wide-reaching claims about the effects of work across both rural and urban spaces. In the poem's opening lines, the speaker likens the binding of free individuals employed in "business in the green field" and in "the town" (l. 4), saying that the worker's spirit is weighted down by "ever-haunting importunity" and forced into "dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood" (l. 3-4).

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This parallel between geographical categories of labor is developed throughout the poem: rural and urban workers are similarly subjected to the wheel-like nature of employment that Satan has bound them to in a hell-like environment (l. 11) and "toiling" becomes synonymous with "turmoiling" (l. 13). But "Work" leaves the reader with a sense of being trapped on a wheel that cannot be halted in a place "from which [there] are no returnings" (l. 12). The speaker underscores the bodily nature of the pressure that both rural and urban workers feel in the early-nineteenth century by framing the workers' plight in physical and tactile terms like binding, being stuck behind a dry desk, and being caught on a wheel. Recognizing from his tenure in this world of labor that there was no easy escape route from the ever-turning wheel, the speaker works from within the system to again call attention to the effects of modern labor on workers. He does not demand any particular recourse or policy changes per say (though his tone implies that his own affective potential might be inclined to promote change), but his colorful depiction of the effects of work is in itself an act of resistance against the increasing standardization of labor for capitalist purposes and—in the case of noncompliance—against administrative disciplinary action that sought to control workers. By employing a speaker in this poem that is not entirely reducible to Lamb himself, Lamb can address the plight of workers from other socioeconomic classes with this act of resistance, thus making a more generalized appeal to working conditions than he could make through his middle-class perspective.

As a major figure of political economy, Friedrich Engels' important 1845 reflection on this period of rapid changes in labor, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, lends some further context to these themes from Lamb's work. Despite the fact

that Lamb was a solidly middle-class gentleman and Engels' analysis focuses on the working class, it becomes clear that the increasing pressures of the work week and the expectations of business transcend class boundaries in the period. Engels first describes the kind of life that rural workers had before economic developments (he identifies the invention of the jenny in 1764 as the starting point) changed the nature of rural work and forced working class families to the city to find employment:

> So the workers vegetated throughout a *passably comfortable existence*, leading a righteous and peaceful life in all piety and probity; and their material position was far better than that of their successors. *They did not need to overwork*; they did no more than they chose to do, and yet earned what they needed. *They had leisure for healthful work in garden or field, work which, in itself, was recreation to them, and they could take part besides in the recreations and games of their neighbours, and all these games—bowling, cricket, football, etc., contributed to their physical health and vigour*. They were, for the most part, strong, well-built people, in whose physique little or no difference from that of their peasant neighbours was discoverable. Their children grew up in the fresh country air, and, if they could help their parents at work, it was only occasionally; *while of eight or twelve hours work for them there was no question*. (2; emphasis mine)

While this analysis overly romanticizes rural work, it underscores a blurred division between labor and recreation prior to the Industrial Revolution. Without an excess of work to generate a distinction between activity that taxed the body and activity that allowed it to rest and relax, work and recreation both belonged to a more general category of physical activity or "healthful work." Moreover, pre-industrial laborers were much

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more likely to report to a family or community member in their work, and since rural

residents often watched out for each other, it was less likely for workers to be taxed

beyond their mental or physical resources. There is no denying that the physical labor of

the rural workers was vigorous and tiring, and the enclosure movement had been slowly

changing the relationship between people and land since the thirteenth century,[39] but

these workers were not subject to new external pressures when the Enclosure Acts [40]

changed the way that tenancy functioned; and of course, for those that left the rural

community altogether and went to work in a factory town, changing expectations of work

and increasingly urbanized lifestyles descended upon them simultaneously, thus

compounding the pressures that those workers faced.

       Returning once more to the mill workers' protests in *Shirley*, the Yorkshire

workers use their collective embodied potential to more explicitly protest changes in

labor that adversely affect them by using their bodies as a site of resistance to the

pressures they face in the capitalist labor system. The politically charged context makes

particular demands of affect, especially for workers: affective potential must "find (or

not) the coordinating rhythms that precipitate newness or change while also holding close

to the often shimmering (twinkling/fading, vibrant/dull) continuities that pass in the slim

interval between '*how* to affect' and '*how* to be affected'" (Greg and Seigworth 15). The

indeterminacy of bodies continually takes into account the folds and creases of the social

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[39] E.P. Thomson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1964) is the canonical work of criticism on the enclosure act; but J.N. Neelson's *Commoners: Common Rights, Enclosures and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (1996) extends this study by identifying the social antagonisms and pervasive sense of loss experienced by commoners in the wake of the Enclosure Act, and Peter Linebaugh's article "Enclosure from the Bottom Up" reconsiders enclosure in light of Elinor Ostrom's work on the commons that earned her the 2009 Nobel prize in economics.

[40] The Enclosure Acts were a series of acts that fenced or otherwise enclosed open fields and common land that had previously been considered to be held in common, creating legal property rights to those parcels of land. See, for example, the "Enclosure Act of 1773" from the British *National Archives*.

and political changes that are in process—another "almost, but not yet" quality similar to that which characterizes an individual's affective potential before its activation. Among the many changes that the Yorkshire mill workers face in *Shirley* are those political (rhetorically labeled as "progress"), historical (the history of technological innovation), national (England attempting to advance politically and economically in the face of conflict with America), and local (the town's mill needed to innovate to survive).

In some ways, the mode of response that these complex political situations require from the affective bodies involved is improvisatory because it responds to a particular context in a spontaneous fashion and assumes some element of creativity. Bodily indeterminacy accounts for the way in which the affective dimensions of the environment resonates with the individual and how the individual continues to play a role in this always-changing affective landscape. The exchange between individual(s) and environment runs in both directions (or in every direction) and is layered with affective resonances in the moment or series of moments in which affect unfolds.[41] There is a degree of creativity involved, which is reminiscent of the way that both Blake and Shelley describe affective potential as a way to effectively respond to a world in motion and in flux. The individual invocation of creativity can take up new ways of being in the world as those ways of being come into being themselves.

Of course, this kind of "creative" unfolding of affective potential as the future is written into the present can defy authorized modes of being where indeterminacy is channeled in what is socially or politically deemed a productive direction. But in a situation where the authorized mode of being for workers—conforming to the structures

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[41] Following Sara Ahmed in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, I am collapsing the "inside out" and "outside in" models from sociology and instead positing that affect can come from within and from without in complicated circulations (9).

and expectations of modern capitalist work—crumbles because of the possibility of machine technology replacing human labor, the affective potential of soon-to-be-displaced workers is activated. They have few options but to reply with a significant response that makes use of the same embodied potential that is about to be withdrawn from them in their jobs, and yet riots calls attention to their predicament in a profound way (even if, as I have already pointed out, a lucky turn of events ultimately leads to their job security rather than the riot producing this happy end). Affective potential thus becomes directed toward not only an outward and visible response of protest (smashing the machinery, binding the men in charge of delivery, and later, burning the mill) but an attempt to reassert control over their own embodied potential. When these worker bodies erupt affectively, they make themselves seen and heard; likewise, the bodies of mobs or crowds call attention to the significant affective potential of material bodies in public spaces.

While Chapters Two and Three have discussed problematic qualities of embodiment at the individual and collective level, the Chapters Four and Five will turn in more detail toward the circulations of affect, particularly in the form of sympathy. In particular, the following chapters provide the opportunity for closer attention to the goals of affective connections and their reception not only by others within the world of the text, but even outside of it (by readers). But, the intersecting concepts of indeterminate bodies and material bodies contributing to the affective exchanges within a space will certainly carry forward into these other related cases of Romantic movements where a body's ability to move (or not) or move others (or not) is always at issue.

CHAPTER IV

SYMPATHY AND THE MINISTRY OF TOUCH

"I was alone in the Forum; alone in Rome; alone in the world. Would not one living

man—one companion in my weary solitude, be worth all the glory and remembered

power of this time-honoured city?"

—Adrian, *The Last Man* (463)

Touch as Affective Gesture

Late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century conduct books had very precise

information to share with young boys and girls—not just about how to navigate complex

social behaviors and expectations but, more literally, about the proper carriage of their

bodies. Amidst careful attention to practical concerns of the (young) material body, the

issue of the hands seems to be continually at issue. The chapter entitled "Awkwardness"

in *Practical Morality, or, A Guide to Men and Manners* tells a comical story of a man

who violates every rule of social decorum, and the authoritative narrator suggests that one

of his most annoying "strange tricks and gestures" is the fact that "His hands are

troublesome to him, and he does not know where to put them; but they are in perpetual

motion between his bosom and his breeches" (8-9). Other conduct books intended for

boys likewise highlight the "troublesome" nature of the hands, underscoring the

difference between the tendency of young hands to be busy and fidgety and the kind of

control of the hands that marks maturity and social poise. Books for girls have a different

emphasis: references to the hands often describe the use of the hands in domestic labor

tasks, such as weaving, cooking, and taking care of children.

But, when the hands are invoked for moral purposes, such in James Fordyce's

widely-read *Sermons to Young Women*, instructive literature speaks to the literal and

metaphorical use of the hands to touch those outside the home as well. One of Fordyce's

directives for girls instructs: "'She stretcheth out her hand to the poor: yea, she reacheth

forth her hands to the needy.' Those hands, which she employs with so much diligence

for the advantage of her family, she fails not to stretch out with equal alacrity for the

relief of the indigent. She is not so engrossed by the cares of her own household, as to

forget the claims of those who have no habitation" (166-167). This female hand reaching

out to the poor does not literally deliver material goods; instead, the act of reaching out *is*

the act of engagement with others who have fewer resources. Although there is no literal

act of touch mentioned, the young woman's hand provides the point of connection

between herself and others who remain outside of her family and even outside of her

social circle.

As such, touch is represented as a mode of action that synthesizes social manners

and moral behavior, but within a very narrow set of conditions. The domestic tasks

discussed in *Practical Morality* only include touch in the context of the family sphere;

Sermons to Young Women, on the other hand, suggest that—in certain scenarios—touch

has a place with individuals outside of the family as well. Touch functions as an offering

to someone in need, but its motivating impulse can ride a blurred divide between pity,

which hierarchizes social relationships by positing who is in need and who is able to give,

and sympathy, which is usually understood as an intersubjective relationship between

(theoretical) social equals. Of the Romantics, Blake is the most interested in

differentiating between states of feeling like pity and sympathy; in "The Human

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Abstract" from *Songs of Experience,* the speaker provides a reproach to social "do-gooders" who continue to gain from their socioeconomic standing and resources even when they give to others: "Pity would be no more / If we did not make Somebody poor / And mercy no more could be / If all were as happy as we" (Erdman 27:47, 1-4). Aside from Blake, most other texts are not interested in creating these exacting distinctions, and so sympathetic relationships were often categorized broadly.[42]

Sympathy, as we will see, was a key term for Romantic authors who were interested in issues of connecting individuals to each other but who were also acutely aware of its ability to fail to secure these connections. Emerging sciences had not yet theorized its psychological and physical nuances, so literature was a prime venue for exploring this complicated but socially-critical concept. A few examples: Percy Shelley argues in his "Defence of Poetry" that poetry (and, by extension, all literature rising out of base prose and aspiring to poetic language) "is a strain which distends, and then bursts the circumference of the reader's mind, and pours itself forth together with it into the universal element with which it has perpetual sympathy" (515). For Shelley, then, poetic language is the vehicle for pulling readers outside of their narrow personal sense of human experience and provides the possibility for making connections. Additionally, the term "fellow feeling" as a synonym for sympathy was widely circulating during the period to denote the presence or absence of this connective mechanism. Adam Smith

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[42] Suzanne Keen points out that twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers are more likely to feel uncomfortable about the fact that "the fiction of [eighteenth-century] sensibility presents excessive scenes of compassion and pity that can seem condescending to the suffering recipient." She continues: "Sympathy becomes tainted with a sense of social as well as moral superiority, and the suspicion that it exists only to shore up middle-class identity taints its [morality-building] exercise" (47). This strong reaction, however, is a modern one; Romantic texts to some degree refused such theatrical scenes of compassion and pity, and Keen points out that "Though some Romantic writers felt qualms about the conversion of others' suffering into aesthetic pleasures for readers, they emphasized the beneficial opportunity to engage in imaginative transport beyond the bounds of the self" (48).

uses it in *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, as does Wordsworth in his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*; and the Creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* acknowledges that he may never receive "fellow feeling" from humans that perpetually misunderstand him (154). This interest in modes of sympathetic relations has long been recognized by critics and readers of Romantic texts, such as by David Marshall, who investigates the theatricality of sympathy and characterizes sympathy as a problem with which eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century texts were engaged, and Raymond Williams, whose investigation into "fellow feeling" (a frequently used term Adam Smith) and community building in George Eliot's novels can be linked back to similar notions in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.[43]

But to return to conduct literature, this significant moral act of reaching out and forging a sympathetic connection with another is primarily relegated to the realm of feminine interactions, but strict gender coding does not necessarily extend to other genres of literary texts in the period. For instance, John Keats' poem "This Living Hand," which draws on Keats' medical knowledge of the nervous system and the sensitivity of the nerves in the hands and fingers, [44] narrates a scenario describing a male speaker reaching his hand out to touch the woman he loves (biographical readings of the poem identify the "you" as Fanny Brawne). The male coding of this hand is suggested by the addressee of the poem's purported wish that "red life might stream again" in the speaker's veins, which obliquely suggests virility; yet, I want to suggest that this question of life or death

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[43] See David Marshall's *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy* and Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City*. See also Forest Pyle's chapter "Eliot: The Imagination of Community," which extends Williams' relevance for thinking about the limits of the Romantic imagination in Eliot's novels.
[44] In Keats' notebook, he notes generally in Lecture 10 on the "Physiology of the Nervous System" that "The different sensations reside in peculiar structures as the toes & fingers which have papillae through which the sense of feeling" (55).

(or the speaker's gender, for that matter) is hardly the focal point of the poem. Instead, the poem works to establish the literal and figurative power of a hand to touch others—a kind of touch that is not restricted along the lines of the gender binary.

Critical attention to this fragmentary poem has often focused on its unstable referents, and while interpretations of its meaning have varied widely, the common threads are acknowledgements of its haunting tone and its rhetorical power. While Lawrence Lipking suggests that "two fully coherent yet mutually exclusive" narratives arise from imagining the living hand as dead and the absent one as present (181), Timothy Bahti understands the living hand turned dead as the handwriting of the speaker—a hand which is then brought back to life by the act of reading "as meaningful representation" (219). Susan Wolfson builds on both of these readings by supplying a reading of formal closure that she believes critics have wanted and been missing; she initially tests the notion that the poem may bear out a Barthesian "death of the author" in an act of "substitution rather than expression" (188) but turns to a revised interpretation of the author's fate:

> Closure by form yields to a formal suspense of verse in mid-line, with the reader left in uneasy complicity with the fragment's last "heated" word, *you*, and forced to surrender to the writer in a radically charged economy of antagonisms—of friendship turned to haunting, of life to death. This is not so much Keats imagining the death of the author and the birth of the productive reader as it is the author's ghoulish rebirth through his text as the murderer of the reader. Even so, this writer, whose language will always remain suspended in petition, must surrender final authority to the reader. Sacrificing formal integrity to a projection

of these violent transformation and transactions, Keats's fragment makes

aggressive poetic capital out of the knowledge that anguishes his efforts to give

form to his desire for Fanny Brawne. (191)

I do not want to quibble with Wolfson's sense that the narrator is imposing upon the

audience, because rhetorically, that effect cannot be avoided with the uncomfortable (and,

in this case, startling) second-person address; yet, I disagree that the formal

inconsistencies of the poem lead only to an interpretation where the reader's agency is

first co-opted by the writer's "antagonisms" and then reintroduced with some finality in

the second-person address. As an alternative, I want to suggest that these inconsistencies

point to the speaker's incomplete knowledge of how touch and sympathy work, both

during life and after death. The exigency of the speaker's rhetoric suggests that this

potential of the hand matters greatly, but the speaker's language also gives way to

hesitation about the success of "grasping." Concomitantly, because the trope of the

reaching hand requires an object for the grasp (a reciprocal touch), the reader retains

agency throughout the poem, even as the speaker wrestles with his speculations.[45]

With that affective exchange between the speaker and reader in mind, the work

most influential to my reading of Keats here is Jonathan Mulrooney's article "How Keats

Falls." Though his argument primarily concerns *Hyperion*, Mulrooney makes an

important (re)intervention into Keats scholarship; noting that much recent critical work

has emphasized the political dimensions of Keats' works, Mulrooney "wishe[es] to

reassert an approach to Keats's writing that explores how, for Keats, human identity

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[45] This hesitation is less surprising given what Jaques Khalip claims about the relationship between Keats' poetry and sympathy in *Anonymous Life*. He says that Keatsian "subjectivity is perceived as perpetually deconstituting, becoming almost irresponsible as a consequence of its inability to cling to any stable sense of self-knowledge" (98). Part of this "clinging" to self-knowledge also extends to a desperate desire to know the affective powers of the body.

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emerges from the imagination's necessarily incomplete attempts to comprehend the fullness of its historical experience," where he defines historical experience to include material circumstances and "narratives (poetic, scholarly, or otherwise) that attempt to make sense of those events and circumstances" (252). The intended result is to "help Keats scholars to reexamine the affective value of poetic form, focusing on how poetry presents feeling in particular historical moments and, more vitally, how it produces feeling readers" (252). "This Living Hand" is well-served by this approach, since the poem's speaker seems particularly attentive to the potential of the living body but seems to question the depth of corporeal understanding both in life and after death; moreover, by implicating touch, the participation of a "feeling reader" is solicited by the poem.

The poem's opening line draws on the same state of indeterminate bodily capability (already activated or awaiting activation) that I discussed in Chapter Three. "*This* living hand" (emphasis mine) seems to be the subject of the poem, but it really functions as the speaker's tangible point of reference for the power of touch. The hand, entirely established in an immediate present, is "now warm and capable" —and the enjambed line somewhat discourages the act of reading on to the subsequent prepositional phrase since it might, in fact, be enough to simply say that the hand is warm and capable; it is alive and full of potential for action. Yet, the speaker continues on to identify the important act that the hand is capable of— "earnest grasping" (l. 2) —and the line break adds emphasis to this apparent power of the hand. This accompanying prepositional phrase also provides a new context for the previous line, since "warm" can now be read as a relational quality (do we necessarily know how cold or warm our own hands are until we touch someone else's to compare?) and the significance of its

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"earnest" grasping capability suggests grasping not just a material object in the world

(perhaps a pen), but more likely another hand. The ability to grasp a mere object is not

novel (it is just a pedestrian movement); but, the speaker suggests that the ability to grasp

another's hand earnestly has unacknowledged import. At the same time, there is a

slipperiness here to "grasp": the hand might be grasping with certainty or grasping *at*

something unsuccessfully. Coupled with "earnest," signaling the sincerity of intention

but not whether the intended action can be completed successfully, the speaker's grasp

hints at some uncertainty about the ability to create this physical connection, or what

Marcello Giovanelli has called "a state of affairs that is possible but yet to be realized"

(188). The equal possibility of successful or unsuccessful grasping aligns with the sense

among Keats scholars like Magdalena Ostas that his poetry cannot be characterized by, as

Abrams put it, the "internal made external" (Ostas 337; Abrams 22); rather, the

doubleness of the poem's second line discloses both an interest and an uncertainty about

how intention for making a physical connection might not manifest externally in the form

of touch.

The second movement the poem outlines a claim for how the immediate and

tangible power of the hand can survive even past death. Following Denise Gigante's

counsel that readers of Keats should always question what it means to "die into life," it

becomes clear that the speaker's imaginative speculation about the hand after death does

not involve a deeper sense of embodied cognition, but rather, the divide between life and

death here is somewhat permeable for Keats by a recognition that effects of once-

corporeal existence persist in the world of the living (240). In other words, the poem

encourages readers to approach the poem from the perspective of the living since the

hand has power to touch now and could even return to offer a form of touch after death.[46]

The evolving power to grasp or touch is evoked through the story of the oppositional "cold" hand that has the persistent power to "haunt" the addressee's days and "chill thy dreaming nights" (l. 4). Narrated in this way, these actions unfold in active narration (through the speaker's own assertion) rather than through the addressee's memory of the speaker, and yet the speaker announces the possibility of these powers emanating from a physical body that no longer lives, in direct contrast to the "warm" hand of the first line but with no less "capability." The notable effect of this new power to touch is that the speaker anticipates such an extreme reaction from the listener: that she would wish her own blood to dry up as a means to resupply life to the speaker (l. 5). This strong reaction suggests the hand's ongoing ability to provide affective touch even when that touch can no longer be physical; yet, the effect of this touch could be just as physically chilling as emotionally chilling for the woman left behind through the memory of the touch or, as Corcoran has argued, the hand-writing of the poem that allows the words to "live through" the poet's own death (321).

The crux of this poem lies in its final two lines, when the speaker says "see here it is— / I hold it toward you" (l. 7-8). While Susan Wolfson has chosen to focus on the second-person address in the final line, it is worth noting that the reader's position is explicitly invoked in the previous line (191). "See" functions as a command: the speaker asks the reader to recognize the visible power of the hand in the present moment (in life)

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[46] My approach here also takes into consideration Jonathan Mulrooney's recent discussion of what I have called the permeable division between life and death, particularly his astute observation that Brendan Corcoran's essay "Keats's Death: Towards a Posthumous Poetics" subscribes to the strain of Keats' scholarship that insists on Keats' "posthumous poetics" without attention to how the poetry (in Mulrooney's words) "moves" the living characters as well as the readers (264). I take his orientation to be important toward re-opening approaches to Keats that acknowledge both his "posthumous poetics" and its correspondence with lived experience and affective influences.

and in the future (afterlife). Jonathan Culler has pointed to these final lines as an indication of this poem's apostrophic qualities: that temporality is reduced to the "fictional time" of a poetic event in which "we can believe that the hand is really present and perpetually held toward us through the poem" (154). But rather than reading this line as the final stage of mystification, I see it as performing the power of the extended hand in a way that has only been suggested earlier in the poem, while also gesturing toward the ongoing and infinite possibility of touch as either a tangible or an ethereal sensation for the listener. Yet, because the language of the poem does not narrate or describe an actual touch, the final line of the poem rests only in potential action rather than a completed action of touch; even so, the affective touch has already occurred, which is suggested by the weight of the double potential (of touch in life and in afterlife) being slightly skewed toward the hand's figurative potential of touch even after death. The hand need not be in a living, embodied state in order to have a significant power of reaching out and touching, which gives the hand a kind of infinitely-unfolding affective and sympathetic potential that is rooted in but transcends even the living materiality of the body.

In light of this close connection between the hand and notions of sympathy, it is not a coincidence that the philosopher most associated with theories of sympathy in the eighteenth century and persisting into the nineteenth century, Adam Smith, also originated the "invisible hand" theory in economics.[47] In his 1759 book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith begins with a delineation of how sympathy arises and the kind of social forces it produces, suggesting that attempts to understand others are at the heart

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[47] The "invisible hand" concept first appears in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, though Smith's theory becomes much more detailed in *The Wealth of Nations*. Yet, in both texts, the invisible hand suggests self-interest in social and economic transactions – the same kind of impulse that we see him emphasize in transactions of sympathy.

of all the "moral sentiments" that he takes up in turn. In this opening section, sympathy is characterized by an attempt to understand the circumstances and consequent emotions of another. For Smith, sympathy is utterly imaginative and bodily so as to overcome inevitable differences in experience that pose obstacles to fellow-feeling:

> [Our brother] never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations… It is the impressions of our sense only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. (9)

Importantly, Smith identifies the key role that the body plays in the act of sympathy, and he makes no distinction between involvement of the mind and the body in the imaginative action that the individual must undertake. But, Smith is clear in acknowledging the limitations of this sympathetic feeling; sympathy requires the functions of the imagination because it is not reproducing any original sensations but, instead, a best attempt at a copy. As such, bodily experiences are discrete and impossibly individualistic, so sympathy provides only a feeble attempt to move one's consciousness "beyond [their] own person." Critics such as David Marshall have identified strong strains of skepticism in Smith's description, but physically and emotionally, this description figures continued isolation and exclusion from a full understanding of another as the most likely outcome (180).

The isolation implied by Smith's discussion of the limits to sympathy is further intensified in his examples of social contexts where sympathy might arise. Though Smith attempts a kind of phenomenological explanation of how sympathy might develop and be deployed by an individual, the weight of the description on the giver of sympathy, the "I" perspective, divulges the subtle self-interest embedded in feelings of sympathy. For example, he illustrates how sympathy works when watching a performance: "the mob, when they are gazing at a dancer on the slack rope, naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation" (10). These examples say nothing of an attempt to connect with the acrobat; instead, the impulse seems to be only of self-preservation if one were to inhabit the acrobat's body and experience those same conditions of imbalance and danger. Smith notes, too, that attempts to sympathize are also "imperfect" because they so often involve "a curiosity to inquire into [the other person's] situation," denoting yet again a self-serving impulse entangled in an interaction that otherwise—or at least at the surface—presumes to emphasize the concern of the other person (11). These conditions lead Smith to conclude that "sympathy, therefore, does not arise so much from the view of the person, as from that of the situation which excites it" (12). Locating the source of sympathy in situational circumstances rather than in an attempt to make a connection with another further deprives sympathy of its connective power and makes sympathy appear to be more of a well-intentioned but ultimately self-serving feeling.

Mary Shelley's Projects of Sympathy

But not all representations of sympathy in Romantic literature are equally dismissive of its potential to generate connection and community. The texts that most

powerfully draw on the idea of sympathy as a connective mechanism (while also acknowledging its limits) are Mary Shelley's novels *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Last Man* (1826), and both novels also feature a conceit of the movements of the hand denoting literal and figurative suggestions of sympathy. Critics working on *Frankenstein*, including Barbara Johnson, Anne Mellor, Thomas Dutoit, Sara Guyer, and Guyatri Spivak, have already acknowledged its engagement with failures of sympathy in Frankenstein's treatment of his creature, especially in the 1818 edition of the novel where Frankenstein's actions are portrayed with a greater sense of free will; [48] I will argue that one of the key turning points of the novel that has gone largely unacknowledged hinges upon Victor Frankenstein's refusal to touch his Creature when he reaches out his hand—a very literal hand gesture that functions as a preliminary experiment with the conceit of connecting hands, touch, and sympathy. Furthermore, I will show how Mary Shelley further employs literal and figurative gestures of touch in the midst of a plague-ridden Europe for the purposes of exploring the centrality of sympathy to human experience in *The Last Man*. While I will argue that *Frankenstein* is an initial testing ground for sympathetic touch, *The Last Man* can be read as a full-scale test of sympathy's affective circulations, especially through the ministry of touch.

Critical discussions of *The Last Man* often get caught up in its roman-à-clef features, in parallels to Mary Shelley's own deep sense of loss, and in advertisements for the novel claiming that it narrates "a new Romance, or rather Prophetic Tale!" thereby placing the novel in the mode of prophecy (Paley 107). The despairing parallels between

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[48] Victor Frankenstein's frequent declaration that he is the victim of fate in the 1831 edition suggest that he has been touched by the forces of the universe rather than ascribing any powers to himself to "touch" or affect others, which make him seemingly less capable of sympathy because so much of his life is beyond his control. The Frankenstein of the 1818 edition is portrayed as being much more cognizant and capable but, nevertheless, failing to extend sympathy toward his creation.

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the novel's characters who are doomed to death and the loved ones Mary Shelley lost and the inevitable demise of the human race in the face of the plague have thus led most critics to read this novel as depressing (Hutchings 237); others, most prominently Barbara Johnson, have tried to find some sort of commentary on human systems and values in the rage of the plague, leading to interpretations where man has mistakenly believed he has mastered nature (a critique reminiscent of *Frankenstein*) or where the "lethal universality" of disease "is a nightmarish version of the desire to establish a universal discourse, to spread equality and fraternity throughout the world" (264). Yet, if we consider its prophetic nature in a kind of Blakean sense where prophecy encompasses both the past and the future with bearing on the present—an inclination that the novel already takes up in the act of linking ancient prophecy with "current" events in Naples in 1818 and a main narrative taking place in the distant future—then perhaps prophecy speaks less to an inevitable demise of the human race and more to the kinds of relationships that should be cultivated among members of a dying race.[49]

Unlike the criticism of *Frankenstein*, which has already been deeply invested in questions of sympathy and relationships, previous criticism on *The Last Man* has not fully realized the novel's exploration of sympathy, nor the way the novel builds on the scene in which a physical gesture of sympathy fails in *Frankenstein*. As Morton Paley has pointed out, *The Last Man* came late in a long line of "last man" narratives in the 1810s and 1820s, and as such, was published at "just the wrong time" (107). In the wake of these other novels, lastness was not only *not* novel and *not* apocalyptic, but

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[49] Critics have provided somewhat varied analyses of the ambiguities in the novel's introduction. I am largely following Kevin Hutchings' approach, where the leaves prophesize Verney's story (240), whereas Morton Paley seems to believe that the introduction explains that Verney's story has been translated by the author (121). Kate Ferguson Ellis' interpretation aligns somewhat with Paley's but she emphasizes that the translation is "imperfect and doubtless deformed," making it even more suspicious and complicated (266).

"ridiculous" (107). As Paley discusses, narratives about lastness presuppose an audience that supposedly cannot exist, and the novel's nineteenth-century readers were put off by this troublesome disjuncture. But perhaps in part because of this history of reader responses, critics have almost exclusively focused on *The Last Man* as a novel of lastness. What these analyses then fail to explain, however, is the complicated exploration of sympathy between individuals during times of political and financial growth and then in the midst of an international epidemic. *Frankenstein* takes up this issue of sympathy at the level of individual relationships since Victor's decisions are made in the midst of the Creature's vengeful violence, but *The Last Man* explores the bonds of sympathy much more broadly—within families, communities, and even within and among nations. So, my analysis seeks to recuperate this novel by reading it not just as a narrative about the experience of lastness but instead about the way that human relationships transform in the midst of lastness as a circumstance.

As such, I want to undertake an assessment of these two novels as projects of inquiry into sympathy, and I will argue that Mary Shelley's two novels are interested in positing touch as a primary vehicle of sympathetic connection, literally negating the isolation between the edges of bodies. In this chapter, the notion of affect as inter-subjective relationality will inform my response to forces—including but not limited to emotional impulses—that draw people together even under circumstances where getting too close physically poses danger. Because affect theory does not deny that bodily resonances may expand beyond the borders of the text, I am interested in pursuing questions about how the reader also becomes implicated in the spinning of sympathetic webs, particularly in light of Lionel Verney's moments of direct address that not only

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narrate to an audience but seek their participation. I also seek to place Shelley's iteration

of sympathetic touch within a larger cultural history of touch by drawing on the work of

Constance Classen's *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*. Like Adam

Smith, Shelley will understand sympathy as a gestural and bodily act, but Shelley's

novels do not assume sympathy to be a primarily self-interested or self-centered act;

rather, Shelley's iteration of sympathy is fully cognizant of relationships to the

community and actually seeks to continue to build community in spite of circumstances

that render the endeavor impossible (depopulation).

But we must begin with *Frankenstein*, which provides an initial testing ground for

Shelley's advocacy for sympathy. While it is hard to deny that the novel's narrative

interrogates the ego and the hubris of man, particularly in the emerging realm of

scientific inquiry and discovery,[50] the many critical approaches to this novel demonstrate

that some of the central concerns of the novel revolve around issues of character

relationships: Victor as a mother, the Creature as an abject and monstrous body, etc. For

the purposes of discussing sympathetic relationships, I want to draw attention to two

strains of criticism. On the one hand, David Marshall presents a compelling case for

Frankenstein as a novel about the failures of sympathy in the relationship between Victor

and the Creature. Victor creates a living being that seeks sympathy and receives none

because while the creature's physicality resembles human features in some ways, he is

too different to be recognized as human and as a proper recipient of sympathy (181).

Thomas Dutoit extends this argument by concentrating on the face as the primary figure

of the novel. He posits that the impossibility of understanding between the creature and

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[50] See, for example, Mary Poovey's analysis of Shelley's theory of individual ego and desire in *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, in which she argues that Shelley sees "imagination as an appetite that can and must be regulated" (123).

the human beings around him lie in the "unpresentability" of the creature's face: the "face functions as a transparent reflection of moral character, and as the chosen medium for interpersonal communication," so the inability of others to look at and accept the creature's face presents an immediate obstacle for sympathy (850). These interpretations focus on the creature's body as the site of foreclosed sympathy, while acknowledging the creature's utter lack of control over the appearance of his body or how others react to it.[51] On the other hand, an equally convincing (and not entirely contradictory) case can be made that while not a single human character reacts favorably to the Creature, Frankenstein also actively contributes to the foreclosure of sympathy both at a moral/cognitive level and at the level of bodily and sensory ability. Kate Ellis, for instance, argues that the Victor's failures of sympathy are metaphorized through his blindness to others' situations and needs (260).

I want to draw on both of these perspectives to claim that not only does the creature's face and Frankenstein's incapacity for awareness erect blockades to sympathy but that Shelley chooses to have Victor dramatically and physically perform this failure of sympathy to signal the discomfort of sympathy's refusal and the depth of the resulting physical and affective disconnection. This failure is prefigured in both Victor's voracious consumption of (outdated) volumes on science in his childhood and his rapid and enthusiastic rise to expert scientific knowledge at university. When he arrives at Ingolstadt, Victor realizes only too late—with some chiding from his first professor—that he has read only the works of pseudo-scientists (26); in other words, his study in isolation

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[51] In a somewhat related and Marxist analysis of the Creature's disfigurement, Franco Moretti argues that the Creature is a symbol of the emerging industrial proletariat – a class that inspired fear – using such evidence as the Creature's namelessness, lack of individuality or recognition, and his close ties (by mechanisms of control/denial) to his creator (83).

prevented him from engagements with others that may have provided earlier correction

(after all, to soften Victor and provide perspective is Elizabeth's primary role in the

novel).[52] Still, this cycle of isolation begins again once Frankenstein gets ahold of the

"right" books. As in the other indeterminate bodies of Chapter Three, the Romantic

notion of enthusiasm suggests a valence of not-yet-activated power: of the potential for

engaging sympathetically with others or with isolating oneself from the fabric of society.

Anne Mellor's analysis places Frankenstein squarely in the latter category: he is the

"calculated inversion of the eighteenth-century 'man of feeling,'" and thus he becomes

the "isolated protagonist [that] has given both 'heart and soul' to his work, callously

indifferent to the anxiety his silence might cause his father and his fiancée… he has truly

'lost all soul'" ("A Feminist Critique of Science" 79). This indifference seems to have

always been a part of Frankenstein's character, and yet the heightened emotion that he

feels about his project increases his inability to think about anything else; he says: "No

one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the

first enthusiasm of success" (32). Given this enthusiasm that perhaps even exceeds

Victor's linguistic ability to describe it through simile, readers are meant to find it

unsettling that Victor has a strange relationship to his creation even as he is wholly

invested in the project; as Sara Guyer points out, "Victor can negotiate the living monster

only by not looking" (103). Indeed, Victor's failure to see his creation's hideousness

prior to bringing it to life suggests that Victor has not really been looking attentively, nor

has been paying attention to the stakes of embodiment. Commenting on Victor's strange

surprise when he truly sees his creature for the first time, she argues: "Frankenstein's

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[52] See Spivak's discussion of Elizabeth as one dimension of the Kantian "three-part subject" wherein
Elizabeth is the "aesthetic judgment" and, in Kant's terms, the "mediating link" (256).

shock… at the moment of the monster's 'birth' shows how 'disembodied'… his creative imagination has been" (168). Victor is perhaps being a "good" objective scientist by trying to achieve the goal of bringing an inanimate object to life without injecting personal feeling into the process, but there is a cost to ignoring the body in an imaginative project that attends only to the end-goal rather than understanding the ramifications of creating a (much) less-than-perfect body in a culture apt to judge external appearance.

But, one of the critical turning points of the novel takes place in the second volume when the bodies of Victor and the Creature are in the closest proximity since Victor completed his work on the Creature's body and brought him to life. Though not a neglected scene in Shelly criticism, the first re-encounter is usually understood to be a moment when the Creature intentionally suspends Frankenstein's view of him in order to mount a convincing argument for a mate solely through language.[53] Considering Anne Mellor's influential account of Frankenstein as a "life stealer" who is punished by Nature for his transgressions, meeting out in nature and in a "scene terrifically desolate" does not bode well for a happy reunion (Mellor 227; Shelley 64); under these fraught circumstances, and in light of the apathy and fear with which Victor has treated his creation thus far, we should not expect a significant re-encounter with nurturing, paternal (or maternal) sympathy.[54] Shelley sets up the scene with astute attention to body positioning, since Victor is very concerned about a quickly-approaching shape that he determines to be the Creature: "I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance,

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[53] See, for example, Peter Brook's chapter on Frankenstein entitled "What Is a Monster? (According to Frankenstein)," pg. 201.
[54] Also see Mellor's essay "A Feminist Critique of Science," in which she explains how parallels to Darwin's theory of evolution demonstrate that Frankenstein's failure to provide motherly nurturing begins with his unfortunate choice to create a child by "lateral propagation" rather than sexual procreation (73).

advancing towards me with superhuman speed… I perceived, as the shape came nearer, (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that is was the wretch whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach, and then close with him in mortal combat" (65). Of course, Victor has already decided to kill the creature—a naïve misreading of the matchup of bodily size, strength, and stamina, but a desperate response to his immediate problems nevertheless—and this resolution partially accounts for his choice to stand his ground and fight the creature. But he offers only two options, staying to be killed or leaving permanently: "'Devil,' I exclaimed, 'do you dare approach me? and do not you fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile insect! or rather, stay, that I might trample you to dust!'" (65). These options correspond to the only spatial orientations and interactions of their two bodies that Victor can endure. When the Creature tries to sway him with talk of Victor's obligations to him, Victor again repeats: "Begone! ... There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies" (66). Community, here, may be emotional or sympathetic, but it is also bodily: Victor does not want to be anywhere near the Creature, whose sight both repulses him and provides a painful reminder of the violence that the Creature has carried out.

But the Creature refuses the possibilities that Victor dictates and even attempts to overcome the physical divide between them. He responds: "How can I move thee?" suggesting his Creator's stubborn refusal to budge emotionally *or* physically (66). And when Victor repeatedly fails to be moved by the Creature's entreaties and directs him to "Begone!" yet again so as to "relieve [him] from the sight of [the Creature's] detested form," the Creature responds with words *and* a momentous physical gesture: "'Thus I

relieve thee, my creator,' he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence; 'thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion'" (67). In previous critical assessments of the novel, this type of reference to blindness has been attributed to a weakness or failure on Frankenstein's part, but here, the Creature understands the impossible obstacle that his own monstrous appearance poses for Frankenstein and he attempts to remove that obstacle from the situation by *enabling* blindness, thereby introducing the possibility that Frankenstein could be persuaded by hearing the power of his words and his story.[55] These senses—sight and hearing—are at odds throughout the novel; sight prevents hearing, which in turn impedes cognitive understanding. But this moment is the only instance in the novel where there is a possibility of the sense of sympathetic touch overcoming all of the other impediments to Frankenstein and his Creature coming to an understanding. The Creature initiates the touch seemingly out of care and concern for Frankenstein's situation—a sympathetic gesture—even as he "takes" sight from him. Frankenstein responds with a different kind of touch: not a willing reception of the Creature's gesture of sympathy, but rather a flinging away of the Creature's hands "with violence." His immediate reaction utterly refuses any kind of touch that could generate connection between him and the Creature, and this action of refusal and resistance is even more deliberate in nature than his choice to remain blind to his obligations to his creation. Moreover, though he tries to get rid of the Creature in this scene, his act of flinging away the Creature's hands also causes his creation to stay and be "seen," so this refusal of

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[55] Sara Guyer's reading of the Creature as apostrophe produces a reading in which the Creature is masking "the face whose burden he attempts to convey" (94). Her interpretation is not at odds with my own in the sense that the Creature's disfigured face must be hidden for his voice to be heard because others' reactions to his bodily appearance always disable their ability to hear and understand him; however, I read this movement as both sympathetic *and* as a means to his own end.

sympathy becomes a failure to initiate any relational change: no connection is created but no separation is initiated, either.

While Peter Brooks points out that this scene marks the moment "when the Monster's words assign to Frankenstein for the first time a parental role" (202), the familial connection is constantly interrupted by their failed sympathetic connection. Other scenes of sympathy's absence unfold in succession. The Creature comes to understand the meaning of family relationships (81) and the power of sympathetic love only by observation; he idolizes the DeLacey's family unit because "they loved, and sympathized with one another; and their joys, depending on each other, were not interrupted by the casualties that took place around them" (89). The Creature "yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures," and yet he never has an opportunity to experience the fullness of familial sympathy because they too reject him (89). This devastating loss is compounded by not just a failure of recognition when he pulls a young girl to safety after she falls into a river, but then he is shot by a man accompanying her (95). The Creature retreats deep into the woods to, as he tells Frankenstein, "meditate in what manner I should apply to you" (96). This note seems to suggest more than mere strategizing about persuading his creator to his request: there is a hint of attempting to draw out Frankenstein's sympathies. Clearly, engaging in human sympathetic exchange is not producing the desired results, both because the Creature cannot be treated sympathetically and because he has been barred from a journey of maturation in a familial environment and thereby cannot fully understand the bonds of sympathy. Thus, when he encounters young William, the Creature tries a more forceful approach that attempts to circumvent this problem of exclusion from the webs of social sympathies:

"Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me, that this little creature was unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him, and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth" (96). Of course, the Creature is too optimistic that this "young creature" is not attuned to cultural expectations about bodies; in a series of insults, William calls his assailant "monster," "ugly wretch," and "ogre," but in perhaps the most painful slight of all, reaffirms the family ties to which the Creature has no access by threatening to "tell [his] papa" if he is not released (96) —a father who would most certainly be sympathetic to a son's fears and perhaps pursue the monster (as did the previous man accompanying the young girl) to injure or kill him.

But Frankenstein, too, cannot escape the vacuum of sympathy that he has created. Haunted both by his creation's absence and presence, and with no one else (until Walton) privy to his misery, Victor often turns to the apostrophic mode, calling on some aspect of the landscape to answer him—a practice which is replicated by the Creature when he narrates his miserable experience to Victor. For instance, the Creature's "Oh, earth! How often did I imprecate curses on the cause of my being!" (95) closely resembles the structure of Victor's exclamation upon the Creature's departure: "Oh! Stars and clouds and winds, ye are all about to mock me; if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory… but if not, depart, depart, and leave me in darkness" (101). Alan Richardson's work on Romantic apostrophe has demonstrated that it "exemplifies rather than derails [or "embarrasses," in Culler's term] the social and communicative function of linguistic acts" (369). Indeed, the strangeness of both Victor and the Creature's apostrophes produce a speech act that redirects their communication entirely away from the other;

moreover, these alternating apostrophes reiterate and recycle their feelings of physical

and emotional isolation coupled with increasing despair in a sympathy-less relationship.

Yet, as Sara Guyer has pointed out, Victor's exclamations demonstrate "mock

apostrophic power" since the Creature "responds to and is called by each of

Frankenstein's apostrophes" (87). If sympathy can be said to function like call and

response, then the repeated, legitimate calls for sympathy followed by entirely

misdirected responses lead to devastation.

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Figuring Sympathetic Touch

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The Last Man shares some of the same prominent concerns about individual

choices and motivations as *Frankenstein*. Critics point to the desperate assertion made by

the novel's main character, Lionel Verney, that "I felt for a moment the intolerable sense

of struggle with, and detestation for, the laws which govern the world" as an indicator of

the struggle of the ego with a sense of control over the world, but this novel complicates

the kinds of struggles that the narrator faces and the mechanisms by which he tries to

cope with these challenges (357). Imagination and art, for instance, do not seem to offer

a way to resolve the social and emotional turmoil created by the plague, as Morton Paley

points out in "The Last Man: Apocalypse Without Millennium" (113).[56] Indeed, the

strength of the cognitively-driven concept of "imagination" pales in comparison to the

unpredictable and incredibly formidable force of the plague—there is no protecting

oneself or one's loved ones from the plague by the mind's creative powers alone, nor is

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[56] Interestingly, Lionel's depiction of the imagination seems to be primarily centered in the mind: "For a moment I could yield to the creative power of the imagination, and for a moment was soothed by the sublime fictions it presented to me. The beatings of my human heart drew me back to blank reality" (200). The way in which the material body—the beating of the human heart —snaps Lionel out of his only temporarily soothing imaginative musing suggests that real solutions are to be discovered in the material realm rather than in the imagination, even if the material realm offers only a dismal "blank reality."

there any way to think one's way out of its effects once touched by its contagions. Instead, the appropriate and effective responses to the circumstances created by the plague are acts of sympathy that largely emanate from affective gestures: figurative—or non-physical ways of influencing others—and literal touches that demonstrate sympathetic engagement toward those who need another's touch in a time of distress.

One of the framing narrative tropes of the novel is that each character is on his or her own journey of self-discovery—though this is primarily apparent for Lionel, who, as Victoria Middleton points out, is Mary Shelley's last first person narrator (167). These parallel journeys include changing conceptions of self and relationship to society (Middleton 167) and are deployed through the recurring motif of ships encountering cycles of good and bad weather. Lionel's narrative opens with the image of England as a ship as he looks back on his life: "England, seated far north in the turbid sea, now visits my dreams in the semblance of a vast and well-manned ship, which mastered the winds and rode proudly over the waves" (9). In hindsight, Lionel recalls safety and security even in the midst of "turbid" water, both in his life and in his country more broadly. Ironically, this ship is "well-manned"—which pre-figures both the fully-populated country that will soon be struck by the plague and the high-ranking society with which their family is soon to fall out of favor in this narrative. As Lionel is quick to admit, though, his fortunes are an exemplary case "of the power that mutability may possess over the varied tenor of man's life" (9). Mary Shelley seems to borrow here from her late husband's poem "Mutability" to express the ever-enduring quality of change being the

only predictable experience in life.[57] The ship motif thus vividly accounts for an individual (or a nation) encountering rapid and erratic changes in circumstances.

Lionel's narration clearly situates the stakes of the novel within the realm of the social. Rather than beginning with his own memories of childhood, he first returns to important familial circumstances that precede his birth. He paints his father's gambling, the whole family's subsequent fall from favor in court, and his father's decision to go into exile in the country as a series of regrettable events that remove them from society. Lionel's father deeply feels his "degraded state," partially because of his financial hardship but also because of his dearth of social relations, and dies, only to be shortly followed by his mother, who was burdened by poverty and sorrow over the loss of her husband (12-13). Thereby, the initial loss of community when Lionel's family moves to the country is further intensified when Lionel and Perdita lose the community of their parents. After contextualizing his own story within his lineage, Lionel recounts his first memory: "My first real knowledge of myself was as an unprotected orphan among the valleys and fells of Cumberland" (13). Lionel uses the word "orphan" to refer to both himself and to Perdita as a way to characterize the sense of total isolation that they feel and this framing of their situation also helps to explain why they will cling to each other and distrust outsiders. Yet, at the same time, Lionel rejects the pastoral life and reveals his need for a kind of sympathy that can only circulate in wider society: "I shepherded a numerous flock on the near uplands. I cannot say much in praise of such a life; and its pains far exceeded its pleasures. There was a freedom in it, a companionship with nature, and a reckless loneliness; but these, romantic as they were, did not accord with the love

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[57] As Percy Shelley's poem claims, "naught may endure but mutability" —a poem which, incidentally, Frankenstein also quotes in Volume II.

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of action and desire of human sympathy, characteristic of youth" (14). Kevin Hutchings calls this moment an apparent critique of Wordsworthian pastoralism, noting that Lionel also refers to himself as an "uncouth…savage" during this time (229). To mature socially, then, Lionel must engage in a community rather than living a solitary life as a shepherd with only Perdita as his companion. Lionel associates his increasing "desire of human sympathy" with youth, but as we will see, this desire persists throughout his life.

Initially, Lionel and Perdita are both resistant to community sympathies. Perdita, in particular, repels people: she "was not altogether saintly in her disposition. Her manners were cold and repulsive" (15). Lionel's choice of words here suggests that this is a character fault, though he attributes her coldness to her lack of affectionate upbringing (15). She also has a strange, internalized version of sensation. Lionel says:

> Perdita, even in joy, fled to loneliness, and could go on from day to day, neither expressing her emotions, nor seeking a fellow-feeling in another mind. Nay, she could love and dwell with tenderness on the look of her friend, while her demeanour expressed the coldest reserve. A sensation with her became a sentiment, and she never spoke until she had mingled her perceptions of outward objects with others which were the native growth of her own mind. (17)

Lionel's description seems to try to redeem the fact that his sister's sensations become sentiments that lead her to turn inward rather than engage in social life by suggesting that his sister has a depth of feeling even if it is not apparent to others. But, her feelings are fully independent—only "*her* perceptions of outward objects" are mingled with those that are "the native growth of *her own mind*"—and thus her lived experience is disjointed and disconnected from others. Lionel does not seem to suffer from such an extreme isolation,

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but Perdita creates an almost impenetrable boundary between herself and potential affective influences.

It is not surprising then that, of the two siblings, Lionel is the first to become intertwined in the society of a new community of companions. As the more malleable individual, he is touched by Adrian's generosity in response to his deviant behavior of slaughtering some of Adrian's game animals. Morton Paley argues that Adrian's influence on Lionel is a "civilizing" one (112)—and it is in terms of Lionel's transition out of being a rustic and into bourgeois subjecthood and community life—but what is at stake here is more than manners or social ranking. For instance, Lionel claims that his worldview has been entirely changed, partially by the education that Adrian offers him, but also because of his friend's attentiveness and good heart: "Nor did Adrian instruct me only in the cold truths of history and philosophy. At the same time that he taught me by their means to subdue my own reckless and uncultured spirit, he opened to my view the living page of his own heart, and gave me to feel and understand its wondrous character" (32). The "reckless and uncultured spirit" that Lionel references is the civilizing influence that tempers what is wild in him and helps to nurture his socialization. Middleton points out that their friendship is also ready-made for sympathy because Adrian himself has a spirit of rebellion "against aristocratic tyranny in his own royal family," so Adrian is both poised to soften Lionel's rough demeanor and to also understand his interests (169). With Adrian's openness comes a kind of vulnerability—a radical form of allowing another to view oneself—that allows Lionel to "feel" in response; notably, *feeling* precedes *understanding*. Lionel must be able to feel the

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sympathetic ties of friendship before he can understand others and then act with his own openness toward them.

Adrian embodies sympathy rather than simply being the model of paternalistic sympathetic behavior, and Mary Shelley makes his proclivity toward inter-subjectivity visible through his physical body. First, Lionel describes Adrian's profound transparency: "Adrian's soul was painted in his countenance, and concealment or deceit were at the antipodes to the dreadless frankness of his nature" (34). Adrian does not need to perform because, as we might say colloquially, he is an "open book" in utter opposition to "concealment or deceit"; hence, his frankness is "dreadless" because there is no possibility of him being revealed as something other than what he pretends to be. This earnestness of manner as figured through the body connects him not only to others but to nature: "He owned affinity not only with mankind, but all nature was akin to him; the mountains and the sky were his friends; the winds of heaven and the offspring of earth his playmates; while he the focus of this mighty mirror, felt his life mingle with the universe of existence" (45). Lionel emphasizes *affinity* here: Adrian is connected to everything around him. Such a description divulges Lionel's attitude of worship toward Adrian and the positioning of Adrian as one of the novel's heroes, but the substance of these connections is noteworthy for their comprehensive immersion in all aspects of place and community. Engaging sympathetically, then, involves not just identifying with others (and with nature) but establishing and continually developing connections to others. Because of these qualities, Adrian is the prime candidate for figuratively touching Lionel's life in such a way that he encourages an outsider to join and participate in the bonds of community.

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This initial section of the narrative operates as a bildungsroman (Franci 184), and yet what is at stake is not just two young people's general social and moral development; rather, this novel's particular slant on the bildungsroman form pays special attention to Lionel and Perdita's entrance into a sympathetic community. Their gradual acceptance of the sympathetic ties to and from others—first by Lionel and later by Perdita—is a measure of their increasing maturity, and this same maturity of both giving and being responsive to sympathy is a central focus throughout the novel's first volume as they learn how to cope with increasingly complex social relationships. Lionel describes that his pastime of writing (he writes modest historical biographies) helps him to develop this mature type of sympathy, wherein he has "acquired new sympathies and pleasures. I found another and a valuable link to enchain me to my fellow-creatures; my point of sight was extended, and the inclinations and capacities of all human beings became deeply interesting to me" (157). This act of writing not only helps Lionel to become a student of the human condition, but it also imbeds his own sentiments in the lineage of those who came before him and the posterity who would (supposedly) follow. Importantly, he says that these his aspirations "were not expressed in words, nor even reduced to form in my own mind; but they filled my soul, exalting my thoughts, raising a glow of enthusiasm, and led me out of the obscure path in which I before walked, into the bright noon-enlightened highway of mankind" (157). Thus, his study of humanity is inflected not by intellectual aspirations for knowledge per say, but rather by an attitude of sympathy that seeks to draw out inter-subjective connections. This attitude begins in a kind of mystical space in the body (the soul) but proceeds to other heightened bodily effects—the exalted thoughts and the raising glow of enthusiasm—that ultimately register change as the

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physical act of walking out of an obscure path and into a bright, warm

light/enlightenment. [58]

But not all of the individuals in the community demonstrate this mature sense of

being intertwined and responsible to others around them. Raymond, for example, has a

skewed view of this idealized network of connections between nature, self, and society,

which creates a foil for Adrian's "soul [of] sympathy" (45). Raymond's sole focus lies in

the social realm (to the exclusion of nature), but for him, society is a mechanical structure

that he can build his life and his prestige on: "… self-gratification at least was the

paramount object with him. He looked on the structure of society as but a part of the

machinery which supported the web on which his life was traced" (45). The mechanical

metaphor negates the possibility of Raymond recognizing any real human connection

among his fellow countrymen; furthermore, if society as machinery is simply a structure

which supports his own sociopolitical advancement, then it also lacks any intrinsic value

other than its ability to prop up his reputation. This imagery suggests that Raymond sees

himself as both above and set apart from these social mechanisms, even as he is aware

that they enable his social status and even propel him to further political greatness.

Through his notoriety and authority as a preeminent politician, Raymond has the greatest

potential to extend sympathetic relations in England, so his inability to understand his

own connection to society (and the workings of society generally) as anything other than

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[58] Lionel again reiterates his arrival into this mature form of sympathy later when he says that "social feeling and sympathy constituted a marked feature in my disposition. In early youth, the living drama acted around me, drew me heart and soul into its vortex. I was now conscious of a change. I loved, I hoped, I enjoyed; but there was something besides this. I was inquisitive as to the internal principles of action of those around me… This faculty, or instinct, was now roused" (174). While the above passage largely concerns the kind of sympathy that grows in him as a result of his "authorship," this passage suggests that sympathetic tendencies are innate in individuals and need only to be "roused" appropriately. Thus, it follows that Adrian is able to contribute so profoundly to Lionel's sympathetic development, and even Raymond's capacity for sympathy grows in his adult years through his relationships with Perdita.

an emotionless mechanism is a blemish on his character. Given the fullness of life that
we have seen Adrian embody, Raymond's words reveal his self-centeredness and shallow
comprehension of the rewards of feeling connected to others.

As for more personal connections, Raymond even tries to resist the lures of love,
fearing that it will weaken him. Discussing a possible marriage to Lady Idris with
Lionel, Raymond assents to the duties of marriage but forswears giving into the influence
of love:

> Love! I must steel my heart against *that*; expel it from its tower of strength,
>
> barricade it out: the fountain of love must cease to play, its waters dried up, and
>
> all passionate thoughts attendant on it die—that is to say, the love which would
>
> rule me, not that which I rule. Idris is a gently, pretty, sweet little girl; it is
>
> impossible not to have an affection for her, and I have a very sincere one; only do
>
> not speak of love—love the tyrant and the tyrant-queller; love, until now my
>
> conqueror, now my slave; the hungry fire, the untameable beast, the fanged snake
>
> —no—no—I will have nothing to do with that love. (56)

Raymond's heart is not impenetrable by love; rather, he must "steel" his heart and
"expel" and "barricade" out the influence of the "untamable beast" so that he can
reposition himself as the "conqueror" rather than the "slave" of love. Yet, to deny
anything beyond a meager and unavoidable affection for Idris is to close himself off from
the kind of human connection that Adrian continually demonstrates to be at the center of
a full human experience. Indeed, Raymond's tendency to not fully engage with others
clouds his worldview and politics and will later endanger his marriage to Perdita.

Yet, Raymond's conscious attempts to disengage cannot fully disconnect him from the webs of social relationships and, in fact, his eventual entanglement in them demonstrates the power of sympathy when it is given and its devastating force when it is taken away. His affections for Perdita, who he takes as his wife, gradually develop such strength as to make him forget the firm pledge that he swears to avoid becoming the captive of love, proving that even Raymond is not immune to giving or receiving affective touch.[59] Most striking is not an alteration in Raymond's behavior because he *assents* to a connection with her (this connection develops so gradually that Lionel does not comment on its growth) but, instead, a dramatic alteration in his emotional state because he *loses* the deep connection that he has built with Perdita. When she suspects that Raymond is being unfaithful to her in his concealed relationship with Evadne, "she in some degree returned to her ancient disposition" of coldness (137). In other words, Perdita returns to her initial habit of turning inward and disengaging with others. Raymond, in turn, spirals out of control. His physical gait conveys his distress as he "staggered forth from this scene" of their confrontation, and Lionel's narration equates this action with a man "who had just been put to torture" (126). Perdita's inability to believe his story wounds Raymond so deeply that he loses all sense of the boundaries he has tried to erect between himself and others in order to minimize his own vulnerability. The resolution that he voices to Perdita, that they simply "let [their] affection expire" speaks of replacing love with practical amiability, but Lionel's description of his spirit belies this rationalist approach to an utter breakdown in their relationship: "his spirit was a pure fire, which fades and shrinks from every contagion in the foul atmosphere; but

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[59] In their passionate discussion of Raymond's secret relationship with Evadne, Raymond finally voices his feelings: "You have loved me; I have adored you" (124).

now the contagion had become incorporated with its essence, and the change was more painful" (127). Raymond's spirit, like a flame, burns with his strong but changing passions, but its attempt to "shrink" and to "fade" to keep itself contained from affective influences in its surroundings ultimately fails and becomes painfully mixed with that contagion, just as Raymond's attempt to protect his heart cannot hold up (because human existence demands connection). This physical metaphor of chemical effects paints a profound picture of the vigor of Raymond's passions, the strength of his almost scientific-like effort to avoid contaminating his affective sphere from the influence of others, and the agony that is caused when he is forced to feel the kind of pain that characterizes human experience.

The conflict between Raymond and Perdita marks the first intentional turn away from sympathy in the novel. Perdita seems to feel not guilt for her inability to forgive Raymond but rather severe regret as she writes to Raymond that "I forgive the pain I endure; but the trodden path cannot be retraced" (141). Lionel's resentment about the pain Raymond has caused his sister leads him to blame Raymond's inconsistent passions (140-141), but Raymond seemingly suffers from pangs of his own conscience, even if he will not admit wrongdoing. In the aftermath of their confrontation, "he heartily despised himself, he was angry with Perdita, and the idea of Evadne was attended by all that was hideous and cruel" (127). This behavior is motivated by guilt that he kept a secret from his beloved, that she found out and cannot forgive his transgression, and that Evadne was able to fracture his marriage. Later, too, he seems to try to rekindle his former intimacy and confidence with Perdita, but "shame seemed to hold him back" (141). The breach between Raymond and Perdita thus cannot be resolved because of two individuals turning

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not just away from each other but from sympathetic relations: interactions that always seek connection rather than detachment and that opt to stimulate resolution instead of prompting an individual to turn inward.

As in *Frankenstein*, after this initial refusal of sympathy, other similar gaps in interpersonal understanding arise. Raymond's valiant death upon entering the plague-battered Constantinople also hinges on a lack of sympathy: none of his men will enter the city with him, choosing their own well-being over the bond of brotherhood and sympathy that typically bind together soldiers marching into danger. Raymond presumes that his troops' fear lies in superstition about the plague's influence (193), but his solitary execution of the plan to take over Constantinople physically marks the breach between Raymond and his men. On Lionel's return ride from gathering more troops, he sees, from a distance, the division appear:

> …with intense curiosity I lifted my glass to my eye. I saw Lord Raymond on his charger; a small company of officers had gathered about him; and behind was a promiscuous concourse of soldiers and subalterns, their discipline lost, their arms thrown aside; no music sounded, no banners streamed. The only flag among them was the one Raymond carried; he pointed with it to the gate of the city. The circle round him fell back. (197)

The troop's act of stepping back signals general resistance to Raymond's commands, but Lionel's description signals that these men are breaking away from Raymond, forming their own new groups of dissent that are resistant toward sympathy with their leader. When Raymond requires their help to break down the city gates, "a few men came to aid him" (197-198), but their temporary return to sympathy dissipates quickly. They almost

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immediately "shrank back; they seemed afraid of what they had already done" (198). Raymond responds not by ordering his troops to follow him out of obligation and duty, but Lionel surmises by the gestures he can see, to "adjure their assistance and companionship" even as "the crowd receded from him" (198). The nature of his final attempt to encourage his men to follow him calls attention to the failure of his men to follow through on the obligations toward mutual support inherent to sympathetic connections.

Lionel's response further emphasizes this failure of sympathy while, in the background, the spontaneous destruction of Constantinople unfolds. Lionel, the only companion who might have accompanied his leader into the city, is prevented from reaching Raymond both by distance and by the force of the men who are fleeing the explosions in the city. He recounts that "a crowd of soldiers made for the road by which I came; I was surrounded, hemmed in by them, unable to get forward. My impatience rose to its utmost; I stretched out my hands to the men; I conjured them to turn back and save their General… tears, aye tears, in warm flow gushed from my eyes" (198-199). When Lionel finds himself physically obstructed from running to Raymond's side, he feels an acute form of suffering that begins with impatience and ultimately manifests as the bodily response of gushing tears. But more importantly, Lionel stretches out his hands here both as a plea and as recompense for the sympathy that the men have failed to give their general. Literally, if he stretches his hands out to the men, then he is also stretching them out in Raymond's direction as if to try to revitalize the severed connection between men that has resulted in Raymond riding alone to his death.

Raymond's men do not seem to lament their abandonment of him, but Perdita

feels profound grief both about his death and about the disconnection they experienced in

the later years of their marriage. At a loss for how to go on without Raymond, she turns

to an obsession with his body, treating it as a kind of sacred relic that helps her to revive

the sympathetic connection that they once shared. As soon as Lionel finds and is able to

retrieve Raymond's body from the devastated city, Perdita becomes wild at the news that

Lionel has been successful in his search. He calls her speech "maniac language of …

enthusiasm": it does not matter that "those limbs moved not and those lips could no more

frame modulated accents of wisdom and love… still that was the form she had caressed,

those the lips that meeting hears, had drank the spirit of love from the commingling

breath… at this time, with human fondness, she clung to all that her human senses

permitted her to see and feel to be a part of Raymond" (207). Even in its coldness, the

prospect of seeing or holding Raymond's body offers Perdita the opportunity to try to

overcome her previous obstacles to sympathy and understanding; she desperately clings

to any sensory experience of his body that recalls the kind of commingled affective

influences of intimate lovers that they once shared before their marital problems began.

Yet, Lionel can see that her attempt to cling to past feelings is a poor substitute for living.

He is distressed when Perdita becomes equally obsessed with the idyllic place where she

chooses to bury her husband in Greece. Perdita, begging Lionel to return home without

her to rejoin their friends and to care for her daughter as if she was his own, explains to

her brother that "I am a part of this scene; each and all its properties are a part of me.

This is no sudden fancy; I live by it" (211). Her adopted philosophy of life is reminiscent

of the earlier connection that Lionel detects between Adrian and nature, and yet the

connection she claims to feel to Raymond's burial ground is empty of the true fullness of inter-subjectivity suggested by Adrian's sympathies to everything around him. Adrian's connections look outward to the living and to the future; Perdita's connection looks inward to the dead and to the past. As such, she performs this kind of sympathetic impulse to assuage her own anguish over a largely lost connection that has now been severed by death, but her acts are not truly sympathetic.

Lionel, the only remaining living individual seemingly capable of connecting with Perdita in the midst of her grief, breaks the last bond of sympathy tying her to life by tricking her into sailing back to England. When she discovers his plan, Perdita becomes silent except to tell Lionel "You know not what you have done!" (214). These words recall Christ's exclamation before his crucifixion, but the resonances of injustice in sending an innocent to her death are less significant here than the implications that this early death is caused by a violation of the bonds of sympathy.[60] Losing trust in her brother devastates and completely isolates Perdita, and she jumps overboard to her death, preferring to "share the rocky grave of Raymond, before the animated scene this cheerful earth afforded, and the society of loving friends" (215). Lionel identifies here the culmination of Perdita's turn inward—away from all of the connective webs of friends, family, and larger social community. But Lionel does not dismiss his own responsibility in his sister's death; he acknowledges that "the ill-stared girl died a victim to my senseless rashness" (215). What he deems rashness was really a too-limited understanding of the depth of Perdita's grief; his failure to see beyond his own desire to return to England and his simultaneous inability to leave his sister in Greece clouded his

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[60] See Luke 23:34: "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.'"

awareness of Perdita's needs, and so his well-meaning but insensitive deception effects Perdita's utter isolation.

The chapter concludes with Perdita's death at sea, Lionel and Clara's return to England by steamer, and an ominous revision of the ship motif. Lionel, in his own grief, bids farewell to the sea which, rather than bringing the motif to a final resolution, only closes the *figurative* potential of these ships. In its place, a literal ship arrives on England's coastline in the midst of a new tempest, and while the waves tatter the ship's body, the body of the only man surviving to reach the shore is rumored to have fallen down on the beach to his death from the plague. This turn toward the literal in the ship motif runs parallel to, and also emphasizes, the turn toward the issue of literal touch. Influence and interaction in the first volume tends toward figurative touch, where words and affective resonances both link and unlink individuals and groups in a community, but the kinds of affective touch that are at stake hereafter in the novel are physical and palpable.

Literalizing Sympathy and Compassion

In a compelling analysis of the tension between mind and body in *The Last Man*, "'A Dark Image in a Phantasmagoria': Pastoral Idealism, Prophecy, and Materialism in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*," Kevin Hutchings argues that the essential conflict of the novel lies in divisions between mind and body and between man and nature, with strong inclinations toward an anti-materialist bias. Using Foucault, Hutchings suggests that "Adrian is the Shelleyan character who best exemplifies this anti-materialist turning-away from the corporeal world" (230) largely because the increasing weakness of his body "impedes and retards transcendental striving" of his mind (231). Indeed, Adrian

uses pastoral rhetoric to emphasize the contraction of his wide-ranging and lofty aspirations, but defining his orientation to materiality and his own body solely by these moments of expressed disappointment seems to read Adrian too narrowly, just as reading Lionel solely for his rejection of the pastoral for idealized and less "earthly" conceptions of identity ignores the complexities of the novel's intense attention to the material body in the wake of the plague (231). Hutchings' argument does help to clarify the role of pastoral rhetoric in providing a counterpoint to (and a temporary escape from) materiality that, at times and for certain characters, seems preferable to the messiness of bodies racked by disease, starvation, and trauma. Like Radcliffe and Byron, Shelley seems to acknowledge the flight to the transcendental imaginary as a coping mechanism for confronting more base and problematic aspects of human experience, allowing the individual to imagine a better alternative (or at least a more poetically interesting one). But because it is difficult to ignore the novel's acknowledgement of the failure of imagination and of art, it is likewise difficult to see the novel ultimately resting in anything but materiality. The pastoral, as espoused only briefly by Lionel and then Adrian, almost entirely gives way to gruesome, immediate, and tangible material changes in bodies.

As Lionel narrates the earliest encounters with the plague, recurring shifts from the intangible and speculative to the tangible and immediately observable distinguish between often unfounded speculations about the plague and the reality of actual engagement with its victims. Geographically, stories trace the (supposed) epidemiological origins of the disease in Africa (175); and while initially Africa seems a world away from the relative safety of England, especially given the widespread belief

among the British that western Europeans have immunity to the plague, soon the arrival

of the plague in France and Italy (235) and then its dreaded entrance into England belies

this elitist superstition. The ominous encroachment of disease moves quickly from

abstract speculation to observable effects. In the midst of the difficult political discussion

about abolishing nobility and rank so as to best distribute resources to those who need

them, Lionel tries to imagine the devastation that the people he met in Greece are facing:

"I pictured the scene of suffering Athens. I heard of the death of only sons; of wives and

husbands most devoted; of the rending of ties twisted with the heart's fibres, of friend

losing friend, and young mothers mourning for their first born; and these moving

incidents were grouped and painted in my mind by the knowledge of the persons, by my

esteem and affection for the sufferers" (223). Sympathetic though these imaginings are,

Lionel is only able to conjure an abstract and generalized picture of trauma in his mind;

soon enough, he will come in close contact with precisely the scenarios that he describes.

Likewise, ongoing reports of the number of fatalities abroad carry abstract import at best,

whereas the magnitude of the plague's desolation becomes more visible when, later on,

the constant addition of acquaintances and loved ones to the death count wreak extreme

psychophysiological effects.

Perhaps most tangibly, Lionel and others worry about the fragility of the body and

its ability to fight the epidemic. There is much discussion of the presence of

"empoisoned" air where "each human being inhales death" (233) which both presents a

best guess at the means of the disease spreading and expresses a fear of penetrable bodily

boundaries—a fear that mirrors the anxiety about national borders that are equally

vulnerable to the plague because of trade and are in need of "schemes" that provide a

higher probability for "keeping out… the enemy" (231). Both bodies and borders need

protection, but no one is quite sure how to secure them. The fragility of the body and its

unpredictable ability to fight off the plague or succumb to its power poses a particularly

perplexing mystery. Lionel contends that "individuals may escape ninety-nine times, and

receive the death-blow at the hundredth; because bodies are sometimes in a state to reject

the infection of malady, and at others, thirsty to imbibe it" (231). The description of a

body thirsty for what is harmful to it underscores the unpredictable permeability of the

body to its environment and the unknown cause of its seeming desire to submit to

disease, almost to the point of supporting rather than disputing a Cartesian-like separation

of mind and body. If the mind has little control over defending the body other than

through basic protective measures that Lionel recommends, such as "cleanliness,

sobriety, and even good-humour and benevolence," then, as the novel seems to suggest,

perhaps the best remedy is affective and holistic (246). Indeed, the trope of

communicable disease in this novel brings into sharp focus the need not just for the kind

of sympathy that only other humans can provide but how dire circumstances can require

physically affective responses like touch.

When the plague initially arrives in England, most individuals have the

instinctive reaction to avoid contact with others; Shelley draws here on the plague's well-

known ability, hearkening back to Boccacio, to spread by contact (Classen 58). At first,

no one wants to be near a potential plague victim so as to inhale their contaminated

breath, and touching them is considered even more dangerous. Even Lionel, who has

shown so much growth in refining his sympathetic instincts, tries to imagine a reactive

"uncontaminated seclusion" to try to save his "beloved treasures," or his family and

friends (243). Likewise, others avoid direct contact with the sick out of fear, abandoning

them in their hour of need. After determining that a group of people fleeing London has

left a sick member of their party behind, "none dared approach within half a mile of the

infected neighborhood, and the deserted wretch was left to fight with disease and death in

solitude, as best he might" (258). Adrian, however, ever the model of sympathy,

provides a different answer: "Whither indeed would you fly? We all must remain; and do

our best to help our suffering fellow-creatures" (242). This inquiry is framed as a

question of "where?" because there is little evidence to support that any place is safe; yet,

the subsequent explanation really suggests that he is asking *why* others would desert

those who are in dire need of care. Adrian promotes compassionate care, and his own

actions reinforce a sense of responsibility toward others, not out of a blind sense of duty

but out of choice to identify with and assist others. Even though Adrian's body weakens

with time and he is perhaps the most vulnerable to contracting the plague, he leads the

charge for direct care for the sick, not expecting that he can heal them, but that he might

provide comfort to them in their suffering and consequently to their mourning loved

ones: "I can bring patience, and sympathy, and such aid as art affords, to the bed of

disease; I can raise from earth the miserable orphan, and awaken to new hopes the shut

heart of the mourner" (247). Here, Adrian elevates the vocation of sickbed nursing out of

the realm of the feminine and (often maternal or wifely) duty; now the potential of

women and men alike who have a penchant for sympathy and compassionate care are

equally useful. Adrian's lead also breaks down the typical trope of "rescuing" females

from danger that critic Kate Ferguson Ellis finds in *Frankenstein* and other Shelley

novels, since both men and women of all ages and classes are in need of assistance, particularly orphans and widows (227).

It is important to point out, though, that this touch for which Adrian advocates is not specifically of a healing kind. He does not claim to provide medical attention, nor is he naïve enough to believe that treatment can reliably cure the plague. When Constance Classen describes centuries of history on the thought and practice on hands (dead or living) being applied to the sick, none of the approaches seem to inform the type of touch that Adrian champions: he seeks not to diagnose, to re-establish bodily equilibrium, nor to invoke healing by divine intervention (47-51). Consequently, his idea of touch is aimed not at a cure but at making dying more comfortable, and perhaps more bearable, by heightening the effects of sympathy. From our modern perspective, we might read Adrian's approach to touch as having altogether different ends since it seems to offer something to *both* the giver and the recipient of touch. Brian Massumi describes this connectivity-driven and bodily form of knowledge as "double translation of the subject and the object into the body, at a medium depth where the body is only body, having nothing of the putative profundity of the self nor of the superficiality of external encounter" (59). In other words, the effect of proprioceptive touch works to dissolve the boundaries of the subject-object relationship so that corporeal relationality is possible, and in trying circumstances, this inter-subjective space provides relief.

And yet, touching others, particularly strangers and especially strangers who are sick, persistently entails significant risk. Lionel's hesitation about caring for others and, more specifically, touching them is mitigated by the fact that Adrian is nursing for and "even touching the sick," but his concern is only reversed upon his first encounter with a

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victim of the plague (259). He notes that, out of curiosity, he had already studied the descriptions of the plague's effects as offered by De Foe and Arthur Mervyn, whose "pictures drawn in these books were so vivid, that we seem to have experienced the results depicted by them" (259). It is not surprising that Lionel, our writer and student of sympathy, would seem to feel in his own body what was communicated by the pictures and descriptions in books since he has already identified his increasing ability to sympathize with human narratives through literature. Yet, as he readily admits, "But cold were the sensations excited by words, burning though they were, and describing the death and misery of thousands, compared to what I felt in looking on the corpse of this unhappy stranger" (259). It is significant that Lionel finds his sympathy through reading so much less powerful than the experiential moment he has in finding and observing the markers of death in this body. Seemingly unafraid of the repercussions of direct contact now, he touches the man: "I raised his rigid limbs, I marked the distortion of the face, and the stony eyes lost to perception" (259). Touch, now, is not soothing to the sufferer, but it seems as though Lionel needs to go through the motions of ministering touch to the body before he can come to terms with the fact that his arrival to help has come too late. He then goes on to describe reactions that form in his own body in detail:

> …chill horror congealed my blood, making my flesh quiver and my hair stand on end. Half insanely I spoke to the dead. How came this? Was the coming painful? You look as if they enemy had tortured, before he murdered you. And now I leapt up precipitately, and escaped from the hut, before nature could revoke her laws, and inorganic words be breathed in answer from the lips of the departed. (260)

Lionel's first bodily reaction is noteworthy, since Mary Shelley so often uses the image of "blood running through the veins" to connote life;[61] if sheer horror at the sight of a traumatic death has the effect of congealing his blood, then it is as if life in his own body has temporarily ceased as a way of experiencing sympathy. Moreover, the rigidity of the limbs and the stony quality of the eyes also lend themselves toward the sensation of coldness, and Lionel is stopped in his tracks with the "chill" of horror. As he proceeds to question the silent body, he seeks to understand how this person came to such an end. But desiring such information is not for his own benefit of being able to avoid the same fate as this man; instead, the second question wondering about pain suggests that Lionel is acting out of genuine sympathy here as he contemplates this man's phenomenological experience in his final hours and minutes. Lionel's quick escape from the hut as if to flee from his own folly may parallel his own retrospective judgment that to speak to the dead in this way was insane; but, alternatively, he may feel so overcome with the power of sympathetic emotion that perhaps he simply cannot bear to imagine hearing the dead man speak. Even though he realizes with reflection the absolute impossibility of the man answering his inquiry, the sympathetic identification that Lionel undergoes in this moment is so immersive that he may not be capable of distinguishing between his own loss for words and the dead man's inability to speak.

Adrian and Lionel's promotion of acts of sympathy and compassion only takes hold slowly as solitude (and some reports of anarchy and barbarity[62]) becomes something

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[61] See, for example, Lionel's comment that Perdita values her relationship with Raymond more than life itself: "The treasure which she possessed in the affections of Raymond, was more necessary to her being, than the life-blood that animated her veins" (121).

[62] Allan Conrad Christensen points out that *The Last Man*, like most other narratives of the plague, includes examples of (in the form of reports about) other towns suffering from anarchy and barbarity (11). However, sympathy seems to mitigate these unfavorable outbursts.

more to fear than contracting the plague, or the newest threat of typhus. As autumn transitions into winter, people begin to waste away from hunger after a failed year of crops; some inhabitants of rural areas continue to wander about trying to stay separated from others to avoid disease, but many farmers and cottagers, "struck with the fear of solitude" return to towns where they might secure resources and have access to medical assistance (269). Initially, these practical reasons seem to speak more to the pangs of hunger and to an immediate need for medical care than a desire for community and sympathy, but Lionel addresses these latter needs as well. When he travels from London back to his rural abode in Windsor, he finally realizes that, just as others had predicted, the plague had reached every part of England. He observes that the effects of the plague seem greater in these places where resources are more scarce, but that human sympathy helps to mitigate suffering: "There was a companionship in suffering there, and, the neighbours keeping constant watch on each other, and inspired by the active benevolence of Adrian, succour was afforded, and the path of destruction smoothed" (268). Adrian's commentary about suffering in rural districts helps to reorient the discussion of essential needs during this difficult time; while individuals continue to require basic necessities like food, human compassion offered amidst intense suffering seems to make the difference between a terrible event that feels unbearable and one that is tragic but made bearable by sympathy. More specifically, Adrian's leadership calls the (somewhat obstinate) healthy individuals beyond their own interests and, in turn, produces a critical transition from a kind of cognitive sympathy to compassionate *actions* that have discernible effects on other individuals' lives and the camaraderie of the community.

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But, while sympathy and support bring together smaller communities in England, two fractures appear from circumstances related to the plague: first, class uprisings occur, resulting from suspicions about how resources for the plague are being distributed. Lionel reports that "intimate sympathy was wanting here" as individuals compete for limited resources and question if those in charge of the dissemination of those resources are working from a principle of equity: "The poor perceived that the rich possessed other means of preservation than those which could be partaken of by themselves, seclusion, and, as far as circumstances permitted, freedom from care" (272). Second, North Americans invade Ireland, and in turn, the Irish invade England, fighting for land and other resources (296-302). This particular sequence of displacements motivated by desperation exacerbates the displacements that the English have already experienced as they move to help each other and pool resources; increasing the competition for those resources only generates bad feelings among each faction. Only Adrian, who Lionel says has an "excess of sensibility," is able to help these groups on the verge of warfare to overcome their differences and see the commonality in their situations (303). Lionel's assessment of Adrian's sensibility seems to champion his friend's good sense of how to assuage the tensions, but sensibility here also has bearing on Adrian's unparalleled ability to sympathize with others. Quite literally, he is utterly open to feeling for and with others—here, he recognizes a mutual fear of the plague and its effects, even though fear has manifested in different ways among different groups—and by occupying that voluntary space of in-betweenness, he has the ability to help repair divisions.

While Adrian takes on regional and national differences, the plague does its own work in levelling any remaining distinctions between classes. Household hierarchies

dissolve when servants cannot be found, meaning that everyone, regardless of former

rank, must contribute to physical labor tasks even if they are untrained in them (309).

Lionel has heretofore lamented most fading or lost vestiges of civilized British society,

but the loss of classes seems to foreshadow some positive changes—an undercurrent of

reform that is not altogether unsurprising in the novel's political context since the idea of

doing away with aristocratic titles is a popular proposition among the masses, though, of

course, not among aristocrats. But, as Lionel discovers, the plague's equalizing influence

provides the circumstances for yet another shift toward sympathy:

> But in every change goodness and affection can find field for exertion and
>
> display. Among some these changes produced a devotion and sacrifice of self at
>
> once grateful and heroic. It was a sight for lovers of the human race to enjoy; to
>
> behold, as in ancient times, the patriarchal modes in which the variety of kindred
>
> and friendship fulfilled their duteous and kindly offices. Youths, nobles of the
>
> land performed for the sake of mother or sister, the services of menials with
>
> admirable cheerfulness. They went to the river to break the ice, and draw water:
>
> they assembled on foraging expeditions, or axe in hand felled the trees for fuel.
>
> The females received them on their return with the simple and affectionate
>
> welcome known before only to the lowly cottage—a clean hearth and bright fire;
>
> the supper ready cooked by beloved hands. (309)

Under the changes that the plague has wrought—undoing commerce, making money

virtually worthless, and depopulating households—families of nobility find themselves

living simpler lives akin to the commoners. But more importantly, the characteristics of

these behaviors that Lionel describes hearken back to a time when individuals in a

community were all more dependent upon each other. Labor is, of course, still gendered here (males are responsible for outdoor labor and women for domestic labor), but all tasks are undertaken with a spirit of self-sacrifice and with an awareness of others' needs. In other words, this changing atmosphere of the household and immediate community provides the ideal environment for sympathy to take root and grow. In fact, it seems that sympathy flourishes best (or most completely) without the pressures of strong class distinctions that seek to divide rather than unify groups of people. In the next chapter, Lionel repeats twice "We are all equal now" as if to underscore both the anguished circumstances that have brought about this state of affairs and the benefit of banding together as equals (317).

But sympathy is not always bestowed with liberality, nor does a sympathetic character like Adrian always intervene to interject peace and benevolence. Indeed, some of the most striking commentary in the novel is not about the unchallenged victories of sympathy but its conspicuous absences or insufficiencies. A haunting scene takes place in London when Lionel encounters a young black servant who is dying from the plague, demonstrating the centrality of race to the question of who is perceived to be deserving of sympathy. Lionel recounts:

> It was quite dark, but, as I strept within [the house], a pernicious scent assailed my sense, producing sickening qualms, which made their way to my very heart, while I felt my leg clasped, and a groan repeated by the person that held me. I lowered my lamp, and saw a negro half clad, writhing under the agony of disease, while he held me with a convulsive grasp. With mixed horror and impatience I strove to disengage myself, and fell on the sufferer; he wound his naked festering arms

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round me, his face was close to mine, and his breath, death-laden, entered my

vitals. For a moment I was overcome, my head was bowed by aching nausea; till,

reflection returning, I sprung up, threw the wretch from me, and darting up the

staircase, entered the chamber usually inhabited by my family. (337)

This scene of bodily contact is immediately turned perilous by the "pernicious scent" that

not just reaches but "assails" Lionel's senses, framing this scene as if it were an assault

rather than a call for help. Lionel reverts to the suspicion that the plague was transmitted

through the air and that "death-laden" breath is discernible, thus making the close nature

of these bodies the critical test of sympathy. The young man takes hold of Lionel's leg to

plead for sympathetic aid, and Lionel is initially paralyzed before deciding to "throw the

wretch" from him, but he only observes this individual's agony without mentioning any

of the affective reactions in his own body that he has felt so intensely when witnessing

other plague victims. His erratic behavior in this moment might be explained by the fact

that his child is dying and he is mad with concern over reaching him in time—and this

encounter hinders his progress on this mission, not to mention the fact that he fears

exposure to the plague; on the other hand, the unspoken guidelines for compassionate

ministry of touch to the sick that Lionel sets up throughout the novel as ideal and gallant

behavior has not otherwise restricted healthy individuals from tending to the needs of the

sick, whomever they may be. Adrian and Clara, Perdita and Raymond's daughter, for

example, are most frequently discussed as taking on nursing roles, and they do not

become symptomatic as a result of their work. The superstitious nature of the concern

that touching the sick will result in one's own death has been hindering Lionel and

Adrian's efforts all along, so it is difficult to understand Lionel's motivations as being

something other than racially biased; Lionel cannot identify with the young black servant, which utterly forecloses his ability to sympathize with or offer aid to this sick man in his dying moments. Thus this scene suggests that sympathy is tenuous because it relies on an individual being able (or willing) to identify with the other individual. Lionel's comment that he seeks refuge with his "family" in his upstairs apartment further articulates the possible divisions between people that continue to make sympathy impossible. Regional, national, and class distinctions can be overcome, but racial differences are too much for this largely homogenous community to overcome, even in the midst of extensive social "leveling."

Assuming an audience more like himself, however, Lionel extends the sympathetic community to the reader as he solicits a sympathetic response for his own plight and everyone who has been touched by the plague. Mary Poovey points out in passing that Lionel "voices not anger, but resignation and pain" in the midst of this great depopulation, but reads Lionel's lamentations as moments of self-pity; but Lionel's calls to the reader's sympathy, which begin as apostrophe but turn toward insistent commands, underscore the focus on communicating the loss of familial and communal ties instead of lamenting man's cosmic powerlessness alone (152). Considering if the reader will tire from drawn-out details of his long journey from Paris to Geneva, he exhorts:

> Patience, oh reader! Whoever thou art, wherever thou dwellest, whether of race
> spiritual, or sprung from some surviving pair, thy nature will be human, thy
> habitation earth; thou wilt here read of the acts of the extinct race, and wilt ask
> wonderingly if they… were of frail flesh and soft organization like thyself. Most

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true, they were—weep therefore; for surely, solitary being, thou wilt be of gentle

disposition; shed compassionate tears. (399)

First, Lionel must establish that the responder (the reader) will be capable of human

sympathy (this is the same part of the sympathetic process where Victor's ability to

extend sympathy to his creature was impeded). Of course, Lionel believes this to be in

question because the human race is dying out his eyes, so he wavers on the brink of

believing in and doubting the renewal of the human species. But because he speculates

here that these future readers will be of "frail flesh and soft organization," the very

characteristics that have defined the physical body as fragile and susceptible to disease,

and that they will also "be of gentle disposition," or capable of human emotions, he can

"therefore" instruct readers to "weep" and, more specifically, to "shed sympathetic tears."

From their future age, readers are unable to literally lend a hand to comfort and console

Lionel, but the appropriate sympathetic response is to shed tears that demonstrate feeling

for the gravity of the situation and what it might be like to be the last human on Earth.

But, Lionel also asserts that there are limits to the sympathy he is calling up in the

reader. He frames this qualification following his aforementioned instructions to the

reader: "If I were to dissect each incident, every small fragment of a second would

contain a harrowing tale, whose minutest word would curdle the blood in thy young

veins. It is right that I should erect for thy instruction this monument to the foregone

race; but not that I should drag thee through the wards of an hospital, nor the secret

chambers of the charnel-house" (399-400). Lionel ascribes a boundary here to his own

narration, and consequently, to an appropriate scope of sympathy. "Drag," here, has both

a physical and a psychological connotation of being moved against one's will—and yet

the inability to act or respond differently does not change the effect (only its degree).

Thus, Lionel sees a distinct danger in feeling too much, but this concern is localized to the reader, who, by definition, cannot act in the narrative frame. This strange self-reflexive musing teeters on the boundaries of pulling the reader into the secrets of death that Lionel has learned through his experience because Lionel himself is desperate for sympathy; and yet, because he has also tested the boundaries of hope, he simultaneously understands the impossibility of his reader fully sympathizing with all of the trauma that he has experienced.

The Last Man thus leaves us with a profound sense of the centrality of sympathy to human experience, since what Lionel bemoans is not the condition of lastness but its deleterious effects on him. There is no distinction or reward associated with lastness—he can no longer celebrate avoiding the plague's death knell because there is no companion to share in his joy and remaining days, months, or years of life. Furthermore, all of the foundational bonds and connective tissues of sympathy have been shorn apart at this point in the narrative, calling into question if the relationships built in the midst of the plague actually outstripped its negative effects. Middleton points out that "the novel asks, not 'How Live?' but 'Why live at all?' The former question requires an answer in terms of personal choices, social responsibilities, and political decisions. The latter, for Mary Shelley, proves unanswerable. Because she cannot teleologically justify why we live, the activity of living becomes an end in itself. This outcome, paradoxically, influences possible choices of how best to live" (168). As such, death becomes less the thing to be feared than the loss of all figurative and literal human touch, without which life has no purpose. While we might be tempted to read this loss of sympathy and the

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hardship that it creates for Lionel as his self-centered reflection on sympathy (he misses it because he despairs without it), the utter meaninglessness that he feels in continuing to live without companions (save a dog) suggest that he is less interested in seeking resolution for his loneliness than finding a reason to continue to live when companions are what make his life worth living. He notes that his own voice produces a sound that "comes strangely on my ears" (467). Suggesting a kind of illusion, his observation calls into question whether he is really speaking and if his speech has any meaning if there is no one to listen.

And so, Lionel resolves to wander about the world; his only firm plans are to travel with his personal books and to visit the libraries that remain, seemingly to find solace in literature, which is *his* only remaining tie to human narratives and human sympathy (469). These final plans are a final grasp at ties to community and to human relationships—the only foundation that he can imagine for a purposeful life—while also acquiescing to what Middleton calls his involuntary "imperative will to live" (177). For this reason, Middleton names Lionel a "survivor": someone who, to his own regret, outlives the very worst devastation imaginable for Mary Shelley, which is the wholesale destruction of the social fabric (179; 172). The very web of sympathetic connections that Adrian taught him are central to human experience and to a meaningful life collapse, and Lionel can only invoke them through memory and through weak and incomplete attempts to imagine a future readership.

Sympathy's Impermanence

The unresolvable paradox of *The Last Man*'s narrative framing is Lionel's anticipated readership; he has no spectators to witness his utter isolation and despair and

yet he desperately desires them, both for his own relief and for the security of knowing that the human race would not perish. In *Frankenstein*, too, the creature touches and weeps over Victor's dead body, unaware at first that Walton witnesses this scene: over "the remains of my ill-fated and admirable friend… hung a form which I cannot find words to describe… as he hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy. When we heard the sound of my approach, he ceased to utter exclamations of grief and horror, and sprung towards the window" (152). Margaret Homans has argued that *Frankenstein* is Shelley's way of showing that "romantic desire seeks to do away, not only with the mother, but also with all the females so as to live finally in a world of mirrors that reflect a comforting illusion of the male self's independent wholeness" (106). While this premise leads her to an intriguing account of Shelley bearing male language through her novel, it does not fully account for the pieta-like embrace at the end of the novel that serves as a culmination of the series of familial losses across the novel. Victor's subconscious obsession with reanimating his dead mother is here displaced into yet another mother/child loss—the Creature's loss of his Creator—but though a loss that emphasizes not the human body's susceptibility to disease (Victor's mother dies from scarlet fever) but the frailty of human sympathies.

That there are scenes at the end of both novels with the last "survivor" of a race also points to the fact that both *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man* are engaged with cultural discourse about human populations. Frankenstein chose to create a creature and then refuse the female by which the creature could reproduce, which reverses the eighteenth-century logic that Frances Ferguson describes wherein populousness was is a favorable

indicator of general well-being and depopulation, in contrast, was something to fear (108-109);[63] conversely, Lionel's journey from isolation to full participation in a community populates the novel with vibrant characters and meaningful life experience, only to see the plague to obliterate those social webs and cause an almost complete depopulation of the world. As Mitchell discusses in his essay "Population Aesthetics in Romantic and Post-Romantic Literature," *Frankenstein* "provides its readers not with a didactic lesson but rather with a means for identifying aspects of the world that can be understood in terms of populations… (population as a homogenous aggregate, population as a heterogeneous aggregate)" (281). To make this claim, Mitchell draws on the competing population theories of Godwin and Malthus in the late-eighteenth century to show that Mary Shelley leans toward a desire for biological explanation for variation (population as "heterogeneous aggregate") and this approach affords some insight the kinds of "normative" population trends (consumption by the plague) and the initially-unaccounted-for variations (the creature as a non-compliant and, in Frankenstein's eyes, ungrateful child).[64] What Mitchell's analysis lacks, however, is accounting for the micro-populations that are the central concern of both *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*. For example, the depopulation of major European cities is a cause for serious alarm in *The Last Man*, but primarily in the geographical sense of mapping the plague's journey through Europe and the way it inches closer to England; this news, however threatening, is something to read about in newspapers, not something personally devastating until

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[63] Of course, Malthus' concern was that an increasing population would lead to a state of insufficient resources, but that parallel does not have much resonance in *Frankenstein*.

[64] Mitchell sometimes qualifies claims about always placing the term in quotation marks but does not fully explain that this term was not in circulation until the 1840s, so both the 1818 and 1831 editions of *Frankenstein* predate usage of the term "normal." See Lennard J. Davis' essay "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century," pg. 3.

friends and loved ones fall prey to disease. Because sympathy and the ability to literally or physically touch others is built at this small level of community instead of on larger (i.e. national) scales, Shelley may have population concerns in mind but dwindling individual communities, the sites of interpersonal relationships, mark the real loss.

Concerns of individual human loss aside, I mentioned earlier in this chapter that Adrian's vision of touch does not attempt any curative effects; in both of these final scenes, where touch is too-late or impossible, sympathy also will not produce its intended long-term effects of community building. The Creature has indicated that he will immolate himself on a funeral pyre (155), while Lionel is left to roam the world alone, so under these circumstances, the primary circulations of sympathy (or the hope of it) pass out of existence. Within these two novels, the "muscular memory of relationality" that Massumi posits as the connective tissue generated by proprioception then becomes a memory that lives on only through the text and through the sympathies aroused in the reader (59). Thereby, the veritable death of sympathy in both of these novels highlights its fragility, its danger, and the necessity of mourning its passing—and the fact that it is worth pursuing even under the direst circumstances. Touch, especially, may not be curative, but it offers to both the giver and the receiver temporary relief from the isolation of individualism.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*, of course, do not resolve the eighteenth-century "problem" of affective sympathy that Romantic writers inherit; but, they further cultural questions about the circulation of sympathy by representing its corporeal dimension, especially through touch, and they are noteworthy for their insistence on sympathy's centrality to human experience. In the next chapter, where I

will turn to the work of William Blake, this question of sympathy—and particularly an embodied form of it—will continue to be relevant. Mary Shelley's affective use of the conceit of the hand literalizes embodiment and the physical dimension of affective relationships, but there is still the ultimate failure and foreclosure of that critically important sympathy to account for in both novels; in Chapter Five, I will argue that Blake takes up a more hopeful account of corporeal sympathy by positing the body's ability to narrativize and encourage self-reflective processes on the part of the reader.

CHAPTER V

BLAKE AND THE STRATEGIC SYMPATHIES OF MOVEMENT IN *MILTON*

"It can't be denied but that any Art, or Science, is more or less excellent, as it contributes more or

less to the Advantage of Men, both in the Body, and in the Mind. So that if it can be prov'd, that

both the Body and the Mind receive considerable benefit from *Dancing*, then I hope it may be

allow'd to be worth of Esteem, and Countenance."

– John Weaver, *Essay towards an history of dancing, in which the whole art and its various*

excellencies are in some measure explain'd: containing the several sorts of dancing (1712)

Staging Affective Bodies in Motion

The eighteenth century is a critical period of divergence for the English ballet

from French traditions. Ballet had emerged from French court culture in the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries, but in French ballet of the eighteenth century, the style of

movement was still a bastion of the rigid comportment intended to echo its elite origins in

court traditions, and the center of the ballet world was still very much centered in Paris.

In response, British teachers and ballet dancers began to seek a variation of ballet

technique and performance that would more authentically reflect their own cultural

moment and appeal to audiences who were interested in seeing something new. Scholars

often point to John Weaver for helping to catalyze the initial points of departure for

English ballet. Weaver, a dancing master from Shewsbury, was an outspoken proponent

of not only a distinctively English style of ballet but of dance more generally as a

cornerstone to eighteenth century notions of politeness and civility. His 1712 *Essay*

towards an history of dancing provided an important public statement on what he

perceived to be the misunderstanding of the limitations of ballet in his time and its

possibilities for British culture that had yet to be realized on the stage. This essay

positions dance as occupying a central place in the history of human art, thus demonstrating that Weaver was interested in elevating the art form to public prestige in London.

Weaver's influence on rearticulating ballet dance in the early-eighteenth century parallels an important development wherein ballet began to transcend social class distinctions that had in the past tied ballet as a theatre art form to almost exclusively elite audiences. Pushing against these lasting ties between ballet and court traditions in Paris, choreographers like Weaver and his contemporaries contributed to ballet in London becoming a more democratized form that was believed to contribute to social unity. As Jennifer Homans argues in *Apollo's Angels*, Weaver was instrumental in advocating dance as a way for men to "regulate their passions and behave with civility: it could be a social glue, a way of smoothing over the differences between people and alleviating the tensions that threatened to undermine public life. The point was not—as it was in France —to accentuate social hierarchies, but to quell them" (55). Weaver and others drew on pantomime in hopes that audience members of all classes could connect to the dramatic narrative of the performance, but they were able to do so knowing that the ballets would continue to attract members of the elite classes—those for whom attendance and seeing who else was attending was a symbol of status. Though they were not ultimately successful with their particular iteration of balletic pantomime (as Homans points out, this approach fails to "'take' on English soil" because it "reverted to clowning"), the emphasis on the connective potential of ballet was central to detaching the form from its courtly origins (58).

Weaver's developments also anticipate a freer, more artistic style in the manner of Greek art that allows the very aesthetics of ballet movement to shift away from courtly comportment and to take on more narrative meaning. Marie Sallé, a Parisian dancer who rejected the strict artistic guidelines and politics of the Paris Opera and consequently relocated to London, where she rose to prominence on the English stage, helped to nurture this innovation. She "set aside her formal training (and masks and corseted dresses) and focused instead on solo dances that mingled pantomime gesture, and free-form movements to tell a story, and convey its emotions, without words" (Homans 61). This evolution of movement "undercut the artifice and formality of the serious genre [of ballet]" to provide "a glimpse of the ways in which ballet could depict inner realms as well as ceremonial forms" (Homans 62-63). Sallé's early contributions to the blending of courtly ballet tradition with other possibilities were integral in creating a foundation for ballet to transcend the limitations of its roots and become more than a ceremonial accoutrement to the stage.

But perhaps the most important development in eighteenth-century English ballet for pervasive cultural effects outside of the theatre was a new confidence in the body's ability to communicate a narrative.[65] The great Jean Georges Noverre, a French dancing master and choreographer, was invited by David Garrick to work at London's Drury Lane Theatre in 1755, and his ideas about the dramatic potential of the body significantly changed the trajectory of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ballet in England. Drawing

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[65] This confidence, it should be noted, was not universally shared. Many, including Rousseau, still emphasized the limitations of movement to the communication of basic emotions in a primitive kind of fashion. Also, the emerging popularity of female dancers —ballerinas—in costumes that were immodest by eighteenth-century standards of dress drew public suspicion about their moral purity. Thus, the persistent gossip that equated ballerinas with prostitutes proved to be an obstacle to a wider acceptance of dance as a culturally legitimized vehicle for narrative.

on Diderot's argument for realistic theatre focused on character development rather than social formality, Noverre writes in his *Lettres sur la danse et sure les ballets* that "dancers must 'speak' to the soul and bring audiences to tears. Ballet must become a 'portrait of humanity,' which took mankind and truth as its subject" (as qtd. in Homans 73). By employing a particularly dramatic form of ballet movement and pantomime, Noverre believed that dance could convey emotions and a story better that words. He also utilized dancers arranged in carefully constructed formations and "frozen" for a short period of time to emphasize moments of action, heightening the tension between action and stillness in a way that was meant to evoke strong emotional responses from the audience (Homans 75). Noverre's innovations in choreographic approaches to ballet and his frank insistence that ballet can communicate a narrative in a way that not only resonates with an audience but touches them emotionally represents a critical turn in ballet history, and his effect on the English ballet scene was notable both for immediately changing the scope of the stage ballet and for paving the way for the great stories of the Romantic ballets in the early-nineteenth century.

It is not clear if poet and artist William Blake was influenced by first-hand knowledge of these innovations in mid-eighteenth-century ballet in London. Blake attended the Drury Lane theatre with his patron John Linnell in the early 1820s, and this theatre had built a reputation for the inclusion of dance in dramatic pantomimes and as intra-act performances ever since David Garrick hired Jean Georges Noverre as the resident ballet master in the early eighteenth century (Bentley 105). However, whether or not Blake had witnessed theatre dance in any form earlier in his life is unclear, through the allusion to contredanse in *Milton* suggests familiarity with the popular dances of the

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countryside.[66] Blake's description of and depiction of dancing has virtually no

correspondence to codified ballet technique of the eighteenth century; none of Blake's

figures are standing in "first position," for example, or more generally are demonstrating

the body mechanics and aesthetic positioning that was common to ballet at the time. So

often, Blake's intersections with art and culture seem not to align with his

contemporaries, a feature of his work that has invited continual re-readings of his

relationship to twentieth and twenty-first century culture,[67] but somewhat ironically, his

use of movement as a vehicle for narrative across a number of illuminated texts develops

at the same historical moment that ballet was emerging as a vehicle for narrative on the

London stage.   Yet, this conundrum of Blake's relationship to eighteenth-century dance

history does not need to be solved in order for the lens of dance theory to help us to

interrogate his moving bodies; rather, we can use the framework of that history to better

understand Blake's intersection with questions of his time about the role that material

bodies—and especially moving bodies—could play in a narrative. This chapter will

position Blake as the most attuned of the Romantic authors to the affective possibilities of

the human body. Whereas Chapter Four investigated the power of affective movement

(touch) between individual bodies *within* the text and with some preliminary attention to

how sympathy could be elicited from a reader, this chapter will consider Blake's affective

designs on the reader as a model for engaged (and transformative) practices of reading.

Toward the advancement of Blake scholarship, which still functions as a niche of

committed (and, Steven Goldsmith says, "enthusiastic") scholars within Romantic

studies, assessing the function of these bodies in Blake's work also provides new insight

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[66] Participants "touch each other & recede; to cross & change & return." See Erdman, *Milton*, 123: 26, 6.
[67] See, for example, the fragments collected by Mike Goode in "The Joy of Looking: What Blake's Pictures Want."

into a recent question posed by Mike Goode in his article "The Joy of Looking: What Blake's Pictures Want." Goode's inquiry takes a different direction from my own—he is interested in why "it is starting to look suspiciously like Blake's words and pictures *want* to remain apart" in fragments that circulate in popular culture—but the methodological orientation that leads to his question also underpins mine (4). He calls attention to the fact that Blake criticism has too often tended toward a kind of analysis that attempts to reach a holistic conclusion rather than seeking to understand and accept the inconsistencies inherent to the work (3-4). For Goode, poststructural approaches have been most effective to understanding the "lines of flight" across a text or even across the body of his work; but he also argues that "poststructuralist criticsm has not been poststructuralist enough" because "it tends to substitute the closed corpus for the closed book or the closed page as the chief object of interpretation, thus pulling up short of contemplating the significance of the paths Blake's words and pictures have taken out of his books and into the world" (3). Thus, we can better understand Blake's project by following these paths to the unlikely and surprising places where fragments of Blakean texts or images appear in popular culture while also interrogating if the "composite" nature of his work is in fact as important as scholars have made it out to be. This revitalized methodological orientation to Blakean analysis also suggests the line of inquiry that I will pursue in this chapter: what do Blake's pictures want from readers? And, more specifically, what do Blake's texts ask of their readers through the moving bodies that occupy the text? I will also take up Goode's position that Blake's work must be read in poststructuralist fashion—by reading across multiple texts to see how one

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informs the other, by reading backwards, forwards, and otherwise not chronologically, and by allowing ideas to exceed the neat confines of his plates and works.

Dance theory is central to formulating a response to this latter question because the field has sought to understand not only the aesthetics and phenomenology of human movement but how audiences might react to the movement that they witness. To that end, I will invoke dance philosophy and phenomenology as well as criticism of dance photography, which seeks to understand how still images portray motion; I will also draw from an ongoing debate about the viability of the concept of "kinesthetic sympathy." This term, which was first used in the 1920s by *New York Times* dance critic John Martin, suggests a concept whereby audiences have the ability to "feel," without any movement on their part, the kinesthetic sensations of the moving bodies that they watch; the concept has been vigorously contested and debated by scholars and is still a lively subject of discussion and research in dance studies today. Though scholars of the twentieth century have largely disproved the ability of kinesthetic sympathy to provide a universalized means of communication to a diverse audience, the theory itself can help us to understand the designs that Blake had on his readers to call them to transformed thinking and action and how he employs bodies to attempt to accomplish that end.

Although subtle, dance punctuates a number of Blake's texts: intra-lineal flourishes contain graceful bodies in motion, central characters appear to be suspended in the midst of choreography, and, as Blake's narrator tells us in *Milton*, characters dance in frenzied commotion. Blake's work repudiates Cartesian dualist principles that elevate the mind at the expense of the body, and in this context, dance has the ability to function as an Eternal index of unified mind/body perception and response. This chapter will trace

Blake's understanding of material embodiment and his depictions of moving bodies in

Blake's early texts, which will subsequently inform the most critical instances of

radically expressive bodies that move and dance across both books of *Milton: A Poem*—a

text which, to me, provides the most fruitful elaboration of Blake's innovative use of the

moving body. This text focuses on Milton's largely psychological journey to redeem his

error of Selfhood; from his place in Eternity, Milton hears a cautionary tale from the Bard

that reveals how Milton gave in to pride and replicated tyranny with his unsympathetic

portrayal of God in *Paradise Lost*, and he realizes that he must do something to remedy

his error. As I will show, discussions of and representations of bodies call attention to a

physical and movement-oriented dimension where the "encrusted" human form—in

mind, body, and spirit—can be made anew; and I will therefore argue that only through

this physical dimension can transformation and redemption be communicated in a way

that may generate an affective influence on the reader.

My work here extends a substantive line of canonical and recent criticism in

Blake studies that attempts to understand Blake's materialism, aesthetic interests, and the

role that emotion plays in transformative experience. Adding to the area of Blake textual

studies by Robert Essick and Morris Eaves, W.J.T. Mitchell's *Blake's Composite Art* and

Picture Theory both emphasize Blake's role as an artist as well as the necessity of

undertaking complex dialectical readings of visual and textual dimensions of Blake's

work, and Mitchell readily admits to the tension between those two dimensions which

rarely (if ever) truly align. But one of Mitchell's most profound and persisting insights

into Blake is that he participates in the creation of a "visible language," "a form that

combines sight and sound, picture and speech—that 'makes us see' with vivid examples,

theatrical gestures, clear descriptions, and striking figures… If we are a painter-poet like William Blake we may even construct a 'composite art' of word and image that plays upon all the senses of 'visible language' simultaneously" (*Picture Theory* 114). Although Mitchell's premise here underpins all subsequent criticism of Blake, early twenty-first century readings have sought to discern both what Blake makes visible and what is left obscured, visible only to acts of intense and creative criticism. Concerning emotion, a topic of discussion that spans both the visible and the invisible and has long been a source of debate in Blake's work because of his roots in niches of radical dissent, Jon Mee in *Dangerous Enthusiasm* contends that a strategy of "bricolage" lies beneath the surface, drawing emotionally-charged sources of content together into his composite media; Mee further argues in and *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation* that the kind of emotion that animates Blake's works is subjected to a process of containment across the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. Additionally, Saree Makdisi's *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* carefully locates Blake's political inclinations among those whose grievances he shared as well as positions him against those who fetishized empiricism and egalitarian individualism; as such, the emotional content of Blake's works is carefully articulated and deployed within a complex framework of political and cultural ideologies. These three texts contribute to a view of Blake as an artist extraordinarily attentive to both the causes and effects of emotion.

Two recent scholarly contributions to this discussion of emotions that play an influential role in my study of Blake are James Chandler's "Blake and the Syntax of Sentiment: An Essay on 'Blaking' Understanding" and Steven Goldsmith's *Blake's Agitation*—texts which are strongly connected by Goldsmith's invocation of Chandler's

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essay. Chandler makes a compelling argument that Blake recognized that the language of

emotions had a syntax of its own that must be generalized so as to be made accessible by

others. For this process to succeed, Chandler suggests that sympathy requires a very

particular sequence to occur: "To imagine one's self in another's case requires both an act

of disembodiment and (at the same time) of virtual reembodiment" (107). But, Chandler

argues, Blake often turns this process on its head in order to expose how sentimentalizing

works and to trouble its effects, and he uses a number of examples from the *Songs of

Innocence and of Experience* to illustrate awkward disjunctures in particular words and

phrases that call attention to the variant effects of sentimentalizing—an outcome that he

terms "denaturalize[d] sentiments" (114). While I agree with Chandler's overall analysis

of this mechanism and the manner in which his careful attention to the wayward

particulars in his language call attention to yet another level of divergent discourses in

Blake's texts, I am not fully convinced that the metaphors of "disembodiment" and

"reembodiment" are the best descriptors; though Chandler turns his focus primarily to the

linguistic register of Blake's *Songs* and I will be focused on both the images and text of

Milton, sentiment in Blake almost always leans toward supporting generative connection

between individuals, whereas Chandler's terms unfortunately emphasize a kind of

awkward gap between one's own body (that which must be left behind) and the body of

the other (the body that one must assume). Yet, Chandler's larger point about Blake's

attentiveness to generalizing sentiment and how that process can ignite sentimental

feeling in his audience underpins my approach to Blake's project. I, too, will suggest that

Blake makes deliberate (almost to the point of being overdramatized) and (for his time)

novel moves to make visible the weaving of sympathetic connection. The representations

of embodiment that I have explored in previous chapters have highlighted how other authors of the Romantic period wrestled with the body's possibilities, but Blake needed no further convincing of the body's centrality to sympathy and other affective influences; so, rather than the body simply functioning as a metaphor for a type of relational understanding—the role it seems to play in Chandler's essay and in other critics' attempts to include the material body in analyses of emotional life in Romantic texts—Blake makes use of the body's range of affective potentials to not only provide fertile ground for sympathy but to encourage readers to engage in their own re-making.

Goldsmith's impressive account of Blakean "enthusiasm" in *Blake's Agitation* also informs my work here in its persistent attention to what it is about Blake's texts that "agitates" a wide variety of critics. One of the texts Goldsmith finds most influential to his own work is Saree Makdisi's *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s*, and the similarity of their language to describe Blake's project is often striking. For instance, Goldsmith takes up Makdisi's argument about Blake's "striving"[68] to show that Blake's enthusiasm "runs backward *and* forward" in the sense that Blake derives his own radical dissent from seventeenth century voices at the same time that his energies look forward to modern conditions that continue to speak to readers today (9). Just as "striving" suggests both a physical and intellectual act, Goldsmith's allusions to the "mobilized reader," she who activates the future-oriented possibilities of Blake's work by accepting that "feeling (the *arousal* of the faculties, the *fiery chariot* of contemplative thought) is itself the index of critical agency in action," also invokes language that alludes to both physical and mental mobility. Goldsmith's insights into enthusiasm and

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[68] Makdisi says that Blake is "always becoming anew, racing and retracing different trajectories of actualization, existing in and as and through *striving*" (320).

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emotion in Blake's work will prove helpful for my argument in this chapter, and so I will

return to this pivotal critical text often, but I want to point out that my main departure

from Goldsmith's work is to locate where Blake's attempts to provoke emotion are

deployed through the physical body. Goldsmith readily takes up and extends Jacques

Khalip's argument about the centrality of anonymized emotion from *Anonymous Life:*

Romanticism and Dispossession by arguing that that Milton's entrance into Blake's left

foot and Blake's inability to recognize him results in a suggestion of "literary history as

an affective transmission that works through persons but without belonging to anyone"

(26). This observation leads Goldsmith to a series of important insights about the body in

Milton: that the body can be "a materialist resource of self-transforming motions,

sensations affects and energies" and that "according to this understanding, the body

comprises a sensorium so subtle and extensive… that it perpetually generates experiences

accessible as feeling but beyond the current horizon of knowledge" (27). Subsequently,

Goldsmith can suggest that "the reader's corporate and anonymous body is not a fallen

condition to be overcome but a critical resource activated by emotion, an opening onto

experiential possibilities the selfhood doesn't already know" (27). Here, Goldsmith

dances around the concept of kinesthetic sympathy, though the intermediary step of

Milton and the reader meeting in anonymity obscures rather than clarifies the attempt at a

deeply personal connection that I will unveil in *Milton*. Nevertheless, my reading of

Milton will extend the possibility that Goldsmith sees in the text "to restore embodied

affectivity to reading" (27). I do not intend to overstate the role of the body—the

emotional fabric of Blake's works are so much more complicated than any single account

can describe—but I will identify examples in *Milton* where representations of the body in

both the visual and textual fields elicit reader identification with Milton so as to prompt reader engagement and complicity in self-transformation.

To date, the only analysis of Blakean bodies from the perspective of dance is a chapter in Janet Warner's *Blake and the Language of Art*. Over two chapters, Warner provides an admirable survey of important moving figures across Blake's texts, but her distinction between "leaping and soaring" figures (those not bound by gravity) and "dancing" figures (those bound by gravity) is somewhat arbitrary given that she admits that Blake may not have known much about codified dance; in any case, if he had, eighteenth-century ballet took pains (and, indeed, ballet takes still attempts today) to create the illusion of movement without the obstacle of gravity, so this between moving forms does not follow historical distinctions between what is and is not characterized as dance movement.[69] In spite of these categorical limitations, Warner's contribution to Blake is important for three reasons: she provides the foundation for these figures to warrant critical inquiry, she insists upon the soaring and leaping figures communicating both physical and psychic or spiritual energy (124), and she confronts the problem of whether Blake's human figures are "depictions of non-corporeal states" (127). In response to the latter issue, she makes helpful distinctions between "different orders of visual allegory," such as between figures who have a physical presence in the narrative and those who do not. These distinctions are important to help account for how Blake's depictions of movement differ between spatial realms, even if I am less inclined to treat all visual representations of bodies as allegory (127).

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[69] I would argue that Blake's flexible poetic use of the term "dance" predicates reading any movement with heightened emphasis or aesthetic features as dance, but the (now) current practice of dance philosophy to be interested in understanding *all* human movement results in a moot "dance" vs. "non-dance" movement distinction.

Blake's Holistic Body

The texts that provide a foundational understanding of Blake's philosophical and political orientation, "All Religions are One" and "There Is No Natural Religion," establish that the body has more value than it is typically afforded by Enlightenment thinking and, in fact, that it may be afforded more than just the status of aesthetic accoutrement as well. The very structure of "All Religions are One" employs the dialectic form to set up an oppositional stance toward the assumptions of Enlightenment reason, and the opening "Argument" appropriates the methodology of rational "experiment" in order to dismantle it. With this approach in place, the speaker can assert that "the true faculty of knowing must be the faculty which experiences" (Erdman 1). The speaker does not name this faculty, but its singularity suggests something that includes the five senses, which we might conclude is the active material body that is constantly in the process of experiencing its environment. Furthermore, the "Principle 1st" explicitly elevates the status of the body by asserting that "the Poetic Genius is the true Man. and that the body or outward form of Man is derived from the Poetic Genius" (Erdman 1). Mark Johnson points out that eighteenth-century discourse on reason sublimated the body as an inferior site of perception and privileged the mental faculties instead (*The Meaning of the Body* 210-211)[70], and in response to this cultural belittling of the body, the speaker links the birth of the body to the Poetic Genius, indicating that the body is in active communion with the paramount sphere of creative activity in Blake's philosophy, and we shall see soon the extent to which Blake favors creative activity over the staleness of inactivity or passivity.

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[70] Johnson points out that, during the eighteenth century, bodies were thought to only provide subjective states of "feeling."

But both "All Religions are One" and "There is No Natural Religion" expound upon the limitations of this body to undertake the act of infinite perception. The former calls attention to "the confined nature of bodily sensation" (Erdman 1) while the latter states that "Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover" (Erdman 2). In other words, the modes of perception themselves do not generate those limitations but rather the systems of reason superimposed over the channels of perception blind individuals to what they have yet to discover. Thus, "There is No Natural Religion" concludes with a stark assessment of this limited capacity for knowing: "If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character. the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things & stand still. unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again" (Erdman 3). Here, to borrow a mathematical term, the "Philosophic" and the "Experimental" provide the limiting case of sensory experience. Once that limiting case is reached, a kind of static state is described both as "stand still" and as "repeating the same dull round over again." These conflicting descriptions speak to the predicament caused by the intersection of two effects: creativity and perceptive engagement comes to a halt (there is no expansive activity) while the application of that knowledge becomes stuck in unproductive circularity. Only through the intervention of the "Poetic or Prophetic character" can the limitations imposed on sensory experience be removed. The "Poetic character" has already been identified as a bodily form, thus providing a solution to this problem that resides in the body itself, and, as we shall see, the "Prophetic character" is centrally affective in terms of linking individuals to an engaged state of consciousness.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell further elaborates on these initial claims about

the body by articulating a complex and interconnected relationship between the body, the

soul, and the five senses—a relationship that will be essential for understanding the role

of the body in *Milton*. While *The Marriage*'s opening section makes important claims

about the necessity of "contraries" that "are necessary to Human existence" because they

allow room for dissenting pressures and therefore for and "progression," the section

entitled "The voice of the Devil" provides radical assertions about the body that are *not*

meant to bring a sense of balance to the world but rather are intended to correct previous

"Errors" (Erdman 34:4-5); as such, they stand out for making important critiques about

previous theories of the body and for attempting to correct false assumptions in a way

that does not foreclose other possibilities for understanding material embodiment. Thus,

the false assumption "That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body & a Soul" is

challenged by the corresponding contrary that is "True": "Man has no Body distinct from

his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of the Soul discerned by the five Senses. the chief

inlets of Soul in this age" (Erdman 34:4). This new assertion overturns pre-existing

assumptions about the body and soul functioning as separate entities while also

establishing the interconnectedness between body, soul, and five senses in the following

series of relationships: 1) The body is a portion of the soul, or an integral part of being

rather than a physical accessory; 2) The body is discerned by the five senses, which

provides a sense of lived embodiment; and 3) The five senses are the main (but not

exclusive) inlets of soul. Put together, the sections of this cyclical assertion suggest that

the five senses allow the body to be known and to experience soul, or connections to a

world beyond the limited scope of reason that has already been lamented in "All

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Religions are One" and "There is No Natural Religion" and that is reiterated again in the oft quoted metaphor of the bird perhaps being an unknown "immense world of delight" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.[71] It is important to note here, too, that Blake's conception of "soul" does not correspond to its traditional religious sense; rather, as Jon Mee points out, "'Energy' is what defines the spiritual body for Blake, not the vaporous idea of the 'soul'" (260). Just as Blake is suspicious of reason because it undercuts what an individual can perceive, religious ideas of the soul are externally defined rather being able to account for individual modes of spirituality that are informed by the five senses' "inlets of soul."

Reason is also sublimated to energy in *The Marriage*, and the kind of energy under discussion is a distinctly bodily kind of activity. The Devil again attempts to correct the notion that energy is evil with another "contrary" perspective: "Energy is the only life and is from the body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (Erdman 34:4). This assertion locates the source of energy in the body and situates that active body at the center of a kind of life fully lived, while reason is notably exiled to the "outward circumference." In this case, reason is not entirely separate from energy, nor is it altogether less important (it is the integral half of the reason-energy contrary), but it is secondary and oriented *outward* rather than inward toward the state of self-knowing that has been obscured by the falsehoods of "Bibles or sacred codes." In other words, energy supports self-knowing in a way that the external bindings of calculated reason cannot. The import of vibrant energy is shortly thereafter reiterated in a slightly different fashion in the "Proverbs of Hell": "What is no proved was once, only

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[71] "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (Erdman 35:6)

imagn'd" (Erdman 36:8, 33). Isaiah, too, will say later in *The Marriage* in response to

the speaker's questions about his divine inspiration that "…my senses discover'd the

infinite in every thing, and as I was then persuaded & remain confirm'd" (Erdman

38:12); notably, reason is not the means of persuasion here. Both of these later sections

validate the relationships articulated between the holistic body/soul, senses, and reason—

that reason only has the power to confirm what the body has already perceived through

imagination, and that the process of discovery (and becoming aware of the infinite) draws

not on reason but on the senses and therefore on the body. As such, in this schema,

reason must be figured as connected to but just outside of the central powers of the

knowing, perceiving body.

Parallel to the importance of energy in Blake's understanding of the body is the

notion that activity also trumps passivity. Two markedly dark proverbs emphasize both

excess in activity leading to wisdom and the dangers of being passive:

Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead.

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.

Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.

He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.

(Erdman 35:7, 2-5)

Pestilence, of course, is a problem that has negative effects beyond a single individual; it

suggests rampant destruction in a community and even possible death—in this case, a

turn toward a decline in both physical and mental activity and life. Taken together, these

two proverbs encourage readers to err on the side of excess, emphasizing the life-giving

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and wisdom-granting effects of constant mind-body movement as opposed to stillness and stagnation. It should be no surprise, then, that Blake's illuminated figures rarely appear to be passive (with the one notable exception of Theotormon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, whose physical stillness points to his mental inability to overcome his assumptions about female sexuality); these figures in motion serve to both literalize and amplify this metaphor of bodily activity that speaks to the productive and creative movement of the body, mind, and soul under conditions that allow them to work in unison rather than be drawn apart.

It is noteworthy that, in the midst of all the corrections of "Errors" and proverbs that seek to turn conventional wisdom upside down so as to uncover new possibilities, the speaker of *The Marriage* returns to just one single point of contention—the false dichotomy of body and soul—as he declares his purpose for writing the text. He says: "But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method…" (Erdman 39:14). Reinstating a connection between the body and the soul evokes the language of primary impetus, suggesting that this single myth is perhaps the gravest of the errors. Yet, this statement also insinuates that the severity of this issue may lie in the fact that many other false assumptions derive from this myth. If this is true, then it stands to reason that Blake's *Milton* may have more to say about the essential connections between the body and soul that are forgotten by individuals or downplayed by external forces.

Affective Interventions at the Intersection of Blake Criticism and Dance Theory

Milton is perhaps Blake's greatest achievement in drawing on the human body and its movements, both in the visual and textual fields. As we will see, defined

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movements (such as dancing, laboring, etc.) take on very particular connotations of restraint or freedom, and visual depictions of unconstrained movement indicate an individual's holistic transformation. But, to understand these bodies, we must confront two related problems: the notion of narrative time and the problem of representing movement in "static" images or texts. Dance phenomenology provides a helpful alternative to both. By employing Maxine Sheets' explanation of the unfolding of bodily movement in time, we can approach *Milton* through a framework wherein there is no discernible "present," but rather a series of "nows," or "sub-structures whose meaning derives from their being intrinsic to the whole" (16).[72] Under this view, identifying increments of time are less important than a view of more general (connection-oriented) scope in which we can easily imagine an immediate past and future without needing to measure or mark time (in fact, in a kind of physics conundrum, time and space collapse as John Milton undergoes physical transformations at the same time that he travels between distinct worlds). York St. John University theatre professor Matthew Reason's description of dance movement in photography makes a similar case via the work of John Berger and Jean Mohr: though an image of a moving human being may actually be still, we intuitively understand that the mover has been somewhere and he or she is going somewhere new (2).[73] The illusion of movement is even more palpable if the moving body is captured in such a way that we project the inexorable effects of physics onto the image—to summarize this phenomenon as "what goes up must come down" seems trite, but it resonates with our own experience of gravitational forces and balance. Thus, in the

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[72] Sheets notes that this descriptive approach is influenced by the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Martin Heidegger.
[73] Reason also cites John Berger and Jean Mohr's work here, which suggests a similar process of the viewer "reading into [an image] a duration extending beyond itself" (2).

visual image of a dancing body, we perceive a tension between motion and stillness—a tension that heightens our awareness of movement as such, and in Blake's illuminated texts, underscores the unconscious kinesthetic insight that tricks us into seeing movement. To clarify, my use of the word "insight" does not necessarily reference "seeing" other bodies per se: though we certainly rely on the visual sense to perceive movement, my approach to *Milton* requires us to resist over-categorization of dancing bodies at the visual level (as Janet Warner tries to do) and, instead, begin to feel their physicality and weight in our own bodies. Blake's insistence on understanding the human body calls for a response in which readers are attentive to the bodies that regularly populate the page and draw from common experiences of human movement. For Blake, kinesthesia, or a common sensory understanding of motion and/or stillness in the body, would represent another modality within our individual "Genius"—a vital and physical form of "minute particulars" (attention to sensory details) that should not be ignored. [74]

This brings us to a critical question about "reading" bodies: how do we interpret movement that we see in others? One important answer was offered to American readers by the dance critic John Martin in the 1930s when he introduced his theory of kinesthetic sympathy. Drawing on German philosopher Theodor Lipps' theory of "inner mimesis," or a spectator's feeling of enacting the movement that they observed, Martin further delineated this phenomenon with a particular emphasis on dance movement (Reynolds 106). To Martin, the reaction of the spectator was simply a derivative of the movement-initialization process of the dancer: "Naturally these motor responses are registered by our movement-sense receptors, and awaken the appropriate emotional associations akin

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[74] Both Elliot Eisner in "Aesthetic Modes of Knowing" and Donna Krasnow in "Performance, Movement and Kinesthesia" describe kinesthesia as a kind of knowledge sense, which aligns with the kind of bodily knowledge that Blake underscores in his illuminated works.

to those which animated the dancer in the first place" (Martin 53). These "movement-sense receptors" help spectators to recall similar experiences in their own lives, and thus, in Martin's conception of dance, the ultimate goal of the dancer (and the dance itself) is to open up these channels of kinesthetic sympathy so as to allow the audience to become participants in the dance.

In later decades, however, Martin's theorization of kinesthetic sympathy met with dissent. Mark Franko, for example, citing issues of "divided experience" that surfaced in 1930s modern dance, argued that Martin's theory "universalized the personal and essentialized the irrational" (Franko 61). In other words, the identification process between the dancer and the spectator assumed that the personal, emotional content of the dance was *universally* accessible by any audience member, and for Franko, Martin makes invalid (and "irrational") associations between personal and national identity. In a number of texts, Susan Foster has expressed congruent reservations about the underlying assumptions of Martin's kinesthetic sympathy by arguing that the theory privileges the white body—a body without racial markers that could universally transmit meaning, thus omitting the possibility for ethnic difference on the part of the dancer or the dance viewer.[75]

In response, terms like kinesthetic empathy, kinesthetic competency, and kinesthesia have surfaced as alternatives, and these theoretical distinctions help us to understand how Blake might have been approaching the readability of movement. Kinesthetic empathy, as described by Matthew Reason, is "an audience response to dance or art… also involving an aesthetic, emotion[al] or interpretive impact as well as a

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[75] See "Movement's Contagion: The Kinesthetic Impact of Performance" and the resulting book *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*.

cognitive attunement"; kinesthetic competency, on the other hand, is "an ability to read

and recognize and respond to movement in our everyday environment" ("Watching

Dance Round Table Discussion"). The subtle distinction between these two terms is

crucial to sorting out how audience members respond to cultural movement codes. [76]

Kinesthetic competency refers to one's familiarity with these codes and ability to access

shared meaning in them because we are socialized into our culture's particular forms of

movement through our "everyday environment" in both intentional and unintentional

ways. Carrying one's self in a particular way, for instance, entails an implicit process of

learning and performing both cultural and gender norms. One need not even practice

various culturally-coded movements to have some understanding of its contextual

implications—"competency" allows us to recognize various degrees of familiarity with

movement. Kinesthesia once referred to a theoretical concept that existed only as a kind

of thought experiment with purely subjective evidence, but on the heels of significant

advances in cognitive science, the term now refers to bodily perception that can be

analyzed and quantified at the level of receptors and brain response (Krasnow 20). While

Blake's invocation of bodies too far predates the science that now underpins kinesthesia,

of course, Martin's theory of kinesthetic sympathy closely approximates the kind of

bodily knowledge and communication that Blake's *Milton* portrays, so these recent

critiques of kinesthetic sympathy provide perspective on the limits of Blake's approach to

employing the body for engaging readers with his ideas.

While the concerns about kinesthetic empathy are well-founded and help to

reassert the importance of cultural difference in the consideration of audience response to

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[76] I owe my understanding of culturally-coded movement to Deidre Sklar's study of cultural (meaning ethnic, religious, etc.) norms that are present in everyday movement. See "Unearthing Kinesthesia: Groping Among Cross-Cultural Models of the Senses in Performance."

dance, we should remember that Martin's theory of dance and Blake's much earlier

invocation of dance reflect their respective historical moments. Martin draws on a

principal of the modernist movement in America in the opening decades of the twentieth

century that argued that rather than identifying with a storyline or subject, a viewer

should respond directly to an artistic medium; under this view, viewers encounter and

respond to the movement rhythms of a dance performance ("Watching Dance:

Kinesthetic Empathy").[77] This kind of modernist emphasis surfaces in Martin's work: he

suggests that if a spectator allows himself or herself to be drawn into a performance by

the dance movement itself, they must realize the work's message because the dancing

body can accurately disclose the meaning. Of course, by ignoring categories of human

difference, this theory fails to account for the ways in which this seemingly easy through

line of communication could be disrupted or thwarted. Blake is not so committed to the

reductive view that there are limits to responding appropriately to art, but—at least at the

surface—he seems to fall prey to the same universalist assumptions about movement as a

common language. As I will show, Blake draws on a kinesthetic-sympathy-like

framework in his representation of movement so as to bridge an important gap between

what is real and what can only presently be imagined, and this framework also serves to

recuperate a kind of selfhood that does not degenerate into a self-centered and

problematic insistence on individual sovereignty; however, as twentieth century criticism

helps us to see, Blake's approach cannot make claims to reaching a universal audience.

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[77] See also Susan Foster's discussion of modernism in "Movement's Contagion: The Kinesthetic Impact of Performance," page 49.

The Strategic Sympathies of Movement

In *Book the First* of *Milton*, readers are quickly bombarded by the frequent spectacle-like dance movements that take place against a very dark emotional landscape. At the Mills, while the "Females prepare the Victims" and "the Males [are] at [the] furnaces," their "Anvils dance the dance of tears & pain," thus drawing an association between the physical expression of lamentation and processes of mechanization, and perhaps alternatively read as forced labor (Erdman 98:5, 16.). Ross Woodman provides another alternative when he notes Blake's attention to "the psychosomatic processes of his body… under the control of Urizen," which are depicted in Milton as what he calls "a labyrinth of imprisoned energy arthritically experienced as ceaseless pain" (125). This characterization of pain suggests that the passage comments less on monotonous labor and speaks more generally to the physical manifestations of severe bodily limitations. Attending to potential symbolism here, Janet Warner notes that, in this section of *Milton*, "dancing is most often sadistic or masochistic, and symbolic of the depths of the fallen world," and at least in this initial invocation of dance, violence is subsumed into a symbolic version of movement (151). In fact, the very grammar of the line "dance the dance of tears & pain" resists positing a gap between the emotion and its representation; additionally, the close proximity of dance as verb and as noun suggests a kind of trap wherein individuals may dance but they can only dance *the* single, seemingly unending dance of tears and pain. Physical bodies may be active here, but not in a creative or generative state, and thus dance accumulates negatively-charged connotations early in this text.

Blake also figures dance here as a kind of flawed social language: one in which the natural human inclination to dance collides with the depravity of the human condition and an inability of individuals to express themselves with relative freedom. The obvious reference point for the restricted existence in this world is the allusion to contredanse: participants "tough each other & recede; to cross & change & return" (Erdman123: 26, 6). Though the movement is described in positive terms as "intricate mazes of delight," in typically Blakean fashion, we cannot rely on how things appear to be at the surface; rethinking this rosy generalization, the subtle reference to the contredanse tradition reifies the presence of prescriptive (and perhaps even over-determined) rules and roles. At an even more constricting level, "Human Grapes" in torment who "sing not, nor dance" may be found at the Wine Press (Erdman 124:27, 30). Ironically, the only hint of hope lies in the behaviors of the servants who are "drunken with wine," naked, and "dancing wild" (Erdman 101:8, 8 and 124:27, 24). Dances resulting from insobriety present the affective danger of individuals and social propriety slipping into chaos and could be a cause for fear (just as the mobs were), but here they exemplify the very small potential of free expression under otherwise restrictive conditions. In its rebellious and transgressive nature, this particular type of dance is an embodied form of liberty in the fallen world, but its yet *unredeemed* state has limited agency; drunken dancing is not self-consciously a mode of expression and it cannot ultimately allow one to achieve a transformed state of being that has the ability to affect others in a constructive way. In this world of Generation, we might imagine that dancing the dance of tears and pain is really the only sober alternative.

The restrictions that dancing bodies are subject to in Generation are paralleled by extreme sensory limitations. An early section of book one delineates both these limitations and examples of full sensory experience that are consequently rendered impossible:

… Ah shut in narrow doleful frame

Creeping in reptile flesh upon the bosom of the ground

The Eye of Man a little narrow orb closd up & dark

Scarcely beholding the great light conversing with the Void

The Ear, a little shell in small volutions shutting out

All melodies & comprehending only Discord and Harmony

The Tongue a little moisture fills, a little food it cloys

A little sound it utters & its cries are faintly heard

Can such an Eye judge of the stars? & looking thro its tubes

Measure the sunny rays that point their spears on Udanadan

Can such an Ear filld with the vapours of the yawning pit.

Judge of the pure melodious harp struck by a hand divine?

Can such closed Nostrils feel a joy? Or tell of autumn fruits

When grapes & figs burst their covering to the joyful air

Can such Tongue boast of the living waters? or take in

Ought but the Vegetable Ratio & loathe the faint delight?

Can such gross Lips perceive? alas! Folded within themselves

They tough not ought but pallid turn & tremble at every wind

(Erdman 99:5, 19-26, 28-37)

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In the first stanza, each body part is diminished in size and power; each part is "little" and can make only slight distinctions among an immense world of sensory possibilities. The eye is primarily characterized by closure rather than opening to light, the ear shuts out melody and hears only a basic difference between harmony and discord, and the tongue is characterized as "little" both in its size and in its limited ability to cry out and make an individual be heard. In contrast to experience of sensory delights in the subsequent stanza, the sensory apparatuses of this stanza are essentially impotent; for instance, the power of a closing eye pales in comparison to the image of the eye as a telescope that harnesses creative and technological power to not just see in detail but measure sun rays. Hence, those living in Generation are "folded within themselves" due to their inability to experience and interact with the world around them; they seem to not even be able to react without fearful trembling at the experience of (literal or metaphorical) wind as a result of their inability to fully understand their surroundings. Under Blake's idealization of interconnectivity between humans and environments, this reduced state of being is paramount to not living at all.

Beulah, the setting of *Milton, Book the Second*, offers more hopeful—if not yet ideal—iterations of sensory experience and the possibility of creative movement (Erdman 131:31, 46-63). An extended description of the scene's natural elements tells of flowers and trees dancing; again, dance is figured as "natural," but here its connotations are neither debased nor frenzied, suggesting that the practice has been at least partially redeemed. Moreover, unlike the "gravity-bound" inhabitants of Generation in the previous book, the first plate of *Book the Second* visually displays the unfettered space of Beulah (see Figure 2); we see flowing human figures in mid-air (two are even upside

down) and the extension of their limbs opens up the projection of each body into space. The body positions of the six figures are also symmetrical across a vertical axis, and on each side of the page, the orientation of bodies facing up or down alternates, thereby
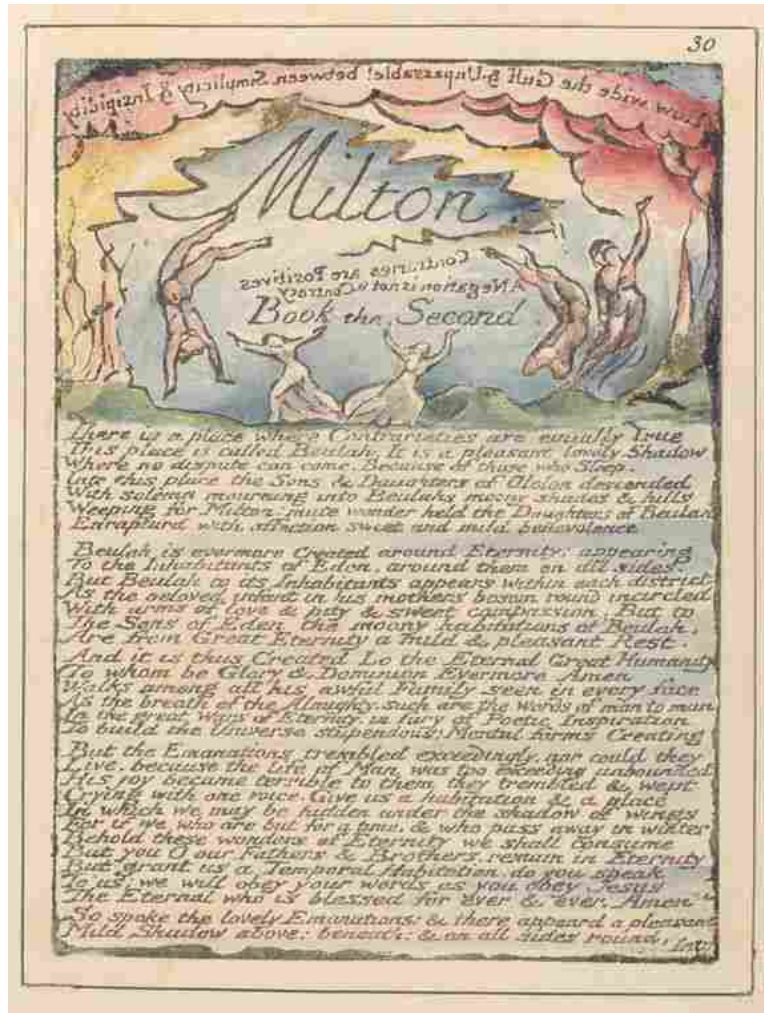

Figure 2: *Milton*, copy C, plate 30. From the New York Public Library.

resolving any visual tension that might have otherwise been present in the illumination. Such a visual field is appropriate for a book whose first lines read "There is a place where Contraries are equally True / This place is called Beulah; It is a pleasant lovely shadow / Where no dispute can come" (Erdman 129: 1, 1-2). The bodies across the page act reciprocally as each other's shadows and depict the balance of the contraries that are

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equally true; importantly, they encircle a message written backward that seeks to remind readers that "Contraries are Positive A Negation is not a Contrary" so as to underscore the "positive" balance of contraries in this space in opposition to (negative) negations (Erdman 129: 1). As such, Beulah is set up as a prime space for a redemption of movement that will be carried out as part of Milton's embodied journey.

Milton's journey seeks to remedy an ongoing imbalance in between the Four Zoas —four interconnected "universes" of power that in Blake's mythology often try to overtake each other—and in doing so unbind the shackles of immutable order that God has established (Erdman 134: 32). The Four Zoas include Urthona, the northern realm of imagination, which is counterbalanced by Urizen, the southern realm of reason; to the east is Luvah, or the realm of love, and to the west is Thamas, or the realm of sensation (see Figure 3). The Four Zoas are pictured in their ideal state: interconnected and yet separate, and seemingly suspended in equal parts equilibrium and tension. But, as the speaker points out, "when Luvah assumed the World of Urizen in the South / All fell towards the Center sinking downward in dire Ruin" (Erdman 134: 34, 37-38). When one of the Zoas assumes too much power (a problem which is taken up in more detail in the *Book of Urizen*), the system falls out of balance, which has both primary consequences in that the universe shifts in problematic ways as well as secondary consequences because the Zoas encapsulate the Mundane Egg, or the crust of matter that indicates the boundary of mankind's understanding of the world (Damon 288). What is pictured as "Milton's Track" suggests that Milton's journey will take him through the overlap between reason and love and into the shell of the Mundane Egg. While these universal realms of reason and love might generally be attributed to the mind (as opposed to, say, sensation), the

"map" of Milton's journey insists on the physical implications of this journey and the trajectory of movement that Milton must complete. Furthermore, because the Mundane Egg resembles a human eye, we may read Milton's track as a direct penetration into the way that humans see and experience the world; thus the journey is both physically embodied and transformative in its goal.

In the main narrative frame (and supposed impetus for the speaker's creation of the text), John Milton's self-sacrificing decision to return to the mortal world in order to
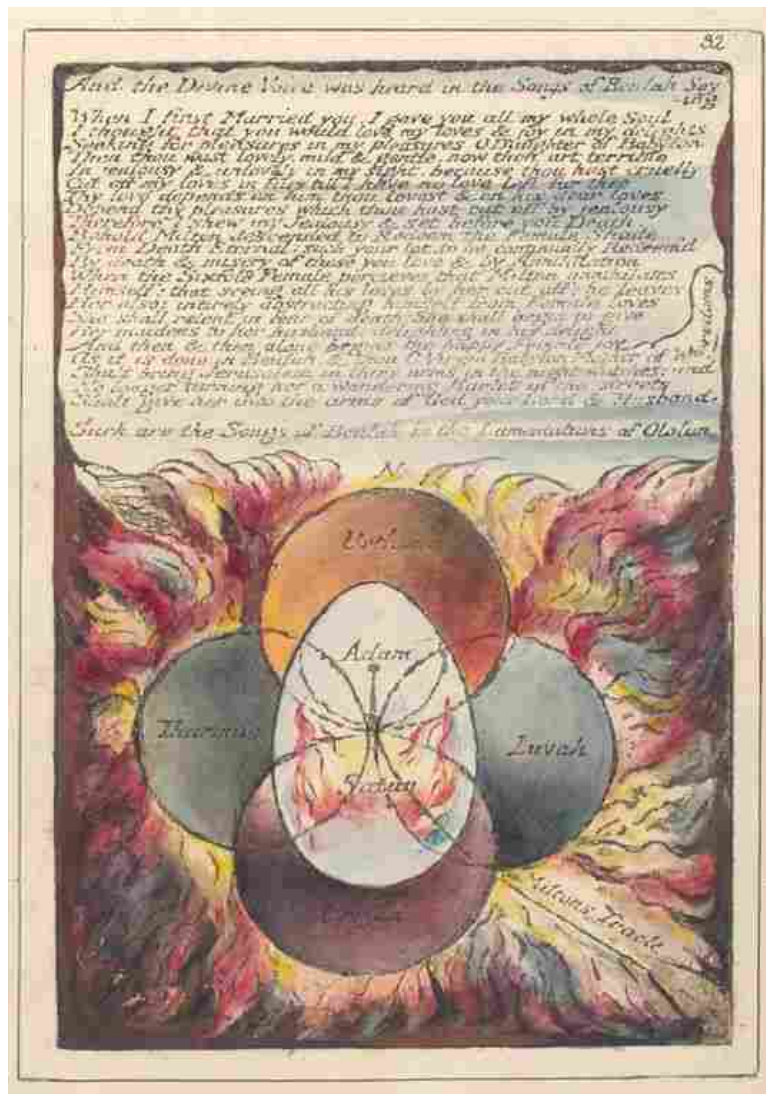
Figure 3: *Milton*, copy C, plate 32. From the New York Public Library.

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redeem his emanation is enacted through a sequence of movement. First, his ultimate

redemptive act necessitates a physical shift between "worlds." Here, a comparison with a

proverb of Hell in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*— "the most sublime act is to set

another before you"—helps to contextualize Milton's choice (Erdman, *The Marriage of*

Heaven and Hell, 36: 7, 16). While these two "acts" share an ethical imperative, they

both require a spatial shift. To *set* another before you alters hierarchical priorities, and, in

a similar vein, Milton's return requires a reordering of experiential space itself via the

"Vortex" (Erdman 109: 15, 22) or what Mark Lussier has called the "quantum bridge"

between Eternity and Generation (85).[78] The critical difference between these two

examples lies in that the proverb suggests a change in purely psychological space,

whereas the emphasis in *Milton* is on a "literal" track of transportation and transformation

of the material body as figured in the text and image. Milton's body undergoes

significant changes: he "bent down / To the bosom of the earth" in the vortex to

transform into a falling star that lands on the speaker's left foot (a critical moment

depicted in Figure 4) and then inspires the speaker's hand to transcribe the text (Erdman

110: 15, 41-42). Milton's process of transformation also generates transformative effects

for others, as evidenced by extended and fully-engaged body of the speaker as the star

enters his foot. Moreover, the text's insistence upon relating Milton's return in terms of

corporeal experience resonates with the physical and spatial indexes of perception that

inform *our* own reality, with the consequent effect of underscoring the magnitude of

Milton's action through the visual representation of his moving body. Setting aside the

occasional complexities of disjunctive narratives between text and image in Blake's

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[78] The vortex "functions like a quantum bridge or wormhole that bores through the black hole of collapsed self-consciousness" (85).

illuminated books, the image in *Book the First* that illustrates Milton's act of self-

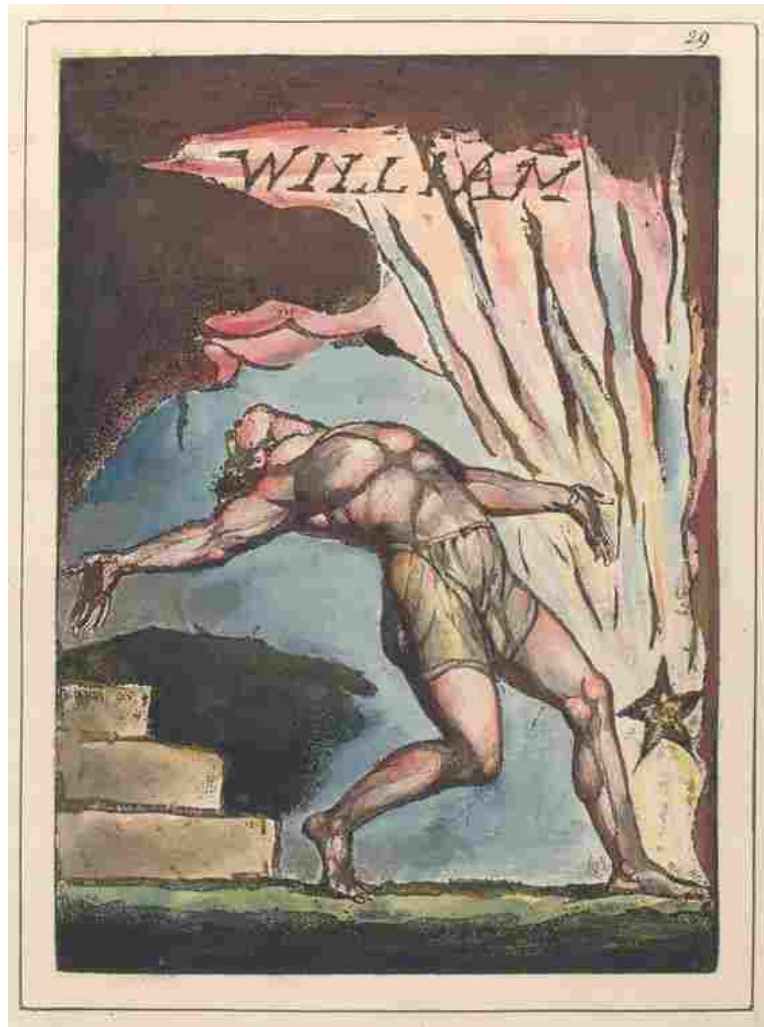annihilation demonstrates the affective power of a representation of bodily movement in

Figure 4: *Milton*, copy C, plate 29. From the New York Public Library.

this text (Figure 5). Literally and figuratively, we perceive movement in process in this

image: Milton is in mid-stride toward Urizen and the broken stone tablets and thus, he

has been captured in the midst of the annihilative process. Pointedly, his back foot is still

placed behind his body, splitting "self" and "hood" in the proto-caption that Blake has

included. Milton's weight is forward (as if to underscore the trajectory of the motion

toward completion) and yet traces of the very recent past (the phase of selfhood) are still evident in the right foot that lingers behind in the inscription.

The most compelling facet of this image is its orientation toward the main figure, Milton, in this critical moment in the poem. Milton is positioned with his back to the
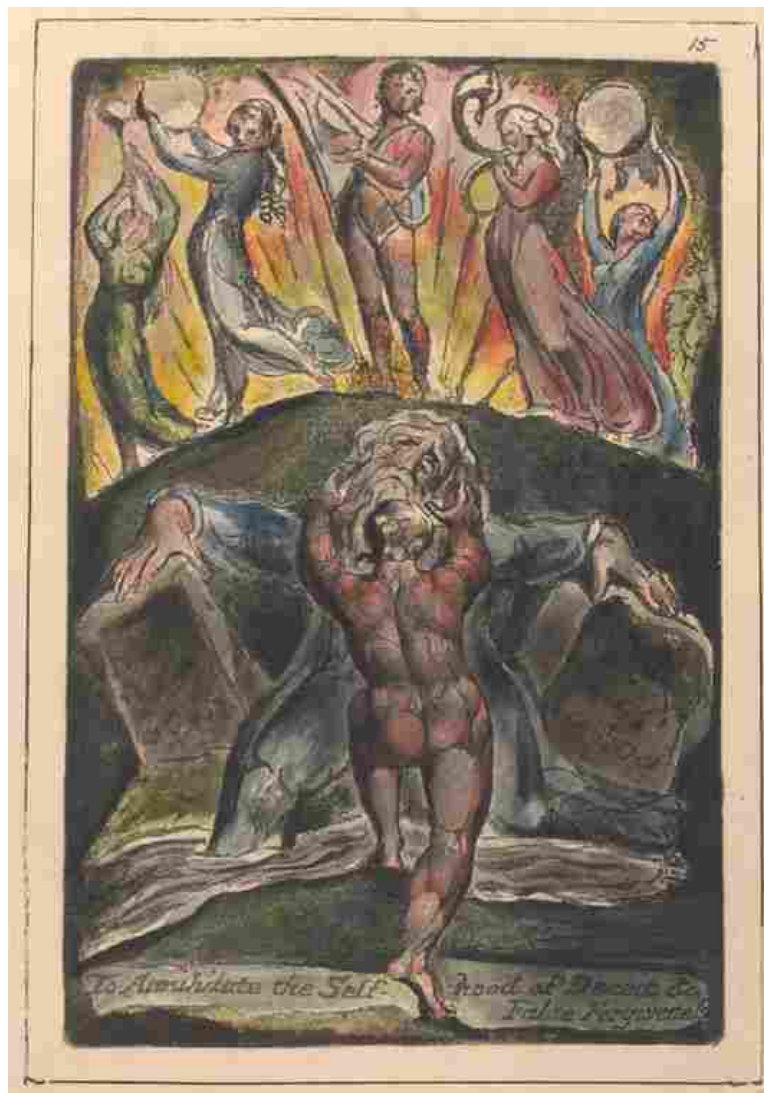

Figure 5: *Milton*, copy C, plate 15. From the New York Public Library.

viewer and it is, in fact, this point of view that solicits our participation in the image and the text by the process of kinesthetic sympathy. Here, Milton's body becomes the vehicle by which this affective process becomes possible—and the effect of kinesthetic sympathy

here, to quote a variant definition of it from contemporary British choreographer Adesola Akinleye, is that "the audience becomes aware of their own feeling of the aesthetic of the body in space" ("Watching Dance: Kinesthetic Empathy"). As I have mentioned, while kinesthetic sympathy maintains that movement from any perspective can produce a response in audience members, the text invites us to experience a particular form of kinesthetic sympathy here by encountering the aesthetic of Milton's body in space. Milton either leads us in an interactive and mimetic process of self-annihilation (what we might call a "lead and follow" model in dance) or, if the visual and textual poetics are successful in collapsing the reader's "double position" inside and outside of the text (Broglio para. 11), then we identify with Milton's physical body, becoming the mover in the image ourselves.[79] The positioning of the viewer/reader in relationship to the image/text, then, is powerful—rather than simply taking on the role of spectators observing Milton and his journey, we are invited into the immediate context of his physical and emotional transformations so as to (perhaps) experience that journey ourselves as well. In fact, instead of drawing on the term "kinesthetic sympathy," one of its alternative iterations, "metakinesis," is even more appropriate in this specific case. Kinesthetic sympathy suggests a kind of horizontal relationship between the dancer and the spectator, but the "meta" prefix in metakinesis signals both the kinetic implications *beyond* our prosaic conceptions of movement and the presence of something *beyond* one's own subjectivity.

Dances of joy are an appropriate response to Milton's redemptive act. In the vertically-schematized background of this plate, we see five instrument-playing, dancing

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[79] The reader is "inside" the poem by their act of reading and has a second position "outside" in the poem in reality. Broglio argues that Blake collapses these distinctions by using the "real" names of British places, but I argue that the affective dimension of kinesthesia is much more powerful.

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figures, usually read as a representation of the five senses, moving at top of the hill—a hierarchized setting which suggests that Milton has yet to advance to that higher realm of experience. Set against the warm and vibrant colors of the sunshine, the figures' arms are outstretched as if in a joyful, celebratory dance. Based on their line of sight, Milton's positioning within the larger frame, and our perspective as audience members to this celebration, their energy seems to be directed at us as much as at Milton. Thus, given the difficulty of remaining "outside" of this plate, we are inevitably called into the self-annihilative space as part of the wider audience to Milton's critical act; we become, at the very least, witnesses and perhaps even participants in this scene. Encouraged to take on a participatory role, we join Milton at this step of undergoing transformation and then also, to use Makdisi's term, "strive" to reach that place of celebratory movement.

But, in the main frame of this plate, Milton's physical depiction lends something to the final stage of transformation that the poetic language itself cannot capture. In her very thorough rhetorical analysis of *Milton*, Laura Quinney points out that:

In his final peroration, Milton would appear to have incorporated the teaching of the Seven Angels, and to be adopting their language of the Starry Seven, when he speaks of annihilating "All that can be annihilated." But, in fact, he was already using this imagery in his first epiphany when he recognized Satan as his selfhood: "I will go down to self annihilation and eternal death, / Lest the Last Judgement come & fine me unannihilate / And I be seiz'd & giv'n into the hands of my own Selfhood" (M 14[15]:22-24, E108). Why does Milton require the further instruction of the Angels when he has already given the proper diagnosis and the proper prescription for a cure? One might say that the act of "self-annihilation"

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has not taken place yet and that the intervening episodes show what it entails. But

this observation confirms the telling point: insight into the Selfhood does not

break its grip. (151)

One might argue that *embodiment* actually furthers this grip of selfhood rather than

breaking it under the assumption that the borders between the physical body and the

surrounding environment help to make the consolidation of that rhetorical "I" possible;

however, the parallel fractures of the stone tablets and the word "self-hood" highlight

Milton's move to undercut the grip of law and tradition at the same time that linguistic

fusion is undone—fissures that require reconsideration not just of one's self-

understanding but entire worldview. As such, Quinney's observations can be extended in

two ways by considering the visual depiction of transformation. Firstly, since Milton's

language *does not* change pre- and post-transformation, we can read his physical

movement as a means to underscore transformation in a way that language cannot.

Secondly, language is a kind of entrapment for Milton and the visual realm allows us to

imagine some kind of alternative. To narrate his journey, he must use the first person,

but the imagery of fissure suggests that the bindings of law and grammar must not always

hold so fast. Milton's journey necessitates the breaking of such bonds to enable the

beginnings of transformation.

When the seemingly impervious borderlines of the grammatical and physical self

are transgressed, a new kind of interaction with others becomes possible. Another

collective dance appears on the plate that, textually, is concerned with the implications of

casting off selfhood, suggesting what is possible at the intersection of the self-

annihilative process and movement (Figure 6). As negation after negation is "cast off" to

redeem the contraries, the textual energy moves toward a "cleans[d]" vision of spirit

(Erdman 142: 40-41). Accordingly, the six figures—which suggest the multiple aspects
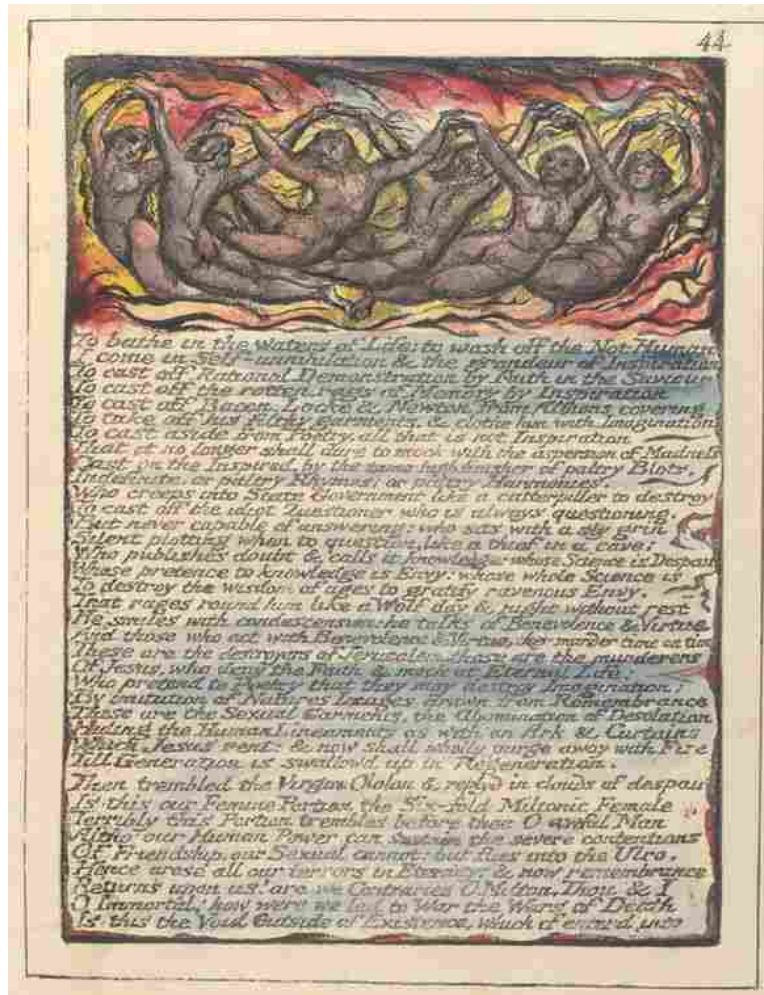

Figure 6: *Milton*, copy C, plate 44. From the New York Public Library.

of the spirit requiring unification and regeneration—present the complicated twists and

turns of this cleansing, and yet the intertwinement of bodies and linked hands forms a

modified circle (imbuing the image with the affective associations of unity and cohesion).

Of interest, too, is the organization of bodies into a chain: the bodies are alternatively

forward- and backward-facing with arms linked, but two successive forward-facing bodies on the far-right side of the plate leave the circle slightly asymmetrical. Thereby, whatever balance is achieved by the intertwined bodies and circle formation is offset by the unequal balance of bodies within the circle. As in other plates that are populated by multiple bodies, this kind of tension between weight, body position, and direction provides the sense of movement that I call dance in these stationary figures, but something more lies at stake here than a simple visual impression of movement. At the risk of too closely associating this image with the text on the same plate, this image seems to underscore the fact that, for Blake, the act of annihilating one's selfhood occurs *in process* rather than in a finite act. As much as negations continue to endanger the recuperative and imaginative consciousness that Blake asserts by creating tensions that manifest physically in this image, movement can help to alleviate imbalance while also acknowledging its ability to pull and resist. Furthermore, by depicting spirits in embodied human form, the plate also presents the potential of a rejuvenated form of human interaction when individuals' minds and bodies work in concert rather than operating in isolation.

Tensions and balance also figure prominently "Albion Rose," or, as it is alternatively titled, "The Dance of Albion," which is often posited as a visual parallel to the final scene of *Milton* (Figure 7). Some copies of this print include two lines of poetry inscribed at the bottom: "Albion rose from where he labourd at the Mill with Slaves / Giving himself for the Nations he danc'd the dance of Eternal Death" (Blunt 66). Taken as a culmination point of *Milton*, these two lines suggest the rise out of the depths of slavery in *Book the First* and to the rejection of selfhood in *Book the Second*, leading to

the death of self-interest (or sometimes figured as materiality), which ultimately

generates a dance. While Janet Warner finds utmost importance in the negativity of the
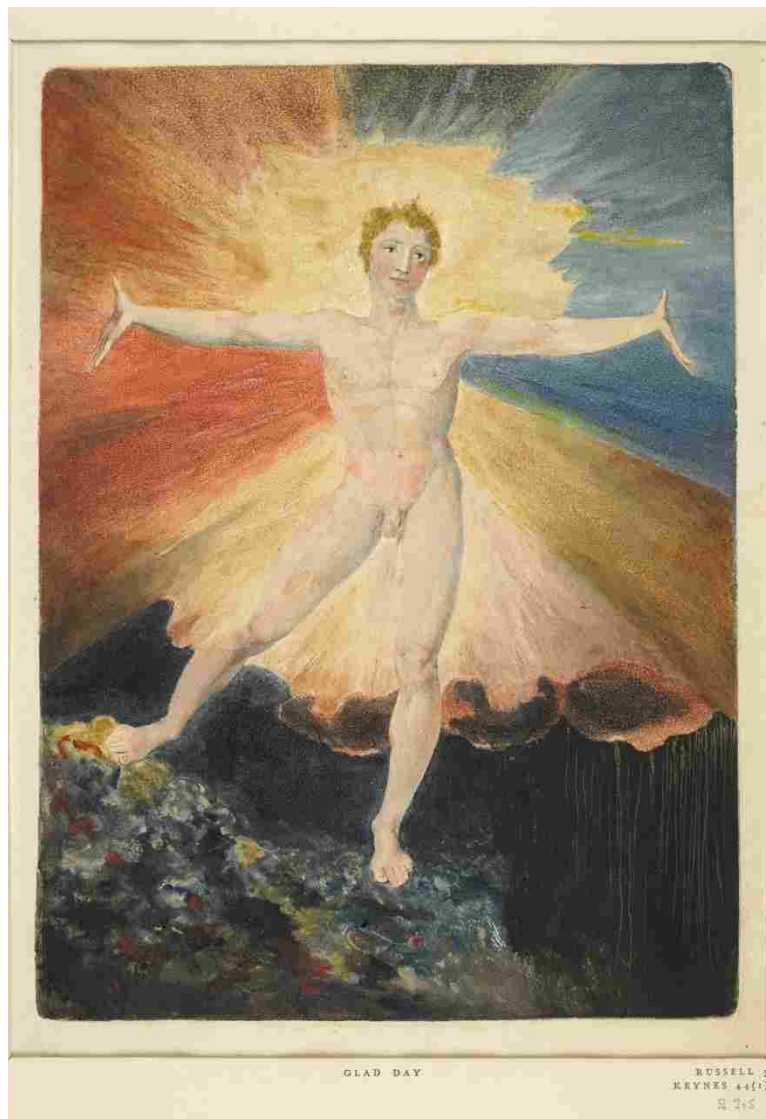
Figure 7: "Albion Rose," *A Large Book of Designs,* copy A, plate 1. © Trustees of the British Museum, Used with Permission.

phrase "dance of death" (176), I would hasten to agree with Robert Essick, who

emphasizes the regenerative nature of Albion (77). A gesture of self-sacrifice gives rise

to this dance of death; this gesture is a direct counter to the "dance of death / rejoicing in

carnage" that emerged from *Book the First*. So, by conquering his self-hood, the

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politically-awakened Albion emerges into a new state of freedom in Eternity, where dance has been divorced from the negative associations of the fallen senses (Blunt 66).

It is striking that, given the significance of movement across *Milton*, Albion seems to be fully stationary in this image rather than moving. While Blake likely appropriated Scamozzi's anatomical design (Blunt 65), Albion's attitude also adapts the cruciform pose, which includes arms outstretched. Importantly, Albion balances with substantial weight placed on his left foot to compensate for the repositioned right foot. Unlike other "moving" figures, he appears to be pausing, demonstrating an active balance that is only possible in his regenerated state. The phrase "active balance" may seem paradoxical, but maintaining any asymmetrical position requires not only strength but the utmost consciousness of the body. The key here is, in fact, consciousness—not a consciousness of the mind *or* of the body, but a dialectical consciousness that treats mind and body holistically rather than separately. Dancing bodies—or, in the context of this print, even dancing bodies in pause—are a prime site for (re)weaving together aspects of body and mind, image and poetry, to demonstrate a redeemed, active, and embodied awareness of the world. Though Blake refuses the mind/body distinction from his earliest texts, *Milton* suggests an experiment with making more of that philosophical position such that transformation is holistic, too, and can generate effects anywhere in time or space. As Steven Goldsmith discusses, Blake is usually read as either a radical dissenter— "a *bulwark* against modernity" that locates him in the past—or a "figure of 'Eternal Youth' whose enthusiasm is a kind of perpetual kindling always ready to be ignited anew, in the present, by the reader's own enthusiastic response" (8). Reading Milton's body as a site for envisioning an alternative to history *and* to present social and

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political circumstances also provides us with the opportunity to not be forced to choose between these critical orientations.

In an unexpected way, the visual and textual dimensions align to support a critical shift in perspective from Milton to a framing poet at the end of the text. Diverging from Harold Bloom's assessment that Blake takes on the self-assured voice of Milton, Laura Quinney argues that Blake intentionally leaves a rhetorical gap between Milton's voice and the poet's own in the closing lines of *Milton*—a gap which I want to suggest is mirrored in the illuminations' visual perspectives (153). Quinney exposes the shift from the first-person narration of Milton's journey to the third person perspective of a new narrator at the end of the poem and senses that they are a deliberate choice on Blake's part. She suggests that this rhetorical gap "reflects that the fate of the world is passing out of the poet's hands. What follows is history, which takes over where the poet has to leave off. The larger world opens out, still in drastic need of change, after the individual renovations of Milton and Blake. According to the program, the great transition will occur when a catalyst like the ideal Milton arises and converts all the Lord's people to prophecy" (153). The visual perspectives reveal a similar shift but with different consequences. As I've argued, we are encouraged to *follow* Milton's movement when we see him pictured from behind and as a vertically-equivalent horizon, which functions a visual corollary to first-person narrative; but, when we encounter a full-frontal image of a redeemed Milton in "The Dance of Albion," we are actually *faced* by redemption embodied, or a kind of third-person account of his progress.

Emmanuel Lévinas' descriptions of encountering the other through the face provides the most compelling affective and phenomenological analysis of an orientation

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toward the other, and are worth contemplation in relationship to the kind of kinesthetic

sympathy that Blake's choices suggest he is interested in generating.[80] A Jewish

philosopher that was taken as a Nazi prisoner of war during World War II, Lévinas later

constructed a philosophy grounded in an ethical imperative of responsibility that is

steeped in his residual horrors of Nazi Germany.[81] In his work, he posited that the face

was the prime site for identification with another: in *facing* this other (and in particular,

by seeing another's eyes), the "I" must account not only for itself, but for another.

Moreover, this other face makes demands of recognition on the "I" subject position, and

thus what could be perceived as purely facial expression becomes a summons to what he

calls "trans-ascendance" in which the "I" rises to the other in an "affective intentionality"

("Emmanuel Lévinas"). Elsewhere, in his criticism, Lévinas explores how this

phenomenon occurs (or makes an attempt but fails) in literary works, and one particularly

relevant case is his analysis of the poetry of Paul Celan. Trying to reconcile Celan's

swirling allusions that Lévinas construes as "mediation," he says: "We must listen to him

[the poet] more closely: the poem that spoke of me speaks of '*that which concerns*

another; someone entirely other'; it already speaks 'with' another, 'with another' who

would even be close, 'very close'; it 'moves in one bound out in front of that other'" (42).

Of interest here is that Lévinas and Celan both cast the interrelationship between the self

and the other in physical metaphors (by virtue of their prepositions and "very close"

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[80] I intentionally use the term "orientation" here to signal an *ethos* rather than an *ethics*; as we shall see, Lévinas' work suggests but does not fully lapse into morality discourse and, instead, poses a responsibility toward the other outside of traditional ethical obligations. Though other affect theorists, like Silvan Tomkins, have also made substantive contributions to the field regarding the importance of the face to affect, Lévinas' work most clearly emphasizes an ethos.

[81] I cannot sufficiently capture the complexity of the concept of the face here, particularly because of its relationship to Heidegger's notion of "being." Lévinas elaborates this "ethics as first philosophy" through the face-to-face encounter in *Totalité et Infini* (*Totality and Infinity*). I will, however, refer to a second text in which he applies these philosophical concepts to Paul Celan's poetry in order to more closely approximate how they might be applicable to Blake's moving and dancing bodies.

proximity) as if to already suggest some kinesthetic precondition for the encounter. But even more importantly, Lévinas finds in Celan's poetry the potential transcendence of one's subjectivity by facing another. In addition to the eye contact (albeit indirect) that Milton offers the reader in "The Dance of Albion," a kind of "hailing" in the Althusserian sense, throughout *Milton*, an image of a body may provide another means of *facing* and engaging the reader's sense of ethos, though in a more fully-embodied fashion that is possible in only the textual field of poetry.[82]

Like dance theorists who followed John Martin, Lévinas' project underscores the unpredictable and, ethically speaking, often unsatisfactory nature of these encounters between self and other. Kinesthetic sympathy can approach a description of this encounter, but it cannot enable the kind of openness or willingness that a spectator or reader (the "I" subject position) must exhibit in order for the process to generate connection; as such, it might often accord more fully with Romantic notions of sympathy as "fellow feeling," or a kind of psychic meeting on equal ground that affords only a limited understanding of the other. Yet, when we take "The Dance of Albion" to provide a capstone image of Milton's journey, Blake makes every attempt to provide the means for a process of kinesthetic sympathy to engage the reader by leaving him or her with Milton as a kind of mirror to their own engagement with transformation and redemption. So, whereas Quinney seems to suggest that the rhetorical gap in the poem's language results in Milton's energy arriving at an abrupt end, the visual field suggests a wider and ongoing transformative power. Milton's outstretched arms gesture not toward a degenerate world in need of redemption but a world of new possibility, drawn in by the

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[82] Mark Franko asserts that audiences could be interpolated as subjects, which accords with my own analysis, with only a slight difference in that I am concerned with the affective nature of this hailing rather than its potentially political nature (60).

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story of his journey and persuaded to follow. As such, Milton is the catalyst to "the great transition" but *the poet* intentionally orchestrates the encounter between the redeemed Milton and the viewer.

Thereby, the larger process that Blake seems to employ here—from Milton mid-transformation to Milton transformed—might be best described as kinesthetic sympathy because of the interpretive expectations that the images of moving bodies place on his readers. Given the critical dismissal of this theory of movement in the twentieth century because it fails to account for audience diversity, we may well question if Blake's project here was a bit too optimistic about who would see themselves in Milton and pursue some type of self-transformation. However, Matthew Green's account of "magical realism" (as a revision of scholars who discuss Blake's "visionary materialism") helps to demonstrate why the moving human body provides the ideal bridge between the dismal world of reality (what is "rational") and the superior world of redeemed religious, political, and artistic life (what is "imaginative) (18). Green points out that while many scholars have identified Blake's "indebtedness to two interwoven traditions: empirical science and protestant enthusiasm" and called it "visionary materialism," Green categorizes Blake's texts as pre-cursors to the (admittedly equally problematic term) "magical realism," which he finds to be a better approach to investigating a narrative that draws from both the material and the spiritual worlds simultaneously (19). Blake's penchant for prophecy lands him in an uncomfortable position: he must juggle audience identification with the real world (even in its poor state) and the idealized or fantasy-world elements that a text like *Milton* contains. Paraphrasing Blake's own notes to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, Green suggests that "the universal must be embodied in order for the individual to

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recognize it and take it into his or herself" (26). Thereby, a moving human body can—or at the very least opens up the door of potential to—make that critical recognition of oneself in Milton possible while concurrently insisting on movement *away* from the unredeemed state and *toward* transformation.

Green and others have perceived anxiety or a kind of unwelcome pressure in *Milton* because of the way levels of discourse unfold through various places and moments in time, but this anxiety originates in overlooks the means of bridging those gaps via moving human bodies and dance. After highlighting the marks of past, present, and future in Blake's earliest works, he suggests that:

> The conflation of the world-making capacity of poetry and the temporal elisions
> of prophecy… ties in directly with the presentation of the fallen world (in both its
> fallen and post-apocalyptic aspects) as the unfolding of multiple discourses;
> however, what this does in effect is foreclose the possibility of appealing to an
> external or pure universality beyond human experience, which is itself constituted
> through various representations (i.e., imaginatively). This leaves considerable
> room for anxiety, not only at the philosophical or culture-wide level, but, given
> the centrality of identity within attempts to rethink and reimagine the world as we
> know it, at a personal level too. (20)

Green's frame suggests that, ideally, Blake would have been able to escape the remnants of the fallen world of reality and ultimately cling to poetry, prophecy, and a world remade (i.e. "beyond human experience"). However, unlike Byron's Manfred longing for disembodiment, Blake is never tempted to fully escape materiality. Redemption by prophecy both engages and disengages with the common experience of living in a

material body, which is by definition messy but constitutes readers' only means of locating themselves in the narrative. Even if the response of viewers and readers to this single text is not universal, *Milton* acts as a kind of springboard for engagement and transformation in which individuals are beckoned into a process and mode of redemption that participates in universal prophecy but is undeniably flexible in its ability to be personal, too.

An analysis of dance and movement does not approach a complete reading of *Milton* or any of Blake's other works, nor—given the interminable complexities of Blake that both frustrate and intrigue us—should it attempt to do so. However, reading through and with dancing bodies provides another productive way to access meaning in his poetry and illuminated work. Blake deploys a radically integrated mind/body poetics that not only allows for but insists upon a fluid reading of bodies in relationship to the mind and "Soul," even in the midst of material contradictions. But ultimately, dance is a point of juncture between Blake's work and its affective processes that *work on us*, perpetually bestowing kinesthetic energy horizontally onto the text and image in the form of dancing bodies, as well as outwardly toward the reader. This energy seeks to engage readers and actively involve them in the text so as to initiate the potential for them to be transformed alongside Milton. As such, *Milton* becomes an interactive text that draws on common embodied experience to generate a shared foundation for transformation—about the way we view the relationship between mind and body and, on a larger scale, the world around us.

CHAPTER VI

CODA

The embodied labor of completing a dissertation has been a constant source of reminder that scholarly writing is much more than just "mind work." In my years as a writing instructor, I have frequently shared with my students the premise for Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan's book *Thinking and Writing*, which is that cognition and the physical act of writing are fundamentally interconnected (and not just for us kinesthetic learners); and, over the past three years of writing this project, piles of scribbled notes, outlines, hand-written revisions, and a lot of "thinking in typing" have become a testament to the fact that thinking is not a process that simply gets transferred to language on a printed page but is irrevocably wrapped up in that acts of movement, including—but not limited to—writing. In fact, some of my moments of clearest thinking on this project have come when my own body was in motion in the dance studio, teaching and coaching young dance students. It was in these moments when I felt the full force of Blake's affective strategies, imagined the distress of Shelley's imagined world without networks of tactile sympathy, and was acutely aware of the individual and collective inclinations to the circulations of affect and its embodied effects.

While the focus of this project has encouraged (and even required) me to become much more aware of the role my own body plays in my thinking and response to literary texts, I have also become attentive to the temptations to slip into language that obscures the body. Writing about bodies in a culture and age that still has unsatisfactory vocabulary for capturing the complexities of phenomenological experience and the politics of embodiment presents very acute challenges for communicating the importance

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of bodily representations in literature. To point to a very simple example, over the course of this project, I have been tempted to use many a turn of phrase that would have undermined my philosophical position. If I had said that it was important to "wrap our minds" around a new concept, we may have been tempted to forget that negotiating our own knowledge and experience against a new idea calls up not just cognitive knowledge but embodied knowledge. Likewise, it is not uncommon for the term "body of knowledge" to spill out unnoticed, and yet there is nothing necessarily embodied about that phrase, which ultimately reinforces knowledge as a product of (mind-centered) cognition and posits the "body" as a convenient term for categorization and grouping. In these moments, the residual traces of mind-body dualism become visible. Amidst these difficulties of grappling with language, my appreciation for accessible theoretical writing on movement-oriented affect and embodiment (such as Brian Masummi's *Parables for the Virtual*) has increased exponentially. There is still much work to be done on "unlearning" some of our habits of ignoring the body and finding new language to describe what it means and feels like to be embodied, but I believe that affect theory is in a prime position to help us to accomplish this, both to illuminate our readings of literary texts and for our own sake (our nation could stand to benefit from increased awareness of theories of intersectionality, embodiment, and the ethics of affect). Although I appreciate Steven Goldsmith's perspective when he posits that affect is an ideal framework for critical engagement in literary studies because it defamiliarizes the object of analysis— producing "dizzying uncertainty," he says—I must admit that I cannot accept this conclusion without reservations (272-273). If we are willing to begin to acknowledge our own affective role in reading as an important dimension of studying literature, then we

also need to consider the cultural and political implications of consenting to its "dizzying" effects. It is probably not surprising given my chosen theoretical approaches to this project that I would advocate for better familiarity with what it means to be embodied because that knowledge—whether we have realized it or not—matters to every aspect of our lives (academic work included).

But the insufficiency of body-centered critical vocabulary has not been the greatest obstacle to studying or writing about this topic: in my graduate work, I have encountered resistance from a number of faculty and scholars who stridently deny that bringing together the disparate fields of dance studies and literary studies could possibly result in fruitful insight into literature. These reservations hearken back to any one of the many critics of the body (from Descartes onward) who position it as "lesser" than the objective mind; yet, affect theory—largely thanks to new insight into human cognition in the latter half of the twentieth century—has demonstrated, with quantitative evidence and almost undeniably, that emotions matter, that moods and feelings have transferrable qualities, and that there is a bodily basis for knowing and making sense of experience. Consequently, all of these findings have (or should have) a significant impact for the way we read and analyze literature. For instance, the insights that affect theory offers—in particular, a foundational premise that material bodies matter—help to shore up the insight and relevance of other strands of theory that I have referred to under the umbrella of "embodiment theory": gender studies, critical race studies, disability studies, etc. To add dance theory to that list is simply to consult the experts whose aesthetic, philosophical, material, and affective interests have been focused on the body all along.

Beyond the importance of including an awareness of the body in our own critical apparatus, understanding the role emotions play in reading literature can also help us to discern what it means to appreciate literature. Romanticists are known for their strong investments in the texts that they write and teach about, and Blake seems to draw in scholars who have even stronger personal connections to the subject of their work (which provides good evidence for Goldsmith's claims about Blakean enthusiasm). But, as Susan Feagin points out in *Reading with Feeling: The Aesthetics of Appreciation*, what can be revealed by a study of the emotions is something about the relationship between the reader and the text: that some texts are particularly effective at drawing emotions out of their readers (for reasons that we are only beginning to discover), and this propensity toward perpetuating the circulation of emotions has led particular texts to be well-appreciated long after their writing and publication (8-10). It is fair to say that we can count many Romantic texts—including those I have discussed in this project—among those that are equipped to elicit emotion from readers. We need not claim that these texts elicit uniform responses of the same degree or type to be able to say that literature can have designs on its readership, and we can be attentive to those cues and our own embodied responses as a way of better understanding how affect is communicated and what enables its circulation. New Historicist criticism can (and already has) helped to demonstrate that these affective relationships can be analyzed with attention to historical specificity—say, how a text may have elicited particular emotions for a nineteenth-century reader, while the conditions of our contemporary moment might make the same text equally provocative, but might also generate a different register of emotions. Indeed, this is precisely the vein of work in which we might locate Mike Goode's "The Joy of

Looking: What Blake's Pictures Want," which I discussed in Chapter Five. Asking this question of other Romantic texts may lead to new insight about the affect that texts draw out of their readers.

Although Feagin takes a largely cognitive route to understanding emotion and affectivity in literature, with some further attention to the corporeal aspects of affect, her approach can set up two interesting possibilities for the continued development of embodied affect studies in literature. First, by focusing on elements of the text that elicit affective responses, we avoid some of the problems of relativism and subjectivity that apparently still make some scholars question attention to reader's emotions. (I have tried to model this approach in both Chapters Four and Five by noting where the texts in question might call up our sympathetic responses without hastening to overgeneralize reader responses.) Second, this approach may help us to make the case for the continued importance of the humanities in education. Being able to articulate why we appreciate literature and why, for instance, we continue to expect students to read particular texts might go a long way toward showing the relevance of our discipline. More broadly, this attention to embodied affect for which I advocate asks us to better situate our objects of study within holistic networks of knowledge and to embrace the importance of the unique experience that we each bring to literature.

In light of these possibilities for further studies of affect in literature, movement continues to be, for me, the best conceptual framework for understanding the fluid, inter-subjective relationships that affect generates—not just because human bodies are slippery and prone to change and to motion, nor because literary texts would not be very interesting to study without some aspect of narrative development or other sign of things

"happening." Rather, we can simultaneously acknowledge what Massumi reminds us are two of the central qualities of embodied experience, "potential and process," instead of deterministic causes or endpoints (5). And beyond individual experiences with affect in literary representations of the body, we can map webs of affective relationships across— and even beyond the material bounds of—the text to see, and *feel*, how these webs of inter-subjectivity are activated, connected, and expanded.

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