

DEVOURING THE GOTHIC: FOOD AND THE GOTHIC BODY

Elizabeth Andrews

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy

English Studies

University of Stirling

January 2008

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all critical or other sources (literary and electronic) have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of my text.

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Abstract

At the beginnings of the Gothic, in the eighteenth century, there was an anxiety or taboo surrounding consumption and appetite for the Gothic text itself and for the excessive and sensational themes that the Gothic discussed. The female body, becoming a commodity in society, was objectified within the texts and consumed by the villain (both metaphorically and literally) who represented the perils of gluttony and indulgence and the horrors of cannibalistic desire. The female was the object of consumption and thus was denied appetite and was depicted as starved and starving. This also communicated the taboo of female appetite, a taboo that persists and changes within the Gothic as the female assumes the status of subject and the power to devour; she moves from being ethereal to bestial in the nineteenth century. With her renewed hunger, she becomes the consumer, devouring the villain who would eat her alive. The two sections of this study discuss the extremes of appetite and the extremes of bodily representations: starvation and cannibalism.

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Acknowledgments

I would firstly like to thank my supervisor Professor Glennis Byron for all of her help, time, guidance and support. Dr Dale Townshend's suggestions and comments were also invaluable. My partner Andrew Wilson has been an unfaltering support. To the Stirling University's Library staff, the staff in the National Library of Scotland and the British Library, I offer my thanks for their patience and knowledge. I must also thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council without whose generous assistance I would have been unable to undertake this study, and Stirling University's English Department for funding numerous conference attendance and research trips.

Introduction

The fact remains nevertheless that all food is liable to defile
(Kristeva 1982, p. 75)

Eating is at once a ‘trivial and ordinary want’ (*Melmoth*, p. 213), as it is described by the parricide from Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), and also an act that can potentially transgress the most extreme of taboos.¹ The Gothic text is defined as a consumable and once devoured, threatens to pique a transgressive appetite. The reception of the Gothic and the critical debates, which condemned it and feared the influence of the mode in the eighteenth century, frame this study. This reception and the repeated use of metaphors of food and eating that are used to describe the mode

¹ A taboo, Mary Douglas explains in *Purity and Danger* (2002), is that which is called ‘dirty and dangerous’ (Douglas 2002, p. xi); Douglas suggests that taboos are what we must guard against in order to classify the universe. According to Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror* (1982), food ‘designates the other’ and ‘penetrates the self’s clean and proper body’ (Kristeva 1982, p. 75). It is thus aligned with the taboo because it crosses the border between the inside and outside and conflates these classifications.

are engaged with below. The mode itself is obsessed with ‘morbid eating’² and starvation. It is also a literalizing mode that graphically represents thematic lack in the emaciation of the body and excessive desire as cannibalism. The anxiety over Gothic reading is embodied in the gluttonous villain whose desires eat him alive – they thus embody excess – and the disgust of female appetite (and her appetite for reading) is manifested in skeletal female characters. In *Evil Sisters: the Threat of Female Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Culture* (1996) Bram Dijkstra’s discussion of the cultural representations of women engages with how ‘Metaphors do the dirty work of ideology. They telescope complex ideas into simple imagery and encourage us to see others not as persons but as patterns’ (Dijkstra 1996, p. 311).³ The Gothic breaks down these metaphors. It disentangles these complex ideas, creating scenarios and characters in which they can be realised. The Gothic thus actualises sensibility’s metaphoric rejection of the body in figures of starving and forsaken women; the nineteenth-century’s bestial woman is embodied in the man-eating cannibal and the power hungry villain is literalised as a gourmand. However, the Gothic itself becomes a metaphoric pattern of excessive and transgressive appetite. The Gothic becomes a flavour of literature as well as a negative term in relation to established notions of

² Joan Jacobs Brumberg in *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa* describes ‘morbid appetite’ (Brumberg 2000, p. 102) to be ‘eating outside normative food categories (ingesting leaves of trees, seeds, roots, chalk, unripe fruits, and faeces or urine)’ (ibid., p. 310, n. 9). The morbid eating in the Gothic has a more sinister edge.

³ *Evil Sisters* and the earlier *Idols of Perversity* written by Bram Dijkstra in 1986 are both important texts which explore the representations of women as evil and bestial. Although Dijkstra primarily discusses visual representations, his discussions of the misogynistic views held in the nineteenth and twentieth century inform this study.

taste in this period.⁴ There are numerous texts which explore the critical reception of the Gothic, its audience and the effect of its readership, yet no discussion as yet emphasises the persistent use of metaphors of food and eating which are used in reviews and criticism of Gothic texts.⁵ These metaphors are used mostly in the eighteenth century when fears of Gothic popularity and the threat this posed to taste were under debate. The use of ‘Gothic’ in critical discourse defines what is ‘indulgent’ and ‘supernatural’; in modern usage it becomes an index of the dark, grotesque and taboo. Alfred Longueil talks of ‘Gothic’ as a ‘sneering-word’ (Longueil 1923, p. 460) in his essay ‘The Word “Gothic” in Eighteenth Century Criticism’ (1923): it causes the nose to wrinkle and the lips to purse in disgust because it confronts the unspeakable; it evokes and expresses, all too literally, a bad taste in the mouth.

Although there are many studies that discuss the representation of the body and the body in Gothic literature there is no prolonged study that examines the

⁴ Of course, the term ‘Gothic’ is an ambiguous one. The Whig Party in England celebrated the Goths as the originators of democracy. As Victor Sage explains, the ‘Gothick’ is seen to be ‘native, Protestant and “democratic” and the very foundation of contemporary English culture’ (Sage 1990, p. 17); yet it is also considered foreign, superstitious, barbaric, and all that ‘English culture’ resists. See Sage’s *The Gothick Novel* (1990). Also, see James Thomson’s long poem *Liberty* (1736) where the Gothic origins of England are denoted:

‘The Roman, Saxon, Dane, had toil’d and bled.
Of Gothic nations this the final burst;
And, mix’d the genius of these people all,
Their virtues mix’d in one exalted stream
Here the rich tide of English blood grew full’ (Part IV, p. 725).

Richard Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) also discusses the *positive* qualities of the Gothic, the characteristics of chivalry and the ways the Gothic was ‘not *unnatural*’ (Letter 5, p. 304).

⁵ See for instance: E. J. Clery’s *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction 1762 – 1800*, Markman Ellis’s *The History of Gothic Fiction*, and Ian Watt’s *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*.

intersection of food, the body and the Gothic. Susan Skubal's *Word of Mouth: Food and Fiction after Freud* (2002) is a psychoanalytical exploration of the linguistic and textual meanings ascribed to eating. Her focus is not Gothic. At one point she discusses what she describes as 'the oral nature of our darkest imaginings, dreads, and desires' (Skubal 2002, p. 9). She does this by analysing Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno' (1855), and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606), none of which are used here in any great detail. Indeed, in this chapter she suggests that the Gothic text is able to represent cannibalism because 'the devourers are alien, monstrous, categorically not fully human' (ibid., p. 116), a point I engage with in the second section of this project. Maggie Kilgour's *From Communion to Cannibalism* (1990) discusses the production of identity through cannibalistic eating and incorporation. Kilgour's primary focus is on the 'conceptualisation of all antitheses' (Kilgour 1990, p. 4) and her highly theoretical text moves from Homer to Melville. Although she includes a section in her final chapter, 'The Deformed Reformed', which comments upon the Gothic as a mode, her study is in one sense more general and in another more theoretically specific than this project. Kilgour, in her discussion of the Gothic, argues that 'What the gothic demonstrates is the unsettling vulnerability of those things we tend to think of as autonomous and self-sufficient: both texts and our selves' (ibid., p. 185). Here she suggests the inherent cannibalism of the Gothic, an argument taken up by H. L. Malchow.⁶ This general idea of the genre or mode as 'always crossing boundaries'

⁶ See his *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (1996).

(ibid., p. 185) is taken as read here and instead specific textual examples of cannibalistic characters from texts such as Ann Tracy's *Winter Hunger* (1993) and Sabina Murray's *A Carnivore's Inquiry* (2004) amongst others, form the basis of my discussion in the second section of this project. Sarah Sceats's *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (2000), as the title suggests, explores a different area: however, her discussions of the significance of eating and its representation are also important here, specifically the 'deep associations between food and the psyche' (Sceats 2000, p. 8). I argue that the Gothic literalises psychological or cultural trauma in the body: images of the emaciated body communicate female characters' feelings of loss or desire for domination, for example, and I argue that the representations of cannibalism literalise fears of embodiment. Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's work *The Shell and the Kernel* (1994) creates a framework around which to discuss 'demetaphorization (taking literally what is meant figuratively)' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 126), which is the want of the Gothic mode. Their definition of incorporation helps to explain the issues that underlie the desire to consume. Incorporation can usefully be considered as 'the corporal model for introjection' (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, p. 211), yet in *The Shell and the Kernel* these terms are set in opposition with introjection as 'an ideally harmonious progress of life...the principle of gradual self-transformation' and incorporation as life's 'traumas, obstacles, or near deaths...the traumatic impossibility of self-fashioning' (Rand in Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 101). The life affirming and the destructive alternatives are considered here. Both theories use food and metaphors of eating to express or substitute for the desire to take inside what is outside. These terms help to create a vocabulary in which to discuss the significance

of food and eating in the Gothic mode. Melancholia (where mourning is aligned with introjection and melancholia with the refusal to mourn and with encrypting incorporation),⁷ substitution, and reparation all motivate the characters' relationship with food. However, while psychoanalytical theories are drawn up when the texts explicitly call for or self-consciously demand such readings, close textual analysis and historical contextualisation lead this study.

This study is organised into two sections, focusing on the two extremes of appetite: starvation and cannibalism. The first section follows the progression of the Gothic heroine from objection in eighteenth-century sensibility to subjection in nineteenth-century self-starvation and is thus composed of two chapters. The second section of this study discusses the cannibalistic appetite, which is ubiquitous in the Gothic. This section contains four smaller chapters and does not follow the linear chronological order that the first section observes. Instead, because there is no progression as such but a discussion of themes and the ways in which they are reinterpreted and repeated, this section reflects the dissipation that the Gothic undergoes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

⁷ The Freudian explication of incorporation also shadows the discussion of male cannibalism and their infantile fixation in Chapter Five. In 'Mourning and Melancholia' from *On Metapsychology* Freud writes: 'The ego wants to incorporate this object [the now dead loved person] into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phrase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it' (Freud [1917], p. 258). (In the texts I am discussing in this chapter this object is often the mother or maternal figure in the fantasies of the male cannibal). The discussion of these theories is approached through an acceptance of their absorption into the fabric of culture.

Food and the Body: How Appetite Gothicises the Body

Jack Morgan's *The Biology of Horror* (2002) argues that 'the horror literature tradition is an aspect of our mental life in which our physiological constitution is most notably implicit, that horror is essentially bio-horror' (Morgan 2002, p. 2-3). And, Gothic implies the body in both its horror and its terror. Morgan goes on to posit that 'in the gothic, the nexus of the supernatural and the natural is corporeality' (ibid., p. 6). The themes that the Gothic is concerned with, the representations of horrific scenes of imprisonment and death, of characters literally ripped apart, and the atmosphere of claustrophobia and terror that is constructed by this literature, reconnect the reader with his or her physical mortality and vulnerability. The Gothic evokes feelings that overwhelm the reader, overwhelm thought; this is how it achieves the sublime aesthetic that Edmund Burke discusses in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), a text which was very influential to the early Gothic aesthetic. Ann Radcliffe, in her posthumously published essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' (1826), distinguishes between horror and terror by aligning terror with the sublime. She suggests that terror is 'indistinct or obscure', while horror is 'distinctly pictured forth' (Radcliffe in Norton 2000, p. 315). Radcliffe continues: 'Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them' (ibid., p. 315). Horror, then, is an explicit confrontation with death, perhaps similar to the effects of 'danger or pain press[ing] too nearly' (Burke [1757], p. 86). Horror produces a physical reaction as it 'contracts' the flesh, while terror is also physical as it intensifies sensation and 'awakens the faculties'. Burke discusses the ways in which 'Our minds and bodies are

so closely and intimately connected, that one is incapable of pain or pleasure without the other' (ibid., p. 163), but 'the bodily organs suffer first, and the mind through these organs' (ibid., p. 175). The body and mind must combine for us to understand and thus to *experience* pain or pleasure; the sense is *felt* in the body and then relayed to the mind.⁸ Thus, although the sublime is considered to be a moment of spiritual transcendence, mental expansion and release, it is still fixed within bodily sensations which create this psychological experience.

Morgan suggests that the 'everyday physical life' (Morgan 2002, p. 3) and the fears of pain, death and disease create 'another kind of reality' (ibid., p. 3) which horror represents. This horror centres upon what might happen to the body and the ways in which the mind that inhabits this body reacts. Gothic literature, however, with its attraction towards the supernatural, may appear to salve or compensate for the dissipation and destruction of the body by gesturing toward an existence after or beyond the physical. Spectres, haunting, demons and immortality, all convey the notion of life beyond the physical and material, yet, the Gothic debunks these fantasies. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) Radcliffe's supernatural coalesces in the figure behind the black veil, which is actually a *memento mori*, an image to

⁸ Burke describes this relation when he explains the sensation of falling when going to sleep; he states that 'the parts [of the body] relax too suddenly, which is the nature of falling; and this accident of the body induces this image in the mind' (Burke [1757], p. 176). Ideas are felt in the body and then cause the mind to interpret these sensations. Such sensations as the sudden relaxation of muscles are interpreted as falling, and when the physical senses feel overwhelmed, as Burke discusses by loud noises, vast visual scenes and strong flavours, the mind interprets this as a mixture of pleasure and pain, of a feeling of immediate danger and of instant liberation: the sublime. Burke states that sources of the sublime are fostered in ideas that excite '*pain*, and *danger*' and these are 'the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling' (ibid., p. 86); the mind is given physical sensation; it *feels* rather than thinks in the sublime moment. The body in pain is the main source of the sublime in Gothic texts.

remind the viewer of their physical mortality. Charles Dickens' Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations* (1860-1) haunts Pip and her half-brother Arthur, her ghost even seems to cause Arthur's death, yet it is the image of her ruined body which returns. The ghost is not 'real', but the rehearsal of her image, an image which resonates in her physical manifestation of death-in-life. Matthew Lewis's Ambrosio from *The Monk* (1796) confronts Satan, but rather than suggesting life after death, this text ends with the image of prolonged physical torture; death is not the release of the body but the inability to escape eternal physical pain. The Gothic is a body-centred mode and, as Deborah Lupton in *Food, the Body and the Self* (1996), a socio-cultural examination of food practices, writes: 'Food and eating are central to our...experience of embodiment' (Lupton 1996, p. 1). In this project, the ways in which appetites control and transform the body will be engaged with through its two extremes: starvation and cannibalism. How the female body becomes a subject within this mode and how the male body is objectified are central issues. In the Gothic texts engaged with here, subjection and objectification are expressed through taste, hunger, food and its denial.

The Gothic draws attention to the ways in which ideology and culture are consumed. This literary form is figured as an edible object, and its themes concern the permeability of the flesh, miscegenation through ingestion and the horrific and erotic possibilities of the oral. Steven Bruhm in *Gothic Bodies: the Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (1994) discusses how the Gothic creates the 'immediacy of the

body' (Bruhm 1994, p. xvi)⁹ through the spectacle of physical pain. Eighteenth-century Gothic texts are particularly interesting in relation to how they represent the fear of and fascination with the flesh. Roy Porter explains that

the period [eighteenth century] brought such an earnest raising of the thresholds of embarrassment and shame, so as to hide, deodorize, cleanse, purge, exclude and expel those multitudinous aspects of the flesh and of bodily functions experienced as psychosocially threatening, disgusting and dangerous (Porter 2003, p. 25).

What is repressed, and denied, what is excluded, expelled and cleansed returns in the sub-terrain of the Gothic, where the 'threatening, disgusting and dangerous' belong. The Gothic is the perfect breeding ground for the glutton because, as William Miller notes, 'Gluttony requires some immersion in the dank and sour realm of disgust' (Miller 1997, p. 92).¹⁰ Male characters embody this self-destructive excess of appetite and it devours them, as is shown in Chapter Three, while the female character is starved as an expression of the fear of female appetite, discussed in Chapter One. The 'multitudinous aspects' (Porter 2003, p. 25) of the flesh are vividly displayed as its

⁹ This invocation of the body links Gothic literature with 'low' culture, as does the Gothic's preoccupation with food. Jocelyn Kolb in *The Ambiguity of Taste: Freedom and Food in European Romanticism* (1995) discriminates between 'high' and 'low' texts by their representation of food. She explains that only 'low' forms mention food realistically, that 'high' forms represent food abstractly or artificially (see Timothy Morton's discussion of Kolb in *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite*, pp. 262-3). This artificiality distances consumption from the body, and denotes a closed, sterile presence, rather than the open, permeable materiality of the Gothic body.

¹⁰ In Chapter Three I shall focus on the male villain because of his particular relationship to gluttony and cannibalistic appetite. The glutton and the cannibal are aligned and this will also be discussed. There are many female villains, but their relationship with food is generally one of abstinence (see Madame Montoni from Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), for example, where her sexual gluttony is punished by starvation, or the Prioress from Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, who punished Agnes by starving her). Of course there are exceptions and perhaps W. H. Ireland's eponymous character from *The Abbess* (1799) could be seen as gluttonous, especially in her indulgence of wine. The iconography of the devouring male mouth signifies something very different from the eroticised female mouth, and again this is specific to my discussion.

appetites expose, illuminate, and foreground materiality. Gothic as a genre deals with what is felt rather than thought, with feelings as opposed to reason, and this emphasis on sensation and physicality ‘haunted’ the ideology of the Enlightenment with its characteristic focus on rationality.¹¹ The Gothic body, Steven Bruhm asserts, marks a ‘return of the body’s repressed fragility and vulnerability’ (Bruhm 1990, p. xv) and does so through its ‘excessive display’ (ibid., p. xvii). And starvation gothicises the body as it exposes the body’s interior, its bones, veins and premature decay. Lack of food thus magnifies the fragility and vulnerability of the body and, rather than causing the body to recede, it intensifies its physicality and impact as a spectacle. The starved woman in the eighteenth century (in sensibility and early Gothic) speaks through her body and manifests her loss and disempowerment through her emaciation. This action is counteractive for the nineteenth-century heroine who desires to suppress her body while the Gothic returns its force and represents the impossibility of mastering the physical. This exemplifies another aspect of Bruhm’s Gothic body: it forces recognition of our ‘inescapable corporeality’ (ibid., p. 9). In *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (1996) Kelly Hurley discusses the abhuman, the body ‘metamorphic and undifferentiated’ (Hurley 1996, p. 3); a materiality of the body specific, she argues, to

¹¹ This emphasis on feeling and sensation rather than reason and thought challenges the prevailing philosophy of the eighteenth century. Kant observes (paraphrased by Ernest Gelner in *Nationalism*), that ‘feelings could not be commanded, they could not be part of our worth and our identity’ (Gelner 1997, p. 66 original emphasis); thus, a literature, which promotes such rebellious sensation, could only be counterproductive to the current ideology. However, by conveying this dangerous freedom, this fearful lack of boundaries and certainty, the Gothic acts conservatively; the desire, which started as the want to escape from reality, becomes a desire to escape the horrors of fiction and return to reality and the sanctions that dictate reason and moderation.

the nineteenth-century *fin de siècle*. In this conception of the Gothic body, matter dominates form. It is possible to see how in narratives of cannibalism, the reduction of the body into food privileges flesh over self. The body is described in terms of the matter that makes it: bones, skin, and meat. This creates an uncanny detachment from the body but also what Hurley terms the ‘vertiginous pleasures of indifferentiation’ (ibid., p. 4). This pleasure may come from a curiosity to examine the flesh that is both ours and Other. Both of these definitions of the Gothic body inform this study; however, neither of these texts focuses specifically upon how appetite transforms the body or how the discussion of appetite creates a confrontation with ‘the prospect of an existence circumscribed within the realities of gross corporeality’ (ibid., p. 3). Hurley does touch upon cannibalism in relation to the Thing-ness of the body eaten and the dehumanisation of the eaters of bodies. She also discusses the importance of the fear of degeneration in a post-Darwin world. The focus of this study is, however, the importance of female appetite in relation to bestiality and degeneration, specifically the ways in which the Gothic text literalises these fears in the representation of female cannibalism, whereas Hurley focuses upon sexual degeneration and degeneration in a more general sense.

Starvation

In the first section of this study the starved female body is discussed. The differences in representation and meaning that this Gothic body conveys and changes through sensibility, early Gothic and nineteenth-century Gothic texts are the focus. Janet Todd in her overview *Sensibility: An Introduction* (1986) disentangles the differences between sensibility and the Gothic. The Gothic text follows on from sensibility; as

she argues, sensibility's popularity spanned from 'the 1740s to the late 1770s' (Todd 1986, p. 9). It is generally accepted that the Gothic came into being with Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, just preceding sensibility's drop from favour. Todd argues that 'Gothic fiction...uses sentimental contrasts of virtue and vice or malignancy and distressed worth, but goes far towards sensationalizing and often sexualizing these elements, while it retreats from the didactic aim of sentimental literature' (ibid., p. 9). Before the Gothic gained popularity in the 1790s, "'Sentimentality" came in as a pejorative term' argues Todd; 'it suggested and still suggests debased and affected feeling, an indulgence in and display of emotion' (ibid., p. 8) while the Gothic represented indulgence of another kind. The Gothic's move from explicit didacticism undermines sensibility's sickly excesses of transcendent emotion by tempering this with the bitterness of vice and mortality. Sensibility dangerously suggests that death is a reward. When, for example, the heroine of Samuel Richardson's archetypal text of sensibility *Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady* (1747), escapes into death, her friend Miss Howe explains how she has suffered 'the loss' when Clarissa dies, but that Clarissa has 'the gain' (*Clarissa*, p. 1472) in reaching heaven. Death is represented as beautiful and the dead body is aestheticised: Clarissa is 'lovely still' (ibid., p. 1231). In Gothic texts, however, death is never beautiful. In sensibility, the female is her body; it is only in death that she can claim what Donnalee Frega's study *Speaking in Hunger: Gender, Discourse, and Consumption in Clarissa* (1998) terms Clarissa's 'self-determination' (Frega 1998, p. 1). The Gothic follows on from this position but moves towards mortal self-possession in the nineteenth-century Gothic heroine's reclamation of her body through the erasure of its femininity in starvation. In order to achieve

subjection, the female internalises the tyrant and assumes dominion over her body. This psychological action is literalised in the Gothic through the attempted subordination of the body. The move from women as ‘touchstones of morality’ (Todd 1986, p. 37) to the degenerate, soulless animals that Otto Weininger’s popular philosophy in *Sex and Character* (1904)¹² describes is traced in the changing representation of female characters in the Gothic. The female characters move from the forced starvation that the early Gothic heroine suffers to self-imposed hunger in the nineteenth century to the exaggeration of voracious and cannibalistic appetite in later nineteenth-century Gothic and beyond.

Anna Krugovoy Silver’s study *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (2002) presupposes that ‘Victorians used to define the ideal woman [as] – spiritual, non-sexual, self-disciplined’ (Silver 2002, p. 3). This assumption neglects to consider that this criterion is what the woman must strive for because she is in constant battle with her degenerate body. Women at this time were seen as forever on the verge of falling back into the bestial, sexual, voracious being that Darwin and other contemporary theorists, who consider the female as a less evolved man, asserted she was. These theories from Darwin, Weininger, Thomas Laycock, Schopenhauer, Frank Pirone, Lombroso and Ferrero amongst others, will be discussed in this project and

¹² Bram Dijkstra’s *Idols of Perversity* (1986) is one of the few critical texts that engage with Otto Weininger’s influential misogynistic manifesto *Sex and Character* published in 1904. Dijkstra engages with its message arguing that it calls for ‘wholesale “gynocide”’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 221). Dijkstra follows the ways in which fear and attraction for the fantasies of femininity have created images of monstrous, demonic and inhuman women in art and literature at the *fin de siècle*. Weininger’s extreme stance seems to be dismissed as an exploded perspective without consideration of the other great minds, including Freud and Wittgenstein, who found him inspirational. See David Stern’s collection of essays: *Wittgenstein Reads Weininger*, and Dijkstra for discussions of Weininger’s impact.

considered alongside the Gothic texts which literalise the fears that these philosophers and scientists expound about women and men, focusing on appetite. Silver goes on to suggest that in Victorian society there was a ‘cultural validation of the slender form’ (ibid., p. 4). However, what was valued was an extreme contrast; the desirable figure is ‘the shape of a wasp, or an hour-glass’ (Farrar 1837, p. 198) Eliza Farrar’s *The Young Lady’s Friend* explains in 1837. This shape goes out as well as in. The ‘small waists’ (ibid., p. 198) act to exaggerate the swelling of her feminine characteristics and thus magnify her differentiation from men, her construction of and conformity to bodily gender. Indeed Silver seems to go on to contradict her point by asserting that ‘To offset a small waist and to distinguish her female body from the muscular male body, a woman’s face, arms, shoulders, bosom, and hips were to look round and curvaceous’ (Silver 2002, p. 30); however, she suggests that the ‘fetishistic focus on the small waist’ (ibid., p. 31) led to women slimming to decrease this area. Yet, in this fashion ‘nature has been completely overruled’ (Farrar 1837, p. 199) and the anorexic body does not conform but transgresses this standard because it no longer requires the corset to visibly manipulate and contort the form; it has already done this to itself. A very thin body, like Miss Havisham’s and Jane Eyre’s when it is no longer squeezed by her corset, risks being considered unfeminine, masculine even. This will become a focus in the second chapter of the first section.

Gothic Food

It is not only the consequences of appetite that are of interest but also how food itself becomes Gothicised. ‘Food becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct

entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the nonhuman' (Kristeva 1982, p. 75), argues Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* (1982) and the Gothic text continually threatens these borders and boundaries. From the abnormal and seductively huge cherries in the grounds of Ann Radcliffe's *Udolpho*; Jonathan Harker's discovery of his appetite for 'red pepper, which was very good but thirsty' (*Dracula*, p. 31) on his way to Dracula's castle; Lucy Snowe's glowing 'yellow stars' (*Villette*, p. 428) in what Alison Milbank terms her 'Red Riding Hood' (Milbank 1992, p. 154) fruit basket; Miss Havisham's ruinous 'great cake' (*Great Expectations*, p. 83); and finally to the body as 'underdone stew' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 163), the Gothic questions what is edible, crossing over into the unnatural and nonhuman, and intensifies the act of consumption to convey deeper thematic and psychological connotations. In each case, this Gothic food only increases hunger rather than sating it. Gothic food is intensely flavoured, beautiful or horrific, as it comes to symbolise and express aspects of the character with which it is associated. For instance: Emily's danger is reflected in the incongruity and abnormality of these cherries, which are as out of place as she is; Jonathan's lust is piqued by this fiery pepper; Lucy's wish to be special is crystallised in the preternatural fruit; Miss Havisham's immolation is represented in the mouldy and crumbling cake; and *Winter Hunger's* (1993) Alan's own wish to be cannibalised is reflected in the body as food. Marina Warner in *No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock* (2000) argues that 'feeding and monstrosity have begun to coincide in meaning' (Warner 2000, p. 73). And it is the case in these texts that voracious appetite is figured as monstrous and bestial, but *what* is eaten is also important. Miss Havisham is monstrous because she eats nothing, the female cannibal

is monstrous or simply animal because she hungers for human flesh and the villain is monstrous because he consumes the life and subjectivity of the heroine. Appetite alone is dangerous, but what is identified and used as food determines the monster.

Cannibalism

Female appetite is a recurring taboo within the Gothic, beginning with the anxiety and fear surrounding its female readership and culminating in the horror of the female cannibal and *vagina dentata*. The second section considers how this anxiety is literalised in the consumption of male flesh or the conversion of the male body into food. While sensibility and early Gothic obsessively represents the consumption and objection of the female body, for instance her cannibalisation in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* and burlesque metaphorical cannibalisation in *The New Monk* (1798),¹³ modern Gothic texts show female animalistic hunger. Men in these texts, on the other hand, are depicted as needing the bodies of women to reconstruct their identities. The male cannibal's consumption remains metaphorical possession, absorption (often of his body into hers) and preservation. While the female cannibal satisfies her hunger, the male strives to make himself whole. This discussion of the representation of cannibalism diverts from the collection *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (1998),

¹³ This text gives its author as R.S. Esquire, thought most notably by Montague Summers to be Richard Sicklemore (see Summers (1938) *The Gothic Quest* p. 302 n. 106), a satirist, playwright and publisher (see brief biography from <www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk>). This authorship is, however, contestable. The text is published by the notorious and subversive Minerva Press and is burlesque rather than horrific. It is a satire concerning the reception of the Gothic, rather than an attack of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* as Alison Milbank suggests (again see <www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk> for Milbank's essay 'Gothic Satires, Histories and Chap-Books').

which focuses on the colonising cannibalism of Europe, and racially specific narratives of cannibalism. Malchow's discussion of cannibalism in *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (1996) is also bound by racial issues; however, his discussion of the 'double sensation – both *fear* of being eaten and *disgust* at eating, at sharing in that unmentionable feast' (Malchow 1996, p. 45 original emphasis) is a significant duality explored in the second section. This notion of the 'unmentionable feast' is also pertinent.¹⁴ The unrepresentable quality of cannibalism is addressed in Chapter Four where the Gothic's tendency towards the unspeakable, of horrors 'wrapt in the shades [of their] own incomprehensible darkness' and thus 'more awful [sic], more striking, more terrible' (Burke [1757], p. 107), is discussed. Although the Gothic also, paradoxically, moves towards literalising, and so depicts desire as cannibalism the act remains unspeakable. The act of cannibalism is represented by a blank in language, a '—'. The literalising mode of the Gothic depicts, through a concrete symbol, the impossibility of confronting the act of this taboo.

¹⁴ Susan Skubal also engages with the unspeakable nature of cannibalism in relation to oral aggression in *Word of Mouth*; however, she suggests that 'the Gothic [can] get by' (Skubal 2002, p. 116) and represent the cannibal act and so she does not discuss the connection between the Gothic convention of the unspeakable and cannibalism.

Food and the Gothic: Metaphors of Reading a Literalising Mode

The Gothic text and the genre of the novel are both figured as ‘food’ that is ‘tasted’, enjoyed or found to be disgusting.¹⁵ Michael Gamer explains that it is necessary for the creation of any genre that it be ‘recognised as a commodity and therefore produced for consumption’ (Gamer 2000, p. 44), and the Gothic, because of its rehearsed features, is easily accepted as a consumable, becoming mass-produced for the delectation of the reading public.¹⁶ The transformation of the Gothic into a consumable is explicit in the *Monthly Magazine* of 1797, which employs an extended metaphor of food. The entire ‘Novels’ section within the review discusses authors serving a ‘plentiful...dinner’ which was ‘over-loaded with sweets’, ‘too highly garnished’ (*Monthly Magazine*, p. 121); it is too rich, excessively sensational because in the German and French flavour, in contrast to ‘substantial and wholesome’ offerings of a ‘sensible and correct author’ (*ibid.*, p. 121) who displays the moderation of the British style. The magazine tells us that ‘readers of Novels have been, as usual, plentifully supplied with daily food from the common market’ (*ibid.*, p. 120), but the Gothic of Ann Radcliffe represents a ‘rich treat’ (*ibid.*, p. 120). The *Monthly Magazine* continues to describe how these ‘Foreign dishes [are] not perhaps

¹⁵ This metaphor, and the use of these descriptions, are found repeatedly in the critical discourse surrounding Gothic texts, see specifically, in this instance, for ‘food’ (p. 120) *Monthly Magazine* 1797 ‘Novels’ section, and for ‘tasted’ (p. 209) see the letter: ‘On the Good Effects of Bad Novels’ (1798) signed ‘E.A’. Parts of this research have been included in my introduction to *The New Monk* published in 2007 by Valancourt Books.

¹⁶ The issue of whether the Gothic is a genre, mode, adjective, noun, collection of characteristics, or definition of space is a debated one. I use the term as a mode, but recognise its inception in 1764 with Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*.

exactly suited to the English palate' (ibid., p. 121), and are only advisable for those who 'have an appetite which can digest improbabilities' within such '*Sandwiches*' or offerings 'given by other hosts, or hostesses' (ibid., p. 120-1 original emphasis). The simplicity and realism, the reason, which is aligned with the 'English palate', is reinforced by the perceived 'improbabilities' of the Gothic. Yet the novel reader is invited to 'feast even to satiety' on Radcliffe's Gothically 'over-powering passion' (ibid., p. 120-1).

Taste is above all a physical sense and, as a term, 'taste' is one that is intimately bound to notions of the corporeal. The Gothic is a literal mode: it does not make the leap from the physical to the metaphoric; rather, it graphically represents metaphors in physical terms, and so discussions of taste remain fixed within bodily parentheses.¹⁷ The mouth is the site of taste, both cultural and physical, as Susan

¹⁷ Critical use of the term taste depends upon a sense of metaphoric suspension, in which the literal eventually comes to signify a penchant for aesthetic sensitivity and appreciation. The connotations of this term are such that the Gothic becomes figured as a consumable object. Even in aesthetic accounts prior to the formal rise of Gothic in Walpole, the application of the metaphor of physical taste to critical discernment is salient. Joseph Addison in *The Spectator* from 1712 explains that 'Most Languages make use of this Metaphor', the metaphor which illustrates the 'very great Conformity between that Mental Taste...and that Sensitive Taste which gives us such a Relish of every different Flavour that affects the Palate' (Addison & Steele [1711-14], etext). In 1731 the *Weekly Register* claims to define 'Taste [as] a peculiar relish' (Anon in Denvir 1983, p. 63), intertwining flavour and critical opinion. Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), a text which was a major influence on early Gothic texts, argues for general principles in taste on the basis of the physical sense; 'what seems sweet to one palate, is sweet to another', he argues and thus 'the pleasure and pains which every object excites in one man, it must raise in all mankind' (Burke in Denvir 1983, p. 68). David Hume in 1757 explains that although 'the principles of taste be universal...The organs of internal sensation are seldom so perfect as to allow the general principles their full play' (Hume in Denvir 1983, p. 66) and here individual physical defects account for differing judgement, but judgement is considered to be reliant on the 'organs of internal sensation', on the body. Post-modern, post-feminist criticism is interestingly similar. Hélène Cixous writes: 'what we are told is that knowledge might begin with the mouth, with the discovery of the taste of something, knowledge and taste go together' (Cixous in Heller & Moran 2003, p. 5); again taste is anchored to its physical corporeal site, the mouth.

Skubal argues: ‘culture passes through the mouth’ (Skubal 2002, p. 43). The mouth is an important locus of production and destruction:¹⁸ we consume and then become; we impose our shape upon what enters us or are assimilated within the dominant forces with which we are force-fed. The mouth is that gap within the body which bridges the inside and the outside. The mouth is the site of dialogue and of exchange. It is the discriminator and communicator of taste and, as Voltaire notes in his discussion of the term in ‘Le Goût’,¹⁹ ‘this ability to discriminate where food is concerned has given rise in every known language to a metaphor which expresses by the use of the word taste a feeling for the beauties and defects of the arts’ (Voltaire [1757], p. 66).²⁰ The universal exchange that Voltaire suggests between physical senses and the production of cultural discrimination helps to explain the repeated twinning of eating and reading in contemporary accounts of Gothic romance.²¹

¹⁸ The image of the mouth is a complex one. The mouth is the liminal gateway in the body of exchange. It is closely linked to Julia Kristeva’s ideas of abjection and the policing of the boundaries: inside/outside, self/other. It is an uncanny organ, undifferentiating external objects from the self. For further discussions of the importance of the mouth in relation to boundaries and their instability see Rosemary Betterton’s *An Intimate Distance*.

¹⁹ François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778) speculates that order is necessary to define taste. Voltaire’s discussion, ‘Le Goût’, is found in the text *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1757). Specifically, Voltaire reconnects the metaphorical term ‘Taste’ with the physical sense in his essay. The excerpt cited here is taken from *Music Aesthetics and the Eighteenth and Early – Nineteenth Centuries*.

²⁰ Taste, as an eighteenth-century term, is contentious and differs considerably from how we now use the idiom. In this period ‘taste’ was problematic. It was alternately argued to be an inherent quality and conversely a cultivated marker of breeding. Taste was both seen as an improvement on nature and a universal human quality. Our present use of taste as a noun suggests personal preference rather than something to conform to. For a discussion of the problem of taste, see A. Aronson’s ‘The Anatomy of Taste’ in *Modern Language Notes* April 1946 pp. 228-236.

²¹ It is possible to trace the use of the metaphor of food in critical discourse concerning literature much further back than Pamela Gilbert asserts in her essay ‘Ingestion, Contagion, Seduction: Victorian Metaphors of Reading’ in Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran’s collection, *Scenes of the Apple: Food and the Female Body in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Women’s Writing* pp. 65-86. As the title of this collection shows, the area of interest is the Victorian era and after. However the dominance of this

A taste for the Gothic is dangerous. Encouraging gluttony and greed, it is an appetite out of control. Thomas Love Peacock satirises the critical reaction to the Gothic with the character Mr Flosky²² in his parody of the mode, *Nightmare Abbey* (1818). Flosky declares that ‘the *reading public* which shuns the solid food of reason for the light diet of fiction, requires a perpetual adhibition of *sauce piquante* to the palate of its depraved imagination’ (*Nightmare Abbey*, p. 68, original emphasis). This ‘adhibition’ transgresses the Enlightenment’s ideological notion of an appropriate diet. John Locke remarks that the diet ‘ought to be very *plain* and simple’ (Locke [1693], p. 91 original emphasis), and his advice on these matters inform later eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking.²³ Gothic becomes the spicy food that ‘may heat the Blood’ and thus must ‘carefully...be avoided’ (ibid., p. 92). Such foods, as Mr Flosky warns, do not satisfy but ‘perpetually’ feed the ‘depraved imagination’ (*Nightmare Abbey*, p. 68). Like Locke’s account of over-seasoned

metaphor is a continuation of the anxiety surrounding ‘ingestion and bodily invasion’ rather than, as Gilbert suggests, this anxiety being specific to ‘The Victorian popular novel market’ (p. 65). See also Alberto Manguel’s *A History of Reading* (1997), which traces the metaphor to the seventeenth century and to biblical sources.

²² Mr Flosky embodies the extreme views that the literary critics of the eighteenth century expressed regarding romances and Gothic texts. In his notation to *Nightmare Abbey*, Raymond White writes that Flosky is most similar to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, even appropriating his terms, specifically ‘reading public’ which White explains was coined by Coleridge (see *Nightmare Abbey*, p. 265, n. 5). Here he also enters into the discourse of food and consumption when discussing this literature and in so doing reflects the discourse favoured by such critics.

²³ The literature’s mixing of genres, the ‘attempt to blend...two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern’ (*The Castle of Otranto*, p. 43) as Walpole famously discusses in the ‘Preface’ to the second edition of the ‘first’ Gothic text *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), is an example of this miscegenation and contagion which confuses the ‘natural’ order of things. This confusion transgresses the classical and Enlightenment desire for simple clarity and was rejected by a movement to, as Jean-Bernard le Blanc writes, ‘restore the true taste to design, by recalling us to beautiful nature’ (Le Blanc [1747], p. 46). Le Blanc (1706-1781), French poet and man of letters, compared English and French taste in his letters. This quotation is taken from his ‘Letter to the Comte de Caylus’ (1747). His appeal to Nature to find beauty created his ‘dislike of “Gothick barbarity”’ (*The Age of Enlightenment: an Anthology of Eighteenth-Century Texts*, p. 42).

foods, they cause our ‘Palates [to] grow into a relish’ (Locke [1693], p. 92). The eighteenth-century ‘*reading public*’ that Mr Flosky talks of were thought to be misled and corrupted by the literature upon which they gorged.²⁴

The Enlightenment’s anxiety over the definition of the term ‘taste’ finds a focus in Gothic texts. In opposition to this metaphorical taste, Gothic taste reflects Voltaire’s explication of *Goût* as intimately connected to the ‘phenomenon of physical taste’ (Voltaire [1757], p. 66).²⁵ The Gothic’s formulaic structure is likened to a ‘recipe’ in a 1797 article, where ‘*quant. suff.*’ of the ingredients are ‘Mix[ed]...together, in the form of three volumes, to be taken at any of the watering-places before going to bed’ (‘Terrorist Novel Writing’, p. 229).²⁶ The transference of the experience of taste from a physical sensation is never free of its biological

²⁴ Peacock is parodying the critic’s fear of the Gothic First Wave. The Gothic popularity was unprecedented and popular culture was defined by a Gothic flavour at this time.

²⁵ Voltaire discusses the ways in which ‘The taste of a nation can be impaired’ (Voltaire [1757], p. 68), that it is susceptible to influence and critics fear the contamination of national taste caused by adding the spice of Gothic. Ideology, in the guise of literary critics during the eighteenth century, fought to regain control and moderate this consumption by strictly regulating definitions of ‘taste’ and rejecting the Gothic as a tasteless style. However, ideological discourse is by nature duplicitous, and thus, although the Gothic is negatively regarded as lacking in taste, it is also represented as a gratuitous embellishment of a ‘natural’ form, the spice added to intensify flavour, or an unnecessary indulgence. The tasteful, in these terms, is ironically the bland, simple food of naturalistic or nationalistic English literature. In a continuation of this alimentary idiom, such realist texts are assigned the metaphor of archetypal English fare ‘plain potato and salt’ (Moir [1851], p. 337) - while the Gothic is associated with over-seasoned foreign foods. The Gothic contaminates the purity of national taste and leads to confusion. National taste is part of national identity and thus must be homogenised and separated out; mixing or miscegenation, by contrast, destabilizes it.

²⁶ The recipe continues as follows:

Take – An old castle, half of it ruinous.

A long gallery, with a great many doors, some secret ones.

Three murdered bodies, quite fresh.

As many skeletons, in chests and presses.

An old woman hanging by the neck, with her throat cut.

Assassins and desperadoes, *quant. suff.*

Noises, whispers, and groans, threescore at least (‘Terrorist Novel Writing’, p. 229).

origins. Morgan discusses the consequences of realising that ‘Ours is a psychology correlative to and defined by our biological character’ (Morgan 2002, p. 2), that is to say, how we function and behave is dictated by our organic structure: by our bodies. Thus discussions of artistic appreciation (or the endorsement of forms of art)²⁷ inescapably invoke a discourse of food. Although Rimelli discusses in the *Monthly Magazine* (1802) that any reading engenders a certain ‘taste for reading’ (Rimelli [1802], p. 310), it was the irresistibility and accessibility of the Gothic flavour in particular which was responsible for encouraging the appetite. Hunger is piqued by the Gothic text because it represents instant gratification. This is the ‘junk food’ of the literary world, not the staple wholesome sustenance of necessity, but a ‘rich treat’ (*Monthly Magazine*, p. 120). Marina Warner describes the ‘lip-smacking Gothic sensationalism’ (Warner 2002, p. 127) of these texts and represents the Gothic as delicious but forbidden fruit.²⁸

Eighteenth-century conceptions of taste emanated from the comparison to or imitation of Nature. What was tasteful was natural: simple, clear and clean, conforming to the neoclassical model. In this framework, the Gothic style was

²⁷ Taste in the eighteenth century was a didactic term; an absolute by which social worth was measured, or a ‘civic virtue’ (Denvir 1983, p. 63), as Bernard Denvir glosses an article in the *Weekly Register* for 6th February 1731, which explains taste to be ‘acquired by toil and study’ (in *ibid.*, p. 63).

²⁸ The Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) in ‘Idée sur les romans’ from *Les Crimes de l’Amour* (1800), explains that there is no need to search for the origins of Gothic literature, that all the cultures which produce this style share a commonality in that they express ‘either love or superstition’, that ‘this species of writing [Gothic]...became the necessary fruit of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe’ (Marquis de Sade [1800], p. 48-9). He sees this writing as forming a community against the horrors of humanity rather than a tool of difference by which nations are built. The image of fruit resonates with meanings that can be attached to the reading of Gothic novels; it connotes the dangerous and tempting (Eve’s apple, the sweet invitation and pleasures of the flesh, since both fruit and the body’s tissues are termed ‘flesh’), both fresh and archaic, and both nutritious and gluttonous.

without taste; it was, Arthur Lovejoy terms, ‘barbarous and tasteless’ (Lovejoy 1932, p. 419 emphasis added)²⁹ in his essay ‘The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature’ (1932). Although a negative term, denoting lack, it was seen as a gratuitous embellishment of a ‘natural’ form, the spice added to strengthen flavour, or an unnecessary indulgence. The Gothic, described in relation to architecture by John Evelyn,³⁰ ‘rather gluts the Eye than gratifies and pleases it with any reasonable Satisfaction’ (Evelyn in *ibid.*, p. 421). The Gothic is disruptive because the ‘taste’ and hunger to which it replies cultivate the impossible fantasy of satisfaction, dreams of suspense fulfilled, of resolution; but ‘Curiosity is raised oftener than it is gratified; or rather, it is raised so high that no adequate gratification can be given it’ (Anon 1794, p. 290)³¹ and consummation is continually deferred and perverted, mimicking the desire generated by consumerism. To the eighteenth-century critic, the Gothic aesthetic implied excessive superfluous additions. Moving from the Gothic style, primarily in architecture, to Gothic style in literature, the same premise persists. The Gothic is further represented not just as excessive, but as gluttonous, and is situated within a discourse of food and consumption. The Gothic is considered tasteless because it is too highly flavoured; it deviates from or spoils the natural simple, ‘plain’

²⁹ Indeed, the definition of ‘barbarian’ is ‘someone without taste’ (*Chambers Dictionary*, p. 127-8).

³⁰ See garden designer and author John Evelyn’s (1620-1706) discussion in *Account of Architects and Architecture* (1697) quoted in Lovejoy’s ‘The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature’ (1932). In this discussion Evelyn uses notions of ‘reasonable[ness]’ and ‘satisfaction’ (p. 421) to describe the desired aesthetic experience. These notions are what the Gothic opposes and calls into doubt by transgressing the hermeneutic code with its layered narratives, supernatural intervention and abrupt endings. These notions also define what the ‘tasteful’ represented in this period; it was unambiguous, and moderate. Taste was not open to interpretation; it was limited, ideologically sanctioned.

³¹ This observation was made by an anonymous author writing a ‘Review of Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho*’ for the *Critical Review* (1794).

foods by adding ‘spice’.³² Its deviation is clear; it is too much and transgresses acceptable bounds of textual form. Where it was associated with, as Lovejoy asserts, ‘the style supposedly invented by the Arabs’ (Lovejoy 1932, p. 423), it continues to be represented as Other as it becomes the ‘highly-peppered’ (Anon [1821], p. 332) and ‘high-spiced curries’ (Moir [1851], p. 337) which are ‘not perhaps exactly suited to the English palate’ (*Monthly Magazine*, p. 121) which ‘began to long for a little “plain potato and salt”’ (Moir [1851], p.337). There is a terror in both the ‘voracious disembodied appetite for otherness’ (Morton 2004, p. 8) and the voracious appetite of the Other (the woman, the foreign, the monstrous, the unconscious). There is terror because the ‘guardians of taste’ (Gamer 2000, p. 41), as Gamer labels the literary critics of the eighteenth century, lose their control over the reading public’s choices.

The compulsion to describe the Gothic in terms of indulgent food is crystallized by the use of ‘spice’³³ and the connotations that the term evoked in the

³² These terms together with Gothic texts described as ‘curries’ are taken from two essays: the anonymously written ‘Review of Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*’ (1821) for the *Monthly Review* and David Macbeth Moir’s essay ‘Monk Lewis and His Coterie’ (1851); both essays and the use of such terms shall be discussed in detail below.

³³ The childishness connected to Gothic literature, and imposed upon the female reader, is apparent in the repeated use of the adjective ‘spice’. Morton describes the exoticization, which culinary representations gave to the ‘oriental’, as somehow simplistic. He states: ‘a deep kernel of consumer ideology is figured in the poetics of spice – the fantasy of infinite (and often infantile) consumption’ (Morton 2004, p. 13). See also Morton’s *Radical Food: the Culture and Politics of Eating and Drinking 1790-1820* (2000). The *Monthly Review* (1792) argues that Clara Reeve’s *Old English Baron* (1777) ‘mak[es] a man a child’, instead of teaching the ‘child to become a man’ (in Gamer 2000, p. 60) and this illustrates the infantilization that the Gothic is seen to act on the reader; its ‘puerile’ influence rather ‘debilitates the mind’ (in *ibid.*, p. 60) than instructs it. The Gothic is also associated with adolescent readers, as R.S. Esquire writes in the ‘Preface’ to *The New Monk*: Gothic texts are a force which act by ‘corrupting the minds of its youth, poisons the fountain-head of those springs, which at a future day ought to be its support and glory’ (*TNM*, p. 3). It is the genre of the bedtime story: fairytales for adults. The Gothic was seen as juvenile; the author of ‘On the Titles of Modern Novels’ in *Monthly Magazine* (1797), for example, describes it as a “second childishness” of taste’ (E [1797], p. 304), which must be regulated and restricted ‘no longer...indulged’ (*ibid.*, p. 304). The Gothic is illicit; Sir Walter Scott explains that it must be ‘devoured...in secret’ (Scott [1810], p. 321), which of course

eighteenth century. Timothy Morton has discussed the ‘fantasies’ of spice and how this ‘sign made flesh’ was used in ‘discourses of spectrality, sacred presence, liminality, wealth, exoticism, commerce and imperialism’ (Morton 2000, p. 9). But in relation to the Gothic, this signifier was used to denote gratuitous excess. The spicity denoted the Other, specifically the pleasures of the Other. William Beckford’s eponymous character from his Orientalist Gothic tale *Vathek* (1786) is representative of the perceived ‘indulgencies unrestrained’ (*Vathek*, p. 1) and the fear that one appetite encourages another since this character is ‘much addicted to women and the pleasures of the table’ (ibid., p. 1). *Vathek* is at the mercy of his addiction and is driven to ‘constant consumption’ (ibid., p. 2) until he has destroyed his city, murdered his people and condemned himself to ‘grief without end’ (ibid., p. 120). This gluttony and the chaos it creates are projected onto the appetite for the Gothic, resulting in the literature being conceived as a dangerous indulgence, which threatens social order and ideological control.

As Thomas Gisborne suggests in his *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797), the romance of the late eighteenth century (and the most popular romance was the Gothic romance) was ‘liable to produce mischievous effects’ (Gisborne 1797, p. 216); used ‘To indulge’ the ‘appetite’, it corrupts it and the appetite ‘becomes too keen to be denied...it is more urgent, grows less nice and select in its fare’ (ibid., p.

makes it all the more enticing and delicious because it is forbidden. Forbidden knowledge is inescapably associated with naughty children, women and with the mouth. Hélène Cixous writes ‘knowledge and taste go together’ (Cixous in Heller & Moran 2003, p. 5). However, the female is denied orality and textuality; she is denied agency as she is grouped with children and represented as infantile.

216-7). Although the Gothic is seen to glut the appetite, ‘a habit is formed’ (ibid., p. 216) which is never satisfied. It threatens to deviate further from sanctioned and ideologically correct matter, threatening to absorb and assimilate the reader’s identity by contaminating it, poisoning him/her with its excess in the way that *The Monk*’s Ambrosio is destroyed by ‘the cravings of brutal appetite’ (*The Monk*, p. 236).³⁴ The Gothic text represents the sinful desire articulated by Lewis’s Matilda as ‘the power of procuring every bliss, which can make that life delicious!...I will enjoy unrestrained the gratification of my senses: Every passion shall be indulged, even to satiety; Then will I bid my Servants invent new pleasures, to revive and stimulate my glutton appetites!’ (ibid., p. 428).

‘Lasses, young and old...they devour my leaves’:³⁵ The Gothic’s Female Audience³⁶

[S]he... had been craving to be frightened
(*Northanger Abbey*, p. 173).

‘Women, even when they were not blatantly regarded as *machines de plaisir*, were generally perceived as more of a source than a subject of pleasure’ (Mulvey-Roberts 1996, p. xiii) argues Marie Mulvey-Roberts. Yet, as shall be discussed throughout this

³⁴Gamer cites Judith Halberstam’s definition of the Gothic and the Gothic presence in Romanticism as ‘characterized by “multiple modes of consumption and production, [of] dangerous consumptions and excessive productivity”’ (in Gamer 2000, p. 28).

³⁵ Montague Summers quotes Mr Pratt from *The secrets of a circulating library* (1797): ‘consumers – lasses, young and old...pretty caterpillars, as I call them, because they devour my leaves’ (Pratt in Summers 1938, p. 60, emphasis in text).

³⁶ William Beckford wrote to the Revd. Samuel Henley, who was translating *Vathek* (1786) from French into English, to urge him to adopt ‘a light, easy style, that *Misses*, &c., may not be scared’ (‘Introduction’ to *Vathek*, p. xvi).

study, the Gothic counters this position. Indeed, Jane Austen's Catherine Morland from *Northanger Abbey* (1818)³⁷ satirizes the young lady's obvious pleasure in reading Gothic novels. Catherine exclaims: 'while I have Udolpho to read, I feel as if nobody could make me miserable. Oh! the dreadful black veil!' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 38). Fred Botting explains the transgressive nature of the Gothic to present 'different, more exciting, worlds in which heroines in particular could encounter...adventurous freedom' (Botting 1996, p. 7). Although the ladies must 'shut themselves up, to read novels' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 33), the freedom which they experience vicariously is feared because, as John Gregory³⁸ warns in *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774), such literary adventures 'rais[e] the taste above the level of common life' (Gregory [1774], p. 117) for women. And Catherine is scolded for the 'extravagance of her late fancies' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 173). Female consumption is transgressive because it breaches the rights, or what Timothy Morton describes as the 'rites of consumption' (Morton 2004, p. xvi), the opportunities, sanctioned traditions, and the resources conventionally allocated to wealthy men. John Fordyce's sermon reacts against this transgression and preaches that the consuming woman is unnatural: 'she who can bear to peruse them [novels] must in her soul be a prostitute' (Fordyce [1766], p. 124-5).³⁹ The female reader is outcast

³⁷ Although this text was published in 1818, it was written during 1798-9 and is thus contemporary with the height of early Gothic production.

³⁸ John Gregory (1724-73) was a Medical Professor at Edinburgh University and pioneered medical ethics; see Laurence B. McCullough, 'Laying Medicine Open: Understanding Major Turning Points in the History of Medical Ethics' (*Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 9 [1999], pp. 7-23) from http://www3.oup.co.uk/ywes/hdb/Volume_80/Issue_02/html/mae011.html

³⁹ James Fordyce (1720-1796), evangelical preacher and orator also famous for writing 'On the Folly, Infamy, and Misery of Unlawful Pleasures' (1760), advocates a strict adherence to the scriptures of

and her appetite for reading becomes synonymous with sexual appetite and lower social standing. The paternal critic attempts to deny her consumption in order to save her, in the way that Henry attempts to instruct Catherine to ‘Consult your own understanding...of the probable’ (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 172).⁴⁰ The female reader is instructed, by Gregory for example, instead to ‘shun as you would do the most fatal poison, all that species of reading and conversation which warms the imagination’ (Gregory [1774], p. 117).⁴¹

Critical condemnation of reading and later of Gothic texts in particular did not, however, repress the female appetite. Indeed, Henry tells Catherine that men read novels, ‘nearly as many as women’; that ‘I myself have read hundreds and hundreds’ (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 96) and so women must have read hundreds more. Austen counters what she considers hypocritical criticism of the novel by asserting that ‘the greatest powers of the mind are displayed...the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language’ (ibid., p. 34) in

God, self-denial and restraint. He captivated audiences with his sermons. See
<www.electricscotland.com/history/other/fordyce_james.htm>

⁴⁰ As Michael Gamer writes, the ‘presumed readers of gothic and other kinds of romance (adolescents and young women) produce in reviewers an obsession with the morality of their producers’ (Gamer 2000, p. 70-1).

⁴¹ Novels were considered dangerous reading for women. The conduct text *The Female Mentor, or Select Conversations* (1793) has a section ‘On Novels’ where the female mentor Amanda explains: ‘when I consider a girl, who is nearly entering into life with a susceptible heart, instead of recommending novels in general to her perusal, I would strongly dissuade her from reading them. Women’s situations are very delicate’ (p. 112). She goes on to explain that although men may learn from the emulation of characters found in novels, women fall for the first man who pays her attention because the representation of love within novels is apt to allow ‘women to work themselves up to such a height of enthusiasm’ (p. 114).

novels. However, as she satirises the Gothic text, she may not be including this mode in her defence.⁴² So, unable to abate their consumption, romances were grudgingly accepted as training texts.⁴³ The attitude increasingly became that the forbidden must be tasted because when ‘the sweetened poison is removed, plain and wholesome food will always be relished. The growing mind will crave nourishment’ (Knox [1778], p. 306) as Vicessimus Knox claims in ‘On Novel Reading’ (1778). Thus, the rich Gothic becomes an appetiser from which the reader would progress onto ‘proper’ nourishing food. E.A., the writer of ‘On the Good Effects of Bad Novels’ in 1798, argues: ‘good taste will spring from the detestation of bad; and thus, spreading itself to myriads of mankind, in luxuriant branches from the well nourished root, will have ample vengeance for the ninety-nine who have been destroyed’ (E.A. [1798], p. 209). Yet the Gothic excites the imagination rather than cultivating a mind in which information can be planted. Such texts remain subversive because, as Fordyce warns, they awaken something illicit as they ‘paint scenes of pleasure and passion altogether improper for you [women] to behold, even with the mind’s eye’ (Fordyce [1766], p. 125).

⁴² Deirdre le Faye in her *Jane Austen: the World of Her Novels* (2002) argues that ‘The Austens were amused and not deluded by such novels [Gothic], and read them together in the long winter evenings, much as nowadays we might watch some mildly foolish soap opera...[she was] well-versed...in the popular fiction of the time’ (p. 206). Although le Faye clearly undervalues the Gothic as ‘foolish’, it may be inferred that Austen read these novels as entertainment and not necessarily where ‘the greatest powers of the mind are displayed’ (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 34).

⁴³ It came to be accepted that any reading was positive and would lead to more worthy texts being sought, since as E.A notes ‘having tasted books, [readers] commonly seek for others’ (E.A. 1798, p. 209). Clara Reeve in her ‘Preface’ to the second edition of *The Old English Baron* (1778) explains that ‘the business of Romance is, first, to excite the attention, and, secondly to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent end’ (Reeve [1778], p. 4). The Romance primes the reader to take in information because it sugar coats it; it ‘throws a veil over the blemishes’ (Reeve [1778], p. 3).

The fear of female consumption progresses from these metaphorical discussions to the regulation of her physical eating habits. Gregory warns:

There is a species of refinement in luxury, just beginning to prevail among the gentlemen of this country, to which our ladies are as yet as great strangers as any women upon earth; I hope, for the honour of the sex, they may ever continue so: I mean, the luxury of eating. It is a despicable selfish vice in men, but in your sex it is beyond expression indelicate and disgusting (Gregory [1774], p. 39).

As William Miller states in his discussion of gluttony, ‘there is something very dangerous about eating’ (Miller 1997, p. 106). But, while male eating is ‘selfish’ and a ‘vice’, female eating is more than dangerous, being dishonourable and unspeakably ‘beyond expression’; it is the opposite to sensibility’s emphasis on delicacy being ‘indelicate’ and it is ‘disgusting’. For the female who is ‘craving’ (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 173), ‘the luxury of eating’ is taboo.

Part One: Representations of the Starving Heroine in Sensibility, Early Gothic and Nineteenth-Century Gothic

Introduction: 'The luxury of eating'

The Gothic heroine's eating habits shape her characterisation, displaying her conformity or her transgression. The early Gothic heroine is fed with a rustic diet following the 'natural' moderation dictated by sensibility. She shuns indulgence but is also punished for excessive abstinence. As the Gothic heroine develops in the nineteenth century, she harnesses the power food holds, but early Gothic texts reply to the anxiety surrounding unrestrained sensibility. Mrs. Elizabeth Bonhote's 1788 text *The Parental Monitor*⁴⁴ explains that sensibility should always be regulated

⁴⁴ Mrs. Elizabeth Bonhote writes a conduct manual. In the 'Preface' she notes that she has 'endeavoured to unite amusement with instruction, and to write of the language of truth in a style most likely to captivate the attention, lest she should disgust and weary those she meant and wished to improve; and to implant proper ideas in their minds, without entirely disappointing their youthful expectations' (Bonhote 1788, p. iii). This text intends to instruct thought as well as the appropriate appreciation of art, behaviour in interpersonal relationships, and indeed all manner of comportment. The text encourages sensibility, but attempts to instruct in the proper manner of applying it to the real world. It warns that the young lady should 'in the moments you are weeping at fictitious woe, soften your heart and interest your feelings in behalf of real distress, whilst the sentiments of the poet will

‘under proper restrictions’ (Bonhote 1788, p. 183) or it can ‘degenerate into weakness’ (ibid., p. 186), and early Gothic texts use food and the body’s relationship with it as the medium in which to represent this degeneration. The Gothic, as a literalising mode, communicates ‘*demetaphori[cally]*’ (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 126).⁴⁵ The ‘weakness’ of sensibility is literalised in early Gothic by the stark spectacle of the starved body. But in the nineteenth century, the Gothic heroine rewrites the language of her body’s ‘silent appeal’ (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 56) by refusing it food. She is empowered by this act rather than victimised; starvation is not imposed upon her as it is in early Gothic: it is an example of her independent choice and emancipation because she diminishes the physical trap of her body. The Gothic mode generally abounds with frail women, but where they were once objects of desire, in the nineteenth century they become spectres of defiance.

The starved body recurs so persistently within the Gothic that it becomes a convention of the mode. It recurs so persistently that it is parodied. The unfortunately plump and healthy Cherubina from Eaton Stannard Barrett’s satire *The Heroine* (1813) proclaims how she must become ‘so fragile, that a breath of wind might scatter [her frame] like chaff’ (*The Heroine*, p. 39) in order to become a heroine. The slight, frail body seems a necessary characteristic of the Gothic heroine. The female body becomes Gothic – that is to say the object of horrified responses – through the representation of its starved state. The connotations of the starved body differ in the

improve your ideas, captivate your attention, awaken and call into action your sensibility’ (ibid., p. 102).

⁴⁵ Abraham and Torok describe demetaphorization to be ‘taking literally what is meant figuratively’ (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 126).

texts of sensibility, early Gothic and nineteenth-century Gothic, and the heroine's relationship with food correspondingly differs. In sensibility, for example Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761),⁴⁶ food is rustic and consumed without enjoyment. In early Gothic, such as Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), refusing to eat is considered as decadent as gluttony, and in nineteenth-century Gothic, the control of food and thus of the body liberates the heroine. There are also scenes where food itself is Gothicised; it takes on an unnatural quality and appears unsettlingly vivid or disgustingly corrupt. The language used to describe starved bodies is also markedly different in each group of texts. Sensibility beautifies the starved body; early Gothic details its materiality; nineteenth-century Gothic represents female flesh as something that retards equality and overpowers. In order to discuss how the representation of the heroine's starved body develops, the following section will explore the differences between sensibility, early Gothic and nineteenth-century Gothic. However, because of the close relationship between sensibility's representations and those within early Gothic, these two modes are discussed more or less together. As Bonhote writes, 'Real Sensibility, so far from flying the gloomy mansions of distress, will hasten to enliven them' (Bonhote 1788, p. 186); sensibility is attracted to the Gothic mode and the early Gothic cannot escape its influence. Indeed, a Gothic discourse became attached to sensibility as it began to fall out of favour.⁴⁷ Coleridge in his miscellany *The Watchman* of 1796 describes the reader of sensibility: 'She sips a beverage

⁴⁶ *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's epistolary novel, is as didactic as it is entertaining for the female reader. It is an example of a pre-Gothic model of the heroine of sensibility.

⁴⁷ Janet Todd observes that the height of sensibility ran between 1740 and 1770. See her *Sensibility: an Introduction* (1986).

sweetened with human blood, even while she is weeping over the refined sorrows of Werther and Clementina. Sensibility is not Benevolence' (Coleridge [1796], p. 139).⁴⁸ Coleridge goes on to write in *Aides to Reflection* (1836) that sensibility, as an 'excessive and unhealthy sensitiveness' (Coleridge [1836], p. 26), inhabits 'the twilight between vice and virtue' (ibid., p. 28). This 'weeping' reader is tainted by her indifference to the blood she drinks and becomes dark and horrifying while sensibility itself is described as lurking in the shadows of twilight, changing its didactic force into the ambiguous and dangerous. Texts of sensibility made a path for the Gothic or prepared the reader; it, Todd argues, 'justified the most violent and vicious appetites' (Todd 1986, p. 141). Sensibility was on a Gothic trajectory since 'sentiment tended to become sensational' (ibid., p. 148). It is not surprising, then, that critics talk of the heroines of sensibility within a Gothic discourse.⁴⁹ The appetite that sensibility attempts to restrain becomes increasingly taboo and this is when it becomes a Gothic concern.⁵⁰ Sensibility's representations of the heroine and her starved body are

⁴⁸ Coleridge is enraged by the seeming indifference texts of sensibility encourage towards 'real' suffering. He begins this description by exclaiming: 'The fine lady's nerves are not shattered by the shrieks [of the slaves on the merchant ship]!' (Coleridge [1796], p. 139) but imagined sorrows elicit tears. Thus her affectation is 'a false and bastard sensibility' (ibid., p. 139). Coleridge also considers such texts to encourage selfishness, he comments: 'Our own sorrows, like the Princes of Hell in Milton's Pandemonium, sit enthroned "bulky and vast" while the miseries of our fellow-creatures dwindle into pigmy forms, and are crowded [sic], an innumerable multitude, into some dark corner of the heart' (ibid., p. 139-40).

⁴⁹ Donnalee Frega writes in her book-long discussion of Clarrisa's anorectic behaviour, *Speaking in Hunger*, that a 'Gothic scenario' (that of the anorexic's conflict described as feeling that 'the gentlest breeze makes their windows rattle, and the house grows shadows around the family' (psychiatrist John Sours in Frega 1998, p. 40)) 'expresses perfectly the atmosphere we have come to expect of the Harlow mansion' (Frega 1998, p. 40). The archetypal heroine of sensibility is best described in terms of a Gothic aesthetic.

⁵⁰ John Gregory in his *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) suggests that even a 'healthy' appetite should be concealed: 'though good health be one of the greatest blessings of life, never make a boast of it, but enjoy it in grateful silence. We so naturally associate the idea of female softness and delicacy with a correspondent delicacy of constitution, that when a woman speaks of her strength, her

discussed with examples from Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa; or the History of a Young Lady* (1747), Rousseau's *Julie*, and the later distillation found in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). The expression of sensibility within these texts is framed by Mary Wollstonecraft's critique of the cult in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and her own fiction *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798). Sensibility, Todd contends, may be seen by some as a 'destabilizing addiction and...glamorous corruption' (Todd 1986, p. 149), and this indulgence prepares the palate for the excesses of the Gothic text.

The influence of these representations upon the early Gothic conceptualisation of the heroine is explored through a concentration upon the sensibility found in Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, lesser known parodies and comic early Gothic (where the conventions become clear because of their exaggeration) such as the anonymously written *The Animated Skeleton* (1798) and Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813).⁵¹ Austen's *Northanger Abbey* parodies both sensibility and the Gothic, conveying 'a blow upon sentiment' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 203) by promoting 'real delicacy' (*ibid.*, p. 51) through Catherine being 'awakened' (*ibid.*, p. 173) from the 'terror upon terror' (*ibid.*, p. 167) of the Gothic imagination. Early Gothic examples of texts which break away from the doctrine of sensibility, in their language and explicit descriptions, are illustrated through examples found in Sophia Lee's *The Recess; or, A Tale of Other*

extraordinary appetite, her ability to bear excessive fatigue, we recoil at the description in a way she is little aware of' (Gregory 1774, p. 50-1).

⁵¹ For a discussion of Barrett's use of comedy and parody see Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik's article 'Dead Funny: Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* as Comic Gothic' in *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* 5 (Nov 2000) <http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cc05_n02.html>.

Times (1783-85), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and numerous chapbooks, some anonymous and others written by Sarah Wilkinson.

The profound changes which occur in the Gothic of the nineteenth century, specifically the movement away from the body to the power of the mind, and the ways in which the body refuses this detachment, will be explored using Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860-1). Contemporary theoretical debates influence the portrayal of the heroine. These debates centre on the delineation of gender roles continued from the eighteenth century. The allocation of these roles is threatened in the nineteenth century because the female is allowed closer to the male sphere of work and education.⁵² The female questions her lot; in Sarah Ellis's *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character, and Responsibilities* (1842) Ellis asks of women: 'What is your position in society?' only to answer, 'the first thing of importance is to be content to be inferior to men – inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength' (Ellis 1842, p. 8).⁵³ Thus the female's body is used as a schema to determine

⁵² Although the nineteenth-century woman's education is broader she is still only able to work in very limited roles. Mary Taylor writes to Ellen Nussey in 1849: 'There are no means for a woman to live in England but by teaching, sewing or washing. The last is the best. The best paid, and the least unhealthy & the most free. But it is not paid well enough to live by' (in Ingham 2006, p. 53).

⁵³ Such questioning, Ellis suggests, is natural to a young girl entering a sphere of life new to her 'on "completing her education"...her mind is so often the subject of new impressions, and her attention so frequently absorbed by new motives for exertion, that, if at all accustomed to reflect, we cannot doubt that she will make these or similar questions... "What is my position in society? what do I aim at?"' (Ellis 1842, p. 7). The suggestion seems to be that her education has enabled her to 'reflect' and allow her 'attention' to be 'absorbed' and so she must be instructed to accept that this mind can go no further. This girl's mind is taught differently from her eighteenth-century predecessor who was educated with the primary function to 'form the manners' (Allen 1760, p. vi), or so the text *The polite lady: or a course of female education* of 1760 indicates. Although the nineteenth-century girl's mind has been somewhat broadened by 'the conventional feminine education in French, Italian, and possibly German;

her mental faculties and this is what Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, in particular, reject. Silver notes that ‘Victorians used to define the ideal women – spiritual, non-sexual, self-disciplined’ (Silver 2002, p. 3) all characteristics that, she argues, the anorexic desires to possess. I am not, however, arguing that these characters suffer anorexia nervosa; instead I argue that they starve to reclaim control over a body that is a cultural hindrance, to diminish a surface that speaks for them so that they may choose their own words.⁵⁴ Food in these texts becomes a site of conflict where issues of power and possession are fought out.

Sensibility

The heroine of sensibility is a didactic model. Her relationship to food is one of necessity. The equilibrium of her body is maintained by her wholesome and natural

drawing; music; and needlework’ (Ingham 2006, p. 4), she is still limited to the skills that are desirable in a wife and mother. Indeed, Ingram notes that ‘Not until the 1850’s, with the founding of Cheltenham Ladies College (1841) and the North London Collegiate School (1850), were there serious attempts to provide secondary education for middle-class girls’ (ibid., p. 53).

⁵⁴ Robert Miles discusses the female body in sensibility to be a ‘wider, more glittering surface’ (Miles 2002, p. 21). In 1837 Eliza Farra’s *The Young Lady’s Friend* writes that ‘Your whole deportment should give the idea that your person, your voice, and your mind are entirely under your own control. Self-possession is the first requisite to good manners’ (Farra 1837, p. 362-3). However, this is again a display of excessive restraint that is ideologically imposed. The heroines under discussion here wish to truly possess the mind and body, not simply in order to convey ‘good manners’, but so that they are not wholly defined by their femininity. As Samuel Coleridge writes in his *Aides to Reflection* (1836): ‘sensibility is the ornament and becoming attire of virtue’ (Coleridge [1836], p. 26); it is something put on. He continues, ‘thus the double sense of the word, *become*. I have known persons so anxious to have their dress become them, as to convert it at length into their proper self, and thus to actually become the dress. Such a one...I consider as but a suit of live finery’ (ibid., p. 26-7, n.7). The person who becomes their assumption of deportment, or appearance of virtue, loses themselves in this image. The body underneath vanishes as their performance becomes their ‘proper self’. The nineteenth-century Gothic heroine strips off this dress to uncover her true self.

diet.⁵⁵ The following points are crucial in creating and differentiating the heroine of sensibility's representation. When she starves it only enhances her beauty or morality. Examples of this will be discussed in relation to the language of sensibility. The body becomes paradoxical within sensibility. It should be both a medium of communication for a woman and something that the woman must transcend. Within sensibility, the body is not described; rather, the body becomes a collection of signs that are interpreted. The body of sensibility is a cipher. It is abstracted into a language which refuses its material state. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines 'cipher' as both 'a secret or disguised way of writing' and 'a thing of no importance' (*COD*, p. 237),⁵⁶ and this is the position that the body occupies within sensibility: it is simultaneously an index of meaning and meaningless.

Early Gothic

Representations of the heroine in early Gothic texts follow the model of sensibility. Their bodies are also regulated by moderation. This is the case in Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, where the heroine's appetite is marked by moderation not starvation. When Emily refuses food, for example, she is considered deviant. Her refusal of food does not express her virtue; it signifies an

⁵⁵ Robert Whytt's 1777 *Traité de maladies nerveuses* is translated in Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* and argues that 'violations of the diet' are amongst the important imbalances which can cause 'morbific symptoms' to the body in 'a state of sensibility' (Foucault [1967], p. 145). The medical definition of physiological sensibility – sensitivity of the nerves, and the doctrine of sensibility – codes of conduct, behaviour and thought, are not clearly delineated. They are reciprocal: the nerves and body effect behaviour and appearance.

⁵⁶ *COD* refers to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

assertion of choice, which is considered transgressive for women in this context. In sensibility the heroine abstains in order to *show* her distress, for example Clarissa and Marianne (detailed below), while in early Gothic women are starved.⁵⁷ The control of food is taken from them. The early Gothic heroine repeats sensibility's marker of transcendence: the faint. Here, however, the faint is linked to nausea and the desire to escape embodiment, rather than the 'fainting spirits' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 139) that Henry Tilney mocks as an affected physical manifestation of sympathetic virtue. Nevertheless, the faint refuses transcendence and enacts a resurfacing of the materiality of the body. Another resurrection of the material is manifest in the form of the starved maternal body, which also refuses the early Gothic heroine's denial of her body. The heroine's determination to transcend or deny her physicality is undermined in early Gothic by her confrontation with the starved body and her emotional and physical connection to it. Sensibility's use of the spectacle of corruption is blatantly didactic. Ugly death is a punishment and the sin is written on the body, as Mrs. Sinclair's death in *Clarissa* shows.⁵⁸ However, this description only encourages

⁵⁷ In early Gothic texts the anti-heroine is starved as a punishment. The heroines in *The Recess*, numerous mothers, and deviant women are all punished by the deprivation of food.

⁵⁸ Janet Todd notes: 'the heroine's antithesis, the wicked Sinclair, is startlingly hardhearted, and her repulsive and noisy death of mortification contrasts with the purifying, emaciating and quiet death of Clarissa' (Todd 1986, p. 77). Sinclair dies in the throes of agony and her body decays before our eyes: 'Behold her, then, spreading the whole tumbled bed with her huge quaggy carcass...her broad hands clenched with violence; her big eyes goggling...her matted grizzly hair, made irreverent by her wickedness...spread about her fat ears and brawny neck...her wide mouth...splitting her face...her bellows-shaped and various coloured breasts ascending by turns to her chin, and descending out of sight, with the violence of her graspings' (*Clarissa*, p. 1388). Her crimes against sensibility's dictated roles for women reduce her to this dehumanised, bestial and abject sight. She is the opposite of Clarissa who starves herself. Mrs. Sinclair's 'misfortune has not at all sunk her but rather, as I thought, increased her flesh; rage and violence perhaps swelling her muscly [sic] features' (ibid., p. 1388). Her death destroys her femininity: her flesh overwhelms her body and becomes masculinised, and 'muscly' with her 'brawny neck'. Sinclair's body disgusts because there is so much of it. Hers is a 'huge quaggy carcass'; she even has 'fat ears'. Her pendulous breasts rot to become 'bellows-shaped and various coloured'. Sinclair's 'wickedness' has corrupted her body because her sin resides there: she was a

conformity to the ethereal ideal. Sensibility's proscriptive denial of the body and early Gothic's confrontation with it are marked in the language used. Samuel Richardson's eponymous *Clarissa* is described as 'a lovely skeleton' (*Clarissa*, p. 1231) while Sophia Lee's *The Recess; or, A Tale of Other Times*,⁵⁹ details Ellinor's body as 'shrunk, wan, and withered' (*The Recess*, p. 187). Examples of sensibility's heroines who starve themselves to convey their virtue and femininity through the manipulation of their bodies are contrasted with early Gothic heroines whose grief, lack and resistance are literalised in the spectacle of their starvation.

Nineteenth-Century Gothic

The nineteenth-century Gothic heroine starves her body to reduce the inferiority which is imposed upon female flesh. The heroine wishes to silence the voice that her body is given because it contradicts her mind. There is a clear mind body split shown through the ways in which the nineteenth-century Gothic heroine internalises the Gothic tyrant and with this masculine mind dominates the feminine body. Gothic

prostitute (see Todd for more on Mrs. Sinclair as madam). This focus on the body is used didactically. She is no longer human, 'more like a wolf than a human creature' (*ibid.*, p. 1387) and the spectacle of her death is not designed to elicit feelings of sympathy or pity, but rather disgust and scorn. The ugly deaths, which are depicted in early Gothic texts and discussed below, maintain an element of poignancy which Mrs. Sinclair's corruption is refused. This is the body of anti-sensibility and it is revolting. Her hair symbolises this as it is 'matted grizzly hair', and even in death the woman should be groomed and presentable, cleansed of any signs of bodily life. Sinclair's dishevelled and unwashed hair becomes 'irreverent', a sign of her disrespect for those viewing her and for her own femininity proscribed by sensibility. She is everything the young woman should avoid and that is swamped in matter that she cannot restrain: her 'huge' body is 'spreading', she is 'fat' and this conveys that she cannot suppress her appetites (for food or sex) and she is inhuman because her gender becomes confused.

⁵⁹ This Gothic tale recounts the pseudo-historical experiences of Mary Queen of Scots' fictional illegitimate twin daughters.

eruptions within these texts occur at moments when the heroine is confronted with her embodiment. The language used to describe her starved body echoes that of early Gothic descriptions but these are often given in the first person, denoting the heroine's ownership of her body and refusal of its objectification. The heroine describes her own 'wasted' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 340, *Villette*, p. 185, *WH*, p. 119) body.⁶⁰ In these texts the heroine's fear of losing possession of her body when it is absorbed into that of her husband creates an anxiety which is vented in the destruction of the body through starvation. Jane Eyre sickens and starves until she marries on her own terms, Miss Havisham creates a spectacle of her loss in the ruination of her body, and Cathy starves to free herself of her marriage to Linton and to enjoy mutual consumption with Heathcliff in death. In these later texts, the heroine feels empowered through abstinence. The Gothic is manifest within later texts through an irreconcilable dichotomy: the woman wants to be freed, expansive and independent, but her mode of rebellion is to control and reduce her body by becoming her own tyrant.

Silver states that 'anorexia stems from the Victorian era, discovered and diagnosed almost simultaneously in the mid-nineteenth century by doctors in Britain, France, and America' (Silver 2002, p. 3), and although its classification occurred at this time, the cultural climate which encouraged a restriction in appetite and specific body-type or image began before this in the doctrine of sensibility. The economic changes which Janet Todd notes caused women to lose 'ground economically', when

⁶⁰ *WH* refers to *Wuthering Heights*.

‘For the first time in English history the middle-class family seemed to need only the work of the man’ (Todd 1986, p. 17), made a commodity of the woman. Valued for her body alone, her ‘business was little more than coquetry in youth and motherhood or fashion in later years’ (ibid., p. 17). Women were wholly dependent upon men: their fathers and husbands. This dependence seemed to impose a position of child upon all women; their weakness and ‘delicacy’ was exaggerated and fetishised in the strictures of sensibility. Because of the disparate roles of men and women their difference was exaggerated and notions of the feminine and the masculine were likewise emphasised. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus discuss the different ‘spheres’ that men and women inhabited and how this ‘clear separation of spheres according to gender’ was ‘central to class identity’ (Barker & Chalus 1997, p. 19). This is important in relation to sensibility because it is through this separation and wish to exaggeratedly define difference that sensibility was aligned with women and considered feminine: ‘masculinity became decisively equated with the public sphere of “work”, politics and power, femininity with that of the private sphere of the “home, family and emotion”’ (ibid., p. 19). Again in order to display their femininity and thus conform to the separation of genders, women must be delicate and restrained. Barker-Benfield comments upon a letter printed in *The Spectator* of 1711, that it is ‘written in the voice of a “gentleman” whose “taste” was “delicate”, in contrast to the young woman he describes’ (Barker-Benfield 1992, p. 289). The letter criticises the young woman for her inability to conform to the appropriate ‘domestic display’ (ibid., p. 289), her inability to display sensibility within her domestic sphere. She ‘either wholly neglects, or has no Notion of that which Polite People have agreed to distinguish by the name *Delicacy*’ (Addison and Steele [1711-14], etext) because,

Barker-Benfield explains, she is too aware of ‘the body’s functions’ (Barker-Benfield 1992, p. 290) and appetites: ‘she...professed before a large Company, that *she was all over in a Sweat*. She told me this Afternoon that her *Stomach aked* [sic]; and was complaining Yesterday at Dinner of something that *stuck in her Teeth*’ and, to top it all, what makes the would-be suitor ‘almost...resolve never to see her more’ is that ‘I treated her with a Basket of Fruit last Summer, which she ate so very greedily’ (Addison and Steele [1711-14], etext). After these outbursts he writes, ‘I begin to tremble when ever I see her about to speak or move’ (ibid.). The female of sensibility’s speech and actions must be wholly predictable; she must regulate her appetites and control a body she denies functions. She displays her conformity to these rules, which allow her to be accepted and married, through, in part, a regulation of her food.⁶¹ The nineteenth-century heroines in the texts discussed here, however, use this control over their bodies to minimise their physicality. In these cases, rather than, as Silver argues, starvation being ‘a sign of female powerlessness’ (Silver 2002, p. 102), it is a sign that the heroine takes possession of herself.

⁶¹ Barker-Benfield suggests that the ‘faux pas (eating greedily) was the clearest example’ of how ‘the condition’ of her body parts ‘were connected with appetite’ (Barker-Benfield 1992, p. 290).

Chapter 1: From Sensibility to Starvation: The Heroine's Gothic Embodiment

Women and Sensibility

I would not boast of sensibility – a quality, perhaps, more to be feared, than desired (*Udolpho*, p. 281).⁶²

In order to discuss the early Gothic's engagement with sensibility, a brief consideration of how this doctrine restricted women's lives is important.⁶³ This is

⁶² *Udolpho* refers to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

⁶³ Sensibility was a contentious term in the eighteenth century because it described material experience but was also used to signify more abstract delicacy of feelings and thoughts. On 'Conduct and Behaviour', John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) explains that sensibility although 'a weakness and incumbrance [*sic*] in our sex...in yours it is peculiarly engaging' (Gregory 1774, p. 27). He goes on to detail the ways in which sensibility should be manifested. 'Blushing', being 'silent in company' and maintaining 'dignified modesty' (*ibid.*, p. 27-8) are a few of these signs of sensibility. Hannah More in her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education Vol. 2* 1799, like Wollstonecraft, sees the perils of sensibility and promotes female education which is useful and which 'instead of stimulating her sensibility, will chastise it' (More 1799, p. 2). The tensions surrounding this term are in some measure explicated within the Gothic representations of it. In the Gothic text it is shown to be dangerous but necessary in moderation in order for the female to be attractive and attain status in the cultural climate of the eighteenth century. Todd notes that when sensibility is simultaneously invoked to construct the heroine's character and then decried 'the effect is often decidedly schizophrenic' (Todd 1986, p. 144). Todd comments on the use of sensibility within Radcliffe's *Udolpho* and observes that Radcliffe 'warns against the sensibility that is the salient characteristic of her heroine; she does so in a dying speech from a father who has first wiped away his

especially crucial because the early Gothic text engages with sensibility primarily in relation to its heroines. The ‘boasted sensibility’ (ibid., p. 281) to which Emily objects in the above quotation seems to reply to the women Mary Wollstonecraft describes as being ‘proud of [their] delicacy and sensibility’ (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 58). The sensibility in *Udolpho* is aligned with the selfishness that Wollstonecraft finds monstrous.⁶⁴ Emily’s Aunt explains, ‘I thought it [sensibility] would not teach you to feel either duty, or affection, for your relations’ (*Udolpho*, p. 281). Sensibility, in this context, suggests affectation and indulgence.⁶⁵ Austen’s parody of this contrivance is shown in her character Catherine Morland who, because she is ‘a true quality heroine’ (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 22), embodies all that Austen considers sensibility to corrupt: Catherine is ‘cheerful and open, without secret conceit or affectation of any kind’ (ibid., p. 17); she is ‘Open, candid, artless, guileless, with affections strong but simple, forming no pretensions, and knowing no disguise’ (ibid., p. 179).⁶⁶ Sensibility enacts a double restriction; it dictates women’s actions but must also be limited and controlled in itself. Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the*

single tear’ (ibid., p. 144). The most influential recent studies of sensibility include: Ann Jesse Van Sant’s *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Sense In Context*; Markman Ellis’s *The Politics of Sensibility*; and G. J. Barker-Benfield’s *The Culture of Sensibility*.

⁶⁴ The woman referred to in Wollstonecraft’s above quotation is later termed a ‘monster’ (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 58) for her idleness.

⁶⁵ This ‘extreme sensibility’ is warned against by Elizabeth Bonhote who agrees that, if not limited to its ‘proper bounds’ (Bonhote 1788, p. 186) sensibility can be ‘a dangerous inmate of the female bosom’ (ibid., p. 185) since it deprives women of generous feelings and leads them to affectation. This is shown when the woman would ‘weep for the death of a linnet – to faint at the sight of a spider...[but] would not shed so many tears for a parent, husband, or child, as for a favourite parrot’ (ibid., p. 185).

⁶⁶ Henry, through this description, ironically comments upon Isabella, whom he fears may become his sister-in-law and who possesses the opposite of these qualities, while Eleanor states she would ‘delight in’ such a sister-in-law ‘with a smile’ (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 179) because she recognises these qualities in Catherine and conveys her wish that Henry will marry Catherine.

Rights of Woman (1792) discusses Jean-Jacques Rousseau's constructions of femininity and condemns the posturing, weakened and controlled woman that sensibility produces. Sensibility's woman is made for men in the eyes of God and subjugated by them; her mind is vacuous and her flesh inert. Austen notes satirically that, 'imbecility in females is a great enhancement of their personal charms' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 99). The rigours of sensibility are, Wollstonecraft suggests, in part to blame for the female fate. She shows how the trap of sensibility lures the woman with the promise of emotional liberty only to necessitate her confinement. '[S]ensibility, the plaything of outward circumstances, must be subjected to authority, or moderated by reason' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 105), she observes, echoing Bonhote's direction that the woman must 'let it [sensibility] not make such encroachments on your feelings as to derive you of sufficient resolution to limit it to its proper bounds' (Bonhote 1788, p. 186). Rousseau dictates that the female should be carefully restricted on the basis of her affected and rehearsed behaviour. He writes:

[women] have, or ought to have, but little liberty, they are apt to indulge themselves excessively in what is allowed them. Addicted in every thing to extremes they are even more transported at their diversions than boys (Rousseau [1762], p. 31).

Rousseau considers the female a glutton who is 'addicted...to extremes'; however, Wollstonecraft's text shows that it is the constant fluctuation between deprivation and freedom that would create such binging. A discourse of consumption is invoked to manipulate women. The woman that sensibility constructs is ruled by her feelings and this lack of regulation leads her to excess. Her consumption is the anxiety by which she is controlled. Women are denied choice: they must submit to 'what is allowed them' because they are starved by their 'little liberty'. Thus when they do eventually

assert their notions of self, they glut, not knowing when such an opportunity will arise again. The female reader binges on the freedom represented by the heroine only to become subjugated by the oppression which controls this fictional Other. Sensibility then encourages her desire and appetite only to condemn her for it.

The notion that women are controlled ideologically by references to what is appropriate consumption is evident in Rousseau's *Julie*. Sensibility itself is metaphorically described as something that the woman is compelled to ingest: 'I have been made to drink to the dregs the bittersweet cup of sensibility' (*Julie*, p. 601) Julie whispers on her deathbed. This archetypal heroine of sensibility recognises the ambivalent, 'bittersweet' nature of this doctrine and how her own 'sweetness' is imposed upon her by sensibility. Julie is described as 'the sweet Julie' (*Julie*, p. 76), and 'sweet' because of her sensibility.⁶⁷ Sensibility is also bitter since its imposition of weakness takes her life.⁶⁸ Yet, within the text of sensibility, the female's delicacy is represented as positive and enhancing, not debilitating as the early Gothic shows it to be.⁶⁹ The text itself is designed to be consumed by women. *Julie* is 'suited to

⁶⁷ Examples of the portrayal of her sensibility are found when she is, for example, 'moved...so violently' that she spent the night in 'frightful struggles' and is suffering 'a burning fever that only increased until finally it gave her transports' (*Julie*, p. 76-7). Julie suffers thus because of her intense feeling.

⁶⁸ Julie is sickened by 'agitations' (*Julie*, p. 76) and 'transports' (ibid., p. 77), symptoms of her delicate and susceptible nerves, and of course her 'fast' (ibid., p. 600). Although she becomes ill after she 'plunge[s] after [her] child' into the lake, it is 'the terror, the *emotion*' (my emphasis) as well as the 'fall, the draining of the water' which leaves her in a 'prolonged faint' (ibid., p. 578). Indeed, although her son recovers and can 'walk' and 'respond to her caresses', without much incident, an adult woman perishes, her 'fever, death are natural' (ibid., p. 578), it would seem because of her inherent weakness and delicacy.

⁶⁹ Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), for example, traces the story of a young maid who rebukes the advances of her master, but manages to indoctrinate him into the cult of sensibility, transforming him into a suitable husband and he duly proposes marriage. This marriage is her reward. In this text, sensibility is seen as positive behaviour and an example of conduct to be imitated by the reader.

women' because it is in part designed to be 'useful' ('Preface' in *Julie*, p. 3). The text makes sensibility easy to digest. The Preface to *Julie* states that this 'collection with its gothic aura is better suited to women than books of philosophy' (ibid., p. 3). The 'gothic aura' in this context refers only to the text's style as 'excessively old' (*Julie*, p. 655, n.4), but becomes a retrospective link or clue to the influence of this on the following early Gothic texts. Readers inducted into the art of sensibility by Richardson's *Clarissa* or Rousseau's *Julie* have their appetites piqued for increasingly tragic or sublime episodes in their literary diet. As April Alliston notes, 'even the most sophisticated readers of the period tended to judge the literature of sensibility according to the strength of the emotional response it could and did produce in them' ('Introduction' to *The Recess*, p. xi). The reading audience is primed and susceptible to the emotional extremes that the Gothic portrays. The literature of sensibility focuses on the heroine not only for the production of the sympathetic response, but also for her instructive example. She becomes the locus for its moral, the model of 'correct' or 'feminine' behaviour, and her body becomes the site where the perils and the glory of sensibility collide. This is clear in the example of Julie where 'bittersweet' sensibility acts like a delicious poison on her body as it weakens her and she eventually dies; yet she is worshipped in this death as those who love her see in the place of a rotting corpse the still sweet Julie.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ In this text and *Clarissa*, sensibility is represented as an inherent quality, a characteristic, or trait, or disposition, which allows the character to be open to finer feelings but also leaves their physicality vulnerable and weakened by its extreme susceptibility and delicacy. In *Udolpho* Radcliffe seems to suggest that it is also an inborn characteristic, which needs restraining, but later texts suggest that it is an affectation. Austen writes that Catherine can 'call forth her sensibility' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 16); it is something that can be assumed.

Although sensibility refuses to see the body, the body of sensibility is, as Robert Miles suggests, the ‘figure of woman’ (Miles 2002, p. 21). Regardless of how much the text she inhabits demands she ignore her flesh or transcend the material, above all, the heroine is a body. Sensibility encourages this obsession with the body surface, a preoccupation that the early Gothic explores while perpetuating. Within the discourse of sensibility, the female communicates through her body.⁷¹ In *Emile* (or

⁷¹ Sensibility is, in these texts, a display of sensitivity. This display is portrayed through what are considered ‘feminine’ signs and it is the female who is both susceptible to these feelings and who needs these manifestations to communicate her ‘true’ emotions because her words are undermined. See Todd’s *Sensibility: an Introduction*. However, the female is also trapped within the double bind of sensibility: she is tied to her body for meaning and she is vulnerable to an excess of emotion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Emile* (or *Emilius*) (1762) posits that: ‘the woman’s mind exactly resembles her body’ (this is translated differently; here I use Barbara Foxley’s 2006 edition, p. 444); he goes on, ‘Why do you consult their lips, when it is not through them that nature speaks. Examine their eyes, their complexion, their swelling bosoms, their timid air, their faint resistance: this is the language with which nature furnishes them’ (Rousseau [1762] William Kendrick trans 1763, p. 70). In the body of this thesis I use Kendrick’s translation. Janet Todd observes that ‘Women were thought to express emotions with their bodies more sincerely and spontaneously than men; hence their propensity to crying, blushing and fainting’ (Todd 1986, p. 19). Foucault’s description of the female body in the eighteenth century as ‘riddled by obscure but strangely direct paths of sympathy; it is always in an immediate complicity with itself’ (Foucault [1967], p. 145-6) supports Todd’s assertion. Manifestations of sensibility are gendered as female. This is emphasised at the end of the eighteenth century and reinforces the mode’s increasingly debased position. Coleridge, Todd notes, ‘used the common abusive gender terms for sensibility, terming it effeminacy and emasculation’ (Todd 1986, p. 140). Although there are texts which portray male sensibility as Todd observes, such as: Sarah Fielding’s *Adventures of David Simple* (1744 & 1753), Oliver Goldsmith’s *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) and *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), and Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771), these men of feeling, according to Todd ‘assumed the womanly qualities of tenderness and susceptibility’ (Todd 1986, p. 89). Although there are examples in these texts of men whose ‘corporal blush’d down to his fingers’ ends’ (*Tristram Shandy*, p. 492) or who ‘burst into tears’ (*Man of Feeling*, p. 61), whose ‘tears choaked [sic] his utterance’, these men’s emotions are in conflict with their manliness and they are shown to have ‘stifled [their] sobbing’ (ibid., p. 177). Again as Todd suggests ‘Men wipe their tears and calm themselves by walking to a window or by otherwise concealing their state’ (Todd 1986, p. 78). As *Tristram Shandy* notes, Toby conceals his sensibility by ‘taking hold of the breast of Trim’s coat...as if to ease his lame leg, but in reality to gratify a finer feeling, he stood silent for a minute and a half’ (*Tristram Shandy*, p. 493). Todd stresses the repeated notion that the man of sensibility is adopting ‘“female” feeling’ (Todd 1986, p. 107), that he assumes a ‘feminine posture’ (ibid., p. 99) and that he is invested with ‘female sentimental significance: “I am as weak as a woman”, says Yorick [from *A Sentimental Journey*] with pride’ (ibid., p. 101). Yet, as David Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature Vol. 3* argues, male sensitivity is not wholly negative: ‘A propensity to the tender passions makes a man agreeable and useful...Courage and ambition, when not regulated by benevolence, are fit only to make a tyrant’ (Hume 1739-40, p. 252). And Todd cites Belford from *Clarissa* who states: ‘tears...are no signs of an *unmanly*, but contrarily of a humane nature; they ease the overcharged heart, which would burst but for that kindly and natural relief’ (in Todd 1986, p. 99). She uses this example to suggest that ‘In sentimental men tears are

Emilius) (1762) Rousseau asserts: 'Why do you consult their lips, when it is not through them that nature speaks. Examine their eyes, their complexion, their swelling bosoms, their timid air, their faint resistance: this is the language with which nature furnishes them' (Rousseau [1762], p. 70). Wollstonecraft describes the danger of this language and of the emphasis on the female body, which excludes all other aspects of woman. She writes of women who become 'slaves to their bodies' and suggests that 'the mind shapes itself to the body' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 58). In his discussion of Gothic sexuality Miles writes, 'One immediately thinks of the figure of woman in the cult of sensibility' (Miles 2002, p. 21). The constructed feminine form, not the biologically female form, constitutes the language of sensibility. Thus the woman must think only of her appearance and mould it in a particular fashion, and in this process, her mind, as Wollstonecraft observes, becomes affected in the same manner. Miles continues: 'Women...speak not with their mouths, but with their bodies...It is

mainly a response to the victim' (ibid., p. 99) and this is an interesting distinction between male and female sensibility: women are the victims and thus weep over their own suffering and men witness this suffering and this elicits their tears. Yet, this quotation also highlights the anxiety and discomfort that the display of male tears creates since Belford must defend the male's 'natural' urge to tears. Female sensibility seems to reinforce the notions that women are more susceptible to extreme emotions. That tears are 'natural' for women is never in dispute. Thus the literature of sensibility, which rehearses this image of the woman rendered beautiful through her suffering, emphasises the glamorised impotence of women and encourages them to become 'wilful victim[s]' (ibid., p. 123) surrendering to their overwhelming sensitivity. The female's sensibility is considered something biological and thus for her inescapable. It can lead to disease and also be a symptom of malady. Robert Hooper's *A compendious medical dictionary* from 1798 describes how hysteria 'is characterized by a grumbling noise in the belly...involuntary laughing and crying...and great sensibility and irritability of the mind' (p. 138). Although sensibility seems to be a catchall term for sensation and sensitivity, in this case it seems more linked to emotional perception since it is twined with irritability and the mind. Roy Porter discusses Albert von Haller's 1759 distinction between irritation and sensibility suggesting that: 'irritability (contractility) is a property inherent in *muscular* fibres, whereas sensibility (feeling) is the exclusive attribute of *nervous* fibres' (Porter 2002, p. 68 original emphasis). This suggests that sensibility is attached to the mind and 'neurophysiology' (ibid., p. 69). The female seems to have immediate commune between mind and body, indeed her body seems to be her mind, while the male is somewhat distanced from his body and is thus in a position of control. His sensibility is an affectation of female postures because while the female speaks through the surface of her body men are 'wrapt up here in a dark covering of uncrystallized flesh and blood' (*Tristram Shandy*, p. 67).

through the semiology of the body that women speak...Barred from words, desire spreads over a wider, more glittering surface' (ibid., p. 21). A woman, controlled and condemned, speaks silently with looks, posturing and form, with the 'glittering surface' that negates her depth. Janet Todd posits that the manner in which women of the eighteenth century can speak is purely physical:

Because of their greater physical susceptibility and because of the social constraints on their verbal expressiveness, women are more sincere in gesture than in words...language frequently exists only to censor a truth expressed by the body (Todd 1986, p. 86).

Sensibility tutors women to use their bodies to speak for them.⁷² In this context, the starved woman within the Gothic text is the woman who is gagged. Her communicative tool – her body – is taken from her, but this lack of flesh becomes the referent of a silent scream.

Wollstonecraft states that 'genteel women are, literally speaking, slaves to their bodies, and glory in their subjection' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 58). The supposed goal of sensibility, to render realities of the physical invisible, only acts to create a fetish of the body with the appetite as central concern. Wollstonecraft continues:

I once knew a weak woman of fashion, who was more than commonly proud of her delicacy and sensibility. She thought a distinguishing taste and puny appetite the height of all human perfection, and acted accordingly. – I have seen this weak sophisticated being neglect all the duties of life, yet recline with self-complacency on a sofa, and boast of her want of appetite as a proof of delicacy that extended to, or, perhaps, arose from, her exquisite sensibility...Such a woman is not a

⁷² This is problematic because she is judged on her appearance as deciphered by the dictates of sensibility.

more irrational monster than some of the Roman emperors (ibid., p. 59).

The early Gothic idealises the female form as ‘delicate’, ‘elegant’, ‘perfect’ and ‘fair’, weakened and thin, but also chastises the female for actively starving herself, and represents starvation as a punishment for excess. In this sense, the early Gothic helps establish ideological machinery, which necessitates the female’s conformation to sensibility’s ideal body, through the constant repetition of this specific bodily representation. The female reader mimics this representative type to attain femininity and acceptance, to avoid derision and suspicions of appetite and sinfulness. This woman must draw attention to, be ‘proud of’ her abstemiousness, her ‘puny appetite’, in order to prove her ‘delicacy and sensibility’. She makes a spectacle of her body, posturing in the most affected manner to display, ‘recline’, stretch the body to expose all angles in order to show that she rejects physicality. She is inactive, merely neglectful and ‘complacent’, on her sofa, mimicking an image of the frail beauty, which is repeated around her, repeated until the representation becomes the reality.⁷³

In these texts the body of sensibility is opposed to the Gothic body. The body of sensibility, the ideal body, is that of moderation; it is fed *enough* to be rounded, soft, yet slight. Edmund Burke explains the horror of ugliness: ‘there can be no doubt that bodies which are rough and angular, rouse and vellicate the organs of feeling, causing a sense of pain, which consists in the violent tension or contraction of the muscular fibres’ (Burke [1757], p. 178). The ‘rough and angular’ form is the form

⁷³ The illustrations which accompany Gothic texts and Chapbooks often have the delicate female sprawled, mimicking Henry Fuseli’s archetypal image of the victim in ‘The Nightmare’ (1781).

of the starved woman. The sight of her jutting bones covered with tissue-paper skin ‘causes a sense of pain’; she creates a tension in the viewer, a ‘contraction of the muscular fibres’ in disgust and horror. This is the Gothic body, the consciously visible body, hungry and pained. Sensibility’s impermeably smooth body surface communicates her submission and makes invisible what lurks beneath this luminous skin,⁷⁴ while the skeletal, pallid, and ugly body of the starved woman in the Gothic screams her deviance and her imprisonment within her cage of flesh. Gothic brings to the surface what sensibility denies.⁷⁵

The early Gothic text cannot be easily disentangled from the text of sensibility. Sensibility was part of the cultural milieu of the eighteenth century and in many ways the early Gothic text retains many elements of the doctrine. However, early Gothic pushes the forms and direction of sensibility to their extremes. The most significant difference in the two modes is in the representation of the heroine’s body.

⁷⁴ Even when the body is skeletal, as in *Clarissa*, the realities of this embodiment are refused by sensibility’s representation, which continues to superimpose the soft and ‘lovely’ (*Clarissa*, p. 1231) upon the decaying and emaciated heroine.

⁷⁵ Women are told repeatedly that their power lies in their body’s capacity to manipulate men. But this power empties the woman into her surface appearance. ‘Women are every where in this deplorable state’ (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 58), Wollstonecraft writes. They are ‘made to assume an artificial character before their faculties have acquired any strength. Taught from their infancy, that beauty is woman’s sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison’ (ibid., p. 58-9). This ‘gilt cage’ becomes a predominant theme within the gothic text; notions of embodiment are bound to the terrors of imprisonment and the connotations of being trapped by beauty. The body of the woman is the focus of unendurable attention; it becomes the locus of self and identity, thus of the potential loss of identity. The female body becomes the Gothic body, the site of horror. Women who ‘glory in their subjection’ by the ‘irrational monster’ (ibid., p. 58) that the female body becomes enact the tyranny which is itself copied, transformed and then represented within the Gothic text. The monstrous, defined by Cohen as ‘subject, only as pure body’ (Cohen 1996, p. 4), is combined with the cult of sensibility in the construction of the woman as her body. The Gothic engages with this position, both reflecting and recreating the female form. The female is taught to be what her body defines her as and not what she chooses to be; ‘it is their persons, not their virtues’ (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 120) that are valued.

Sensibility dictates a refusal and rejection of the body. The language is obtuse in sensibility and the realities of embodiment are denied; nevertheless, this very process transforms the image of the body into a communicative medium. In the early Gothic text the suppressed body rebels; it begins to assert its own presence, rejecting the dominance which imposes, as Mary Wollstonecraft's anti-Gothic text, *Maria or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798)⁷⁶ describes, an 'imprint on the yielding mass' (*Maria*, p. 32). Pushing beyond this inertness, the 'mass' becomes Gothic; it communicates a terrible fragility *and* power; it dominates through the weakness it imposes. Wollstonecraft explains that within the paradox of sensibility, women 'become the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility, and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling.' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 78). Sensibility weakens the female body, however, this insubstantial thing has the power to overwhelm: the woman is its 'prey'. Early Gothic exaggerates this fragility, converting ethereal beauty into, as the anonymous comic-Gothic text *The Animated Skeleton* (1798) expresses, 'sickly slender females' (*Animated Skeleton*, p. 12). This tale repeatedly represents how 'great people like fair ladies...[which are inevitably] shut up in castles, and look white' (*ibid.*, p. 12). The early Gothic shows the dangers that women fall vulnerable to under sensibility. A woman's sensibility makes her beautiful, but 'every woman that is beautiful becomes his prey' (*ibid.*, p. 12), 'he' being the early Gothic villain.⁷⁷ *The Recess*⁷⁸ articulates the position that the early Gothic represents

⁷⁶ *Maria* is a reply to idealised and unattainable fictional heroines of sensibility.

⁷⁷ While the heroine starves, the early Gothic villain gluts his appetite. His cannibalistic appetite is conveyed metaphorically in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) with Ambrosio 'devouring those charms with his eyes' (p. 300) and in R. S.'s burlesque *The New Monk* (1798) these chaotic and barbaric lusts are literalised as Joshua, Ambrosio's alter ego, 'seized the carving knife and fork; - he slashed furiously at the joint; - he forgot his vows, denial, and good name' (*TNM*, p. 48). The Gothic

for women: ‘Woman that have beauty are destroyed by it, and all who have not are neglected’ (*The Recess*, p. 14). Rather than death being ‘a reconciling, almost redemptive act’ (Todd 1986, p. 126) as Todd argues, the horrors of death are reinstated in the Gothic. Julie states she would be ‘happier in my death than I ever was in life’ (*Julie*, p. 119) and although some of this sentiment remains in the Gothic texts discussed here, the Gothic heroine risks death for love and righteousness and death is, at times, seen as escape, the full force of the consequences of dying are not spared her because she is forced to confront the body corrupted in death.

The body of the early Gothic heroine reinforces the ideal of fragility, and in doing so exposes its impossibility. Her body alone can demonstrate her *disembodiment*. She is subjected by its power but she communicates through it. Ann Radcliffe’s Emily St. Aubert, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, is warned by her father that if sensibility is indulged it can become ‘a selfish and unjust passion’ (*Udolpho*, p. 20). Yet, the text uses the ‘charm’ (*ibid.*, p. 5) of sensibility to construct Emily’s character. Her melancholic depth is described through the connotations this term brings to the early Gothic text. Sensibility, the narrator explains, ‘gave a pensive tone

villains which embody this extreme and taboo appetite are, amongst others, Maturin’s parricide in *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), spurned and despotic, his villainy reaches its extreme when he delights in witnessing starvation and cannibalism; and Ambrosio, orally fixated and craving the forbidden. The villain’s drive to possess, imprison and rape are framed within a discourse of cannibalism. This is discussed in the second section of this project.

⁷⁸ This early Gothic text is described by April Alliston to be ‘the first important and fully developed text for both the “female” Gothic and the historical Gothic strains in English fiction’ (‘Introduction’ in *The Recess*, p. xiv). Alliston describes the female Gothic to be ‘featuring heroines who conform to morally prescriptive notions of probability for feminine behaviour, but who are also portrayed as quite literally confined by them’ (‘Introduction’ in *The Recess*, p. xiv). The starved body in early Gothic is part of this confinement in the sense that the control of food is taken from women and they are threatened by starvation if they do not conform.

to her spirits...added grace to beauty...rendered her a very interesting object' (ibid., p. 5). However, this 'charm was too dangerous to its possessor to be allowed the character of a blessing' (ibid., p. 5).⁷⁹ The rigours of sensibility, dictated to the eighteenth-century woman, become magical or bewitching. Yet, this 'too exquisite' 'susceptibility' (ibid., p. 5) must be risked in order for a full life to be lived; as St. Aubert adds 'whatever may be the evils resulting from a too susceptible heart, nothing can be hoped from an insensible one' (ibid., p. 20). The contradictions and ambivalence to which sensibility gives rise are clear. It is both a desirable trait but also a potentially destructive and uncontrollable one. Sensibility is, in some ways, shown as a necessary evil in early Gothic, not the source of morality and value, which the text of sensibility offers it to be.⁸⁰

Sensibility's Moderation and Early Gothic's Unnatural Food

Sensibility dictates the control of the body, and thus the control of food. Sensibility's doctrine can be compared to religious rites which dictate 'eschewing luxury

⁷⁹ St. Aubert teaches Emily to 'restrain her sensibility' (*Udolpho*, p. 19) and in this phrase it is suggested that sensibility is something inherent, a notion contrary to the ideas that sensibility is the result of cultivation. Mary Wollstonecraft condemns sensibility as a 'cultivation of mind [that] has only tended to inflame its passions' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 79), but Radcliffe suggests that sensibility is a character trait that was observable even in Emily's 'early years' (*Udolpho*, p. 5). Sensibility was seen both as 'equalizing since it occurred in all ranks' but also 'property more or less exclusively of the higher and more genteel orders' (Todd 1986, p. 13). It becomes a class marker, or a characteristic which elevates the female to the status of heroine.

⁸⁰ It is important to emphasise that this study focuses upon the Gothic and so sensibility is read through its comparison to and influence upon the Gothic. I cannot hope to cover the topic of sensibility in this study as it fills many books. For a more extended engagement with sensibility in its own right see the texts of sensibility listed above.

foodstuffs...reducing heightened flavours or spices...to prove th[e] ability to override the temptations of the flesh' (Lupton 1996, p. 131). The diet of sensibility is *wholesome*, rustic and simple; it is fuel for the body rather than pleasure in itself.⁸¹ From Deborah Lupton's sociological perspective 'food "structures what counts as a person in our culture"' (Curtin in Lupton 1996, p. 1), and the emphasis on 'proper diet' in sensibility suggest this was true then.⁸² It structures how a person is perceived and treated. Thus the characterisation of sensibility's heroine is manipulated by her relationship with food; as it is written in *Julie*, 'food above all is not neglected' (*Julie*, p. 444).

Rousseau's *Julie* helps to elucidate ideals of sensibility in the eighteenth century and how representations of 'good' eating practices contribute to these ideals.⁸³ Rousseau describes Julie's 'modest and rustic' 'little banquets' (*Julie*, p. 445); he conveys her pleasure in moderation, in food that satisfies without exciting the appetite. Julie experiences pleasure, but her 'plenty is not ruinous' (*ibid.*, p. 444) because it is taken from the land and replenished; she eats the 'local vegetable...that grow in our gardens' (*ibid.*, p. 444). Julie does not consume the foreign and exotic;

⁸¹ The word 'wholesome' comes to resonate in this period. For example the literary review section in the *Monthly Magazine* of 1797 praises novels that display moderation and present 'substantial and wholesome' offerings from a 'sensible and correct author' (*Monthly Magazine*, p. 120).

⁸² For example, in *The Accomplish'd Governess; or, Short Instructions for the Education of the Fair Sex* (1752) the instructions are as follows: 'Suffer not *Servants* to terrify her with stories of *Ghosts* and *Goblins*. Use not monstrous *Fictions* to divert her with; but either ingenious *Fables*, or real *Histories*. Give her a beautiful Idea of *Good*, and shew her the Deformity of *Evil*. Keep her to a good and natural *Regimen* of Diet' (p. 2).

⁸³ John Lord explains that 'this novel [*Julie*] was the pioneer of the sentimental romances which rapidly followed in France and England and Germany' (John Lord 1896 in 'Introduction' to *Julie*, p. xx); it was, therefore, undoubtedly known to Gothic writers since it was, as Phillip Stewart suggests 'one of the greatest international publishing successes in the eighteenth century' (*ibid.*, p. x).

what is emphasised is the ‘local’ and *natural*.⁸⁴ Such foods, we are told, encourage ‘eating plenty without reaching the point of discomfort, making merry with drink without impairing reason’ (ibid., p. 445). They encourage satisfaction and reject excess. The body is kept in balance.⁸⁵ Julie’s ‘little banquets’ are later described to be ‘the inviolable sanctuary of trust, friendship, freedom...a sort of initiation to intimacy’ (ibid., p. 445). Food is an important ritual and expression of affection; the heroine cannot reject it because it establishes her social connections and communicates her demure sensibility and moderation. The emphasis is, however, on the diminutive, the demure and moderate. Later in the text the following question is posed: ‘Does not taste appear a hundred times better in simple things than in those that are smothered in riches [?]’ (ibid., p. 447). The focus here is on purity not cloying indulgence. Food is wholesome and not exquisite: ‘dessert[s] do not take the place of food’ (ibid., p. 445).

The early Gothic follows this model, focusing on the heroine and her relationship with food and nature. The early Gothic heroine takes her characteristics from sensibility. Such ‘primitivism’ of the rustic way of life is important to Ann

⁸⁴ William Falconer in his 1781 text *Remarks on the influence of climate, situation, nature of country, population, nature of food, and way of life, on the disposition and temper, manners and behaviour, intellects, laws and customs, form of government, and religion, of mankind*, notes that the diet of ‘the East’ contributes to the people being ‘immersed in debauchery, profligacy, and all kinds of wickedness’ (Falconer 1781, p. 240), thus home grown produce protects against this orientalist influence. The emphasis on the ‘vegetable’ (*Julie*, p. 444) in *Julie* without much reference to meat is also important since meat was considered to be ‘adverse to the exertions [sic] of genius, sentiment, and the more delicate feelings’ (Falconer 1781, p. 236), while the vegetable diet was ‘very favourable to the mental faculties’ (ibid., p. 241). Thus sensibility would promote a diet of local vegetables such as Julie’s.

⁸⁵ James Makittrick Adair wrote in his *Medical Cautions* of 1787 that ‘the great point is to preserve a due mean between fullness and emptiness’ consuming ‘merely that quantity of nourishment which is necessary’ (Adair 1787, p. 149).

Radcliffe's Emily. It is the contrast between city and country, artifice and nature, La Vallé and Udolpho. The opposition is illustrated in the differences between La Vallé's (and sensibility's) 'little repast' (*Udolpho*, p. 29) and Udolpho's castle (and the Gothic) 'banquets' (*Udolpho*, p. 446). These oppositions are established in *Julie* as Stewart and Vaché note in the 'Introduction', 'one can be *unspoiled* in places where city vice has not yet penetrated' ('Introduction' in *Julie*, p. x). The '*unspoiled*' and uncorrupted characterises Radcliffe's Emily and her life in La Vallé. This characterisation is reinforced by the descriptions of food and eating which take place in the country. La Vallé is the polar opposite of the Gothic Udolpho. Emily is 'drawn from the innocence and beauty of these scenes, to the corrupt ones of that voluptuous city' (*Udolpho*, p. 169).

Echoing the same 'plenty [that] is not ruinous' (*Julie*, p. 444), which satisfies Rousseau's Julie, nature, the epigraph which opens *The Mysteries of Udolpho* affirms, is 'home...the resort / Of love, of joy, of peace and plenty' (*Udolpho*, p. 1). Food should not be indulged in or enjoyed: it is 'necessary' (*ibid.*, p. 54). Food in Emily's homeland comprises of 'cold refreshments' (*ibid.*, p. 3), a 'simple repast' (*ibid.*, p. 3), 'little repast' (*ibid.*, p. 29), and 'homely fare' (*ibid.*, p. 34). A 'pastoral supper of cream and fruits' (*ibid.*, p. 5) is eaten 'in the open air' (*ibid.*, p. 28). The company eat surrounded by what is considered beautiful in nature which is *cultivation*: 'groves of almond, palm-trees, flowering-ash, and myrtle' (*ibid.*, p. 3) with 'plantations of orange, lemon' (*ibid.*, p. 4). The narrator describes how

The gay tints of cultivation once more beautified the landscape...Groves of orange and lemon perfumed the air, their ripe fruit glowing among the foliage; while, sloping to the plains, extensive vineyards spread their treasures (*ibid.*, p. 55).

The landscape is beautiful because it is tamed by ‘cultivation’; it is controlled and ordered into the structure of ‘vineyards’ and regimented into lines. This control is exemplified in *A Sicilian Romance* where Julia and Emilia eat in the grounds of their father’s land. The ‘little party frequently supped in a pavilion...in the woods belonging to the castle’ and they ‘never passed the boundaries of their father’s domains’ (*SR*, p. 6).⁸⁶ There is no appetite in these descriptions, no desire for the ‘Bread and milk...homely fare’ (*SR*, p. 82), for all is accepted and restrained. There is a sense of claustrophobia even in these vast ‘domains’ because there is a constant attention to conduct, action, movement and appearance in order to instil the influence of ‘high cultivation’, where a ‘natural delicacy of taste...and a refinement of thought’ (*SR*, p. 7) are proofs of natural ‘simple elegance’ (*SR*, p. 17). The paradox that early Gothic exposes in this sense of claustrophobia is that what sensibility deems to be ‘natural’ is not. Cultivation is another imposition of artifice: it does not oppose the indulgence of the city; it represents an alternative. Nature is only natural once it has been subdued and tamed by culture. Thus the ‘simple elegance’ which is described as untouched and spontaneously occurring, is shown to be the result of long tutoring and strict control. The diet is consciously restricted rather than the result of a ‘natural’ taste. It is a taste tutored to ‘appear a hundred times better in simple things’ (*Julie*, p. 447) as Julie instructs. The heroines are masters in the art of sensibility, the art of ‘nature’.

⁸⁶ *SR*, refers to *A Sicilian Romance*.

Udolpho and the greed of the villainous Montoni are set up to oppose Emily's pastoral idyll with Gothic excess. Udolpho is aligned with wildness and nature becomes synonymous with cultivation in this context. The first food offered to Emily within the castle is emblematic of this. When she arrives in Udolpho, she is offered huge cherries, 'as big as plums' (*Udolpho*, p. 244).⁸⁷ Cherries represent voluptuousness and sumptuousness. They are expressive of the material, sensual indulgences that the castle houses. The exaggerated size, fleshiness, juice and plumpness contrast with the pastoral land where the fruits are plentiful but not extraordinary and where appetite is restrained with produce regulated and uniform. In the grounds of the castle, the cherries become something abnormal to cultivation: they are like 'plums'; they exceed the size and shape of 'normal' cherries because they grow wild. They seem to have absorbed the castle's excess, reflecting its influence to transform. Emily accepts this indulgent, extravagant food, and Carlo, a more benevolent member of Montoni's staff, mentions that 'it will do me good to see her eat' (*ibid.*, p. 244). The refusal of food and the appearance of thinness draw attention to Emily's body and her unwillingness to conform to Montoni's rule. Her refusal, or rather her assertion of choice, unsettles those around her, so she assents to put them at ease. This establishes Udolpho as a place that has the capacity to nourish, but also the capacity to impose obedience.⁸⁸ Carlo states that the cherries, 'are very fine ones, though I gathered them myself, and from an old tree' (*ibid.*, p. 244). The

⁸⁷ Here cherries are as unnatural as the reference to 'elephants tumbling headlong down the lower precipices' (*Udolpho*, p. 166). The incongruity of these images contributes to an unsettling of expectations inherent in the Gothic.

⁸⁸ This type of imposing food to enforce obedience is more extremely repeated in nineteenth-century asylums.

adjective 'fine' suggests that this food is a delicacy; the cherries are rarefied and exquisite and there is no sense of the 'plenty' of Emily's country.

In these early Gothic texts the denial of food, such as Emily's initial refusal to eat the cherries, is curiously perceived to be as excessive as a desire to gorge. This excess of abstinence is linked to agency, choice and desire. The refusal of food is deemed to be a sign of attention-seeking selfishness,⁸⁹ of female disobedience and deviance. Emily is greeted with impatience when she refuses food earlier in the text. After witnessing the dead body of her father, Emily loses her appetite: 'I cannot take it' (*Udolpho*, p. 97), she explains, but in reply she is greeted with exasperation, not approval. 'Dear lady! do take some food!' (*ibid.*, p. 97), her maid exclaims. In *Maria*, the eponymous character must 'eat enough to prove her docility' (*Maria*, p. 10). Food marks conformity. This abstinence is contrasted with Emily's Aunt and guardian, Madame Cheron, soon to be Madame Montoni, and her equally unnerving excess. Her Aunt's 'ostentatious style' (*Udolpho*, p. 118) shocks Emily because 'it was so totally different from the modest elegance, to which she had been accustomed' (*ibid.*, p. 118). Madame does not conform to sensibility and her excess is further illuminated by her appetite. She 'ordered supper immediately' (*ibid.*, p. 118) and was presented with a 'repast, which was rendered ostentatious by the attendance of a great number of servants, and by a profusion of plate' (*ibid.*, p. 119-20).⁹⁰ Her attendance at banquets, vanity and desire for a second husband (and for him a man 'whose figure,

⁸⁹ This is similar to the way in which nineteenth-century doctors diagnose anorexia (see Chapter Two).

⁹⁰ The contrast of Emily and her Aunt, like the contrast between Julia and the marchioness in *A Sicilian Romance*, is significant. Emily transcends the fleshy, while Madame wallows in its pleasures.

and pretensions' (ibid., p. 133) elevate him) are markers of her indulgent appetite. She upsets the balance and must be punished.

'[T]o die of hunger was one of the most horrible means of death' (*Italian*, p. 115), Radcliffe later writes in *The Italian* (1797). It is only in the Gothic setting of abundance and excess that hunger exists as a threat and terror. The rustics of Gascony suffer the pressure of poverty, but this is not connected with hunger, for nature invariably provides for them. In *Udolpho*, nature is all but exhausted in the 'old tree' (*Udolpho*, p. 244) and is selfishly hoarded as the property of the patriarchal hand (be that the paternal care of Carlo or the tyrant Montoni). The Gothic creates the potential for this terror; its excess is balanced by deprivation, whereas the moderation of the pastoral world offers *plenty* for all.⁹¹ The significant word here is 'plenty'. There is no greed, there is no hunger, there is simply enough. The physical becomes invisible because it no longer lacks. It is only within the Gothic realm of this text that the material makes itself felt.⁹²

⁹¹ The notion of plenty differs in its connotations in the eighteenth century. *The Annual register, or view of the history, politics, and literature for the year 1775* uses 'plenty' to connote profusion. It notes: 'New England provinces did not produce wheat sufficient for their consumption, they had great plenty of Indian corn, and did not want other resources' (p. 87) However, Francis Bacon in his philosophical works (1733) argues that 'a false imagination of Plenty comes along the principal causes of Want; and...too great confidence in things present leads to a neglect of future assistance' (Bacon 1733, p. 4). Bacon seems to use plenty to denote all that is needed, enough, while the *annual register* like both Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and *The Monk* use plentiful to suggest abundance.

⁹² Madame is unnatural because she takes measures to satisfy her desire, to take what she wants from life, rather than being passively happy with what she is given. However, Madame's desire for the possession of the material and physical leads to her 'dissipation' (*Udolpho*, p. 98). She is punished by being starved because she has indulged her appetite. Madame opposes Emily's invisibility with a desire to be noticed at any cost; she represents the anti-feminine because she is 'more shew than taste' (ibid., p. 118). Madame is all appearance, imposing her image rather than receding as the feminine should and when Emily refuses to eat, she asserts her will just as Madame does when she demands the satisfaction of her appetite. Excess denotes desire and agency, and so the choice to not eat is deemed as deviant as eating too much.

Elements of Sensibility in Early Gothic: the Early Gothic Interpretation of Sensibility's Body Ideal

The Mysteries of Udolpho's Emily is a heroine of sensibility within a Gothic text. Emily is the reflecting centre around which matter revolves; she appears 'like an angel of light, encompassed by fiends' (*Udolpho*, p. 317). Emily's pure light illuminates the terror surrounding her. This purity is established in comparison to her Aunt whose 'ostentatious extravagance of her dress' is 'strikingly contrasted by the beauty, modesty, sweetness and simplicity of Emily' (*ibid.*, p. 183). Madam Cheron represents the link with the material and the bodily, which Emily strives to escape. Emily's sensibility, her 'uncommon delicacy of mind' (*ibid.*, p. 5), refuses to be interrupted by immediate thoughts of bodily existence. The disembodied heroine that sensibility designs is repeatedly contrasted with the overbearing surfaces of deviant female characters in the early Gothic. While Madame Montoni consciously calls attention to her body Emily's perfectly balanced body can be forgotten. However, this forgotten body returns and forces acknowledgement.

The body-aesthetic of sensibility infects early Gothic and these texts obsessively describe the female form, attaching worth to particular images of the body. The obsessive concentration on the female's 'delicacy of features' (*Udolpho*, p. 5), and her 'born immaculate' ('Preface' in *Maria*, p. 5) perfection is rehearsed throughout early Gothic texts. Matthew Lewis in *The Monk* (1796) describes the demon Matilda's guise as a heroine. She chooses to be 'formed in the most perfect symmetry, the delicacy of whose skin might have contended with snow in whiteness', and this physicality is perceived to be the most affecting and 'dangerous' as a

‘seducing Object’ (*The Monk*, p. 78). Sarah Wilkinson’s chapbook, *The Convent of St Ursula* (1809), repetitively describes the heroine Magdalena’s elegance: she ‘enveloped her elegant form in a dark mantle’ (p. 11) and she is the ‘elegant, lovely Magdalena’ (ibid., p. 12). Another Wilkinson chapbook, *The Subterraneous Passage* (1803), describes its heroine as ‘the fair one’ (p. 12) and Radcliffe’s *The Italian* (1796) shows how the hero, Vivaldi, is preoccupied by the body of the heroine, Ellena. He is initially struck by ‘her figure, which had a distinguished air of delicacy and grace’ (*Italian*, p. 9), and the image of her face remains with him, ‘the beauty of her countenance haunting his imagination’ (ibid., p. 11).

The imposition of simplicity and integrity upon the complex and permeable body is an important anxiety which arises from the influence of sensibility upon the early Gothic text. *The Recess* describes how ‘Simplicity is the perfection of dress...more beautiful than when adorned with all the gaudy trappings pride and luxury has invented’ (*The Recess*, p. 42). The Gothic heroine seems to oppose the aesthetic of the Gothic context in which she inhabits and is instead aligned with the straight, uncluttered lines of neoclassicism and sensibility. Radcliffe’s Julia and Emilia from *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) are the image of ‘simple elegance...more enchanting than all the studied artifice of splendid decoration’ (*SR*, p. 17), while the anti-heroine, the marchioness, is Gothically ‘smothered in riches’ (*Julie*, p. 447)⁹³ giving ‘an air rather of voluptuousness than of grace, to her figure’ (*SR*, p. 17). But this opposition collapses in ambiguity; the body becomes an object intricate and

⁹³ *Julie* asks ‘Does not taste appear a hundred times better in simple things than in those that are smothered in riches [?]’ (ibid., p. 447) and *A Sicilian Romance* echoes this aesthetic ideal.

complex rather than smooth and simple. Consider the image of the ruin, integral to the Gothic aesthetic, and the destabilisation becomes clear. Parveen Adams suggests in *The Emptiness of the Image*,⁹⁴

in its ruin the boundaries between the inside and the outside have become confused...From without one can 'see through' the building in many places which would normally convince the eye of its solidity (Adams 1996, p. 147).

Adams does not discuss the Gothic in reference to the ruin, but discusses ideas of interiority of the body, arguing that 'far from being complementary opposites, inside and outside rely on a certain coincidence rather than on opposition' (Adams 1996, p. 148). The neoclassical model of the body expounded by sensibility is concerned with the external integrity of the body: it must remain whole. Like the smooth stone of the classical pillar it must 'convince the eye of its solidity'.⁹⁵ However, the Gothic interrogates this image and excavates the interior of the body, confusing the

⁹⁴ Adams paraphrases Donald Meltzer (1975) when he discusses the 'internal space' (Adams 1996, p. 147) of the autistic child. Also the ruin in this case is Tintern Abbey. See Adams, pp. 147-149.

⁹⁵ The Gothic style, described in relation to architecture by John Evelyn, 'rather gluts the Eye than gratifies and pleases it with any reasonable Satisfaction' (Evelyn in Lovejoy 1932, p. 421). See garden designer and author John Evelyn's (1620-1706) discussion in *Account of Architects and Architecture* (1697) quoted in Lovejoy's 'The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature' (1932). The excess and transgression displayed by the Gothic style becomes obvious when contrasting the Gothic cathedral, for example, with the clean minimalist design of the classical mode. The eye wanders and loses its place when viewing the cathedral; it becomes confused, just as the Gothic narrative often is, amidst flowing lines which are abruptly broken and diverted. Also the way in which the eye wanders when confronted with the image of an emaciated woman, all angles and hollows, shadows cast in unexpected ways and places. The Gothic aesthetic implies excessive superfluous additions to the eighteenth-century critic in architecture, art and literature. Ironically this excess of addiction is also present in the ruined and starved body which has jutting bones and ribs where there should be smooth uninterrupted skin. The Gothic is represented not just as excessive but as gluttonous and is thus situated within a discourse of food and consumption, even at its architectural origins. The Burkean sublimity that the Gothic draws on is formed by the 'impression of "inexhaustible fullness"' (Lovejoy 1932, p. 443), which Lovejoy argues Nature produces, Nature capitalised and uncontained. The image of the emaciated body similarly gluts the eye; there is simply too much to take in; too much that disturbs and contradicts expectations.

opposition. The body in ruins, the starved body, denies this 'solidity' and the uncanny fragility replaces it. The body instead 'convinces the eye' of its vulnerability, and thus the vulnerability of the spectator.

The early Gothic heroine is, or should be, as Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813), a parody of the early Gothic, tells us, 'beyond mortality' and 'aërial' (*The Heroine*, p. 11). She should be free of the bounds of the physical and thus untouchable. To display this immortality, she must be 'emaciated' (ibid., p. 27). The heroine stands in opposition to the flesh, to 'plumpness and ruddy health' (ibid., p. 11). Cherubina parodies the established Gothic heroines of the 'romances and novels' (ibid. p. 27), which she devours like 'intoxicating stimulants' (ibid., p. 293) filling her up until she has no appetite and feels 'distaste for all sober occupations' (ibid., p. 292). She explains that she should possess a 'fair and slender form' (ibid., p. 31), a form 'so fragile, that a breath of wind might scatter it like chaff' (ibid., p. 39). The rejection of food is part of the characteristics of a heroine; it gives status to women within these romances. The heroine can 'live a month on a mouthful' (ibid., p. 39), and Cherubina asks 'What heroine in distress but loaths [sic] her food?' (ibid., p. 15). Naomi Wolf argues that controlled calorific intake results in universal personality traits, that of 'passivity, anxiety and emotionality' (Wolf 1990, p. 188); significantly, these are exactly the traits of femininity as inscribed by sensibility, and exactly the perilous traits of the early Gothic heroine.

The romanticised starvation that Cherubina advocates is later recognised as an impossible and undesirable fantasy. The waif that she claims as 'a sister' is reduced to her 'slender form' (*The Heroine*, p. 31) by poverty. This 'real' suffering

becomes a foil to Cherubina's image of the romantic life of a heroine. Its appeal is lost on the people that she meets in the 'real' world. Jerry, a petty criminal who passes Cherubina's path, reasons 'a phthisickly [sic] girl is no great treasure...let me have a potatoe [sic] and a chop for my dinner, and a herring on Saturday nights, and I would not give a farthing for all the starvation you could offer me' (ibid., p. 40). The heroine's rejection of food is clearly shown to be a convention by its representation in parody. Cherubina scorns the hunger of 'vulgar life' in favour of being 'thin, innocent, and lyrical' (ibid., p. 40), but her aspirations are unattainable because the heroine is an 'immortal doll' (ibid., p. 60). Her body is unreal, fleshless and man-made. Starvation is finally stripped of its glamour, becoming 'horrid hunger' (ibid., p. 195) when Cherubina realises that 'the misery that looks alluring on paper is almost always repulsed in real life' (ibid., p. 190). The sheen of sensibility's desire to reject the physical is literalised and dispelled to discover the agony of rejecting embodiment.⁹⁶ Although the parody determines to have a 'slender form' (ibid., p. 31), the early Gothic heroine desires no form: she would be disembodied, truly 'beyond mortality' and 'aërial' (ibid., p. 11).

The body of sensibility is cloaked in moderation, repressed and denied; nevertheless, when returned by the Gothic as a literalised forsaken body, its starvation

⁹⁶ There is, however, a sympathetic treatment of the misguided heroine's motives. Cherubina escapes into the fantasy of the Gothic to avoid her future as the 'mere Miss [who] has no business to attempt any mode of conduct beyond modesty, decorum, and filial obedience' (*The Heroine*, p. 112). The 'mode of conduct' is inseparable from sensibility, yet, the heroine must first conform to this mode before she is allowed to transgress it. She is discontented with what the world allots her and feels it better to risk her life than have it constrained and mapped out. She feels it is better to have the liberty and unreality of the heroine than 'to remain a domesticated rosy little Miss' (ibid., p. 88). In emulating the role of the heroine, the woman is open to choice as much as danger and it seems this freedom is worth any risk.

disrupts the equilibrium of the body, causes discomfort, alters the appearance to be more striking and draws attention to the starving subject.⁹⁷ The starved body shocks us into seeing it, even in its process of erosion. Starving works against invisibility. The exposure of the bones and the mortal frailness of the starved body startle the onlooker with an uncanny jolt. In this sense the starved body is excessively visible, material, and mortal. The obsession with its denial only calls the body to attention. It is the symbol, the image and referent which communicates its own denial, but it must be *seen* to be understood.

Differences in the Representations of the Starved Female Body in Texts of Sensibility and Early Gothic

[A] form so fair – so fragile – so calamitous.
(*The Recess*, p. 266)

The doctrine of sensibility perpetuates an expectation that the body of a heroine should be delicate. This model is repeated in the early Gothic text, although in an increasingly self-conscious and extreme way. The heroine's body in early Gothic texts represents perfect 'elegant symmetry of form' (*Udolpho*, p. 5) and its transcendent and ethereal quality acts in a manner that attempts to elevate it from the

⁹⁷ As G. J. Barker-Benfield cites John Bennett from 1789 who notes: 'Conversation, books, pictures, attitude, gesture, pronunciation should all come under its [delicacy's] salutary restraints' (in Barker-Benfield 1992, p. 207). Todd suggests that: 'Weak, non-sexual women are, then, the supreme exponents of sensibility' (Todd 1986, p. 78). Roy Porter comments that sensibility was 'the process whereby a girl was "manufactured into a lady", [and thus] parents positively delighted in delicacy. Thin being fashionable, such darlings were allowed to get away with finicky eating' (Porter 2003, p. 242). He goes on to observe: 'In the process there arose a new cult of the lithe, limber, slim body indicative of delicacy and fineness of sensibility' (ibid., p. 243).

material vulnerability which is a continuous Gothic obsession, but the female body does not escape. Sensibility aestheticises even the starved body. Richardson's Clarissa is described as 'a lovely skeleton' (*Clarissa*, p. 1231); the register of this adverb conveys a light and enchanting beauty without emotional dialogue. Clarissa's starvation and resulting emaciated body articulates increased femininity. This starvation enhances her fragility but not to ugliness, nor to the point that the physicality of her decaying body imposes; rather, it approaches the illusion of the invisible body. The body is not seen. The violence of her 'self-murder' (*ibid.*, p. 1054) is ignored as the horrific reality of her now skeletal appearance is denied. Her self-starvation does not have any transformative effect; instead, Mrs Betty tells her 'you eat nothing, yet never looked more charmingly in your life' (*ibid.*, p. 263). This charming loveliness is pleasing; her starvation as an act of rebellion is rejected (although she starves because of her feelings of impotence after a forced marriage and rape), and although her desire may be to become physically repulsive, she only becomes more attractive. Her resulting femininity is homely; the terms used to describe her are prosaic. This deprives her skeletal form of any powerful impact because the body is interpreted within the discourse of sensibility, a language that refuses to articulate the materiality of the body. This is in contrast to the Gothic discourse's engagement with the body. In the early Gothic text the starved body becomes horrific and monstrous.

Jane Austen's depiction of sensibility, through Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811),⁹⁸ conveys the position of the female body. Marianne speaks through her body, but this language restricts her dialogue. The narrator, aligned with Elinor's sense, explains that 'Marianne could speak *her* happiness only by tears' (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. 275), and that 'Marianne said not a word. – She trembled, her eyes were fixed on the ground, and her lips became whiter than even sickness had left them' (ibid., p. 264). Marianne's body communicates her 'true' feelings. Elinor, on the other hand, swallows her emotions until they 'led to no outward demonstrations' (ibid., p. 238). Although this seems to allow Elinor more control over how she is perceived, she is also vulnerable to being neglected and overlooked.⁹⁹ The body is only visible in signs that sensibility can translate. For example, in Rousseau's text Julie's physical reality is obscured by the ideal image of her that sensibility constructs around her. Julie is described as retaining her

⁹⁸ Austen uses this exaggeration of both sense, in Marianne's sister Elinor, and sensibility in order to convey the necessity for both aspects in a healthy and happy character. Elinor's restraint deprives her of the support and affection of her mother and her sister, while Marianne's 'excessive susceptibility' (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. viii), as Margaret Anne Doody terms it, leaves her vulnerable to the attentions of Willoughby and threatens her life. The descriptions of Marianne become revealing within Austen's exaggerated discourse. Although Austen does not parody the text of sensibility as she does in *Love and Freindship* (1790) [sic], a work of juvenilia, she highlights the behaviour which binds women. Marianne is highly influenced by poetry and reading. Indeed, Marianne 'had the knack of finding her way in every house to the library' (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. 229). Marianne is lead astray as she emulates the unrealistic depictions she reads. Her reading creates expectations of 'sweet sensibility, a charming tenderness, a delightful anguish, exalted generosity, heroic worth' (Fordyce [1766], p. 125-6) such unattainable expectations that James Fordyce warns against in his *Sermons to Young Women* (1766). Fordyce criticises such novels because their 'best ingredients' are not 'mixed with any judgement or care' (Fordyce [1766], p. 126). Indeed, Austen, with a note of concern, writes of Margaret's consumption of such texts (and repeats this metaphor of food and ingestion). She writes that Margaret 'had already imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance' (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. 6). However, Austen remedies this imbalance by combining both extremes in her representation of the Dashwood sisters.

⁹⁹ Mrs Dashwood, the sisters' mother, is unaware of Elinor's upset because it is not written on her body like Marianne's: 'Marianne's affliction, because more acknowledged, more immediately before her, had too much engrossed her tenderness, and led her away to forget that in Elinor she might have a daughter suffering almost as much' (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. 270).

‘sweetness’ (*Julie*, p. 604) even once she has died and lies decomposing. The body is not represented or seen directly; it is always masked by sensibility. Julie’s maids are ‘indignant at their mistress’s body lying surrounded by men in such indecent attire’ (*ibid.*, p. 604); her corpse is ‘lavished [with] finery’ (*ibid.*, p. 604) to refuse her physicality, even when that is all that remains.

Marianne’s relationship to food is interlinked with her expression of sensibility through her body.¹⁰⁰ ‘[L]eave me, hate me, forget me!’ (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. 138), she exclaims, assuming the position of the forsaken heroine, but simultaneously making this position impossible for her. It could be argued that Marianne composed her illness from images she has stored from poetry and novels, since Marianne is teased for her Romantic ideas about illness: ‘Confess, Marianne, is not there something interesting to you in the flushed cheek, hollow eye, and quick pulse of a fever?’ (*ibid.*, p. 30). Marianne’s illness is brought on by her lack of self-command, or rather because she commands her body in the art of sensibility too well.¹⁰¹ ‘My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself’ (*ibid.*, p. 262), she confesses. She wallows in ‘precious...invaluable misery, she rejoiced in tears of agony’ (*ibid.*, p. 229). Her ‘illness’, which is brought on by ‘want of proper

¹⁰⁰ Her sensibility verges on affectation, as the narrator explains: ‘Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting from Willoughby’ (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. 63).

¹⁰¹ Colonel Brandon’s first love, Eliza, is the image of Marianne’s potential future. Eliza’s ‘warmth of heart, the same eagerness of fancy and spirits’ (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. 153) which Marianne shares leads Eliza to disgrace and the bearing of an illegitimate daughter, herself repeating the susceptibility of her mother. Eliza is described as ‘So altered – so faded – worn down by acute suffering...[a] melancholy and sickly figure...the remains of the lovely, blooming, healthful girl’ (*ibid.*, p. 155) the same ruin that Marianne becomes. But, because Marianne is not seduced in body, she can recover and love again.

rest and food' (ibid., p. 137), only draws attention to her. Her verbal language speaks of neglect but her body will not be ignored. It is noted that 'it was many days since she had any appetite' (ibid., p. 137) and Mrs Jennings is horrified that Marianne has 'gone away without finishing her wine! And the dried cherries too! Lord!' (ibid., p. 144). Mrs Jennings tries to console Marianne's broken heart 'by a variety of sweetmeats and olives' (ibid., p. 144). She 'was to be tempted to eat by every delicacy in the house' (ibid., p. 144) because Mrs Jennings has noticed 'she looks very bad' (ibid., p. 143). Although Marianne *tells* those around her she wants to be hidden and alone with her grief, her body communicates her 'true' desire for attention and consolation. By using food or its refusal, Marianne dictates how her body's message will be interpreted.

In her anti-Gothic text, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, Wollstonecraft represents a 'real' Gothic heroine, a heroine whose suffering is not sanitised through representation or romanticised in escapism. She creates a female character that counters the 'heroines [who]...are to be born immaculate, and to act like goddesses' ('Preface' in *Maria*, p. 5). Her heroine is starved and declares 'Could any thing but madness produce such a disgust for food?' (*Maria*, p. 9).¹⁰² Wollstonecraft's *Maria* juxtaposes the degradation to which women are subject in their quest for subsistence and the horror of being starved with women starving themselves, 'as a proof of

¹⁰² However, the early Gothic interpretation of sensibility does not advocate anorexia, because hunger awakens consciousness of bodily want. Early Gothic punishes excessive abstinence as it does all forms of excess: 'All excess is vicious' (*Udolpho*, p. 20). *Udolpho*'s Emily risks her life to prevent herself starving. She ventures out into a castle riddled with marauding men threatening violation because 'Having tasted no food since the dinner of the preceding day, extreme faintness made her feel the necessity of quitting the asylum of her apartment to obtain refreshment' (ibid., p. 325).

delicacy' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 58), when food is available and at times abundant. Maria is a figure of sense, not in the extreme way that Elinor is, but in an objective way. Maria is critical of both sensibility and the early Gothic mode, and she can view the complex manipulations to which women are subject through food. Hunger, in this arena, becomes the site of pain; it is both the agent and motivation of women's horrific experiences. But it can also become a source of strength and autonomy. *Maria* conveys how hunger causes women to venture into vice and criminality, but also constitutes the only means of control and communication offered them. Jemima, Maria's nurse in the asylum, tells her that she 'stole now, from absolute necessity, - bread' (*Maria*, p. 39), and that her mother who is 'grieved to the soul by his [her husband's] neglect, and unkind treatment, actually resolved to starve herself' (ibid., p. 36). In an attempt to escape, or to draw attention to her plight, she manipulates her body to reflect the 'neglect, and unkind treatment' that she suffers. As sensibility has taught her, her body is her only means of communication.¹⁰³ It is the only thing of value she has and so her hunger becomes the discourse by which she asserts control and conveys her sorrow. She reclaims the 'semiology of the body' (Miles 2002, p. 21) to accuse and confront the image of the body in ruins.¹⁰⁴

Marianne's body also becomes an eloquent symbol of her suffering, yet her body is never described. Other than Willoughby's description of Marianne's 'sweet

¹⁰³ The doctrine of sensibility filters through all strata of class to become an integral part of the ideological construction of 'femininity', or encouraged feminine behaviour.

¹⁰⁴ This notion is different from Hurley's when she describes the 'ruination of the human subject' into the 'abhuman body – liminal, admixed, nauseating, abominable' (Hurley 1996, p. 9). The ruin I discuss draws on the image of the body destabilized, eroding and permeable.

face as white as death' (*Sense and Sensibility*, p. 248), her illness is not manifest in her flesh. Instead she is described ambiguously and repeatedly as having 'altered looks' (ibid., p. 182, p. 257). Her brother John notices that 'she looks very unwell, has lost her colour, and is grown quite thin' (ibid., p. 170). But the details that make her look 'unwell', the paleness of her flesh or her thin body, are not explored. A clue to her skeletal appearance is given by the description of her 'rapid decay' (ibid., p. 236). John is more concerned by the 'loss of her personal attractions' (ibid., p. 178) in this 'decay' than by her mortality. Again this ambiguous suggestion of decay and loss only hints at her physical corruption. This elision in language is very different from the descriptive 'minuteness' (Coleridge [1797], p. 298), which Coleridge attacks the Gothic (specifically Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*'s 'libidinous minuteness') for indulging in. Sensibility avoids this contact with the materiality of the heroine's flesh, silencing the realities of mortality.

The Gothic, conversely, inhabits the realm of the flesh. The supernatural terrorises because it threatens physical integrity and material life. The horror of starvation is a physical horror. However, the heroine is promised immunity to this horror if she becomes as spiritual as the ghosts that threaten her, if she can renounce her flesh and become 'far above mortality' (*The Heroine*, p. 178). Yet witnessing the horrors of death and the distortions of the body near death are what haunts the heroine, anchoring her to the mortal. Early Gothic texts detail the decay of the body in an immediate way, which threatens the gloss of sensibility.

The deaths of Madame Montoni and Laurentini, of Agnes's child, and of the notorious Bleeding Nun in her many guises are all horrific. They are starved, isolated

and forsaken and leave ruined bodies which reflect this horror. In the Gothic text, the starved body haunts. It represents the ‘tally of a slow death’ (Wolf 1990, p. 206), the progress mapped on the skin of the body ‘continually dying’ (*The Recess*, p. 222). There is no denying the power of the flesh as it slowly vanishes. In starvation the victim becomes ‘a member of the walking undead’ (Wolf 1990, p. 206). The starved body forcibly imposes its materiality: ‘they are walking question marks challenging – pleading’ (ibid., p. 206), displaying the injustice and torture that they are unjustly suffering. The body will not be silenced. The starving body is, like Emily’s waxen *memento mori*, seen to ‘resemble a human body in the state, to which it is reduced after death’ (*Udolpho*, p. 662), while yet living.

The Recess follows the transition of the heroine from denial to emulation. Matilda, on seeing her emaciated mother, refuses the horror of seeing the ruined body, and interprets this vision as an expression of the ‘common idea of beauty and elegance [in] feminine helplessness’ (*The Recess*, p. 8). She then sees how the body becomes uncannily ‘changed’ but moving ‘beyond humanity’ (ibid., p. 75) until she becomes the victim of a body in ruins. Recognising herself as inhuman, ‘dead while yet breathing’ (ibid., p. 182) and ‘withering at the heart’ (ibid., p. 185), she desires the ‘shrunk fibres’ (ibid., p. 196) of her body to loosen and let her escape. Matilda witnesses the image of Mary, her mother, ‘withered by eighteen years confinement’ (ibid., p. 75), and when her own daughters are taken from her, Matilda repeats this fate.¹⁰⁵ The haunting body becomes established as a ‘potent example’ (ibid., p. 269)

¹⁰⁵ Matilda is confined while her daughter is taken, and for her ‘Food, light, air, nay even life itself, became nauseous’ (*The Recess*, p. 311). She is reduced to an ‘exhausted mother’ (ibid., p. 148), the double of her own.

within this text, forcing the spectator to realise the terror of the image. This is achieved through the spectacle of Elizabeth's starvation. The Queen is punished for her 'ungoverned passion' (ibid., p. 269); she is tragic because she is 'able to rule every being but herself' (ibid., p. 269). Her body destroys her, both in its inappropriate desires, namely for young men, and in its mortality. Her 'mighty mind' is at the mercy of her flesh and her body becomes a 'breathing memento of the frailty of humanity' as 'the emaciated Queen withers in royal solitude' (ibid., p. 269). The Gothic lifts this 'emaciated' body from its 'solitude' and displays its horrors to convert it into a 'memento', an 'example' which haunts.

The story of 'The Bleeding Nun of St. Catherine's', included in a chapbook collection of *Romances and Gothic Tales* (1801), graphically describes the experience of starvation. The ghostly nun swears that 'My mangled form...shall haunt thy thoughts with horror' ('The Bleeding Nun of St. Catherine's', p. 28). The 'mangled form' is created by 'the torturing horrors of famine' (ibid., p. 26). Her 'soul, though confined with the suffering frame within the massy bars of her prison, at length has built its bonds – It mounts from death, and in a moment is freed for ever' (ibid., p. 27), while her body returns to haunt the villain who condemned her. Refused a voice by 'devouring hunger' (ibid., p. 28) the nun's language becomes 'distracted sentences, and wild, unfinished exclamations' as 'the pangs of hunger' (ibid., p. 27) seize her. The body communicates in its horrible materiality. Maud Ellmann suggests that 'the anorectic body seems to represent a radical negation of the other, [but] it still depends upon the other as spectator in order to be *read*' (Ellmann 1993, p. 17), and

the early Gothic body, in the process of immolation, becomes a protest.¹⁰⁶ Ellmann

¹⁰⁶ As Roy Porter notes, the cult of sensibility made ‘Thin...fashionable’ and as such young girls ‘were allowed to get away with finicky eating’ (Porter 2003, p. 242). The thin body is a body which hungers to display its conformity to the delicacy of sensibility, but the starving body shows an excess of restriction and thus comes to warn against such imposed and blanket control of the body. Specific body shapes and images become dangerous ideologies in themselves. The starved body displays the consequences of this imposition taken too far. It also comes to signify the impossibility of denying the human. Porter argues that ‘the body was becoming a tyrant in new puritanism’ (ibid., p. 243). Anorexia in the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century was considered to be a simple lack of appetite with an underlying physical pathology. Richard Brookes’ *The general practice of physic; extracted chiefly from the writings of the most celebrated practical physicians* from 1754 describes anorexia as the ‘Want of Appetite’ considering it as ‘either an essential Disease, proceeding from a Fault in the Stomach, or else it is derived from other Diseases, or is a Symptom thereof’ (p. 226). Brookes goes on to detail: ‘When it is an original Disease, it generally proceeds from a hard Diet, and Greediness, when crude and undigested Humours will arise, and prevent Digestion; which is often known from a Sense or Weight in the Stomach (ibid., p. 226) thus is it not connected to mental disorder, or from the modern conception of the disease as stemming from body image and fashion (it is also interesting that it is considered the result of greediness). Although Porter’s arguments do suggest that thinness was desirable and that young girls in the eighteenth century refused food because of the extreme delicacy they were meant to display, there seems to be little evidence of this doctrine taken to the extremes of pathological anorexia. Anorexia continued to be considered a physical symptom of other disease into the nineteenth century. Robley Dunglison’s *Medical Lexicon: A Dictionary of Medical Science* from 1851 describes anorexia as: ‘Absence of appetite, without loathing. Anorexia or want of appetite is symptomatic of most diseases. Also Indigestion, Dyspepsia’ (p. 80). However, Joan Jacobs Brumberg in *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa* writes that there is a shift from this purely physical symptom of anorexia into a mental disorder exhibited in the asylums of the nineteenth century. However, along with the observation that anorexia was used as a type of suicide that required forced feeding, the ‘asylum doctors’ Brumberg records, classified their ‘food-refusing patients...into three categories: patients with a “morbid appetite” [eating substances not classified as food: leaves, faeces and so on, or eating in a frenzied, or unusual manner]; those who believed their food was poisoned; those whose “religious monomania” or preoccupations precluded their eating’ (Brumberg 2000, p. 102). Again the anorexia seems still to be a symptom but in these cases of an underlying mental pathology. It is also ‘characteristic of the pregnant, chlorotic, and hysterical female’ (Laycock in Silver 2002, p. 2) according to Thomas Laycock in 1840 and thus gendered in his *A Treatise on the Nervous Diseases of Women*. Even the description of sitomania was considered, Brumberg notes, ‘a “phase of insanity” characterized by “intense dread of food”’ (Brumberg 2000, p. 104 emphasis added); it was not a disease in its own right. Yet, William Stout Chipley, the first doctor to describe sitomania in 1859, discusses a category of patients other than those who believed their food was poisoned or that God commanded them not to eat; he describes those ‘cases in which a morbid desire for notoriety leads to protracted abstinence from food, in spite of the pangs of hunger, until all sustenance is refused. I have never witnessed a case of this kind except in females predisposed to hysteria’ (Chipley in Brumberg 2000, p. 106). Thus the young woman’s desire for attention leads her to refuse food. This attention includes a feeling of moral superiority, which may be aligned with the delicacy of eating imposed upon the woman of sensibility, as does the notion that the anorexic girl sought to inspire pity or sympathy, integral to the workings of sensibility. Chipley decries the anorexic stating: ‘Notoriety is the object – the poor gratification of being pitied and talked of as suffering in a manner and to an extent which no other mortal ever endured’ (in ibid., p. 106). Although, Brumberg notes, ‘she claimed no special powers’ that she ‘had no appetite’ (ibid., p. 106) unlike the fasting girl who ‘asserts she is able to exist for years without eating’ (Hammond 1879, p. 1), the anorexic girl in the nineteenth century is given attention and is considered with awe. Thus there seems to be a similarity in the cultural context that suppressed the female appetite under the doctrine of sensibility and that in the nineteenth century. In both cases the woman seems beyond mortality. In sensibility she is not ruled by

discusses *Clarissa*, suggesting that ‘The more the body’s flesh decayed, the more its rhetoricity appeared’ (Ellmann 1993, p. 72). However, while *Clarissa* is shrouded in sensibility, in the early Gothic text the repressed and silenced body calls out to the visceral reaction of the other. The spectator deciphers the body, giving it voice as pain is shared. Thus, ‘The Bleeding Nun of St. Catherine’s’ enacts post mortem an ironic retribution when the evil Baron’s ‘speech was denied him’ (‘The Bleeding Nun of St. Catherine’s’, p. 28). He is haunted by the nun he imprisoned and starved, while her ghost is shown to communicate with ‘a hollow-sounding voice pronounced through the closed lips of the spectre’ (ibid., p. 28). Her body speaks; the lips remain closed because it is the *image* of her ‘pale, wan, and horrible’ (ibid., p. 28) flesh, of her emaciation, which talks. The starved body is proof against bodily integrity; it denotes decay and produces disgust. The starved body represents the inescapable ‘massy bars’ from which the self is never ‘freed’.

Madame Montoni’s starved body is the most horrifying sight Emily endures. The notorious image beneath the black veil is a precursor to her Aunt’s decay. Emily faints to reject what is beneath the black veil and denies the appearance of her Aunt. Emily encounters her dying Aunt in a scene of rejection: ‘Emily, who was unable to

material appetites and in the nineteenth century she wishes to appear to withstand suffering ‘which no other mortal ever endured’. Indeed, this refusal of appetite also seems linked to extreme religious fasting, which again seemed to attempt to prove the sufferer’s ability to transcend the body. Yet, the starvation within the texts discussed in these chapters seems to challenge this relationship to food and to the body. They continually return the body that should be transcended and convey the impossibility and perhaps the folly of such a contrived rejection of the physical. Anorexia nervosa, the psychological disease, was diagnosed by Charles Lasègue and Sir William Withey Gull in 1873. Fairburn and Brownell’s text *Eating Disorders and Obesity* condense the description of this ‘psychogenic affliction’ by writing that ‘Lasègue and Gull’ explain the features to include: ‘the relentless pursuit of thinness and the characteristic disturbance of the body image’ (p. 152). For further information see also Anna Krugovoy Silver’s *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* and Walter Vandereycken and Ron van Deth’s *From Fasting Saints to Anorexic Girls*.

speak, or to move from the spot, uttered no sound of terror' (*Udolpho*, p. 364); her 'motions are suspended' (Burke [1757], p. 101) in a moment of Burkean horror. Emily is stunned and silenced by what she sees. The world recedes from her. When Emily sees 'a pale emaciated face' she 'started back' (*Udolpho*, p. 364); she retreats from the spectacle and creates a distance from its physicality. She objectifies the face with an indefinite article 'a', and refuses to recognise it as her Aunt. The disembodied 'hollow voice' (*ibid.*, p. 364) seems not to originate from within a human body, but to emanate from the air. Emily attempts to withdraw, to contract and to shield her self from this vision of death. The movement of the language pulls Emily away and could be said to confirm Abraham and Torok's argument that the wish to deny is communicated in the very obscurity of language, in the 'cryptonymy or concealment in language' (Rand in Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 104), of the unspeakable. The description of the scene, focalised through Emily, is full of negatives: 'unable...no'; of exaggerated distance: 'remote...retreat'; and of obscurity: 'dusky...silent...hollow' (*Udolpho*, p. 364). Her denial of this image, not letting it 'press too nearly' (Burke [1757], p. 86), is illustrated in the non-description of her Aunt. The narrator's words are again focalised through Emily's reluctant mind. The object before Emily is 'so changed by illness, that the resemblance of what it had been, could scarcely be traced in what it now appeared' (*Udolpho*, p. 364). The repeated use of 'it' disorientates the subject, and the agency is suppressed: 'it' is bodiless because it now seems so detached from the human it once was. The voice and the form are now spectral and dislocated from the corporeal. The sentence hides from meaning. Emily's sensibility will not allow her to see clearly the body before her and so she retreats further into this sensibility in order to hide from the unbearable

image of lack, of starvation. She cannot describe this absence and her language evades her.

As is discussed above, Emily speaks within the discourse of sensibility.¹⁰⁷ Emily uses the same elision in her language that *The Recess*'s Matilda uses. Matilda sees but refuses to acknowledge the disfigurement of her mother, exclaiming 'oh, how changed, and yet how lovely!' (*The Recess*, p. 75). The contradiction of the adjectives 'withered', 'weakened' and 'lovely', 'beautiful' (ibid., p. 75) within the same paragraph allows a double vision. This double vision is the vision of the Gothic and the vision of sensibility both focalised through Matilda. The confusion causes her own body to reject what she sees because she can no longer interpret it; she is paralyzed, her 'lips denied all utterance' as she began to 'swoon' (ibid., p. 76). This sight fills her with loss. Emily asks of her Aunt: 'Do you indeed live...or is this some terrible apparition?' (*Udolpho*, p. 364). Emily sees her as a spectre already, willing to rescind the material body, preparing herself for the haunting which will come, a haunting that Matilda also suffers as this sight of her mother 'empoisoned' (*The Recess*, p. 76) the hours which followed. The initial sight of Matilda's mother and the consumption of the image are discussed through metaphors of imbibing or drinking in the vision, but this spectacle becomes corrosive as it is absorbed. The early Gothic heroine futilely tries to superimpose the vision of sensibility upon a Gothic spectacle.

¹⁰⁷ Mrs. Sinclair is not described within a discourse of sensibility, which would evade her physicality and emphasise sympathy, because she represents anti-sensibility. The image of death, however, lingers. *Clarissa*'s rejecting death scene depicting Mrs. Sinclair's decomposition is significant, yet the ugly deaths within the Gothic retain a connection between the spectator and the sufferer; there is an affect not simply a lesson in the Gothic destruction of the body.

Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* represents the most Gothic and material spectacle of starvation. Agnes, imprisoned by the evil Prioress, gives birth to her illegitimate child. This child perishes because Agnes is neglected; she feels the 'want of proper attendance' (*The Monk*, p. 412). 'Food shall be supplied you, but not sufficient for the indulgence of appetite' (*ibid.*, p. 408), she is told, but the Nuns soon forget her completely. Agnes is left to endure a slow death, but this death is represented in unflinching detail. Lewis describes the 'livid corruption' (*ibid.*, p. 413) of this infant and begins the episode with the uncovering of the 'putridity, and the worms' of a 'corrupted human head' (*ibid.*, p. 403). Agnes's soliloquy verbalises her hunger: 'Till now, I knew not what it was to hunger! Hark!' (*ibid.*, p. 370). Agnes gives a commentary on her sensations: 'my scorched-up burning palate...would I give treasures for a draught of water!' (*ibid.*, p. 370) she declares, and 'I am faint with long fasting, and grown so weak that I cannot raise myself' (*ibid.*, p. 371). Agnes's body is not hidden. Within this Gothic discourse it becomes imposing. Agnes's body commandeers her language; she seems compelled to articulate her physical suffering to the air, to speak it out to her self. When Lorenzo views her body he is 'petrified with horror' (*ibid.*, p. 369), but he looks on. Lewis exposes the body; it is 'half-naked...dishevelled...wasted...shivering...sunk' (*ibid.*, p. 369). The body is also allowed its power; Lorenzo 'trembled at the spectacle...grew sick...His strength failed him' (*ibid.*, p. 369). Lorenzo's body is forced into experiencing what the starved body feels as it imposes its decay upon him. The starved body speaks in the early Gothic text, and it speaks viscerally. Agnes's voice 'rattled in her throat' (*ibid.*, p. 369); it becomes tangible and material. The body returns threateningly from its neglect and evasion. Lorenzo views Agnes and 'doubted to think her Woman'

because she is ‘so wretched, so emaciated, so pale’ that she becomes a ‘Creature’ (ibid., p. 369). The starved Gothic body refuses the abstraction that sensibility imposes upon it and resurfaces in its animal form.

In *Udolpho*, the most immediate threat is not the supernatural, but the physical, and this can be argued for the Gothic tradition as a whole. Terror arises from the fear of the body, its pain, mutability, power, invasion, identity, appearance, and its control. Indeed, it is ironic that Henri, in *Udolpho*, states jokingly, ‘no ghost of these days would be so savage as to impose silence on you. Our ghosts are more civilized than to condemn a lady to a purgatory severer even, than their own’ (*Udolpho*, p. 473). The irony here is that the early Gothic villain continually threatens to silence and imprison the heroine in such a state of ‘purgatory’ and culture imposes such terrors for the woman within her own body. Montoni condemns his wife to be ‘blocked up here [in *Udolpho*] to die’ (ibid., p. 305), because she would not be silent. ‘Madame Montoni and her niece [are] shut up from all intercourse’ (ibid., p. 315). They are isolated for their refusal to acquiesce, ‘shut up’ and told that ‘Your voice will bring no succour...submit, therefore, in silence’ (ibid., p. 265). Madame Montoni is not condemned by a ghost, but something worse: ‘She suffers by her own folly’ (ibid., p. 307).¹⁰⁸ The text tells us she must be punished for her desires, her excess,

¹⁰⁸ Madame Montoni starves: she is denied food and Naomi Wolf reminds us ‘Food is love, and memory, and language...food is status and honour’ (Wolf 1990, p. 189). In the early Gothic text the worst punishment is to be forsaken. Madame Montoni’s ‘inclinations led her into a life of dissipation’ (*Udolpho*, p. 98). This ‘dissipation’, destabilizes the character and paves the way for her ‘approaching dissolution’ (ibid., p. 366). Her excess and debauchery leads to her disintegration and death in the same way that the definition of the word ‘dissipation’ leads to the meaning of ‘dissolution’. She has brought her fate upon herself; it was Madame’s ‘strange infatuation that had proved so fatal to her’ (ibid., p. 376). Madame’s deviance from the moderation and self-control of sensibility has been her undoing. She conveys the consequences of a lack of control. She is reduced to ‘a preserving spirit, contending

and her *choice*. The consequences of this punishment haunt Emily and teach her and the reader that desire is not allowed: the body must be denied. The early Gothic represents the ideology of sensibility, which disempowers the female by disembodiment. She is trapped within a body that she must renounce. The early Gothic, 'by depicting heroines sublimated almost to immateriality, teach[es] the common class of womankind to reach what is uncommon, by striving at what is unattainable' (*The Heroine*, p. 177), and just as Cherubina sees the positive in this, the negative is also depicted. '[T]o contract a taste for that sensibility' (*ibid.*, p. 177) is to live a diseased fantasy, which denies Wollstonecraft's 'real' horrors. It also prevents women looking beyond the prison of their bodies which confine because they must be restricted and controlled.

Accepting that the Gothic surfaces at points of cultural crisis, the body was, (perhaps always already is) at the centre of crisis. Roy Porter explains that

The body Christian, the body pagan; the body medical, the body scientific; the body noble, the body debased; the body free and the body disciplined; the body natural and the body artificial; the body solitary and social; the body sacred and profane – all these were in the melting pot in that great 'crisis' of European thought marking the early Enlightenment (Porter 2003, p. xv).

with a feeble frame' (*ibid.*, p. 371). She is split and cannot be re-collected into herself again. Instead, Emily forgets the truth and imposes an image of femininity where there is none. Just as Matilda refuses the 'withered' and superimposes the 'lovely' (*The Recess*, p. 75) upon the defaced image. Emily no longer sees 'her imperious aunt in the poor object before her, but the sister of her late beloved father' (*Udolpho*, p. 366) as she 'forgot all her faults' (*ibid.*, p. 376). Emily disassociates her Aunt with the body which is inscribed by her transgression. Her Aunt is imbued with the characteristics of Emily's late father and in this way she comes to more powerfully represent a maternal figure, and is mourned in that light, while her starved body becomes an icon of death and horror.

The body Gothic is surrounded by the supernatural and the mixture of hope and terror that this opens up, but it represents the body as an anchor rather than a transitory phase. While the invocation of ghosts and spirits can encourage the hope of immortality, life after death and existence beyond the physical, the Gothic text remains fixed to the body. Lewis's representation of The Bleeding Nun¹⁰⁹ depicts a spirit haunting because the 'unburied' (*The Monk*, p. 172) body has not been ritualised, sanctified and purified. The flesh calls. The body, in its 'mouldering bones' (ibid., p. 172), has independent agency. The binaries, which Porter sets up, 'the body noble, the body debased...the body sacred and profane', collapse in the Gothic undecidable. The body's relationship with food transforms the body profane into the body sacred.¹¹⁰ It is the denial of the physical body that terrorises the Gothic text. The body must be repressed, but it returns. The body is forsaken in life, but becomes an unforgettable emblem in death. The starved and neglected body will not 'just fade away' (Wolf 1990, p. 210).

Fainting Dead Away: The Early Gothic Heroine's Abjection of Food and the Body

[T]he faintings which laid me among the slain, perhaps alone saved me (*The Recess*, p. 224).

¹⁰⁹ The Bleeding Nun is punished for her 'warm and voluptuous character' represented by her 'feasts' which 'vied in luxury with Cleopatra's' (*The Monk*, p. 173).

¹¹⁰ Reference to the Eucharist is the obvious connection, but the heroine's pure diet also acts to elevate her from the bodily while her denial of food defaces her.

‘And what made you faint?’ (*Otranto*, p. 120) Isabella asks Matilda, the seminal Gothic heroine of Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). A heroine, Cherubina explains, when ‘reduced to extremities...faints on the spot’ (*The Heroine*, p. 24). The heroine faints to reject. If she cannot deny food without being considered deviant, she rejects the food she has eaten, and sickens into a faint. She crawls into her self. She denies the body because it threatens to destroy her, not by injury, but in meaning. The ‘heroine’ in this early Gothic context, following the lineage of the heroines of sensibility, *means* disembodiment, so she must exclude and expel the material to protect herself. The early Gothic heroine is characterized by her ability to faint. From ‘the fainting spirits of Julia’ (*SR*, p. 166) in Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance*, to *The Monk*’s Agnes and her thankful lapses of consciousness, ‘I am faint with want, and sorrow, and sickness, and my forces have quite forsaken me! So, that is well!’ (*The Monk*, p. 372), the heroine’s tenuous attachment to her own body, propitious or otherwise, is repeated throughout Gothic texts. The Gothic and the heroine are ‘much addicted to fainting’ (*The Heroine*, p. 268). This lack of hold on the physical is related to appetite, since the swoon occurs with a feeling of nausea, a rejection of food, or from the want of nourishment. Emily’s fainting is the most detailed, conveying the importance of these connections and how they occur from the denial of the body that returns. In her faint, the heroine uses the body to create meaning in its very rejection: ‘I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish *myself*’ (Kristeva 1982, p. 3).

Emily experiences ‘sickening faintness’ (*Udolpho*, p. 84) when she is faced with the material; after the death of her father, Emily returns home and when confronted by her loss in the material absence of her father, signified by the ‘one

solitary knife and fork, for supper' (ibid., p. 97), she disconnects. 'A faintness came over her' and she loses her appetite; 'supper is ready' but Emily 'cannot take it' (ibid., p. 97). Instead, she wants to escape her reality in 'sleep' (ibid., p. 97). Another of her many fainting episodes occurs when confronted by Count Morano, whom she imagines will abduct and rape her: here, she is left 'Almost fainting with terror' (ibid., p. 261). This threat to her body creates a paralysis, a terror which 'deprived her of the power of discrimination, as well as of that of utterance' (ibid., p. 261). She leaves her body, the site of threat, and her faint both protects and endangers her because she cannot see or hear: she loses the 'power of discrimination'; she cannot call for help: she is 'deprived...utterance'. Similarly Matilda in *The Recess* experiences 'a faint sickness' (*The Recess*, p. 78) when confronted with Elizabeth, the future murderer of her mother, and the person who could end her own life. She describes her incapacity when 'my limbs were scarce able to support my weight, and my eyes hardly served to guide my steps' (ibid., p. 78). Matilda wants to flee from the sight of this monstrous woman, but her body can hardly stand. Both heroines desire escape, but escape from their own embodiment. Horror germinates within their flesh and the only escape is to detach from the body. The heroine's obligatory fainting is more than a hiccup within the structure of the story; her fainting denotes her inability to inhabit her flesh and the danger to which her body subjects her. Sensibility has indoctrinated her to enact transcendent ethereal disembodiment while utilizing her form to manipulate and provide worth. The heroine lives in this paradox and is destabilized by it.

The liminal position of the early Gothic heroine is literalized by her faint. Julia Kristeva writes that the corpse is waste that drops from us, that the word 'cadaver' means 'to fall' and the dead body is 'the most sickening of wastes...a

border that has encroached upon everything' (Kristeva 1982, p. 3). The early Gothic faint is an act of falling *into* this undead body rather than letting it fall *away*. It describes being swallowed by the body rather than defecating it. Instead of animating it, the self becomes subsumed in matter that overwhelms and encloses. William Buchan's *Domestic medicine; or a treatise on the prevention and cure of diseases by regimen and simple medicines* from 1774 describes how 'fainting fits' are 'considered as a kind of temporary death; and, to the weak and delicate, they sometimes prove fatal' (Buchan 1774, p. 480). Thus when the heroine feels her body enclose her it is with real fear that she will not survive. Radcliffe describes Emily's faint as follows: 'A damp chillness came over her; her sight became confused; she knew not what had passed, or where she was' (*Udolpho*, p. 318), she is held within her flesh. This is when she is most aware of her own physicality: the 'damp chillness' spreads over the surface of her skin and she feels the limits of her enclosure; she cannot see and is not conscious of 'what had passed, or where she was' (*ibid.*, p. 318). Instead, she is aware only of being within her own body. Rather than the hoped for disconnection, the faint becomes the reinstatement of the denied body. Matilda explains that her 'limbs were scarce able to support' her, that her 'eyes hardly served to guide' (*The Recess*, p. 78) her; her body controls her with its 'limbs' and 'eyes'. As she comes round, Emily does not jolt back to her flesh; rather, the world around her returns to focus: 'In a few moments, the tide of life seemed again to flow; she began to breathe more freely, and her senses revived' (*Udolpho*, p. 318). The awareness of the external world begins to return as her senses reopen to let life back in; her mind awakens again within her flesh. For Matilda, the faint is a 'temporary death' (here Lee uses the term found in Buchan's treatise) from which she is 'recalled by a sound' (*The Recess*, p. 99); she

too is awakened, recalled from the crypt of her body, as her senses revive. The early Gothic heroine refuses the physical, but while she undergoes this continual disconnection, she is confronted with the dominance of her own body. Kristeva describes this affirmation through abnegation: 'I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*' (Kristeva 1982, p. 3). Rather than a reinforcement of disembodiment, this is a return of the physical, an imposition of material existence, where it would rather be denied. The act of fainting is an abjection of the body, and abjection is 'something rejected from which one does not part' (ibid., p. 4).

Her swoon is 'sickening'; it is linked to the rejection and regurgitation of food.¹¹¹ '[A] gagging sensation...*nausea* makes me balk' (Kristeva 1982, p. 2-3): in abjection, Kristeva tells us that sickness enables the longed for separation, the refusal. In this sense, nausea is very powerful, for it can halt and prevent engulfment and establish autonomy. It symbolizes the opposite to the acceptance of food, where food connotes community, reciprocity, connection, memory, love and attachment. While this sickness causes a separation from external influence or intrusion, it also reconnects the heroine with the matter of life. Just as she loses consciousness in order to escape the horrors of matter, she is reminded that she is at the mercy of her body. Her blood rushes toward her vital organs and leaves her brain; the nausea is caused because there is a burden within her stomach, food that her terror has suspended in

¹¹¹ The repeated reference in Ellmann to how 'the *spectacle* of hunger...deranges the distinction between self and other' (Ellmann 1993, p. 54), and Kristeva's vomiting abjection communicate an undeniable connection between the search for the self, the essence, and the rejection of food, eating and ingestion. This connection also inextricably links notions of selfhood to the body.

the act of digestion, and it becomes a load that she can no longer carry.¹¹² She becomes aware of the unconscious functions that her body completes continuously, and without which she would die. Her body disconnects her from the world around her. It has the agency, and she cannot control it. She is, as Wollstonecraft stated above, a 'slav[e] to her body' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 58).

Maternal Deprivation¹¹³ Literalised in the Representation of the Starved Body

The Gothic obsession with 'mothers that...heroines contrive to rummage out in northern turrets and ruined chapels' (*The Heroine*, p. 156) is a familiar trope. Austen parodies the mortality rate when she describes Catherine's mother as 'a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 13).¹¹⁴ The absent mother haunts the early Gothic text and is intimately linked to the heroine's relationship with food and the body. In *Word of Mouth* Suzanne Skubal argues that our memory of hunger separates us from the object-mother. We hunger for the food she provides and that is beyond us, out-with the boundary of the self. In this sense, Skubal suggests, hunger signals the split

¹¹² Buchan's remedy to prevent these dangerous swoons is 'to take often, but in small quantities, some light yet strengthening nourishment...new laid eggs lightly poached, chocolate, light roast meats, jellies' (Buchan 1774, p. 670). The heroine's refusal of food causes her to faint and thus proves her sensibility, but this also puts her in mortal danger.

¹¹³ Child psychologist John Bowlby created the term 'Maternal Deprivation' in 1951. He stated that 'mother-love in infancy and childhood is as important for mental health as are vitamins and proteins for physical health' (Bowlby in Hardy & Heyes 1999, p. 158).

¹¹⁴ Austen's *Northanger Abbey* repeats this convention with the sudden death of Henry and Eleanor's mother and the 'blackest suspicions' (*Northanger Abbey*, p. 163) the knowledge of this event inspires in the 'well-read Catherine' (ibid., p. 159); well-read, that is, in the Radcliffe school of Gothic.

from the (m)other and creates our initial sense of identity, of our dependence on something external simultaneously with the awakening of our separateness. Hunger recalls the feeling of previous and possible satisfaction; it relies on what has gone before to be translated and understood. Skubal writes, ‘This identity producing past, that is with us in memory and in our hunger that is memory, is pursued, evaded, appeased, displaced, and repressed into the food we eat and the stories we tell’ (Skubal 2002, p. 15-16).¹¹⁵ The images of the starved female body enact a multiple returning. The maternal body is banished. The early Gothic is notorious for its dead mothers and the starved women generally represent mother figures albeit at times inversions of that role, being selfish, cruel and withholding, but in their death the absence of the mother is felt again. The starved body strips the female of its maternal possibilities. Matilda’s starved body conveys this impotence as her daughter is taken from her, ‘snatched...from those weak arms’ (*The Recess*, p. 147). The maternal body is negated; its emaciated replacement becomes the polar opposite of what the maternal should represent. The maternal connotes nurturing, warmth, comfort, while this starved figure embodies deprivation, lack, and vulnerability. This physical manifestation is not only a denial of the mother, but also a complete denial of female agency and worth. The female body is controlled externally (forcibly imprisoned and

¹¹⁵ This idea of food as memory supports Simone Weil’s formulation of fat as ‘frozen past’ (Weil in Ellmann 1993, p. 10), in her discussion of Weil’s image, Ellmann suggests that losing weight, shedding this store of memories promotes ‘forgetfulness’ (ibid., p. 10). The heroine of early Gothic texts desires to maintain a link with this past, since this is what constitutes her identity, be it through the remembering in mourning of her lost parents or the nostalgia for her homeland, either way she desires to keep hold of her thin layer of fat (thus starvation is imposed upon her, she does not starve herself), something that the heroine of the nineteenth century rejects and denies as she not only desires to separate herself from her past but, as Ellmann describes the motivation of the self-starver to be, to ‘release the body from all contexts, even from the context of embodiment itself’ (ibid., p. 14).

starved, separated from the children) and destroyed. It is then held up to the potential female transgressor who sees her desires and possible self in this Other woman as a warning. This image of degradation haunts the spectator and the reader, internalising the message. The starved woman represents the horror we abject and deny we are capable of becoming.

Maternal deprivation is another form of starvation. Abraham and Torok describe how eating becomes a ‘fantasy of introjection’ and thus ‘reveals a gap’ (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 127);¹¹⁶ it reveals the space which true introjection should fill, but is unable to.¹¹⁷ Matilda cannot mourn her mother, but she is also denied the fantasy of this mourning in food. She describes watching her mother from afar when she states that she ‘embraced the only indulgence [she] could gain’ (*The Recess*, p. 75). This phrase mingles the desire for a maternal ‘embrace’ with the hunger of deprivation. The mere sight of her mother is an ‘indulgence’, a satisfaction which connotes childish pampering, but also suggests that this glimpse can satiate the emotional want created by the absence of a mother. The sight of the mother becomes her food, it becomes her fantasy. This emotional and physical want resonates throughout the text, and is substituted later by the perhaps ill-advised or simply immature attachment to men. Matilda effuses to Leicester that ‘you who are now nearly my all, fill up, if possible, every avenue to my heart, and guard it from

¹¹⁶ ‘Introjection’ being the healthy accommodation of the Other into the ego in order for the self to grow from experience and acceptance, or the process of grief and mourning.

¹¹⁷ There is a crucial difference between introjection and incorporation. Introjection is a process of acceptance and mourning. Incorporation signals a failure in introjection. Incorporation is a process where, in the inability to mourn, the object is encrypted within the subject.

retrospection' (ibid., p. 120). The emptiness which Matilda feels at the lack of her mother, and is forced to feel by her deprivation of food, she fills with denial and blocks with the presence of others in order to forget the past, the 'retrospection'. However, the 'gap' that she constantly attempts to fill over becomes an abyss. Later still, when imprisoned with her daughter, she describes how the seemingly insignificant daily actions 'fill up our lives, and leave behind a remembrance that we always revert to with satisfaction, and often conceive to have been happiness' (ibid., p. 146). She must always strive to be full in order to distract her from remembering. These insignificant details of life are what she can 'revert to with satisfaction' or even 'happiness'. These are external to her self, her emotions and to her body. She returns to this idea of being filled by an other, either her lover or her daughter, but in the end she is consumed by the lack of her mother. Like her mother before her, Matilda is left starved, her husband dead and her own daughter suffers the fate of finding 'a grave on the bosom where it first found a being' (ibid., p. 321). In her desire to forget, Matilda unwittingly instigates a repetition of the horrors that her mother suffered, she repeats that fate. Abraham and Torok describe the metaphorical state when the un-mourned object is incorporated and 'the bereaved become the dead for themselves' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 111) until they can work through the separation, and this is literalised in the early Gothic text. Matilda *repeats* her mother's fate, starved, imprisoned and separated from her daughter. Swallowed into the body of the daughter the mother is incorporated. And because she cannot be assimilated, because she is held imprisoned and separated but still alive for such a length of time, the daughter can neither grieve her nor be reconciled with her. The mother's emaciation, her lack and loss are re-enacted.

Although she may be found, the mother's body continues to be forsaken, because, as is the case in *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Recess*, she continues to represent a lack in memory. Julia is 'Deprived of a mother's tenderness before she was sensible of its value' (*SR*, p. 28) just as Matilda writes she was '*forever* bereaved of a mother before I was sensible I had one' (*The Recess*, p. 17 emphasis added). The future cannot change the past. In these cases, the body of the found mother represents her own absence, her own and her daughter's need because while the mother is starved, the daughter is denied her mother. Incapable of giving sustenance or empowering, the starved maternal body offers no redemption, only haunting. This haunting internalises patriarchal power rather than establishing the matriarchal utopia that Hoeveler argues when she writes that the heroine 'excavates' the mother and 'reinstates a fictionalised feminist fantasy: the matriarchy' (Hoeveler 1998, p. 23). Although the mother's fate becomes an example, it is an example that is followed rather than learned from.

The negation of flesh that the Gothic mother signifies is reversed in Barrett's parody. Cherubina finds 'a woman suffering under a corpulency unparalleled in the memoirs of human monsters' (*The Heroine*, p. 153). This plump mother is not more maternal but represents the excess of maternal matter that must be shed. She is repulsive and embodies the abject, with her 'sackcloth' and hair like 'horses' tails' (*ibid.*, p. 153). While Julia from *A Sicilian Romance* runs to embrace her mother to satisfy the unfillable lack, Cherubina repulses the overwhelming matter that threatens to swamp her. Julia's mother 'suddenly exclaiming, "My daughter!" fainted away...She pressed Julia to her heart, and a few moments of exquisite, unutterable emotion followed' (*SR*, p. 174). The faint at this moment communicates

the continuing absence of the mother; she will be forever 'away'. Julia is left speechless, holding her body; she is confronted with the body that bore her but which is now starved and empty. This is contrasted with the disgust that Cherubina feels. Cherubina denies the maternal tie exclaiming 'my mother was of a thin habit' (*The Heroine*, p. 154), when this 'living mountain of human horror' (*ibid.*, p. 156) calls in delight 'it is my own, my only daughter' (*ibid.*, p. 154). The mother claims ownership of the daughter's flesh, 'my' 'my own', and this re-establishes a connection with the daughter, forcing her to see herself in her mother. She will either become the embodiment of the forsaken or the engulfing abject. Cherubina enacts Julia's posture when she 'threw herself at the feet of her mother' (*SR*, p. 174); Cherubina 'kneeled at her feet' until her mother lifts her and 'hugged me to her heart, with such cruel vigour' (*The Heroine*, p. 154). This 'prodigious' (*ibid.*, p. 153) mother does not faint away, but is all too active in her reclamation of the daughter who would reject her. The repetition of the starved mother 'confined in one of the subterranean vaults' (*ibid.*, p. 152) is so common that it becomes comic. Cherubina's mother talks of her diet and conveys the stylized rejection of the Gothic mother's appetite. She muses of the lost 'apple-pies' that she shall 'never, never, taste' (*ibid.*, p. 155) again, while early Gothic mothers express their want in the loss of their daughters. They are starved of their maternal relationship. The only reparation for this loss is the spectacle of her body. The mourning of Rousseau's Julie combines ideas of eating and grief as the image of death is cannibalised with the spectator 'agonising to [the] heart's content, feasting it on this deathly spectacle, gorging [on] grief' (*Julie*, p. 604). This is the only sustenance offered.

Hoeveler argues that 'Gothic feminist heroines discover their own bodies and voices only after they redeem their mothers' (Hoeveler 1998, p. 23), but, as these examples show, the spectacle of their starved mothers silences them. Only once they have found the ravaged and enfeebled bodies of their mothers can these heroines realise their lack. Matilda writes that when her mother 'withdrew her eyes, she carried my soul with her; all my strength failed at once' (*The Recess*, p. 76). Instead of empowering her, the sight of her mother does the opposite. Her mother takes from her rather than giving, compounding her loss and grief and causing physical collapse. Rather than heroines discovering their 'own bodies and voices', Julie experiences 'unutterable emotion' (*SR*, p. 174) and the heroine of *The Recess* is left 'in a swoon' and 'denied all utterance' (*The Recess*, p. 76). Language and its substitute, food, are denied the starving women; she is doubly silenced, left only with her body to communicate. Abraham and Torok argue that the hunger for food is the drive that creates language, but also that food becomes a substitute for the abstract ideas that communication is created for (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 127-128). The Gothic uses the body as a language (and also as food). Bruhm explains that the Gothic exposes flesh in the act of 'reading the bodies Burke would have shrouded' (Bruhm 1994, p. 67); the body becomes a substitute, or prosthesis, for speech. This is especially the case when the body is viewed as a consumable and is 'eaten', either metaphorically or literally. Language is a process of substitution and thus is connected with the emptiness for which eating compensates; in this sense, the body as language is hollowed of subjectivity, objectified and abstracted; it becomes a spectacle. In the image of her mother's want, expressed by her emaciated body, the heroine finds the representation of her own. Just as she is deprived of her mother's

milk because she is starved, so the biological and psychological link is reinstated.¹¹⁸ Mother and daughter become doubled in that instant of recognition. The maternal body atrophies and since the maternal is also the self, the part of the self that must be abjected, as Kristeva suggests,¹¹⁹ and we are forever attached to what we abject, we shrivel too. Its lack must be rejected; starved, and dying of neglect, the daughter refuses the body and becomes truly 'Motherless' (*The Heroine*, p. 9). And in that instant, patriarchal powers are reasserted as the Gothic tale comes to its conclusion, moralising female self-denial and beginning the process of internalising starvation.

¹¹⁸ Matthew Lewis removes the metaphoric connotation of lack and deprivation in Agnes's inability to breast-feed, due to her emaciation, which results in the death of her baby. Matilda also cannot perform this maternal duty; she writes that 'My cruel malady robbing the cherub of her natural sustenance, it was with difficulty she received any other' (*The Recess*, p. 134). Matilda herself was not breastfed; she was taken from her mother 'instantly' (*ibid.*, p. 17) after birth.

¹¹⁹ See 'Before the Beginning: Separation' and 'Confronting the Maternal' in *Powers of Horror*.

Chapter 2: Repossessed: the Female Body as Gothic Subject in Nineteenth-Century Texts

[W]e need neither starve from inanition, nor stand still in despair: we have but to seek another nourishment for the mind, as strong as the forbidden food it longed to taste (*Jane Eyre*, p. 361).

While sensibility denies the body and early Gothic obsesses over the forsaken body, nineteenth-century Gothic is concerned with the possession of the body.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ The female's possession of her own body is a contentious issue. Sensibility expects the woman to display self-control, but she must conform to the control governed by this doctrine and not her own self. She is not a self in her own right as she is dependent upon her father and then her husband; as Sir William Blackstone writes in 1765: 'the very being or legal existence of woman is suspended during the marriage' (Blackstone [1765], p. 441). Yet in the nineteenth century the prolonged period of adolescence allowed woman comparative freedom, and the illusion of self-control. Brumberg observes the domestic change that occurs in the nineteenth century. 'Middle-class English girls were not swept out of the home by precocious marriages...neither were middle-class girls forced by chronic scarcity to leave their parents and siblings prematurely for dependency as a wife or for domestic service in another domicile. In effect, young women from the middle-classes...enjoyed a period of prolonged dependency in which their parents, if so inclined, might lavish affection and energy on them' (Brumberg 2000, p. 125). Brumberg suggests that this prolonged dependency and closer bonds with the family were perfect conditions for anorexia to develop because the child was already the focus and by refusing food this focus is intensified. The notion that she could monitor her own eating and thus control her own body may also suggest why lack of eating was most common amongst these girls. Yet the female characters discussed here do not have the luxury of this extended dependence. Although middle-class, or above, in blood, they must submit to working for survival. They must take charge of their selves and their bodies; they are forced to exist independently. Lucy Snowe in *Villette* describes the adolescent girl's pampered and sheltered existence: 'as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather,

Nineteenth-century Gothic is focused on the power of the mind, and the mind constitutes this other 'nourishment' gained from previously 'forbidden food'. The Gothic aesthetic is concerned with denial, and the female body is a site of repression and lack. Early Gothic's preoccupation with maternal lack retreats to background psychological motivations and is no longer obsessively figured. Instead, the heroine has a new loss. In these later texts, the denial that is countered is the starving of the

in a harbour still as glass – the steersman stretched on the little deck...A great many women and girls are supposed to spend their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?' (*Villette*, p. 39). Although there may be a note of longing in her question, there is also a sense of futility in such a life. In these texts there is a mingling of envy and frustration aimed toward the socially privileged (characters such as Blanche Ingram and Ginevra, for example) and a desire to break out of the positions and roles ascribed to women. Indeed Mary Taylor's letter, mentioned above, conveys this frustration. She writes that the only work available 'teaching, sewing or washing' are not 'paid well enough to live by', but more than this, 'it is impossible for anyone not born to this position to take it up. I don't know why but it is' (in Ingham 2006, p. 53). These characters convey the impossible situation women are forced into if they inadvertently fall 'over-board' or suffer a 'wreck' (*Villette*, p. 39). These texts also seem to suggest that it is the fact of their female bodies that constrain them. The increasing scientific interest in mental and physical disorders strove to highlight the inferiority of women as stemming from their biology. Women were anchored to the flesh in the eighteenth century since they were valued for their bodies and communicated through them. Strict regulation of their appetites and control of their bodies was also deemed necessary through the imposition of sensibility's rules and this domination of the body continued in the nineteenth century with increasing scientific support. Dr. Milligen published *The Passions or, Mind and Matter* in 1848 in which he writes: 'the passions of the soul survive the body; and it is for this reason that the souls of the dead appeared frequently in burying grounds, and hovered about the places where their bodies were interred, still hankering after their old worldly pleasures, and desiring again to enter into the bodies that gave them an opportunity of enjoying them. If corporeal agency is thus powerful in man, its tyrannic influence will more frequently cause the misery of the gentler sex' (Milligen 1848, p. 156-7). Interestingly, the passions are attracted to physical pleasures more than the spiritual relief that was sought in the eighteenth century, where death was considered a release (Clarissa's death and the sense of being freed from these massy bars). This emphasis on bodily pleasure may be reflected in the sexual and bodily longing that Jane feels for Rochester, Lucy craves for Graham and Cathy feels for Heathcliff. He goes on to paradoxically note, 'Woman, with her exalted spiritualism, is more forcibly under the control of matter; her sensations are more vivid and acute, her sympathies more irresistible' (*ibid.*, p. 157) he writes, thus conveying how being indoctrinated into sensibility has left her vulnerable. Her mind is weaker because her gendered biology dominated her: 'She is less under the influence of the brain than the uterine system, the plexi of abdominal nerves, and irritation of the spinal cord; in her, a hysteric predisposition is incessantly predominating from the dawn of puberty' (*ibid.*, p. 157). Again she is valued for her beauty, for her person above all: 'when, no longer attractive, she is left by the ebb of fond emotions on the bleak shore of despondency; where, like a lost wanderer in the desert...she turns...to heaven, as her last consolation and retreat' (*ibid.*, p. 157). Starvation in this context frees the woman from the tyranny of the body, a concept that is especially important when discussing *Jane Eyre*. Starvation does this because it acts to reduce her femininity by reducing her female body. Her menstrual cycle will halt, her breasts and hips shrink and her frame become more like that of a child before puberty and thus before Milligen's observed incessant hysteria.

mind, represented by the literalising mode of the Gothic into a physical spectacle of a starved body. The heroines fight against the lineage of femininity, confronted in early Gothic, which dictates that ‘All she has to do in this World, is contain’d within the Duties of a Daughter, a Sister, a Wife, and a Mother’ (Addison and Steele [1711-14], etext). A woman should exhibit ‘all those Parts of Life, which distinguish her from the other Sex; with some Subordination to it, but such an Inferiority that makes her still more lovely’ (ibid.). The nineteenth-century Gothic heroine confronts these notions of ‘Subordination’ and attempts to find a new model of femininity, one which is not ‘contained’ by conforming to be ‘more lovely’. Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853) replace and harness masculinity. Although this reading is not new, the ways in which the body communicates this, and in the process becomes Gothic, have been largely overlooked.¹²¹ Alison Milbank explains that Brontë’s women escape the ‘phallic romance itself in which the “castrated” woman must perceive herself as “lack”’ (Milbank 1992, p. 140). However, the locus of interest here is the ways in which the Gothic literalises this lack in the starved, ruinous Gothic body. The body’s ownership is transferred from men to women, but the body is still an object of possession. The flesh that society would own and mould is forced away, or rather pulled in. The Gothic is no longer represented by the external threat of abduction and imprisonment; it is replaced by domestic enclosure and psychological tyranny. The body becomes inscribed by Foucaultian domestication,¹²² and as the Gothic ‘comes home’ as it were, the body is reprimanded by the Protestant tradition

¹²¹ See Alison Milbank’s *Daughters of the House* for a discussion of these masculine women.

¹²² That is to say, a control of the body from internal conscience rather than corporal punishment.

of ‘inner accounting’ (Milbank 1992, p. 146), rather than physical torture, which is associated with ‘foreign’ Catholicism.

The texts discussed in this chapter, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* (1860-1), are not considered Gothic in their entirety, but include Gothic episodes and Gothic elements. They follow Robert Heilman’s ‘New Gothic’ mode, described by Christine Alexander as ‘novels that turned from older forms of external terror to “an intensification of feeling”’ (Alexander 1993, p. 409).¹²³ These texts convey the incorporation of the Gothic tyrant within female characters’ psychology. Their power over their own bodies is influenced by the power the early Gothic despot exerted over the fragile heroine. They have internalized this ‘external terror’ and their ‘intensification of feeling’ becomes a near madness as they obsessively control their own flesh from the inside out.

Alexander describes Charlotte Brontë’s Gothic influence by invoking the same metaphors of food that the eighteenth-century critic used. She notes how the Gothic ‘fed the imaginations’, that ‘These tales of terror were *devoured* not only by the young Brontës but also by their mother and aunt’ (Alexander 1993, p. 411 emphasis added). Charlotte writes that ‘I read them as a treat’ (Brontë in *ibid.*, p. 412) and Alexander explains that the Gothic was common enough to be described as ‘staple fare’ (*ibid.*, p. 413). The Gothic revision is apparent in this changing

¹²³ Heilman writes: ‘Charlotte [Brontë] manages to make the patently Gothic more than a stereotype. But more important is that she instinctively finds new ways to achieve the ends served by old Gothic – the discovery and release of new patterns of feeling, the intensification of feeling’ (Heilman [1958], p. 168).

metaphor. It becomes homely: no longer an exotic spice, it is domesticated seasoning. The invocation of these metaphors recalls the reactive metaphors of contagion, which eighteenth-century critics adopted (discussed in the introduction of this project). However, here there is less a sense of contagion as energy. The negative connotation that Gothic texts are indigestible, dangerous foods is gone. Instead, it seems to be a pursuit suitable for daughter and mother to read together, a harmless indulgence. This ‘staple fare’, being commonly consumed, also implies that the early Gothic construction of the heroine and the villain became models for later writers, either to parody or to invoke as an index of suppressed subjectivity.¹²⁴ Yet these texts adopt an almost anti-Gothic stance, interrogating the passivity of the heroine and her inviolable beauty. They turn her slim fragility into empowered emaciation, through dismantling the expectations that the Gothic heroine excites.

The ‘degenerate literary taste’ (Alexander 1993, p. 430) is harnessed to convey the imagination’s dangerous pleasures and the empowerment gained through transgression. *Villette*’s Lucy Snowe explains, perhaps as a nod to the food metaphors repeatedly linked to Gothic literature, that:

I seemed to hold two lives – the life of thought, and that of reality; and, provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter (*Villette*, p. 85).

¹²⁴ Alison Milbank considers the Gothic to be ‘that which can produce a self of value’ (Milbank 1992, p. 141). Gothic elements within texts erupt around fractured or destabilised subjectivity, or selfhood. It opens out an opportunity for self-fashioning, transgressing bounds that constrict and retard the subject.

Lucy becomes dangerously introverted and lives through fantasy. It is only when she breaks through fantasy into reality that she gains self-reliance and empowerment. This is represented by her turning from her idealised Prince, Graham, to her dark and superstitious but ‘real’ M. Paul.¹²⁵ Through the use of Gothic episodes these writers convey how they ‘perversely enjoy the forbidden fruits of the parodied text’ (Alexander 1993, p. 432).¹²⁶ The Gothic thus seems self-consciously applied. This is clear in the characterisation of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, and in the heroic motivations of Jane Eyre. Jane explains that she wishes her life were ‘quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 109) and so she seeks out the Gothic in her life. Her virtue is the perilous virtue of the Gothic heroine, which drives her into vulnerability, and she eventually returns to the preternatural call of Rochester, a man steeped in the Gothic aesthetic which is only enriched by his mutilation in the fire. Jane realises her wish for ‘incident, life, fire, feeling’ in a manner similar to the parody Cherubina represents, willing to risk all to escape the drudgery of remaining ‘a domesticated rosy little Miss’ (*The Heroine*, p. 88), just as Jane would escape ‘tranquillity’ and satisfy her ‘restlessness’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 109).¹²⁷ Miss Havisham reconstructs herself in the image of a Gothic ruin and the female character’s imagination, fed by the Gothic,

¹²⁵ Alison Milbank argues that the men who ‘engage the heroine’s affections [in *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*] are those who are most Gothic, in the sense of being most transgressive’ (Milbank 1992, p. 142). These men are also aesthetically Gothic being dark and brooding and also psychologically complex.

¹²⁶ Alexander suggests that the Brontës wrote straight Gothic stories in their juvenilia and progressed onto anti-Gothic texts, using the Gothic in a more mature and self-conscious manner.

¹²⁷ Jane notes, ‘It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 109).

is crucial to her subjectivity. The Gothic is shown to fill them and with it there is a wasting of the body. The body in one sense limits their drive for excitement, since the female body is subject to the restriction that they desire to escape and transgress, but it is also an important tool which enables them to adopt a life of difference. They manipulate the body, starving the frame to excuse them from becoming a 'commodity of bulk' (*Villette*, p. 223) and opening up an alternative existence which is not circumscribed by their femininity. They are 'nourished with sufficiency of the strange' by their imagination, so that they need only sparsely feed their biological bodies with 'daily bread'.

The body continually reasserts its presence, as Julia Kristeva reminds us: 'what is repressed cannot really be held down' (Kristeva 1982, p. 13). The female characters repress the body in order to set their minds free. However, the body is inescapable and becomes the locus of Gothic eruptions. The body becomes unstable and threatening, unrecognisable to the self and out of control. Donna Heiland argues that 'Ann Radcliffe taught women to empower themselves within patriarchy' (Heiland 2004, p. 81), and these later Gothic texts do not move beyond this mode of empowerment; they only internalise the process. The hero-villain's 'omnivorous appetite for possession' (Milbank 1992, p. 142)¹²⁸ is transferred and focused in the heroine's mind.¹²⁹ She becomes obsessed with her own bodily possession and sickens

¹²⁸ This appetite is discussed in Chapter Three.

¹²⁹ Bertha Mason is the foil against which Jane reasserts her appetite for self-possession. Bertha's hunger is also 'omnivorous'. She is large and sexually threatening. Her indiscrimination is represented by the 'something' cooking 'in a saucepan' described as a 'boiling mess' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 293) which she animalistically devours. Jane is forced to leave Thornfield to distance herself from this potentially all-consuming appetite.

for all else. Yet the autonomy of the body defies this continued oppression and it Gothically returns, changed and disturbed.

Masculine Women: ‘Conscience, turned tyrant’

[T]hough you have a man’s vigorous brain, you have a woman’s heart, and – it wouldn’t do (*Jane Eyre*, p. 408).

‘[T]he soul is the prison of the body’ (Foucault [1975], p. 30) suggests Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*. Cultural systems, conceptualised as the soul, construct, manipulate and control the body. Previous Cartesian notions of the soul/body hierarchy are reversed. In early Gothic texts, the body is represented as a cage, or prison, but in the nineteenth-century Gothic the body itself is imprisoned by the despotic will.¹³⁰ Recurring imagery of enclosure, of one being (previously the mind) struggling inside the confines of another (the body) continues to repeat. Now, however, the body is manipulated: where it was once neglected it is now modelled. The body’s innate meaning, the meaning that sensibility attempted to evade, is distorted. Controlling her body conveys class and morality, but it also portrays self-possession. However, the women in nineteenth-century Gothic texts refuse any

¹³⁰ The nineteenth-century Gothic heroine does not need to be imprisoned within dungeons and recesses; her own mind is her crypt. There are no Miltonesque Satans to oppress her. Rochester tells Jane ‘I am not a villain’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 135), and M. Paul recognises the expectation but reassures Lucy that ‘You will set me down as a species of tyrant and Bluebeard, starving women in a garret; whereas, after all, I am no such thing’ (*Villette*, p. 151). Brontë undercuts the expectations of the Gothic villain and recalls his appetite: Rochester asks, ‘do you suppose I eat like an ogre or a ghou’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 270) and juxtaposes this with the starved heroine. This is subverted because she starves at her own hands, not as Adele fears, ‘She will have nothing to eat: you will starve her’ (ibid., p. 266). Instead Brontë plays with these Gothic tropes because rather than have her starve as she ‘should’ to conform to the Gothic mode, Rochester would ‘gather manna for her morning and night’ (ibid., p. 266). Jane starves herself, she is her own tyrant.

conception of the body's 'natural' state. The bodies of these characters become *unnatural*. Jane's unwomanly will is out of place within the 'slight prison' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 318) of her body and Lucy, although a near invisible and ghostly figure, cannot bear the 'eating rust of obscurity' (*Villette*, p. 53) that she imposes upon herself. Cathy's starved pregnancy is another example of this unnatural body, as is her uncanny reaching beyond the grave to grab the bodies of the living. Miss Havisham's grotesque bridal performance is also a displacement of expectations as she imposes a slow death on her body, eroding it as her heart has been turned to dust. The body is mortified, denied and punished by Lucy and Jane for its lack of beauty, subjugated and escaped by Cathy and puppeteered by Miss Havisham's discipline. All of these female characters use the control of food to control their bodies. Like the woman of sensibility, the nineteenth-century Gothic heroine uses her body to speak for her; the difference is that she creates her own language. These women communicate power through their wounded bodies, as Lucy reflects: 'some herbs, "though scentless when entire, yield fragrance when they're bruised"' (*Villette*, p. 167).

Foucault's exposition of the systems of control and the movement away from corporal rule of the body to an internalisation of discipline is a process which can be mapped onto the starved Gothic body.¹³¹ Earlier Gothic texts explicitly describe the ways in which the body is deprived of food. The body is starved as a

¹³¹ The physical torture of imposed starvation and the horror that it inspired in early texts can be compared to the internalisation of this into a psychological terror. The tyrant controlled through fear, but then this fear emanates from psychology as the heroine starves and dominates her own body.

punishment; it is acted upon to create a reaction, either a purification (in the case of Lewis's Agnes), or manipulation (as Madame Montoni is tortured by her husband because she will not sign her belongings over to him). Later nineteenth-century Gothic, however, follows the general inward movement of haunting and terror to psychological sources. The heroine's body becomes the site of Gothic, but the terror comes from within this body. The nineteenth-century Gothic heroine assimilates the tyrant within her own mind and as a consequence disciplines her own body and punishes her self. The mindset of the starving or anorexic woman is analysed by Hilde Bruch.¹³² Although Bruch's analysis of eating disorders comes from the mid-twentieth century, the same psychological drives and metaphors appear in these nineteenth-century characters' motivations and descriptions of their bodies. Bruch's case studies from her anorexic patient Hazel demonstrate this process that 'You make out of your body your very own kingdom where you are the tyrant, the absolute dictator' (Bruch 1978, p. 62). The phrase 'you make out of your body' reinforces the idea of the body separated, objectified and disconnected. The heroine and the anorexic engage in a desire to become disembodied, to become a thing apart from their physical form, something that has power exceeding the corporeal. The Gothic heroine, now with a taste of the freedom that her wandering predecessors enjoyed, desires to be equal to men. She wants to be accepted not as her female body dictates,

¹³² Hilde Bruch (1904-1984) was an eminent psychiatrist most famed for being the first to 'relate a psychiatric or physiological disorder to the family environment in which the person grew up' ('Foreword' in *Conversations with Anorexics*, p. ix). The disorders she focuses upon are obesity and anorexia.

but as her masculinised mind would demand. She renounces her body by refusing food, because her body no longer fits.

Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* conveys the anxiety over female bodily identity through Miss Havisham. She manipulates her body into a haunting image of ruin, ruthlessly holding onto the image and role of bride even as it decays. Alison Milbank argues that Dickens places Pip in the role of the Gothic heroine and assigns 'tyrannical roles to women' (Milbank 1992, p. 122), tyrannical women such as Mrs Joe Gargery and Miss Havisham. Yet Miss Havisham is only a tyrant to herself; she lacks the power truly to tyrannise Pip. Milbank goes on to describe Miss Havisham as 'a frozen emblem of in-betweenness': she is 'between the unmarried and married states of womanhood' (ibid., p. 128). She is also in-between masculinity and femininity and life and death. Because of this undecidability Miss Havisham represents a disrupting potential position for women, but a potential she never fulfils. She is refused the position as tyrant. Her power and independence are qualified by her self-imposed victimisation. Pip is terrified by the tableau she has created out of her own bodily appearance. By asking Pip, 'You are not afraid...?' she emphasises her contrivance and Pip's answer 'No' (*GE*, p. 57)¹³³ conveys his refusal to admit the fear that she has inspired. Just like the white, which 'ought to be white' (*GE*, p. 56) and has 'lost its lustre' (*GE*, p. 56-7), so the impact of Miss Havisham's incongruity, her eternally out of place image, is undermined by Pip's focus upon her lack of femininity, what she 'ought to be', rather than her power. Pip's attention to this lack

¹³³ *GE* refers to *Great Expectations*.

is suggested by Milbank when she writes that the narrator ‘undercuts’ the ‘fixed nature of Miss Havisham’s contrived appearance’ by ‘drawing attention to the fragility of a long-buried body, which would fall to dust’ (Milbank 1992, p. 129). More than the focus on the desiccated body is the focus on the body which now horrifically lacks femininity. Pip notices how ‘the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress’ (*GE*, p. 57); she has become ‘a skeleton...wax-work’ (*GE*, p. 57); frail and ‘corpse-like’ she is a ‘collapsed form’ and the awe that Pip felt becomes disgust because her body is so decayed and dehumanised that, like the vampire, ‘the natural light of day would have struck her to dust’ (*GE*, p. 59). Already Pip considers ways to vanquish this monster, ways to control the terror she inspires. To do this he focuses upon her once feminine body, its lack now magnified within the trappings of extreme femininity, shadowed by the image of what a woman should be: ‘the [wedding] dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and...the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone’ (*GE*, p. 57). Pip’s male gaze acts to confine Miss Havisham once again. He refuses her disruptive presence and views her against what she should embody. She cannot become the tyrant because her power is undercut by the very appearance she strives to manipulate.

Because of Miss Havisham’s contrivance of appearance it is significant that Pip describes her faults as vanities. Pip considers Miss Havisham to have fallen foul of ‘sorrow...penitence...remorse...[and] unworthiness’ (*GE*, p. 394), unworthiness as a woman. She is the victim of ‘monstrous vanities’ (*GE*, p. 394) and thus her power is contained to the female sphere. She only comes to an epiphany when ‘I saw in you a looking-glass that showed me what I once felt myself’ (*GE*, p. 394). Although

tortured with remorse, she is still self-absorbed and obsessed with what is displayed and reflected. Miss Havisham's power is undermined by these allusions to nineteenth-century stereotypes of femininity. Pip notes that he had 'never seen her shed' (*GE*, p. 394) tears before, but emphasises with approval her new and 'earnest womanly compassion', her 'new affection' (*GE*, p. 395). Dijkstra writes of the symbolism of the mirror in the nineteenth century, that 'males were most often sorely disappointed by their wives and lovers' perverse unwillingness to "break their mirrors" and abandon their selfhood to become the willing reflections of their men' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 135). Here, of course, Pip becomes a reflection of Miss Havisham, and in Miss Havisham Estella is forced to see her own potential future reflected; Miss Havisham explains that the 'figure of myself [was] always before her [Estella as] a warning' (*GE*, p. 395), a warning of the horror of being rejected by the conventional roles afforded women, and the inability to break free from these roles; the masculine claim to selfhood is usurped and this creates an anxiety over gender and power. Miss Havisham must be put back in her place as a woman, although her 'withered' body no longer fits this role of the soft, submissive and 'rounded figure' (*GE*, p. 57). She has become something Other; because she no longer conforms she becomes a monster, something undead: 'skin and bone' (*GE*, p. 57), 'corpse-like' (*GE*, p. 59), 'ghastly' (*GE*, p. 87) and 'a very spectre' (*GE*, p. 298). These descriptions of Miss Havisham's body remove all sense of humanness because she lacks womanliness. Biddy holds the qualities that Pip values as feminine. She is 'comfortable'; all she does she does 'gently...softly...in a soothing way' (*GE*, p. 127). Miss Havisham lacks these qualities in her hard, bony, and decayed state. Although she has broken Pip's heart and perverted Estella, Pip 'seeing her punishment in the ruin she was, in her profound

unfitness for this earth', considers her crime to be her 'vanities' (*GE*, p. 394) and unwomanliness and so justice is served in her physical deformity. He neglects to recognise, however, that she has made this ruin of herself.

The significance of Miss Havisham eternally sitting at her 'lady's dressing-table' gazing into her 'gilded looking-glass' (*GE*, p. 56) and seeing within it the embalmed image of the bride suggests a perverted image of 'feminine self-sufficiency...linked inextricably with its traditional use as a symbol of woman's vanity' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 135). Although the image suspended within the mirror is the woman on the brink of marriage, on the precipice of abandoning her self-hood, she is continually looking at herself for the last time. Her reflection embodies loss and because Miss Havisham is not absorbed within the existence of her husband through marriage she is driven to see herself reflected in others so that her selfhood can escape the confines of her looking-glass. In *Modern Women and What is Said of Them* (1889) Eliza Lynn Linton writes that women were self-conscious but 'it is a self-consciousness of a very peculiar and feminine sort – a consciousness not of themselves in themselves, but of the reflection of themselves in others' (Linton in Dijkstra 1986, p. 135),¹³⁴ and Miss Havisham creates an extreme image in order to create a strong reflection of herself in others. In this way she maintains a horrific claim on selfhood. In Estella she sees the self she vindictively wishes to be and in Pip she sees her own pain reflected. In the figure of Miss Havisham, there is a play of subversion and return to conservative roles.

¹³⁴ Dijkstra comments that Linton was the "Dear Abby" of her time' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 135).

Pip later acknowledges Miss Havisham's power when he describes how she has made an automaton out of him: he was 'a model with a mechanical heart to practise on' (*GE*, p. 319), and Estella talks to Pip of the 'nature formed within me' (*GE*, p. 358) by Miss Havisham. What is missing in her, her 'heart...Broken!' (*GE*, p. 57), Miss Havisham manipulates in others creating new roles for them, which fit with her own constructed narrative.¹³⁵ She will tell 'all *my* story' (*GE*, p. 395, emphasis added) again through these created characters, which are as dehumanised as she has made herself. However, rather than being the tyrant, Miss Havisham is more like a vindictive child playing with dolls. Miss Havisham's gender is continually asserted in her title: 'Miss'; however, the effect of this is to question the power of such categories and call attention to them. Miss Havisham should have no power as an unmarried woman and she is shown to lay waste to her potential, yet Pip thinks that 'Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune on a grand scale' (*GE*, p. 135); however, another unlikely figure, Magwitch, criminal but male, has 'made a gentleman on you!' (*GE*, p. 315). Miss Havisham's power is denied. She is instead shown to be as childish and self-serving as is fitting her vanity. The decay, which emanates from within to eat her flesh, consumes all of her possessions, all of her toys. She likens her ruined body to the rotting and desiccated 'pale decayed objects' (*GE*, p. 59); they are an extension of her. The feast-table upon which she declares she 'will be laid when I am dead' (*GE*, p. 83) is already strewn with a 'form...quite undistinguishable' (*GE*, p. 83); it is 'heavily overhung with cobwebs' (*GE*, p. 82), just as she is draped in her

¹³⁵ See Elisabeth Bronfen's *Over Her Dead Body* for more on Miss Havisham's position as storyteller within a psychoanalytical framework.

own delicate off-white 'shroud' (*GE*, p. 345). She fears that her family will 'come to feast upon me' (*GE*, p. 86) and so like her 'great cake' (*GE*, p. 83) she lets herself become 'covered with dust and mould' (*GE*, p. 82), leached of all life and benefit.¹³⁶ Elisabeth Bronfen describes Miss Havisham's position to be transformed 'from a castrated into a castrating one' (Bronfen 1992, p. 356). She does not help emancipate Pip because that would not serve her purpose, which is to 'wreak revenge on all the male sex' (*GE*, p. 175), and in so doing portray the selfish destructiveness of frustrated femininity. Pip creates a 'dream' (*GE*, p. 319) in which Miss Havisham turns out to be a nurturing and caring figure who will not only provide for his future but find a love-match for him, concluding that 'Estella...[was] designed for me' (*GE*, p. 319), but Miss Havisham's self-destructiveness undermines any power she has to accomplish this. Although she disrupts the assumed position of female she never fulfils this disruptive potential.¹³⁷ When Mr. Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe return from market with news of Miss Havisham's request, the gender of the person for whom Pip

¹³⁶ Interestingly while walking with Pip around this feast table Miss Havisham 'worked her mouth' as if mimicking the predicted consumption of her own flesh and substituting for her inability to consume her 'bride-cake' (*GE*, p. 83). The hyphen which connects bride-cake, bride and cake, also mirrors the connection Miss Havisham creates between herself as the bride *and* consumable. In this image, the ways in which Miss Havisham has objectified herself, or is tortured by her objectification and then rejection as bride, are shown. Both Elisabeth Bronfen and Harry Stone comment upon the cake as a 'materialised sign' (Bronfen 1992, p. 353) of Miss Havisham's body. Bronfen uses this phrase to describe Miss Havisham's body laid upon the table to literalise her 'transform[ation]...from bride to living corpse' (Bronfen 1992, p. 353). Stone argues that 'she will become that gnawed bridecake...She will then become the fully corrupted and gruesomely gnawed centrepiece of her own corrupted life' (Stone 1994, p. 133). Both Miss Havisham and the cake have been eaten away from the inside. Although grand, or 'great' (*GE*, p. 83) images, they inspire awe for the wrong reasons. Smothered in rotten finery, they are forever threatening collapse because there is nothing inside to support the hollowed image. Thus this 'bride-cake', bride and cake, can only be consumed / consummated in death. Feasting on Miss Havisham's corpse would be like tasting those foetid and dusty cobwebs.

¹³⁷ Mrs. Joe is also punished for her assumption of a masculine role. As Alison Milbank argues: 'Orlick will attack Mrs Joe with a leg-iron, the violence of his assault in keeping with her own aggression. This reassertion of male supremacy turns Mrs Joe into a travesty of a patient submissive wife' (Milbank 1992, p. 125).

must be ‘as grateful as any boy possibly could’ (*GE*, p. 50) is stressed. ‘She? I looked at Joe...“She?” Joe looked at me’ their surprise and curiosity stems from this gender, and Mrs. Joe, accepting of female power answers: ‘And she is a she, I suppose?...Unless you call Miss Havisham a he. And I doubt if even you’ll go so far as that’ (*GE*, p. 50). Emphasising gender here weakens the absolute nature of the concept. There seems instead to be a continuum that you should not travel ‘so far’ down. However, Miss Havisham does not effectively challenge gender roles; instead, she remains in-between: neither maternal guardian nor paternal benefactor.¹³⁸

Jane’s body and mind are also at odds. Jane’s domination of her body is impossibly desperate. ‘[C]onscience, turned tyrant,’ she explains, it

held passion by the throat, told her, tauntingly, she had yet but dipped her dainty foot in the slough, and swore that with that arm of iron, he would thrust her down to unsounded depths of agony (*Jane Eyre*, p. 297).

Passion is Jane’s body, her somatic self. It is feminised while the power of her mind is masculine and violently dominant. She has internalised patriarchal power and it takes hold of her body, ‘by the throat’. Jane’s control over her appearance allows her to minimise its importance. She refutes sensibility’s assertion that ‘women are more sincere in gesture than in words...language frequently exists only to censor a truth expressed by the body’ (Todd 1986, p. 86). Women speak through their bodies. In *Jane Eyre*, however, the body belies the ‘true’ more masculine identity that Jane

¹³⁸ Harry Stone comments upon Miss Havisham’s perverted maternalism: ‘weird entombed time-stopped Miss Havisham is most certainly a mother and most certainly a witch. She is a mother of sorts, a luring, entrapping mother, to Pip; and she is a mother in fact, a heartless parasitic mother, to Estella. She feeds upon her offspring, a foul unnatural dam’ (Stone 1994, p. 138).

harbours. Yet it is still through a use of the body as cipher that the Gothic mode literalises its ideas and concerns. Jane's obsessive control over her appearance is a sign of her fear of embodiment. Her feelings of deficiency are figured in the rejection of her immaterial body; her body is 'slight' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 318) and 'frail' (*ibid.*, p. 312); she is a 'phanto[m]' (*ibid.*, p. 14) and a 'fairy' (*ibid.*, p. 14). Her body is outcast because she is not 'pretty' (*ibid.*, p. 26), and she is dehumanised by her appearance.¹³⁹ She begins to see herself and be seen as an unearthly 'sprite' (*ibid.*, p. 262), musing that 'I was like nobody' (*ibid.*, p. 15).¹⁴⁰ The representation of her body becomes more Gothic as her mind rejects it (this will be examined in 'Gothic Episodes' below).

This persistence of the body is evident in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault explains how punishment moved away from physical torture until 'One no longer touched the body, or at least as little as possible, and then only to reach something other than the body itself' (Foucault [1975], p. 11). The body is seen as only the carrier of the 'real' part of the person, that which is 'other than the body'. Foucault describes how 'the last addition to penal death was a mourning veil' (*ibid.*, p. 13). The body is erased but it returns hauntingly. This obscurity of the body only acts to make it more affecting since 'beneath these mysterious and gloomy clothes, life was manifested only by frightful cries, which soon expired under the knife' (*ibid.*,

¹³⁹ Miss Abbot, one of Jane's nurses, condemns her on the basis of her lack of beauty; she says: 'if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 26). Jane's feelings are dismissed and any sense of justice is not applicable to one considered ugly.

¹⁴⁰ Although she accepts her unearthliness she refuses any celestial connotation. 'I am not an angel' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 260) she tells Rochester, sure of her more melancholy spirituality.

p. 14). The body refuses to be hidden. It resurfaces in the mind as a haunting image of annulment. It haunts because the imagination creates its own ghost. It was ‘a horrible sight’ (ibid., p. 14) even though, or rather because, the spectator did not see anything. The starved body enacts the same spectral power. Although the mind tries to oppress the body, it becomes more powerful in its erasure.

Jane represents the mental splitting when she describes her disconnection with her body: ‘physically, I felt, at that moment, powerless as stubble exposed to the draught and glow of a furnace – mentally, I still possessed my soul, and with it the certainty of ultimate safety’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 317). Her body is vulnerable while her mind holds on with ‘that arm of iron’ (ibid., p. 297). She uses the possessive ‘I’ in a masculine sense of the domination of property and Rochester, her rival for ownership, senses this competition and battles for dominance. His frustration is clear:

never was anything at once so frail and so indomitable. A mere reed she feels in my hand!...Consider that eye: consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying me, with more than courage – with a stern triumph. Whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it – the savage, beautiful creature! If I tear it, if I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose (ibid., p. 317-8).

This ‘captive’ is rather the possessor. Although Rochester seems to desire her spirit, it is this that he would break and tame. Rochester reads her and imposes passivity upon her by interpreting the meaning behind her eyes, reducing her threat and active perception of him. He concentrates on her body, detailing its frailty as a ‘reed...cage...slight prison’ because it too is ‘indomitable’. The being within is not buried alive, as in previous Gothic conceptions, for example *Udolpho*’s Madame Montoni and her ‘preserving spirit, contending with a feeble frame’ (*Udolpho*, p. 371); now the Gothic heroine controls her body.

The heroine is a Gothic hybrid of male and female. Her body is destabilized by this undecidability and her mind disturbed by her irreconcilable wishes. Images of this hybrid recur, usually remarking on the presence of something behind the eyes animating the body. This ‘something’ is given a masculine assertiveness. Jane’s masculine ‘vigorous brain’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 408), represented by the ‘the glance of a curious...vivid, restless, resolute captive’ (ibid., p. 138), is at odds with her ‘woman’s heart’ (ibid., p. 408), and this splitting will become a crucial element in the Gothic within these texts. Lucy aligns herself with the feverish Vashti¹⁴¹ in which Lucy ‘found upon her something neither of woman nor of man: in each of her eyes sat a devil’ (*Villette*, p. 286). Miss Havisham is the ‘wax-work...[with] dark eyes that moved and looked’ (*GE*, p. 57) and Cathy’s ‘scintillating eye’ leads Heathcliff to ask ‘Are you possessed with a devil’ (*WH*, p. 149). Gothic terrors, inherited by an anxiety of influence on the new generation of writers and readers, are internalised. The anorectic body of the heroine signifies this process. Her body is inanimate; it is an automaton controlled by her mind and the ‘something’ behind the eyes is tangible. Her physical fading is considered as a sign of lack, hysteria, or oppression.¹⁴² It adds to the weight of excess signification that the female body carries, even as it tries to shed these imposed meanings. What becomes apparent in the descriptions of potential

¹⁴¹ Vashti, from *Esther* in the *Old Testament*, refused to obey her husband King Ahashverosh who ordered her to join a feast, and appear naked for his drinking companions. In refusing to comply, Vashti refuted the accepted notion ‘that every man should bear rule in his own house’ (*Esther* 1:22 in *Holy Bible*, p. 348), and defies the position of female as sexual object. She denies that her worth is in the display of her body and so reinforces Lucy’s ideas concerning the role of women.

¹⁴² For a wider discussion of the various motivations inscribed upon the anorexic body see Abigail Bray’s essay ‘The Anorexic Body: Reading Disorders’ in *The Body* (2005) edited by Tiffany Atkinson, Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 115-128.

meanings is not only a need to assign meaning, but also that the starved female body rejects all that is female or indeed *feminine*.¹⁴³ The emaciated body is ‘de-gender[ed]’ (Ellmann 1993, p. 14),¹⁴⁴ as Maud Ellmann explains, in a reflection of the mind. The female characters usurp male dominance and the heroine courts this battle. Her attraction rests on men who, as Milbank notes, ‘deliberately cross sexual and other boundaries in their desire for knowledge of the female’ (Milbank 1992, p. 142). The women in these texts refuse male investigation and replace it with their own interrogation of masculinity.¹⁴⁵ The material is dominated by the mind, the masculine principle over the feminine, mind over matter, but this battle takes place within the female body.¹⁴⁶

Because these women exist predominantly within their minds, their bodies must dwindle. Scientific thought in the nineteenth century considered woman to be ‘an imperfectly developed male’ (Laycock 1860, p. 314). In 1851 Arthur Schopenhauer writes that ‘in a word, they [women] are big children all their life long – a kind of intermediate stage between the child and the full-grown man, who is man

¹⁴³ The starving woman’s relationship to her femininity is a complex one. She wishes to shrug off the restrictions that this gendered body enforces upon her, yet, in some cases, her starvation seems to exaggerate her feminine delicacy and vulnerability (for example, Jane’s slight body is attractive to Rochester). The physical body is abjected, but the anorexic’s relationship with her femininity is less violently repulsing. Her lack of gender markers is entangled with her desire for disembodiment but the relationship is complicated.

¹⁴⁴ Ellmann argues that ‘*self-inflicted* hunger is a struggle to release the body from all contexts, even from the context of embodiment itself. It de-historicizes, de-socializes, and even de-genders the body’ (Ellmann 1993, p. 14 original emphasis).

¹⁴⁵ Heathcliff, Rochester and Pip are all emasculated at points within the text. M. Paul, however, may seem effeminate but Lucy encourages his masculine dominance.

¹⁴⁶ The misogyny implicit within these connotations is discussed below.

in the strict sense of the word' ('Of Women', p. 446-7).¹⁴⁷ Their biology confines them because all reserves are used up in the reproductive organs, as Spencer writes in 1873: there is 'a somewhat-earlier arrest of individual evolution in women than in men; necessitated by the reservation of vital power to meet the cost of reproduction' (*The Study of Sociology*, p. 341). This arrested development, Spencer argues, results in 'The mental manifestations' having 'somewhat less of general power or massiveness; and beyond this there is a perceptible falling-short in those two faculties, intellectual and emotional, which are the latest products of human evolution – the power of abstract reasoning...the sentiment of justice' (ibid., p. 341). Her mind is weaker because her 'vital power' must be used for reproduction. Indeed Dijkstra follows these scientific findings to the conclusion that 'To think was to "spend" vital energy just as much as it took to give birth to a child. Hence men created in the intellectual realm, while women needed to conserve energy to create in the physical realm' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 169). For these women to assume the masculine power of the mind she must sacrifice her draining body. As Schopenhauer argues: 'You need only look at the way in which she is formed, to see that woman is not meant to undergo great labor [sic], whether of the mind or of the body' ('Of Women', p. 446). These heroines starve to shrink this form and thus its restriction on them.

¹⁴⁷ In his 'Introduction' to *The Works of Schopenhauer* in 1928 Will Durant argues that 'What we like in Schopenhauer is his honesty...Let the truth be spoken mercilessly' (p. ix). This suggests that these philosophies persist. Interestingly, Schopenhauer's essay 'Of Women' is collected in the section 'Studies of Pessimism'.

The idea of the masculine woman was contentious. Masculine traits in women were thought to signal their degeneracy,¹⁴⁸ as Dijkstra writes: ‘For a woman to take on such masculine qualities was actually a sign of reversion, a sinking back into the hermaphroditism of that indeterminate primal state’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 212-3).¹⁴⁹ The differences between the genders were emphasised and women were expected to strive towards becoming fully feminine while men were to become the apex of masculinity.¹⁵⁰ Thus, as Helen Cooper observes in her ‘Introduction’ to

¹⁴⁸ Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution also brought into being fears of devolution and degeneracy (a biological and psychological regression to an earlier bestial state of evolution). Women were thought to be less evolved and thus more prone to this regression, or slipping back to a former state. An eminent text on criminology *The Female Offender* argues: ‘the primitive type of a species is more clearly represented in the female’ (Lombroso and Ferrero [1897], p. 109) and signs of degeneration in the female are manifest in masculine traits such as an ‘outstanding nose...strong jaw...hard, spent glance, which we have pronounced to be a characteristic of degeneration’ (ibid., p. 101). The authors go on to state: ‘what we look for most in the female is femininity, and when we find the opposite in her we conclude as a rule that there must be some anomaly’ (ibid., p. 112).

¹⁴⁹Scientific proclamations that women are simply inferior, weaker, smaller, less evolved men seem suggestive of Laqueur’s discussion of the one-sex model in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Even though Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) was talking of the two-sex model at this time, that ‘natural selection will be able to modify one sex in its functional relations to the other sex, or in relation to wholly different habits of life in the *two sexes*, as is sometimes the case’ (Darwin [1859], p. 87 emphasis added). Karen Harvey in her text *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* also suggests that a shift to a two-sex model began in the eighteenth century where gender ‘was based on the physical rather than the cultural’ (p. 79). To confuse this matter, Thomas Laycock discusses that ‘Meckel, G. St Hilaire, and Blainville, looked upon woman as an imperfectly developed male’ (Laycock 1860, p. 314), thus suggesting that there is one sex and that is male; yet in *The Dublin Journal of Medical Science* Robert F. Power discusses ‘monstrosities’ (congenital abnormalities) citing both Hilaire and Meckel in his piece which states: ‘In the majority of monsters the sex is female: this circumstance depends upon the fact, that, during early periods of foetal evolution, as in the lower classes of the animal kingdom, there is but one sex, the female’ (Power 1840, p. 247). Jonathan Sawday explores the ambiguities and difficulties of the one-sex model in *The Body Emblazoned*. In any case, what is conveyed is the desire to differentiate the genders and their specific roles or spheres. Women were men’s opposite, inferior men and ‘a being apart’ (Victor Jozé in Laqueur 1992, p. 149). The body or biology is another source of evidence in what Laqueur terms ‘the battleground of gender roles’ (Laqueur 1992, p. 152). If the female demonstrates masculine attributes or the male feminine qualities this differentiation begins to collapse. The consequences, Dijkstra argues, attack ‘the essential core of civilization’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 213).

¹⁵⁰ See Harry Campbell’s *Differences in the Nervous Organization of Man and Woman* 1891; Lombroso and Ferrero’s *The Female Offender* 1897; Carl Vogt’s *Lectures on Man* 1863 amongst many others. *The Female Offender*, written by Caesar Lombroso and William Ferrero who are noted to be ‘among the giants of nineteenth century psychiatry and psychology’ (Pirone 1959, p. i), details the physiognomy of the female criminal. In describing ‘Pathological Anomalies’ they write: ‘female

Villette, and as Spencer's argument suggests, when Brontë wrote *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* women were warned against 'feeding blood to their brains rather than to their wombs, where it biologically belonged' ('Introduction' in *Villette*, p. xxvi), warned against wasting her vital energy in thinking.¹⁵¹ The thoughts of women are given a biological process. The female body cannot be escaped because women are continually reminded of their reproductive role. It seems, however, in these masculine characters, that if they are prevented from 'feeding' their brains, they refuse to feed their bodies, the bodies that culture will not let them forget.¹⁵²

In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft raises the idea of sexual equality with trepidation. She hedges her argument by writing, 'because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean violently to agitate the contested question respecting the equality or inferiority of the sex' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 12). She draws attention to the physical, bodily difference in strength, suggesting that 'A degree of physical superiority cannot, therefore, be

criminals approximate more to males, both criminal and normal, than to normal women' (*The Female Offender*, p. 28). This is noted when examining skull and 'cranial anomalies' (ibid., p. 27).

¹⁵¹ The female author or thinker was under threat of being considered unfeminine. Otto Weininger writes: 'George Eliot had a broad, massive forehead; her movements, like her expression, were quick and decided, and lacked all womanly grace. The face of Lavinia Fontana [Italian artist] was intellectual and decided, very rarely charming; whilst that of Rachel Ruysch [painter] was almost wholly masculine' (Weininger [1904], p. 67). Thus the female, valued for her appearance, is considered unattractive if intellectual. Brontë, in challenging the notion that the heroine must be beautiful and what this beauty entails, is taking a controversial stance.

¹⁵² Wollstonecraft is extremely derogative towards women obsessed with their flesh. These 'artificial' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 13) dangers greedily hunger for the compliments that are offered to them in their compliance with femininity. She explains that the terms which glorify weakness are 'pretty superlatives, dropping glibly from the tongue' (ibid., p. 14), overly sweet, unhealthy and nauseating, they spoil women, fixing them within their girlishness. This dangerous craving for sweetness will become important when looking at *Villette*'s Lucy Snowe. This excessive praise can 'vitiating the taste, and create a kind of sickly delicacy' (ibid., p. 14). This sweetness retards women, so they must restrict their diet.

denied' (ibid., p. 12). However, the foregrounding of the body acts to degrade women, or suppress them: 'men endeavour to sink us still lower' (ibid., p. 12), Wollstonecraft argues, to weaken women by the focus on physical weakness, fetishising this difference which acts also to galvanize men's own sense of power. This objectification acts 'merely to render us alluring objects for a moment' (ibid., p. 12), limiting female usefulness and purpose and placing value on the body alone. Indeed Laycock notes that 'she is of less size and muscular power; but she is perfect in being perfectly adapted to her position in creation' (Laycock 1860, p. 314).¹⁵³ This seeming flattery is seen to seduce the woman to accept her deficient position. Wollstonecraft explains,

intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, pay them, [women] do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts, or to become the friends of the fellow creatures who find amusement in their society (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 12).

The suggestion is that the woman, in order to better herself, to elevate her position, must become like a man.¹⁵⁴ Females should become 'masculine women' (ibid., p. 12), assuming and working in 'imitation of manly virtues' (ibid., p. 12). A lack of femininity is thus considered a virtue and the ability to move beyond this assigned, biological fate threatens the privileged position of men and thus gives rise to attacks on masculine, or rather, manly woman. These attacks refocus upon the appearance and bodies of women seeing male traits in her 'broad, massive forehead; her

¹⁵³ Laycock's text does defend the position of women to some extent.

¹⁵⁴ This is, oddly, reinforced by Weininger who considers women's masculinity to signify 'a higher degree of development' (Weininger [1904], p. 66). However, in the context of his argument, any deviation from the feminine is positive, but masculinity in women coincides with homosexuality and altered physicality. The woman is not so much masculine as manly.

movements...lacked all womanly grace...[her] face...was intellectual and decided, very rarely charming...almost wholly masculine’ (Weininger [1904], p. 67). However, Wollstonecraft argues that in not working to become more masculine, the woman contaminates the man. He becomes ‘intoxicated’ by her body and in order to save him this danger the woman should endeavour to negate her bodily importance; she should draw attention to her mind, so that man may find respite from the ‘influence of their senses’. The woman’s physicality renders men susceptible to becoming embedded within their own sensory existence. Wollstonecraft urges that other women will ‘wish with me, that they may every day grow more and more masculine’ because feminine women are the ‘Weak, artificial beings...[who] spread corruption through the whole mass of society!’ (ibid., p. 13).¹⁵⁵

Jane Eyre takes up this quest some fifty years later through her disembodiment. She tells Rochester

“I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: - it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal – as we are!”
“As we are!” repeated Rochester – “so,” he added, enclosing me in his arms, gathering me to his breast, pressing his lips on my lips (*Jane Eyre*, p. 253).

Jane asks Rochester to disregard her ‘mortal flesh’, her female body, and see her as ‘equal’ in ‘spirit’. This suggests that she considers her mind to be equal, that any

¹⁵⁵ Although Wollstonecraft writes at the end of the eighteenth century, it is argued that early feminists in the nineteenth century ‘addressed some of the same concerns that *A Vindication* did but in oblique, fictional terms. Indeed, *Jane Eyre* can be read...as a fictional counterpart to Wollstonecraft’s manifesto’ (Diedrick 1993, p. 23). Thus I have returned to Wollstonecraft’s text to address these common issues.

deficiency is a bodily inferiority which vanishes after the mortal body is no longer required. Rochester, however, reads her body. He sees her as she is defined physically and is perturbed when her image does not fit any role. When he meets her in the grounds of Thornfield, Rochester cannot judge her by her appearance and he flounders, ““You are —”...He seemed puzzled to decide what I was’ (ibid., p. 114). Rochester seems to agree with Jane’s assertion of equality. He repeats ‘as we are!’ but does so in a mocking tone for he then crushes her *body* to his, ‘pressing his lips on my lips’, preventing Jane from speaking further and refocusing upon the ‘medium’ of her ‘mortal flesh’: her mouth.

Jane’s lack of appetite draws on her desire to deflect attention from her physicality. Jane would not be seen as a fleshy being because her body negates her equality. Throughout the novel Jane’s appetite is questioned. She refuses to eat and Rochester asks, ‘Is it the thoughts of going to London that takes away your appetite?’; rather, it is the feeling that ‘Everything in life seems unreal’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 279). Jane eats when her thoughts are clear and she is in control. When she is in Lowood her hunger is overwhelming because she understands the boundaries by which she is enclosed, and her mind is strong. It is at moments of uncertainty that she abstains, in an attempt to feel in control. Jane is aware that her body is powerful. But she would minimise its power because she is conscious of the influence of her physicality. She learns that ‘there would have been danger in yielding to the cravings of your appetite at first’ (ibid., p. 345) and so is able to resist her cravings for a time; however, her body can take control of her through her passions and so she must hold them in check until the time is right.

The bodies of Jane and Lucy are vulnerable and frail while the ‘mind was made strong’ (*Villette*, p. 49). This strength of mind in a woman was perceived to be a dangerous deficiency within the period and so their increasingly vulnerable bodies hide their inner power, the ‘Amazonian brawler’ (in Dijkstra 1986, p. 65) that Francis Cooke considers to be lurking within every woman.¹⁵⁶ Lucy describes how

my inner self moved; my spirit shook its always-fettered wings half loose...I, who had never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life: in that morning my soul grew as fast as Jonah’s gourd (*Villette*, p. 53).

Although her physical body fits the ‘narrow and difficult’ (*ibid.*, p. 52) path of her life, her spirit grows because with her struggle comes independence and true life. Lucy describes her potential life where she would be ‘idle, basking, plump, and happy’, believable since she notes that ‘many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion’ (*ibid.*, p. 39). However, this ‘supposed’ fate for many females seems dull: they ‘pass their lives’ they do not live them. This is especially so in light of the adventures that Lucy undertakes in a new country. This passive, drifting body, fattened like a pampered pet, or beached whale, immobile and prone seems a worse fate than the uncertainty that Lucy suffers, since she suffers it with excitement. This parallel life is a life within the flesh. It is a life of sensation, experienced by the exterior body. She would be ‘stretched on a cushioned deck’, laid out, her body pampered ‘warmed...rocked’ but the victim of circumstance, impotent

¹⁵⁶ The feminist Tennie C. Claflin writes in *Constitutional Equality a Right of Woman* in 1871: ‘it was sufficient to condemn a woman to know that she was “strong-minded”’ (p. 61). The thinking woman was considered unnatural, as the above theories suggest, and which is crystallised in Nicholas Francis Cooke’s 1870s text on human sexuality *Satan in Society* which argues that: once her mind is excited woman will ‘cease to be the gentle mother, and become the Amazonian brawler’ (in Dijkstra 1986, p. 65).

and empty, seen to have ‘fallen over-board’ or shattered by a ‘wreck’ which comes ‘at last’ (ibid., p. 39) to free her from this comfortable living death.

Jane’s somatic life is also something she wishes to escape from; it consists of being swallowed within the gross materiality of the body. This is represented when Jane is locked in the red-room. The room is soft and pulsates with shades of blood and flesh; it is cloying with reams of musty fabric throbbing with the same uncanny shades of interiority. This is Jane’s nightmare, locked in flesh, without the safety of womblike enclosure; there is only the feeling of suffocation and materiality. It is within this body cavity that she sees and disowns her own body. She sees her reflection within a ‘visionary hollow’, seeing only a ‘spirit’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 14). Her body is something ghostly and unrecognisable. This weak, victimised child is not who she is. The body becomes an insubstantial thing; it is a ‘phantom’, ‘half fairy, half imp’ (ibid., p. 14). The mind, or essence seems more solid and formidable as her ‘reason’ screams ‘Unjust! – unjust!’ (ibid., p. 15). Her recourse is to escape into the power of her mind, of her superior reason and to punish her body. She decides at this crucial moment to run away, but ‘if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die’ (ibid., p. 15). Here ‘was the mental battle fought!’ (ibid., p. 15), the battle not against her dreadful treatment but the battle of her mind to dominate her body. From this moment, Jane’s body becomes Gothic and remains so throughout the text, trapped within the ‘visionary hollow’ (ibid., p. 14) of her newly tyrannical mind. Her body comes to represent the oppressed, victimised Gothic heroine, while her mind – split – becomes the possessive Gothic tyrant.

Jane echoes the male voices that proclaim that women are biologically and thus naturally ‘imperfectly developed male[s]’ (Laycock 1860, p. 314). By the very act of her starvation, or wish to reduce her female body, she has internalised these views. Hilde Bruch’s powerfully influential study on the psychology of anorexia nervosa, *The Golden Cage*, gives many examples of the starving woman desiring to shake her female body loose in order to attain the respect men enjoy.¹⁵⁷ She does this by imitating their strategies of power and dominance. The egotism of desiring to ‘be praised for being special...held in awe’ or ‘superhuman’ (Bruch 1978, p. 15) is a masculine trait. Bruch suggests that the anorexic girl feels that ‘being a female was an unjust disadvantage...[she] dreamed of doing well in areas considered more...“masculine”’ (ibid., p. 55). In this sense, the later Gothic heroines who starve themselves neither do so to attain the physical ideal, as Anna Silver argues, suggesting that ‘the Victorian aesthetic ideal [was] of the slim woman’ (Silver 2002, p. 82), nor do they rebel against patriarchal oppression which imposes this ideal. Rather, their bodies display their wish to assume an ability to dominate through the

¹⁵⁷ As Brumberg suggests, this also seems the case in the Victorian adolescent girl’s anorexia. As noted above, in the nineteenth-century middle-class family there was ‘prolonged dependency and intensification of parent-child relations’ (Brumberg 2000, p. 125) where the adolescent girl was afforded some emotional power and so her anorexia intensified this influence. She was thus in a position where she could impact the lives of others, a position previously exclusively claimed by males. Again Brumberg notes, glossing French psychiatrist Charles Lasègue’s 1873 theory of *l’anorexie hystérique*: ‘A girl who declined the food provided by her family became the focus of conversation and concern; her appetite, her diet, and her body became a preoccupation in the child-centred family’ (ibid., p. 126). The starving women in the texts discussed lack this concerned family and perhaps their refusal of food is an attempt to attain concern and attention from others, to make a family gather around their eroding bodies. The nineteenth-century starving woman is an extremely poignant figure. Her desire is both to break free from the restrictions that her female body binds her to, and perhaps to prolong this period of adolescence before she is bartered for in marriage, but she is also communicating the injustice of her biological fate. She is thus taking on board the discourses that pronounce her as an inferior man. She is complicit in the view that to use her mind her vital energies must drain from her female body and that she must therefore become masculine.

imitation of masculine power. In this way, the nineteenth-century Gothic heroine is aligned with anorexic psychology. This movement perpetuates rather than explodes the patriarchy which terrorises early Gothic texts. They wish to be self-possessed, but in the model of male possession, and their rule is no less despotic. Bruch's case history of Hazel shows her testimony, as quoted above, that 'You make out of your body your very own kingdom where you are the tyrant, the absolute dictator' (Bruch 1978, p. 62). This metaphor of masculine rule envisages the feeble, female body of the anorexic controlled by her mind, the male despot, a metaphor the nineteenth-century Gothic also illustrates. She genders her mind to comply with the images of successful power that she assimilated. Her subjectivity becomes androgynous, split and in constant conflict. Naomi Wolf's statement regarding anorexia, that 'the woman in these women [is] cancelled out' (Wolf 1990, p. 199), reinforces this erasure of female identity within this supposed action of rebellion. The 'woman *in*' is replaced and she becomes possessed by her internalised vision of male power.

Gothic Episodes

These nineteenth-century texts are categorised more often as realist rather than Gothic; however, the Gothic mode surfaces at important times and through powerful scenes or episodes. In *Wuthering Heights* Cathy becomes a Gothic figure because she rejects food. Before this she is a healthy girl: 'her figure was both plump and slender, elastic as steel, and her whole aspect sparkling with health' (*WH*, p. 193). After she is

described as ‘dwindling and fading’ (*WH*, p. 103).¹⁵⁸ She starves until ‘the haggardness of Mrs. Linton’s appearance smote him [Edgar, her husband] speechless, and he could only glance from her to me in horrid astonishment’ (*WH*, p. 124). This scene of Gothic horror is similar to the unspeakable scene where Emily cannot look upon her emaciated Aunt or of Lorenzo being ‘petrified with horror’ (*The Monk*, p. 369) at the spectacle of Agnes’s starvation. Cathy models herself on an eighteenth-century Gothic heroine, forsaken and forlorn. ‘You left me too’ she states; ‘I’m dying for it’ (*WH*, p. 151).¹⁵⁹ Cathy seems surrounded by a ‘pervading spirit of neglect’ (*WH*, p. 139) and is ‘stamped...as one doomed to decay’ (*WH*, p. 147), fated like the early Gothic heroines. Heathcliff is also Gothicised by his starved body, leading Nelly to question “‘Is he a ghoul or a vampire?’...I had read of such hideous, incarnate demons’ (*WH*, p. 281). Miss Havisham embodies the Gothic within *Great Expectations*. She speaks and moves with a ‘dead lull’ (*GE*, p. 60) and is ‘corpse-like’ (*GE*, p. 59). Her ‘collapsed form’ (*GE*, p. 59) represents the haunting of the past in the present. The Gothic episodes within *Jane Eyre* surface when Jane is confronted by her body, and this body is also described with a Gothic vocabulary: she is a ‘phanto[m]’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 14). The Gothic mode is where Lucy is most at home and it is through Gothic conventions that her imposing yet invisible body is described.

¹⁵⁸ She fades because she is separated from Heathcliff. This connection with Heathcliff is established in childhood when Cathy ‘can’t eat my dinner’ (*WH*, p. 69) because Heathcliff is absent and being punished.

¹⁵⁹ Not only is she forsaken, but she is a negated mother. Her child is left motherless because of her malnutrition; she has not the strength to bear it and live. Also the child’s growth is retarded by the mother’s starvation: it is ‘puny’ (*WH*, p. 152).

Her body becomes 'skeleton-like' (*Villette*, p. 187) when she succumbs to her lack of appetite. In each text, the body in the process of starvation evokes the Gothic.

Cathy's starvation represents her unbreakable connection with Heathcliff. It also aligns her with the Gothic. 'I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free' (*WH*, p. 123), she explains and her starvation eerily returns her to this. She rejects the adult womanly form she should present as she brushes her 'thick entangled locks from her wasted face' (*WH*, p. 119). Her hair lays 'uncurled' and 'carelessly twisted' and 'Probably she had not touched her dress since yesterday evening' (*WH*, p. 139). Heathcliff also becomes a more intensely Gothic character when he starves his body. He becomes more 'unnatural' (*WH*, p. 280) as his resemblance to the vampire is striking. He displays 'the same bloodless hue; and his teeth visible, now and then, in a kind of smile; his frame shivering...as a tight-stretched cord vibrates – a strong thrilling, rather than trembling' (*WH*, p. 280). His hunger creates a powerful animation and excitement rather than weakness. His body seems otherworldly in its starvation or rather insatiate hunger. Nelly recalls the image of Heathcliff but it is unspeakable. For a moment she, like Edgar witnessing Cathy, was 'smote...speechless' (*WH*, p. 124): 'I cannot express what a terrible start I got, by the momentary view! Those deep black eyes! That smile, and ghastly paleness! It appeared to me, not Mr. Heathcliff, but a goblin' (*WH*, p. 281). The starved body becomes a thing, dehumanized as 'it'. The 'smile' makes the image more terrible and more ghoulish, since Heathcliff does not fear his approaching death, but welcomes it as a reunion with Cathy.

The Gothic in *Great Expectations* comes from the terror of the past returning or never being escaped, and Miss Havisham's body is a constant and present representation of the inescapable nature of past events.¹⁶⁰ It is the incongruity of Miss Havisham, part blushing bride, part decaying corpse, that constitutes a literalizing of these conventionally Gothic fears of the return of the past in the present. Pip describes Miss Havisham as 'dropped, body and soul, within and without, under the weight of a crushing blow' (*GE*, p. 60). This blow happened decades ago but is as fresh as if it was continuously felt every day. Miss Havisham has constructed the moving image of Gothic living decay. The idea that all around Miss Havisham is 'transfixed' (*GE*, p. 60) is an important image. It is as if all surrounding Miss Havisham is petrified by her image, just as Lorenzo is turned to stone by the horror of Agnes, in her Medusa-like image. And, as is discussed above, her reflection is potent and dangerous. Miss Havisham is stricken when her bridegroom rejects her just as Madam Montoni is stricken by the refused love of her husband, and Cathy and Heathcliff suffer the loss of each other. This loss is manifest in the decay of their flesh as each body becomes an emaciated icon of grief. Pip notices that 'Without this arrest of everything...not even the withered bridal dress...could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud' (*GE*, p. 59). The scene is set and Miss Havisham designs it following a Gothic aesthetic in order to frame the tragic immolation of her youth, her body and her self. The uneaten food, rotting to dust, is also a locus of the Gothic, and this will be

¹⁶⁰ Pip's recurring horror, which haunts the text and renders the title poignant and ironic, is that his past will catch up with him, or rather prevent him from escaping.

discussed in relation to the other Gothic foods within each of the main texts studied here. Miss Havisham's body is the Gothic centre from which decay spreads.

The Gothic is unleashed by the body in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. These two texts provide an extended example of the ways in which the nineteenth-century Gothic heroine's body becomes the site of Gothic eruptions. Returning to Jane in the red-room, she declares that, 'Resolve...wrought up, instigated some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable oppression...never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 15). To refuse food is an act of defiance and rebellion against 'insupportable oppression', but it is a rebellion that results in immolation. Jane thinks herself 'wicked' for 'conceiving of starving myself to death', since 'That was certainly a crime' (*ibid.*, p. 16): her body does not belong to her, it is God's object, or the object owned by her guardian. She cannot possess nor destroy it. Her realisation of her impotence terrifies her and evokes a Gothic lens through which Jane perceives the weakened boundaries between life and death, real and unreal. Her mind fills with conventional Gothic images: being buried alive, spectres, horror, and darkness. She sees the 'vault' in which her uncle awaits her as he 'did...lie buried' there as 'an inviting bourne' (*ibid.*, p. 16). This feeling springs from the realisation that her flesh encases her, but that she is powerless to affect it.

Here, in the red-room, Jane is forced to see herself as body and it frightens her. She is confronted by her image in the mirror. This confrontation is not with an image of her secret, inner self, an objectification of 'Jane Eyre's subjective state' (Alexander 1993, p. 435) as Alexander argues, but with her external inescapable embodiment. The tomb-like motifs of 'marble', 'cold as stone' and 'decay' recall the

corruptible materiality of the body rather than the immortality of the spirit.¹⁶¹ Her claustrophobia and terror lead Jane to look toward the ‘dimly gleaming mirror’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 16), a glimmering window of space, where she knows her body, the ‘strange little figure there gazing at me’ with its preternatural ‘white face and arms...and glittering eyes’ (*ibid.*, p. 14), waits. Her awareness of her inescapable embodiment requires her to see and objectify her fleshy prison. This doubling detaches Jane from this ‘strange’ stranger, who is looking ‘at me’. She is not looking at herself but at her body. Her ‘white’ skin covering the face and arms and encasing the ‘glittering eyes’ is not *her*. It is a Gothic presence, ‘one of the tiny phantoms’, from Bessie’s ghost stories; but just as this spectral image surfaces out of ‘the gloom’ (*ibid.*, p. 14) so it might resurface. Jane dreads that ‘some haloed face’ might ‘elicit from the gloom’ (*ibid.*, p. 17). Her glance returns to the mirror and she conjures her own image to confront her. It is manifested too close and is felt oppressively ‘bending over me’ (*ibid.*, p. 17). This image is confused with her thoughts of Mr Reed’s spirit which is conscious in the grave and able to ‘quit its abode...and rise before me in this chamber’ (*ibid.*, p. 17). Her mind, prepared for ‘horror’ (*ibid.*, p. 17), experiences it in embodiment. She is overwhelmed by the sensation that ‘something seemed near to me; I was oppressed, suffocated’ (*ibid.*, p. 17) and she panics. She cries, ‘Take me out!’ (*ibid.*, p. 17). Her body is conceptualised as a separate being. It is the ‘something’ which is too near and out of which she screams to be released. The ‘red-room’ compounds this sense of enclosure. In this belly-room, with its ‘deep red

¹⁶¹ See J. Jeffrey Franklin’s essay ‘The Merging of Spiritualities: Jane Eyre as Missionary of Love’ for a spiritual reading of the ‘sepulchre imagery’ (Franklin 1995, p. 461) in the red room.

damask', 'festoons and falls of drapery', 'crimson' and 'blush of pink' (ibid., p. 13), the horror of being shut inside flesh is experienced. Jane is swallowed, consumed by her body and she wants out.

Jane feels suffocated by this swallowing, and her starvation relieves the stifling burden of her body. It creates a space inside, where she feels herself to be held. The text is littered with references to Jane's lack of appetite.¹⁶² 'I could not eat' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 20), she declares, referring to the pastry that waits for her once she is released from the red room. Food only adds to the encumbrance of her body. She also cannot eat because she is too excited to be leaving for school: she 'had no appetite' (ibid., p. 42) and she could 'not touch the food' (ibid., p. 44), again because of the lightness she feels at escape. Her appetite leaves her when she feels 'mortally apprehensive' (ibid., p. 42), when she feels that her embodiment jeopardises her idea of self. She is confronted by her own embodiment in the red-room and cannot eat; she leaves the relative safety of her home to travel the journey of 'preternatural length' (ibid., p. 41) to school and cannot eat. She cannot eat when she thinks Rochester's affections belong to another: Mrs Fairfax notices 'But you eat nothing: you have scarcely tasted since you began tea', and Jane reveals that this lack of appetite results in her need to ascertain the 'probability of a union between Mr. Rochester and the beautiful Blanche' (ibid., p. 160).¹⁶³ Jane's uncertainty for the future, her heavy heart,

¹⁶² Jane does, however, 'find nourishment' in the 'vengeance [she] had tasted', in its bittersweet flavour of 'aromatic wine...warm and racy: its after flavour, metallic and corroding' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 38). When she is physically deprived, she nourishes herself mentally.

¹⁶³ Jane 'surfeited herself' with 'sweet lies' that Rochester loves her, she 'devoured the ideal' and 'swallowed poison as if it were nectar' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 160), so cannot eat.

is a result of her doubt that Rochester would prefer a 'beautiful' woman, something Jane's body can never allow her to be. She starves when she becomes aware of her embodiment and its limits.

In contrast, she becomes ravenous when she feels her inner being is violated. When Jane comes to Lowood she is starving 'sick from inanition' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 45) but is given 'a nauseous mess' of burnt porridge that even 'famine itself soon sickens over' (ibid., p. 46). This starvation is part of Mr Brocklehurst's mission to 'mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh' (ibid., p. 64). He argues that

when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge into these children's mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls! (ibid., p. 63).

Interestingly, Jane renounces this philosophy. She will not be manipulated through her body. Her appetite returns when food is refused her. 'I was still hungry', she states and notices 'how small my portion seemed! I wished it had been doubled' (ibid., p. 52). The unfairness of Mr Brocklehurst's logic is keenly felt on her 'vile bod[y]'. The action is an attempt to reach her 'immortal sou[l]', the part of her that she holds dominion over and so her hunger increases to the point that all messages sicken in her body before they reach her soul. Jane understands that the body cannot be forgotten, and that although it is a powerful medium, it is more than that. Its mortification serves only to punish the innocent rather than promote transcendence. Jane cannot escape her embodiment and so must constantly battle to possess her body and in this instance her hunger protects her and maintains her connection to her body. Alison Milbank argues that Jane's 'materialist' (Milbank 1992, p. 147) perspective is evident in her resolution that 'I must keep in good health and not die' (*Jane Eyre*, p.

32) in order to avoid Hell. And this materialism is also evident in the ways in which Jane feels injustice physically; it attacks and marks her, branding a ‘singularly deep impression...on [her heart]’ (ibid., p. 58). Unlike Helen, her doomed Lowood friend, who conceives the body as a ‘corruptible’, ‘cumbrous frame of flesh’ which will be ‘put...off’ leaving ‘the spark of the spirit’ (ibid., p. 58),¹⁶⁴ Jane is haunted by the power she recognises her body has, its power to protect and to endanger the tangibility of the self.

Villette’s Lucy Snowe’s embodiment is similarly a complex gateway to the Gothic. She describes the reunion of ‘Spirit and Substance’ after her faint, to be ‘not in an embrace, but a racking sort of struggle’ (*Villette*, p. 185). Her body is a ‘prison’; it is ‘cold and wasted’ (ibid., p. 185). She is close to madness through isolation after she is left alone in Madame Beck’s *pensionnat*.¹⁶⁵ She becomes ‘spectral; my eyes larger and more hollow, my hair darker than was natural, by contrast with my thin and ashen face’ (ibid., p. 186), and ‘skeleton-like’ (ibid., p. 187). The Gothic appears written on her body. She becomes something other, unnatural, and more. Her eyes are ‘more hollow’ and her hair ‘darker than was *natural*’. Her starvation makes her body Gothic. Although it is negatively enhanced, it becomes a conjunction of spirit and matter. It is both ‘spectral’ and ‘skeleton-like’. Her bodily surfaces increase as her frame diminishes. The contours, shapes and textures multiply her signification and

¹⁶⁴ Milbank argues that here Helen demonstrates death as an ‘organic development’ (Milbank 1992, p. 147). However, I argue that more than ‘a certain denial of the flesh in Helen Burns’s vision’ (ibid., p. 147), Helen seems to reject and despise the physical and to ‘delight’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 59) in her Eternal ‘rest...home’ (ibid., p. 59). This is indeed ‘antipathetic to the materialist Jane Eyre’ (Milbank 1992, p. 147) who craves ‘incident, life, fire, feeling...in my actual existence’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 109).

¹⁶⁵ French boarding school

bring attention to her, as they detail her features and paradoxically flesh out the shadowy figure she hitherto seems to be. This is attention she desperately needs. She is devoured by loneliness. She confesses that ‘a want of companionship maintained in my soul the cravings of a most deadly famine’ (ibid., p. 175).

Food cannot sate her hunger and she despises the appetite of the school girls whom she sees as ‘robust...fat, ruddy, hale, joyous, ignorant, unthinking, unquestioning’ (*Villette*, p. 141). Girls like Ginevra value only their ‘commodity of bulk’ (ibid., p. 223) and in these terms Lucy is ‘nobody’ (ibid., p. 341). When Ginevra tells Lucy she is ‘nobody’, she rests her ‘whole weight’ (ibid., p. 341) upon her. Ginevra imposes her body, leaning on Lucy who ‘was not a gentleman, or her lover’ (ibid., p. 341). Lucy is seen in negatives and Ginevra’s selfishness is associated with her excessive bodiliness, but for Lucy ‘mental pain was far more wasting and wearing’ (ibid., p. 174).¹⁶⁶

The Gothic eruptions within these realist texts centre on the materiality of the body and its split from the inner self. This is shown strikingly in Jane’s reaction to her reflection in the red-room, Lucy’s drugged wanderings and subsequent confrontation with the ghostly nun, all scenes with Miss Havisham, and Cathy and Heathcliff’s discussion of their love. The Gothic surfaces in these texts through disturbing metaphors that become literal, through uncanny doubling of the body, and through constant reference to consuming, devouring, uniting, and rejecting flesh. The

¹⁶⁶ This female value is contrasted clearly later in this text by the opposition of the archetypal figures of Cleopatra and Vashti.

Gothic episodes in these texts do not result from psychological terror, which might be supposed of a realist text from this era; rather, the Gothic appears at the point of opposition between mind and body and the fear experienced from a body out of control. The body is considered Gothic when it has agency which becomes threatening to the 'self'. The flesh becomes an uncanny marionette or a thing to be reformed. Food, or its lack, structures the external appearance of these bodies and contributes to the sense of power and identity that these characters strive for.

Ill-Fitting Bodies

These emaciated women are walking ruins. They represent the poignant spectacle of lack. Their want is traced upon their bodies and Gothically literalised. Jane Eyre's shrunken body is withered in her redundant stays, Lucy is a mere 'colourless shadow' (*Villette*, p. 171), but Dickens's Miss Havisham is the quintessential ruin. She identifies herself with the 'heap of decay' (*GE*, p. 87) that constitutes the wedding banquet, stating that 'It and I have worn away together. The mice have gnawed at it, and sharper teeth than teeth of mice have gnawed at me' (*GE*, p. 87). Both her dress and the tablecloth were 'once white...all yellow and withered' (*GE*, p. 87). Her body becomes consumable. 'When the ruin is complete', she announces, 'lay me dead, in my bride's dress on the bride's table' (*GE*, p. 87) where the vulture-like family are told to 'take your stations when you come to feast upon me' (*GE*, p. 86). When Miss Havisham's body is finally feasted upon, her wait ends in her death, and literalises how her life has been eaten up by her loss or lack. The oxymoronic idea of a complete ruin exemplifies Miss Havisham.

While Miss Havisham claims an image for herself, Jane endlessly searches for a place and a resistant idea of herself. Jane is orphaned and, like the ‘placeless person’ (*Villette*, p. 48) Lucy Snowe, too realises that ‘there remained no possibility of dependence on others; to myself alone could I look’ (*ibid.*, p. 40).¹⁶⁷ This intense pressure creates a splitting. The body becomes something that must be looked after and that must project the appropriate messages. Jane does not feel comfortable in her body, and as a child describes being ‘beside myself; or rather *out* of myself’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 12). Lucy also does not feel comforted by her flesh:

I saw myself in the glass...a faded, hollow-eyed vision. Yet I thought little of the wan spectacle. The blight, I believed, was chiefly external: I still felt life at life’s sources (*Villette*, p. 41).

The body is hurt and pained, but this does not touch her inner self. She extracts herself as Jane does in order to escape hurt. Lucy also communicates the feeling that her existence is not dependent upon her body; rather, she exists in spite of it. ‘Life’s sources’ are not ‘external’. Jane’s body is abused and beaten by the gluttonous bully

¹⁶⁷ Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre are characters who feel their bodies do not fit them. They wish to shrink them because attention has previously been negative, frightening and degrading to their ego. Lucy judges herself by her lack of beauty. On her arrival in France, she loses her trunk and asks Graham for help. She does not feel she deserves this help because of her physical deficiency. ‘I was turning away, in the deep consciousness of all absence of claim to look for further help from such a one as he’ (*Villette*, p. 69), she explains. She hides her face, replacing its features with the blank of the back of her head, enacting her perceived ‘absence of claim’. This turning pre-empts any rejection that may come from Graham, she averts her eyes because she feels that she is not good enough to ‘look’ at him. He is ‘handsome...his face was very pleasant’; more than this, however, ‘there was goodness in his countenance’ (*ibid.*, p. 69), his appearance is a reflection of his moral character to Lucy. Both Jane and Lucy harbour a fear that their bodies inscribe a fallen nature or moral deficit that they must prove does not exist through their abstemious denial of their flesh. Graham’s beauty feeds her lack and the memory of his face ‘was a sort of cordial to me long after’ (*ibid.*, p. 70). Lucy’s attraction to the idealised Graham can only be unrequited, and Jane’s body also deprives her of love. As has been noted above, Miss Abbot condemns Jane on the basis of her lack of beauty: ‘one really cannot care for such a little toad as that’ (*Jane Eyre*, p. 26). These two characters starve themselves in a perhaps unconscious attempt to shed their incomplete feminine identity. Their bodies are rejected so they cast this rejection back and force it to be recognised as unfair.

Master John, leaving her 'bewildered by the terror he inspired' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 10), and convinced he is 'a tyrant' (ibid., p. 11). His corpulence repulses Jane; she describes his 'thick lineaments' and how he 'gorged himself habitually' (ibid., p. 9) making him 'flabby' (ibid., p. 10). Her reaction to the abuse of this monstrous boy, unnaturally 'large and stout for his age' (ibid., p. 9), is that 'when he came near' 'every morsel of flesh on [her] bones shrank' (ibid., p. 10). She tries to pull her body into herself; any flesh becomes a target for his pinches. To conquer him she must become her own tyrant. Lucy's body also 'became narrowed to my lot...my appetite needed no more than...tiny messes' (*Villette*, p. 42). In searching for place and self these characters can only feel shelter in the possession of their own flesh. In its shrunken form it cannot house any other. It has no value as a commodity and because it is not wanted, they are free to own it.

Miss Havisham repossesses her body. Her body is a separate being; just as Jane undergoes a splitting, so Miss Havisham's body is split into pure image. The bride is the focus of vision and Miss Havisham is obsessed with this image and her incomplete fulfilment of it. This incompleteness is literalised in her Gothic body as ruin or grotesque skeleton. Miss Havisham, always referred to with the title Miss, emphasising her position as unmarried and lacking, missing something, becomes the image of the discarded bride. Pip's hallucinatory image of her 'hanging there by the neck' yet also 'trying to call to me' (*GE*, p. 63) after his first visit to Satis House reinforces this notion of her living death and of the haunting power of the spectacle of her body. Arthur, Miss Havisham's half-brother and co-conspirator with Compeyson, is haunted by her ruination. Her body 'broke' and resembling Le Fanu's Carmilla stands 'at the foot of [Arthur's] bed' with 'drops of blood' (*GE*, p. 345) on her 'white'

(*GE*, p. 344) gown.¹⁶⁸ Her image is seared onto his mind and it rather than her ‘living body’ (*GE*, p. 354) kills him. He dies ‘with a scream’ as he imagines her wrapping him in a ‘shroud’ (*GE*, p. 345), dressing him in the same deadly white in which she is entombed. This image returns to Pip when he visits Miss Havisham for the last time. He sees her ‘hanging to the beam’ and although ‘it was a fancy’ it leaves him ‘shuddering from head to foot’ (*GE*, p. 397).¹⁶⁹ His earlier vision of ‘a figure hanging there by the neck. A figure all in yellow white, with but one shoe to the feet...I could see the faded trimmings of the dress...the face was Miss Havisham’s’ (*GE*, p. 63) emphasises the surface. He notices the translucent covering of her dress with its ‘earthy paper’, her ‘countenance’ that seems mask-like and artificial in its struggling ‘movement’ (*GE*, p. 63). The image of her body is so striking that it returns to haunt Pip, leaving him ‘shuddering’ as much from his awareness that it is ‘a fancy’, as before his ‘terror was greatest of all, when I found no figure there’ (*GE*, p. 63); but also because the haunting is two-fold: it is the return of Miss Havisham’s unforgettable image and of Pip’s past-self in this ‘childish association’ (*GE*, p. 397). She works to maintain this haunting image. She is aware of the power of inanition and will conspicuously not eat in front of anyone. The lawyer Jaggers asks Pip, ‘how often had [he] seen Miss Havisham eat and drink’, and he answers, ‘Never’ (*GE*, p.

¹⁶⁸ Carmilla, the eponymous vampire from Sheridan Le Fanu’s tale (1872), appears ‘at the foot of the bed’ (*‘Carmilla’*, p. 278), ‘in her white nightdress, bathed, from chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood’ (*ibid.*, p. 283).

¹⁶⁹ Stone argues that ‘Dickens originally intended that Miss Havisham – like Edward Hardman and the protagonist of “The Bride’s Chamber” – would die by hanging’ (Stone 1994, p. 342-3). However, by having her body consumed in fire, Dickens destroys Miss Havisham’s image and thus her haunting potential.

238-9).¹⁷⁰ ‘She has never allowed herself to be seen doing either, since she lived this present life of hers’ (*GE*, p. 239), Jagers elaborates. Miss Havisham is in control. She does not *allow* people to see any other image than the Gothic bride, suspended and starved, living a ‘present life’ out of time but in steady decay. The image she perpetuates is of a preternatural spectre and she contrives an even more Gothic myth in which she ‘wanders about in the night, and then lays hands on such food as she takes’ (*GE*, p. 239). In this narrative, she is a mixture of monstrously consuming nocturnal predator and scavenger. Perhaps she lives on the spiders and rats that live on her. But what is important is that her appetite is crucial in her self-conscious self-fashioning of a Gothic anti-heroine.

This constructed body image continues to speak of her ruined life even when she no longer can. Her language becomes interrupted and she cannot speak in whole sentences. She is ‘always leaving a blank’ (*GE*, p. 399) in her mantra, her three sentences of regret and acceptance.¹⁷¹ She does not ‘pu[t] in another word’ (*GE*, p. 399) to replace the one she must miss out, but creates absence, doubling the absence

¹⁷⁰ Silver argues that Dickens ‘sentimentalizes women’s hunger, depicting the “feminine” woman as naturally abstemious’ (Silver 2002, p. 82) and Miss Havisham’s contrived image of abstention would support this supposition. Yet Miss Havisham attempts to construct a body of excessive femininity. In this excess the body is destroyed, or ruined, and the representations of the feminine are exposed. She uses the trope of the anorectic body to define herself as hyper-feminine. Its contrivance makes it Gothic, in that it is a self-conscious manipulation of the flesh in order to produce horror in its excessive conformity to ‘correct’ feminine conduct. However, this very despotic control masculinises her.

¹⁷¹ This mantra consists of: “What have I done!” And then, “When she first came, I meant to save her from misery like mine.” And then, “Take a pencil and write under my name, “I forgive her!”” (*GE*, p. 398-9). Thus depending on which word she omits, the meaning alters. This is especially so if the word is a pronoun. This verbal skipping seems not to articulate ‘the endless resourcefulness of language’ (Bronfen 1992, p. 359) as Bronfen argues, but to suggest the subordination of language to visual image. Miss Havisham’s body speaks louder through these gaps.

she has created in herself. Miss Havisham's body, like Jane's, is animated by something behind the eyes, something out of reach from the physical. Her body, although seemingly brittle, is solid, 'wax' and bone. Life flickers as within a monstrous life-size doll: 'Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me' (*GE*, p. 57). An image which might seem fragile becomes frightening and threatening. Pip and Rochester's male gaze perceives this power as alien to the female body from which it emanates. Miss Havisham's crypt is a reaction to her grief, her loss of her own great expectations, her loss of the groom, and her loss of her identity as bride and wife. She '*demetaphori[cally]*' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 126) encrypts, or buries alive her own image, her self as bride, in the way that Abraham and Torok describe the cryptic acts of the mind in the face of insurmountable and unacceptable loss. In her death, Miss Havisham wishes Pip to 'take the pencil and write under my name, "I forgive her!"' (*GE*, p. 398-9). The subject and object of this statement are uncertain.¹⁷² Her body becomes separated from the inner self, which has encrypted this corporeal self. Bronfen reads Miss Havisham's final words as issuing from her disconnected flesh, from her 'unconscious body, incessantly speaking' (Bronfen 1992, p. 358).¹⁷³

Just as Miss Havisham's body in 'leaving a blank' (*GE*, p. 399) has the final word, so Jane's body will not be ignored. Jane's body returns. At her lowest point,

¹⁷² It is left ambiguous as to whether she wishes Pip to forgive her or if she wishes to forgive herself. Is this 'I' her bride image or the self held within this image?

¹⁷³ Her speech is not, as the above quotation suggests 'incessan[t]' (Bronfen 1992, p. 358), because as Pip notes she is 'always leaving a blank' (*GE*, p. 399). There is a suggestion of a slight pause, even though she continues 'going on to the next word' (*ibid.*, p. 399).

when she has left Rochester and is starving, sleeping in a ditch, her body becomes painfully visible. She realises here that she cannot separate from her flesh. She is taken in by the Rivers family and nursed back to health. When she awakens she looks across the room and sees

On a chair by the bedside were all my own things, clean and dry. My black silk frock hung against the wall...it was quite decent. My very shoes and stockings were purified and rendered presentable...My clothes hung loose on me; for I was much wasted: but I covered deficiencies with a shawl, and [was] once more clean and respectable-looking (*Jane Eyre*, p. 340).

Her construction of the 'decent', 'presentable', 'respectable-looking' woman lies waiting for her to assume. Her degradation is purified in the cleansing of her clothes, but her body no longer fits. The dress is 'loose on me'. Her starved frame is displaced within the clothes that are designed to subdue it and her 'wasted' body shouts out her displacement; it literalises her feeling that 'I was a discord' (*ibid.*, p. 15).

There is a strikingly similar image within *Great Expectations* discussed above. Miss Havisham's body is vivid in its lack. Pip describes how

I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone (*GE*, p. 57).

However, Miss Havisham's 'shrunk' body communicates exactly what she desires it to. It does not refute an image like Jane's 'wasted' body. Miss Havisham is in control of the message her body speaks for her. The adjectives used to describe the sight of these bodies convey this different meaning. Jane's 'wasted' body is used up with neglect, but it also connotes the sense of having no purpose. Jane's body is not

wanted and it speaks this rejection while Miss Havisham's 'sunken', 'shrunk' body is pulled in to herself. It is contracted and recoiled, but rather than being disregarded, Miss Havisham's body is acted upon. *She* makes it smaller and the adjective becomes a verb.

Jane's body is doubled in her empty clothes just as it is doubled at the beginning of the text in the red-room. It haunts her 'black silk frock hung against the wall' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 340), her silhouette in full. In *Fashioning the Frame* Warwick and Cavallaro suggest that 'the uncanny feeling experienced in the presence of empty clothes' is not a longing for 'the bodies that once occupied them, but for our own bodies, which we do not possess, and have never possessed, hostage as they are to the scopic regimes we inhabit' (in Spooner 2004, p. 12). Jane's wish to possess her body is impossible. The empty dress reflects a trace of her body, always something other but the same, something which possesses and compels but remains elusive. This dispossession is never more apparent than in this image of her swathed in her shawl, covering her 'deficiencies' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 340). Her lack is again literalised by the Gothic aesthetic as an actual physical want of flesh that she covers over. Her body shrinks and begins to call attention to itself; it begins to communicate meaning. Jane's bodily identity is awakened and she cannot stay with St. John in what Milbank terms 'a bodiless and sexless' (Milbank 1992, p. 148) union. This prospect of being 'always restrained...forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 408) she declares is 'killing me' (ibid., p. 412). Being forced to live 'inwardly', what she seems at first to desire, is unbearable. This half life is described by Rochester; he explains it is like 'my soul athirst and forbidden to drink – my heart famished and never to be fed' (ibid., p. 434). She is compelled to return to

Rochester so that she can again become ‘in the flesh? My living Jane?’ (ibid., p. 434). Rochester and Jane use the discourse of starvation to describe their separation, just as Cathy literalises when she ‘fasted’ (WH, p. 118) and is left ‘dwindling’ (WH, p. 103) without Heathcliff, and he tells how Cathy ‘devoured my existence’ (WH, p. 277). Jane’s female body is the deficiency which she must conceal, but she accepts it, realising that her appetite for physical life is too strong to be ignored. Miss Havisham, however, is eaten alive by her unfed appetite for physical life. She wallows in the frustration of her material pleasures. The physical enjoyment of the wedding banquet rots and her bodily display in her dress erodes her flesh beneath so the shadow of her former physical availability haunts the corpse-like form she has made of herself. The nineteenth-century Gothic heroine struggles to define herself against the feminine body.

‘Food, sweet and strange’:¹⁷⁴ Lucy Snowe’s Unnatural Appetite

Food itself falls under the spell of the Gothic imagination. The Gothic is harnessed by Lucy Snowe in order to feed her fantasy of becoming strange and Other. Consumption in the Gothic text is destabilising and transgressive and *Villette* plays with these Gothic tropes. Christine Alexander describes Charlotte Brontë’s Gothic influence by invoking the same metaphors of food that the eighteenth-century critic used. She notes how the Gothic ‘fed the imaginations’ (Alexander 1993, p. 411), and

¹⁷⁴ *Villette*, p. 256

the Gothic in *Villette* is literally the food that ‘fed the imaginations’, in particular Lucy’s ‘Strange, sweet insanity’ (*Villette*, p. 267). Lucy starves her physical body because she retreats into this world of sweet fancy. She rejects bitter reality in favour of what she calls a ‘kinder Power...A spirit, softer and better than Human Reason’ (ibid., p. 256). Rejecting Reason who thinks she was ‘born only to work for a piece of bread’ (ibid., p. 256), Lucy craves something less wholesome. In this Other world of the imagination Lucy can truly go ‘beyond myself’ (ibid., p. 167) and the narrow confines that are imposed upon her. Here she can become something else, something and someone Other. Her desire to escape reality is figured in appetite. Her need is to be ‘nurtured’ (ibid., p. 392) and given ‘succour’ (ibid., p. 207), but reality starves her and repels her taste while she becomes dangerously addicted to the sweet: ‘My hunger has this good angel [imagination] appeased with food, sweet and strange, [she explains] gathered amongst gleanings angels, garnering their dew-white harvest in the fresh hour of a heavenly day’ (ibid., p. 256).

Lucy’s appetite is not, however, divine: it is *strange*. She hungers for sickly, insubstantial fantasy and rejects what M. Paul terms ‘wholesome bitters with disgust’ (*Villette*, p. 259). The sweet and the strange are linked. What allows Lucy to escape is the preternatural gleanings of her angels, her strange, death-tinted and Gothic appetite. She tells M. Paul, when he goads her about her taste, that ‘whatever is sweet, be it poison or food, you cannot, at least, deny its own delicious quality – sweetness. Better, perhaps, to die quickly a pleasant death, than drag on long a charmless life’ (ibid., p. 259). Her sweet tooth is linked with death, and a welcome escape from the drudgery of life. Lucy explains this early on when she describes how

I seemed to hold two lives – the life of thought, and that of reality; and, provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter (ibid., p. 85).

Her fancy is ‘necromantic’, deathly, spiritual, magic, full of the dangerous Gothic food that the eighteenth-century critic warned readers about. ‘Reality’ is sustained ascetically, while her imagination gorges. She rejects her physical existence because it disappoints her. She explains how she ‘enjoyed the “giftie” of seeing myself as others see me’ for a single ‘only time’ (ibid., p. 234). In this she sees ‘No need to dwell on the result’ since ‘It brought a jar of discord, a pang of regret’ (ibid., p. 234). She prefers to live within her ethereal shell, neglecting her body and lacking an appetite that can sustain it. Her body ‘became narrowed to my lot...my appetite needed no more than...tiny messes’ (ibid., p. 42), yet her mind yearns for more.

Images of food in this text resonate with otherworldliness. Lucy’s relationship with food reflects her emotional state. When she is the martyr, sacrificing her life for Mrs Marchmont, she comments that she eats only what was ‘served for the invalid’ (*Villette*, p. 42), for the in-valid. She loses herself and becomes a void. However, her appetite is awakened when her identity is strengthened. Mrs Bretton and M. Paul encouraged, or rather ‘ordered [her] to eat [her] share’ (ibid., p. 394), thus showing her that she has a share, that she is valued. When Lucy arrives in *Villette*, the strange new place where she both desires again to lose herself and find a new self, her sense of alienation is figured in her Gothic perception of food. Her first meal in Madame Beck’s is unsettling. She is served ‘some meat nature unknown’, its taste ‘odd and acid...made savoury with, I know not what’ (ibid., p. 75). The food seems to appear by magic since she enters a ‘foreign kitchen, very clean but very

strange. It seemed to contain no means of cooking' (ibid., p. 75). The Gothic tinge to the world is coloured by her imagination, her 'necromantic' (ibid., p. 85) fancy, the 'intensity of feeling' (Heilman [1958], p. 168) of which Heilman writes. Lucy's Gothic perception Others this food just as she uses it to Other herself. The description of this mystery meal as tasting of 'vinegar and sugar' (*Villette*, p. 75) is an incorporation of opposites that Lucy must marry within herself as her characterisation later shows. The meal serves as a recipe she must follow. She begins by having too much vinegar, her life is too sour, but then she becomes addicted to the sweet, in her life of fantasy.

Alison Milbank considers the Gothic to be 'that which can produce a self of value' (Milbank 1992, p. 141) in *Villette*, and Lucy's Gothic perspective both erases her and also creates a new Other space for her to be. Lucy is already Othered, but negatively. She does not conform to standards of beauty that surround her and so she is not seen, she has no value. In order to construct a valid self, Lucy creates an existence which harnesses her difference. Feasting in imagination and allowing her physical body to wane, 'limited to daily bread' (*Villette*, p. 85), her starved body is both what marks her as Other and what allows her to be seen as nobody, that 'unwelcome blank' (ibid., p. 145). Lucy clings to her Puritan moderation because it defines her against the French girls she despises. It also, importantly, signals the superiority of her mind rather than the dominance of her flesh. She is disgusted by the appetite of the Catholic girls whom she sees as 'robust in body, feeble in soul, fat, ruddy, hale, joyous, ignorant, unthinking, unquestioning', obeying the dictum, 'Eat,

drink, and live!’ (ibid., p. 141).¹⁷⁵ Such gluttony is displayed by Ginevra’s appetite for her own reflection: ‘I stood and let her self-love have its feast and triumph’ Lucy states, ‘curious to see how much it could swallow – whether it was possible it could feed to satiety’ (ibid., p. 159). Girls like Ginevra are taught to cultivate what Lucy terms their ‘commodity of bulk’ (ibid., p. 223), and allow their minds to shrivel, and Lucy’s fleshlessness stands in opposition to this, showing her mental superiority written on her body. Ginevra is fed by her image and is a fleshy, plump girl, whereas Lucy is ‘nobody’ (ibid., p. 341). Her lack of value is literalised in her lack of a body; her body is wasted ‘thin, haggard, and hollow-eyed’ (ibid., p. 48). Yet Lucy paradoxically finds strength in this Otherness. Ginevra defines herself against Lucy’s deficiency. She defines Lucy in negatives: ‘nobody’s daughter’ with ‘no attractive accomplishments – no beauty’ (ibid., p. 160). Lucy, however, finds power in this lack. Lucy aligns herself with Vashti rather than Ginevra’s plump but incapacitated Cleopatra. Lucy turns this negation into ‘positive strangeness’ (Heilman [1958], p. 171), a term Robert Heilman uses to define the Gothic.

Lucy’s rejection of the physical world and her bodily existence is reflected in her appetite for the golden apple. In *Villette*, the golden apple does not mean only the search for immortality and material treasure as its mythic origins suggest, but also a search for the impossible.¹⁷⁶ Tellingly the apple is inedible; it is food for the

¹⁷⁵ See Silver’s *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* for a discussion of how ‘fat signifies lack of intelligence’ (Silver 2002, p. 106) and how materiality is aligned with Catholicism.

¹⁷⁶In the garden of Hesperides in Greek mythology, the golden apple bestowed immortality and was ‘reputed to bring beauty and health’ (Reed 2004, etext). It is also termed the ‘apple of discord’ from myth where ‘Discord...threw on the table a golden apple “for the most beautiful”’ (Kirkpatrick 1992, p. 41). The golden apple then, represents physical, bodily perfection. Indeed, the apple represents the body. Eve’s biblical apple of knowledge signals her embodiment and physical mortality, which is

imagination alone and through Lucy's gluttony for this empty nectar her body wastes away. When Graham tells her to grasp happiness she envisages it as the 'golden fruitage of Paradise' (*Villette*, p. 278). Gold symbolises all that is out of reach for Lucy and solidifies in her unrequited love for Graham. Graham is a golden boy, with golden hair, and happiness is the impossible but hopeful golden fruit. The golden hue persists when Lucy imagines the cool damp before the sun 'pours her blue glory and her golden light out of that beauteous sky, which till now the starved hollow never saw' (*ibid.*, p. 281). The golden light is life, but it is imaginary life that cannot touch the 'starved hollow' that she embodies. Lucy's 'Strange, sweet insanity' (*ibid.*, p. 267) is given full vent in her obsessive consumption of her golden apple, the manna of Graham's letters. To her, Graham's letter is 'a morsel of real solid joy' (*ibid.*, p. 266), yet its contents are distorted through fantasy. The tangibility of the object convinces her that it is 'not an image of the brain...on which humanity starves but cannot live' (*ibid.*, p. 266), and in this declamation Lucy describes how she lives through her fantasy. Lucy goes on to detail the 'manna...which, indeed, at first melts on the lips with an unspeakable and preternatural sweetness, but which, in the end, our souls full surely loathe; longing deliriously for natural and earth-grown food' (*ibid.*, p. 266). However, this sweetness is addictive; like the Gothic text, it cultivates and perpetuates what Thomas Gisborne considers a 'habit' (Gisborne 1797, p. 216)

combined with body consciousness and shame. This is interesting in relation to both Jane and Lucy and the recurring reference to the apple and the golden apple in these two texts. Jane tellingly describes how 'ice glazed the ripe apples' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 295) when she discovers Rochester's marriage to Bertha. Jane 'who had been an...expectant woman – almost a bride' was now 'a cold, solitary girl again' (*ibid.*, p. 295). Her body, like the ripe apple, is retarded and covered over, her flesh, almost womanly and ready for Rochester, becomes frozen into immature girlishness, deprived of sexual consummation. The apple for Lucy is not such a bodily symbol. For her it is idealised flesh; it is Graham. It represents the gift of beauty, but she comes to see beauty in other things.

that will never be satisfied. While Lucy lives on this 'spirit-dew' telling herself that it is 'the wild savoury mess of the hunter, nourishing and salubrious meat...health-full, and life-sustaining' (*Villette*, p. 266), only her imagination thrives, her body weakens. When she faints as a result of her inanition, her body forces her to acknowledge how frail it has become. Her sight 'came upon me, red, as if it swam in blood; suspended hearing rushed back loud, like thunder; consciousness revived in fear: I sat up appalled' (*ibid.*, p. 185). Her body alone is real: 'all my eye rested on struck it as spectral' (*ibid.*, p. 185). However, this jolt is short-lived and she remarks that 'the life-machine presently resumed its wonted and regular working' (*ibid.*, p. 185). The tyrant Reason, or rather 'hag' holds her again in a 'stoical...dead trance' (*ibid.*, p. 120), the state literalised by the 'temporary death' (Buchan 1774, p. 480) of her faint. This 'suspended animation' (*Villette*, p. 207) cannot be broken until she breaks out of her addiction to fantasy. It is M. Paul, her stout and earthly true love rather than the ethereal golden boy Graham who can provide 'real food that nourished' (*ibid.*, p. 544). In Lucy's love for M. Paul she comes to accept her physical self and have her Otherness valued. Only through this acceptance can she welcome reality. M. Paul's attack on her sweet delusions, that he would 'break the very cup' which held her 'beloved poison' (*ibid.*, p. 259), is an attempt to encourage Lucy to continue to 'ventur[e] out' of her imagination, to go 'beyond myself' (*ibid.*, p. 167).

This supernatural golden apple is paralleled in Lucy's distorted fairy tale fruit basket. Again Lucy's representation of impossible food signals her disconnection with reality and her Gothic fantasy world. The unconscious threat that Madame Beck represents, and her malevolent purpose in sending Lucy on this errand, are expressed through the eeriness of the fruit and the sense of uncanny danger that it

conveys. When Lucy is sent to Madame Walravens, a witchlike character conspicuously Gothic, she becomes what Milbank describes as a 'Red Riding Hood' (Milbank 1992, p. 154) figure. She is sent carrying a 'pretty basket' (*Villette*, p. 428) which is full of unnatural fruits, calling to mind the monstrous cherries, ripe in Udolpho. Lucy describes them as abundant; they 'filled' the basket and all are 'rosy, perfect, and tempting' (*ibid.*, p. 428). However, they are 'wax-like' and artificial, being 'hothouse fruit' (*ibid.*, p. 428), and are like the fattened and polished girls that Madame Beck cultivates in her school. The eerie otherworldliness is enhanced when Lucy adds her brilliant 'yellow stars' (*ibid.*, p. 428). When Lucy arrives at the dusty old mansion of Madame Walravens this fruit glows in the dusk. The uncanny perfection is a foil for Walravens' exaggerated deformity. '[W]itch-like' (*ibid.*, p. 508), she is monstrous, 'three feet high' with 'no neck', looking as old as a 'hundred years' she has 'malign, unfriendly eyes, with thick gray [sic] brows above' (*ibid.*, p. 431). The darkness surrounds in such an exaggerated and inescapable sense that it appears to parody the Gothic atmosphere. The fruit represents part of the Gothic machinery that Brontë plays with. Although the Gothic elements of this text are usually considered to emanate from the spectre of the nun haunting Lucy's attic, food and the fruit in this scene, together with Lucy's emaciated body, are Gothic sources. The fruit glows in the violent light of the immanent storm and feeds Lucy's susceptible imagination. However, although Lucy is taken in by this machinery, the Gothic elements are soon dismantled and Walravens's dusty ogre threat later evaporates. The Gothic aesthetic dissolves when Lucy sees Walravens and her clutch again at the Fete. When Lucy confronts her without the supporting Gothic props she recognises her to be 'a harsh and hardy old woman' and not a 'corpse or ghost' (*ibid.*,

p. 508).¹⁷⁷ What differs is Lucy's perception of the world. Only through the distortion of an opiate which mixes a bitter taste with her craving for sweetness can Lucy control her Gothic imagination.

Lucy's first movement toward reality is, ironically, secured when Madame Beck drugs her and she hallucinates. Her world is destabilised and through this new vision she recognises the truth in her self. Lucy's wish to escape reality is conveyed in her lack of resistance to being drugged. She is 'consumed with thirst' and 'drank eagerly' the 'sweet' (*Villette*, p. 496) and, as it turns out, dangerous beverage. Although Madame attempts to camouflage the 'strong opiate' with sweetness, Lucy 'tasted a drug' (*ibid.*, p. 496), but keeps drinking. A literalised cup of Lucy's 'beloved poison' (*ibid.*, p. 259) is created. Once the drug floods her system, 'instead of stupor' she feels 'excitement' (*ibid.*, p. 496). Rather than the intention that Lucy is 'held quiet' (*ibid.*, p. 496) by the drug she is instead invigorated. She leaves the confines of her room and wanders in the night towards the Fete. Her senses are heightened giving voice to what she describes as the 'gathering call [that] ran among the faculties' (*ibid.*, p. 497) of her body. Imagination and reality merge. Lucy is connected with the world and it can feed her because it appears as Other and as strange as her sweet imagination; she is opened to the world allowing it to enter her as she 'drank [even] the elastic night air' (*ibid.*, p. 501).

¹⁷⁷ This recalls a similarity between Miss Havisham and Madam Walravens. Pip notes that 'Without this arrest of everything...not even the withered bridal dress...could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud' (*GE*, p. 59). Miss Havisham also needs Gothic machinery to create her horrifying image.

Lucy is no longer ‘nobody’ (*Villette*, p. 160); no longer invisible, she is out of her body watching its adventures. Lucy sees herself in the world and begins to talk of herself in the third person. The sweetness acts to make the world of her imagination real. ‘It was my prayer to be left alone’ she states and in the same sentence comments that if she had been noticed Graham would have ‘seen the spectacle of Lucy incensed’ (*ibid.*, p. 504-5). She evades his gaze because she recognises that he does not see *her*. He is blind to her alternative self, the Other Lucy, and she fears that ‘my identity would have been grasped between his, never tyrannous [and thus unattractively unGothic],¹⁷⁸ but always powerful hands’ (*ibid.*, p. 504). Graham ‘wanted always to give me a rôle not mine’ (*ibid.*, p. 352) she realises; his wish is to tame her Gothic spirit, to deny her fancy and restrict her. This slipping between ‘I’ and ‘Lucy’ conveys Lucy’s sense that Graham has a fixed and thus limiting and confining perception of who she is, that he has the ability to hold her down and also that the drug has allowed her an out of body experience without the ‘suspended animation’ (*ibid.*, p. 207) of her faint. Yet this very strangeness makes her hunger for the ‘homely’ (*ibid.*, p. 513). She rejects her fantasy and ‘all falsities – all figments! We will not deal in this gear’ (*ibid.*, p. 513), she determines.

The faux Gothic, the ‘falsities’ and ‘figments’, evaporate when she later recognises the nun who has haunted her room to be an ‘artifice’ which she subdues ‘beneath my pillow’ (*Villette*, p. 520). Lucy’s threatening and Gothic view of the world leaves her. The nun, both an impostor and a result of her ‘mental conflict’

¹⁷⁸ See Milbank’s assertion that Brontë’s heroines are attracted to Gothic men in *Daughters of the House*.

(ibid., p. 278) as Graham diagnoses her hallucinations, can be banished. When Lucy returns from her psychedelic wanderings and is confronted by the spectral nun, she is no longer afraid. She declares, 'I defied spectra' (ibid., p. 519) because Lucy herself is no longer a 'shadow' (ibid., p. 130). She physically confronts this phantom aware that 'all the movement was mine, so was all the life, the reality, the substance, the force...I tore her up...I held her...I shook her loose...I trode [sic] upon her' (ibid., p. 519). She refuses to live in her imagination, trapped by her fear. Instead her appetite to 'taste life' (ibid., p. 53), to 'taste the elixir' (ibid., p. 530) is piqued. The assertiveness she has in her fantasy life is combined with her earthly body through her 'beloved poison' (ibid., p. 259) made real in the opiate, and Lucy can become her Other self. Her body is possessed by her; it is 'mine'. She is no longer afraid of her body, living in her mind alone.

After this point Lucy can accept and recognise her real feelings. When M. Paul leaves she cries 'My heart will break!' and feels a 'literal heart-break' (*Villette*, p. 530); her mind and body are in symbiosis. M. Paul is 'strange...but life-giving' (ibid., p. 531). She no longer needs to rely on her imagination to appease her hunger; the reality of M. Paul's affection nourishes her. This realisation occurs on 'the Feast of the Assumption' (ibid., p. 528), a celebration of the Virgin Mary being accepted into Heaven as a union of soul and body, and this is echoed by Lucy's internal marriage of opposites and the food she eats. To mark this ascension, M. Paul offers Lucy something 'better than a feast' (ibid., p. 538); they eat simple sweet delicacies. M. Paul offers her 'chocolate...summer fruit, cherries and strawberries' (ibid., p. 538). Not impossible unearthly fruit, no golden apples, but real natural sweetness. This offering acts to prove that M. Paul can satisfy her sweet craving in a healthy,

'real' way and that his declaration 'I know you!' (ibid., p. 171) is true. Unlike Graham, M. Paul can truly see Lucy, her complexity and her darkness. Lucy is 'relieved from all sense of the spectral and unhealthy' (ibid., p. 520) and in this moment becomes some *body*, and with this fleshy reclamation a 'self of value' (Milbank 1992, p. 141) to repeat Milbank's expression. She joins two disparate aspects of herself, the 'vinegar and sugar' (*Villette*, p. 75), the psychological and the material, fancy and reality, and the Gothic allows her to actively take charge of herself in her domination of its tropes. Through this process, she can become in reality the Other self that her imagination has forged. She can become a 'true' Gothic heroine, because she is, paradoxically as Heilman puts it, 'unheroined', and mostly, 'unsweetened' (Heilman [1958], p. 167).

Cleopatra and Vashti: The Consumption of Female Bodies

She has a peculiar face; fleshless and haggard as it is, I rather like it
(*Jane Eyre*, p. 339).

The plain heroines of the nineteenth-century defy the 'born immaculate' (*Maria*, p. 5) beauty of the eighteenth-century Gothic heroine. They refuse the singular biological role of woman as Wollstonecraft's 'alluring objects' (Wollstonecraft [1792], p. 12). They deny their flesh because it commodifies them. It allows them to become a possession that men can own. Rochester would claim 'Every atom of [Jane's] flesh' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 301), and Jane will not be the 'bonny wee thing' (ibid., p. 270), the ornament that Rochester will wear round his neck. Miss Havisham plays men at their own game, producing a beauty that men can never possess in Estella, and Lucy finds

an alternative body model in Vashti, which Lucy views when Graham takes her to the theatre, refusing the material Cleopatra whom she sees depicted in a gallery.

Vashti is ‘termed “plain”’, but Lucy finds her gloriously ‘wasted like wax in a flame’ (*Villette*, p. 286). She shrugs off her female restraints and inhabits a form ‘neither of woman nor of man’ (*ibid.*, p. 286). Vashti provides Lucy with a taste for the bitterness, turning her from the intoxicating sweetness that troubles her. Vashti is distasteful; in the place of ‘a milder condiment for a people’s palate’ (*ibid.*, p. 286) Vashti overpowers. She is already eaten away and so is no longer appetising; she is ‘hollow, half-consumed...perishing’ (*ibid.*, p. 286). Vashti stands firm ‘rigid...regular like sculpture’ (*ibid.*, p. 286) a figure that Lucy emulates; she opposes the soft welcoming Cleopatra, displayed and fattened for men to feast their eyes upon. Cleopatra is, in Lucy’s mind, voracious and selfish. She is ‘extremely well fed: very much butcher’s meat – to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids – must she have consumed to attain that breadth and height, that wealth of muscle, that affluence of flesh’ (*ibid.*, p. 223).¹⁷⁹ Cleopatra is the spoilt reared stock that Lucy sees in *Villette*, the childish, grotesque lumps of flesh, who have ‘no business to lounge away the noon on a sofa’ (*ibid.*, p. 223). The ‘girl of *Villette*’ is also ‘fat of flesh’ (*ibid.*, p. 513). Ginevra displays the same ‘ripeness’ (*ibid.*, p. 288) as the pampered Cleopatra. These women are mindless products; their subjectivity is obscured by the ‘pulpy mass’ (*ibid.*, p. 287) of their flesh. The exaggeration of their bodies, ‘considerably

¹⁷⁹ The split sentence allows for ‘very much butcher’s meat’ (*Villette*, p. 223) to connote that Cleopatra is like a large quantity of edible flesh and that she has gorged herself on this produce to achieve her bulk.

larger, I thought, than life' (ibid., p. 223), emphasises the way that it is used to define women. Vashti can 'cut through' this fleshy 'obstacle' because she is 'strong; and her strength has conquered Beauty, has overcome Grace, and bound both at her side, captives peerlessly fair, and docile as fair' (ibid., p. 287). Although Lucy values Vashti, Graham and the 'people's palate' cannot stomach her and so dismiss her 'bony harshness and grimness' (ibid., p. 286). Just as Graham is blind to Lucy, he also cannot see in Vashti the qualities that Lucy covets, the transgressive and dangerous 'different vision' (ibid., p. 287) of beauty that she represents. Lucy is aligned with this Gothic Other, opposed to the conventional, plump prettiness that Ginevra and Cleopatra represent in *Villette*.

Jane's body is shown to represent the opposite of the physical sexuality that Bertha embodies in her Cleopatra-like materiality. Rochester rather flippantly expresses that he 'wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 294). He is sated by the richly flavoured Bertha, and hankers after a plainer dish. Rochester signals ownership of Jane 'laying his hand on [her] shoulder' he says, '*this* is what I wished to have' (ibid., p. 294 original emphasis). He wants her body 'young...grave and quiet...collecte[d]' (ibid., p. 294). He asks the men, Wood and Briggs, to 'look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder – this face with that mask – this *form* with that *bulk*' (ibid., p. 294 emphasis added). This turning of the body into meat is what Jane has attempted to escape. She forcefully states to Rochester, 'I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio...so don't consider me an equivalent for one' when he compares her with the 'hourly forms' (ibid., p. 269). He teases her about his 'bargaining for so many tons of flesh' (ibid., p. 269), and Jane retorts with her desire to reverse these roles and free the

'Harem inmates' (ibid., p. 269) to enslave Rochester. She imagines him 'fettered' (ibid., p. 269). At every turn Jane must throw off the shackles that Rochester and men try to impose on her body. Even though Jane's form is slight and reduced unlike the 'bulk' of Bertha which makes her 'stature almost equalling her husband' (ibid., p. 293), it is still what is valued. Rochester would own the fragile form of Jane, objectifying her as 'this' thing to 'have', because her 'form' allows his to be masculine. He rejects Blanche Ingram because 'she's an extensive armful' (ibid., p. 250) and he hungers for the 'sylph's' (ibid., p. 259) supposed weakness. He would have her 'glittering like a parterre' (ibid., p. 268), an 'ornamental flowerbe[d]...brightly coloured' (ibid., p. 475, n.268), there to be looked at, without substance, emptied of the vivid spark that animates her. But this spark can only animate the neutral exterior, stripped of the heavily laden messages the surface of the female body carries.

When Lucy is disappointed by Graham's criticism of Vashti, she shares Jane's frustration. Lucy explains, 'he judged her as a woman, not an artist: it was a branding judgement' (*Villette*, p. 289), indelibly marking her on the flesh. When men judge women as women they judge their bodies. This judgement confines them more fully within their embodiment. Vashti transcends sexual and gender boundaries for Lucy, but Graham reinstates the conservative status quo by dismissing her as a woman. This acts to distance Lucy from him and begin to break the spell she falls under in his presence. However, the emphasis is on a rejection of womanly flesh. The female body should be starved in emulation of Vashti to attain equality, or at least to defy the judgement to which women are subject.

Consuming Men and The Problem of Marriage: ‘We must become one flesh’

I’ll just – figuratively speaking – attach you to a chain like this
(*Jane Eyre*, p. 270).

Lady Caroline Norton writes in her *Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth’s Marriage and Divorce Bill* (1855), that ‘A married woman in England has *no legal existence*: her being is absorbed in that of her husband’ (Norton 1855, p. 8 original emphasis).¹⁸⁰ Her physical self is given over when she vows to obey. The women’s only legitimate complaints threaten her bodily. Norton writes, ‘If the wife sue for separation for cruelty, it must be “cruelty that endangers life or limb”’ (ibid., p. 10). The woman is denied a mind, her thoughts are negated and her value is flesh alone. Jane refuses this negation and will have equality, Cathy and Heathcliff absorb each other and Miss Havisham, being denied this unity and absorption into the body of a husband, atrophies.

¹⁸⁰ The law that Norton comments upon is described by Sir William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765), he states: ‘By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and *cover*, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our law french a *feme-covert*, *foemina viro co-operta*; is said to be *covert–baron*, or under the protection and influence of her husband, her *baron*, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her *coverture*. Upon this principle, of a union of person in husband and wife, depend almost all the legal rights, duties, and disabilities, that either of them acquire by the marriage. I speak not at present of the rights of property, but of such as are merely *personal*. For this reason, a man cannot grant anything to his wife, or enter into covenant with her: for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence: and to covenant with her, would be only to covenant with himself’ (Blackstone [1765], p. 442 original emphasis).

Marriage presents a problem for the women in these texts. It is both a terror of personal erasure, and a necessary undertaking, which preserves virtue and moral integrity. Marriage recalls imagery of women consumed and male consumption. In these texts women are triumphant, even if this triumph is the result of tragedy. Jane's worst fears are realised when Rochester asks her, 'If you were mad, do you think I should hate you?' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 301). He would love her despite her mental functioning because it is her body that he covets. He tells her that 'Every atom of your flesh is as dear to me as my own' and that 'Your mind is my treasure, and if it were broken, it would be my treasure still' (*ibid.*, p. 301). Rather than feeling he had lost his love if Jane lost her mind, he would instead hold tighter to her. '[I]f you raved, my arms should confine you...even in fury, [you] would have a charm for me' (*ibid.*, p. 301). He would still be enchanted by her shell, by her mindless body. He detests Bertha, not because she is insane, but because her 'bulk' (*ibid.*, p. 293) no longer pleases him. In marriage it is the woman's body that must be 'called by the law and by society a part of me' (*ibid.*, p. 306) a part of him. She must relinquish her identity, her independence and her autonomy, while he is still free, only more enriched as he devours her identity. Jane discovers Rochester's hidden bride and tells him 'I must part with you for my whole life' (*ibid.*, p. 303). To remain whole she must separate herself, but he refuses to hear her statement of independence and instead insists 'You mean you must become a part of me' (*ibid.*, p. 303). A Gothic reading of *Jane Eyre* thus results in a different interpretation of Jane and Rochester's relationship; it disrupts the 'ideal Miltonic companionate marriage' (Hoeveler 1993, p. 121) because Jane resists this absorption of self. She resists becoming simply

Rochester's companion, as Eve is to Adam, subordinate as his supporter. Instead, she will be his equal.

Rochester's passion 'draws you to my centre' and 'fuses you and me in one' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 315). But how can this be when Jane feels that 'mentally, I still possessed my soul' even when Rochester 'seemed to devour me with his flaming glance: physically' (ibid., p. 317). This drawing to the centre and devouring recalls images of the red-room, where Jane is swallowed and enclosed within the belly. Rochester threatens her with this cannibalistic appetite. He would eat her up not only with his 'glance'; he 'ground his teeth' (ibid., p. 317) and would consume her to possess her. This terror resurfaces since she desires equality not sublimation. However, once Jane has asserted her independence she returns to Rochester's body. She proves she can and will 'keep myself again' (ibid., p. 341) and so, in Milbank's words, she 'flees from the "iron shroud" of a bodiless and sexless discourse [with St. John], in order to assert her own vision of apocalypse within the flesh' (Milbank 1992, p. 148). Jane is not absorbed into Rochester's flesh, she inhabits his body tangibly 'as she becomes his eyes' (ibid., p. 145) after he is blinded in the fire. Yet, this is qualified by the return of Rochester's sight and with it the return of Jane's constrictive femininity. Rochester tells Jane that 'for some time he had fancied the obscurity clouding one eye was becoming less dense; and that now he was sure of it' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 451). Sure because he sees Jane's body again, Rochester affirms his own returning power through redressing Jane when he asks her 'have you a pale blue dress on?' (ibid., p. 451).

The image of Miss Havisham in her decaying wedding dress, unwilling to relinquish her identity as bride, even if she must become a jilted bride, is a perverted consummation of her wedding. The bride is the spectacle for consumption; she is displayed for all to see and then she is devoured, absorbed by her husband as they are pronounced 'man and wife'. Miss Havisham's death is a cannibalistic marriage. The fire 'would break out again and consume her' (*GE*, p. 398); she is 'laid upon the great table' (*GE*, p. 398) of the 'feast-chamber' (*GE*, p. 303) already half devoured. Miss Havisham remains the unabsorbed bride.¹⁸¹ Her last day is a blinding display. It is 'her day', because it is both a funeral and a wedding. The bride is a dazzling body and Miss Havisham literalises this when she is burned alive.

Miss Havisham renounces physical hunger because her emotional craving is overwhelming. Although Pip, as has been discussed, has never seen 'Miss Havisham eat and drink' and 'never will' (*GE*, p. 238-9) according to Jaggers, she is repeatedly described as having a cannibalistic appetite.¹⁸² She craves Estella, perhaps wishing to gain the power men have of consuming women, but she only seems Gothic and 'dreadful' (*GE*, p. 237) rather than powerful.¹⁸³ Miss Havisham kisses Estella's hand

¹⁸¹ Bronfen describes Miss Havisham as 'a living sign of the bride as a dead woman' (Bronfen 1992, p. 351); but the fate she personifies is worse than death, she embodies the starved parasite without a host. Because she is jilted, she condemns herself to shrivel and decay.

¹⁸² See Harry Stone's *The Night Side of Dickens: Cannibalism, Passion, Necessity* where he argues that Dickens had a 'fascination with cannibalism' (Stone 1994, p. 15) stemming from childhood tales in the *Terrific Register*.

¹⁸³ The notion of the wife as the husband's cannibal feast is suggested by stories Dickens was told by what Stone terms his many 'Scheherazade' (Stone 1994, p. 15) (story-tellers). Stone writes of stories told about 'a monstrous Captain Murderer, who married innocent young girls for the express purpose of cutting off their heads, chopping them up, baking them in giant meat pies, feasting on them, and picking their bones' (ibid, p. 15). Stone also refers to a woodcut called *How to Cook a Wife* (1850), under which is written: 'MEN spare no pains in obtaining the BEST MATERIALS for this superlative DISH...a good wife is exquisitely delicate and susceptible. A few evergreens, such as industry,

‘with a ravenous intensity’ (*GE*, p. 237), and when asking Pip his opinion of Estella, she looks at him ‘with her greedy look’ (*GE*, p. 232). When told that Estella grows prettier she ‘would seem to enjoy it greedily’, described as having a ‘miserly relish’ (*GE*, p. 93) for Estella. Miss Havisham

hung upon Estella’s beauty, hung upon her words, hung upon her gestures, and sat mumbling her own trembling fingers while she looked at her, as though she were devouring the beautiful creature she had reared (*GE*, p. 298).

Her cannibalism seems to be a reaction against the emptiness which eats her away. She would absorb into her decaying flesh the ‘beauty’ and grace that she has created in Estella. Miss Havisham has constructed a ‘perfect’ woman, and now wants to own or become her in order to enjoy the power she lacked over men. There is a desperate hunger displayed in the mouthing of those ‘trembling fingers’. The onomatopoeic ‘mumbling’ joins notions of Miss Havisham’s inability to verbalise her desire and her wish to consume, which are, of course, contiguous. Miss Havisham hungers only for the new flesh that Estella represents, not food which would sustain her own carrion body.¹⁸⁴

sobriety, and fondness, are necessary, and a moderate quantity of the spirit of coaxing and oil of kisses may be added, giving the whole a most delectable flavour. Garnish with flowers of endearment and kindness, and you will then fully appreciate the delights of a dish, compared with which all others sink into insignificance; namely A GOOD WIFE’ (Broadside in *ibid.*, p. 123). This accompanying text transforms the wife into a consumable object, literalising the accepted position of this figure.

¹⁸⁴ Stone glosses this episode, suggesting that Estella is already a part of Miss Havisham, in the following way: ‘Dickens (again using hand imagery) has Miss Havisham, monstrous child-eating sire, devour herself even as she devours Estella...Miss Havisham eats her fingers as she devours Estella. The two are not separate actions but one. Estella is merely an extension of Miss Havisham’ (Stone 1994, p. 137-8). Although Stone argues that in being an ‘unfeeling monster’ (*ibid.*, p. 138) Estella is the same as and part of Miss Havisham, it is however clear that Miss Havisham longs for Estella as something that she wishes to be part of her. Miss Havisham ‘hung upon’ (*GE*, p. 298) Estella’s beauty, words, gestures, as if they might escape her thus suggesting that she does not securely possess them.

The unity of Cathy and Heathcliff transcends the flesh. Cathy starves because she cannot survive without Heathcliff. Her body feels that lack and the Gothic literalises it. Her marriage to Edgar Linton unites her to his flesh, but she is already *with* somebody else, body and soul. ‘As soon as you become Mrs Linton, [Heathcliff] loses friend, and love, and all!’ (*WH*, p. 87), Nelly warns Cathy. Not only this, Cathy too will suffer this loss and lose herself. She denies this loss, exclaiming ‘we separated!...Who is to separate us, pray?’ (*WH*, p. 87). Cathy cannot conceive of this division because ‘I *am* Heathcliff – he’s always, always in my mind – not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself – but, as my own being – so, don’t talk of our separation again – its impracticable’ (*WH*, p. 88). Heathcliff, haunted by Cathy, starves to join her in death.¹⁸⁵ The flesh cannot survive because when Cathy dies Heathcliff dies with her; they are one together.

Cathy sickens in the marital bed. She is subject to ‘uncontrollable grief’ (*WH*, p. 92) because she is not allowed to see Heathcliff: he is turned ‘out of doors’ (*WH*, p. 92) by Linton. They wane without each other to nourish them. Without Heathcliff, Cathy ‘was dwindling and fading before our eyes’; starving she continues ‘rejecting her breakfast’ (*WH*, p. 103). Cathy’s jealousy of Heathcliff’s relationship with Isabella is articulated in the fear that Heathcliff will ‘seize and devour her up’

Miss Havisham’s wish to incorporate Estella is enacted by her action of gnawing upon her own fingers as a substitute for Estella’s perfect and almost out of reach body.

¹⁸⁵ Although his cause of death is ambiguous, that he grins in the face of death suggests suicide. Yet the text returns to his starvation, his ‘obstinate fast’ (*WH*, p. 284), which he explains, is out of his control. He is impelled to starve just as a ‘man struggling in the water, [cannot] rest’ (*WH*, p. 284); he states ‘it is not my fault, that I cannot eat or rest’ (*WH*, p. 284). He is caught in a delirium of love sickness, but the fasting coupled with his body’s demand for energy may have killed him, used him up.

(*WH*, p. 108), which is what Cathy desires he will do to her. Heathcliff allays these fears by letting her know that the metaphorical consumption is incontestably hers; Isabella's fate is to be devoured only 'in a very ghoulish fashion' (*WH*, p. 108). Indeed, Isabella describes Heathcliff as having 'sharp cannibal teeth' and is frightened by his bestial 'black countenance' in which his teeth 'gleamed through the dark' (*WH*, p. 162). Cathy also joins in with this literal consumption, correcting Heathcliff's description of Isabella's eyes as 'detestabl[e]' and offering them as 'delectable' (*WH*, p. 108). Heathcliff 'like[s] her too ill' (*WH*, p. 108) to become one with Isabella, to devour her into himself, but he might cannibalise her out of spite. He would also enact such cannibalism upon Edgar. When Cathy gives him up he would have 'torn his [Edgar's] heart out, and drank his blood!' (*WH*, p. 141). Cathy is the one he would assimilate. They devour each other. Even in the sight of Cathy Heathcliff cannot disguise the 'delight he drank from her [gaze]' (*WH*, p. 99). They hunger for each other and food becomes repulsive to them. In Cathy's rages she is seen 'grinding her teeth, so that you might fancy she would crash them to splinters!' (*WH*, p. 117). When offered food she balks and screams 'No!' (*WH*, p. 117). Cathy rants that Heathcliff has 'killed me – and thriven on it' (*WH*, p. 148) and the opposite is also true. Heathcliff rages that her vindictive words will continue 'eating deeper eternally, after you have left me' (*WH*, p. 149). When she is gone he will be eaten up by her, but unable to devour her in return. He will then suffer the fate she has experienced. They live on each other in an oral and near-literal way. They embrace and when parted Heathcliff 'gnashed' at the interrupter, 'foamed like a mad dog, and gathered her to him with greedy jealousy' (*WH*, p. 150).

Cathy 'fasted pertinaciously, under the idea, probably, that at every meal, Edgar was ready to choke for her absence' (WH, p. 118). Rather she is choked by the absence of Heathcliff, her true other half. Edgar's ability to function and to *eat* signals his independence from her and a lack in his love. Cathy denies Edgar's right to her; he can only possess her body, but this is a body that she wishes to shirk, a body she has left 'wasted' (WH, p. 119) in 'haggardness' (WH, p. 124) which was once 'stout, hearty' (WH, p. 126). She destroys the part of her that Edgar possesses: 'What you touch at present, you may have; but my soul will be on that hill-top before you lay hands on me again' (WH, p. 124). Cathy detests her body now; she calls it a 'shattered prison' that she is 'tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world' (WH, p. 150) where she waits impatiently for Heathcliff to return to her.

'[T]hey may bury me twelve feet deep...but I won't rest till you are with me....I never will!' (WH, p. 123), she warns Heathcliff. 'I wish I could hold you...till we were both dead!' (WH, p. 148), she desperately rages, wanting them to be locked together until they both starve. Her grip is possessive as 'she retained, in her closed fingers, a portion of the locks she had been grasping' (WH, p. 149). Heathcliff will not accept this separation and demands 'haunt me then!...do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!' (WH, p. 155). Finally he declares 'I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!' (WH, p. 155). Heathcliff explains that 'my soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself' (WH, p. 284). His body is controlled and denied. He is only satisfied by Cathy.

I vainly reminded him of his protracted abstinence from food; if he stirred to touch anything in compliance with my entreaties, if he stretched his hand out to get a piece of bread, his fingers

clenched, before they reached it, and remained on the table, forgetful of their aim (*WH*, p. 282).

Heathcliff is dead already. His body and mind have stopped: 'I have to remind myself to breathe – almost to remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending back a stiff spring...I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it' (*WH*, p. 277). The wish is to be united with Cathy: to die. This wish has 'devoured my existence – I am swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfilment' (*WH*, p. 277). Heathcliff's flesh is 'swallowed' into the memory of Cathy just as hers erodes without his presence. These characters swallow and cannibalise each other; they become one equal being that needs the other to live.

Conclusion: The Bliss of Starving

'[S]tarvation [is] a sign of female powerlessness' (Silver 2002, p. 102) argues Silver, and this may be the case for the early Gothic heroine, but the heroines in these nineteenth-century Gothic texts have asserted their equality or power, within the parameters of patriarchal society, by starving their bodies. The body maintains its function as cipher, which supersedes the heroine's language. Since her image may undermine her statements of empowerment she must control or erase its voice. This battle for voice is evident in Miss Havisham's lapses of consciousness where she leaves gaps in her sentences of remorse, but where her body conveys a complete message of ruin. These later heroines refute sensibility's imposition that 'women are more sincere in gesture than in words' (Todd 1986, p. 86). And, there is bliss in silencing the connotations that are imposed upon the feminine form, by starving the body. Rather than shattering the self or exulting in the 'loss of self' (Lechte 1990, p.

67), this bliss/*jouissance* shatters the subjectivity imposed upon the self and liberates it. Heathcliff describes this process in his inability to resist the temptation of abstinence: 'I'm animated with hunger' (*WH*, p. 280) he states. He comes alive on the brink of death because 'my soul's bliss kills my body' (*WH*, p. 284). Jane, who feels fettered by dependence, explains: 'I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 317). She is free when destitute. In this isolated poverty her self becomes unfixed and she can regain her identity. Since the Gothic is seen, in Milbank's words to be a mode which creates a 'self of value' (Milbank 1992, p. 141), starvation, in Gothicising these bodies, is necessary in the development of identity. These female characters are 'half heroine, half horror' (Ellmann 1993, p. 2)¹⁸⁶ as their starved bodies become a conventional marker of Gothic fiction in their 'beautiful barbarity, their troublesome power' (Bruhm 1994, p. xvii).¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Ellmann here describes the anorectic woman.

¹⁸⁷ Steven Bruhm here talks of the Gothic body in general, not the starved body.

Part Two: The Body as Food: Fantasies of Cannibalism and Eaters of Human Flesh

Introduction

Where starvation was dreamy and sad, this was quick and cunning and frantic (*The Hunger*, p. 337).

Sara Roberts from *The Hunger* (1981), written by Whitley Strieber, explains the sudden and desperate craving to consume the human body. Where starvation was an introverted surrender for the eighteenth-century Gothic heroine or an empowering rejection of the body for the nineteenth-century Gothic heroine, here cannibalism communicates the overwhelming need to draw others into the self and secures the body as the primary site of terror and desire.¹⁸⁸ The Gothic heroine previously negotiated the anxiety of embodiment in starvation, but through cannibalism, her hunger creates an inescapable and visceral link with her body. Tamar Heller and

¹⁸⁸ This need is depicted very differently for women and men.

Patricia Moran argue that ‘women writers relied upon images of feeding and starvation to explore issues of female voice, identity, and authority’ (Heller and Moran 2003, p. 5).¹⁸⁹ These issues are addressed in the Gothic text for both men and women through the trope of cannibalism. The self/other binary that constitutes identity and its formation is both established and collapsed by metaphors and acts of cannibalism. Indeed, the Gothic’s main bodily fear is that the integrity of the self and body is a lie, a fantasy that is forever in reparation. Kirsten Guest argues that cannibalism is taboo because it signals ‘recognition of corporeal similarity’ and ‘activates our horror of consuming others like ourselves’, and that the ‘shared humanness of cannibals and their victims’ (Guest 2001, p. 3) is the source of disgust. However, I will argue throughout this section that, in transforming the body (particularly the male body) into food – meat – cannibalism also activates the horror of being too similar to other animals and threatens ‘humanness’. This indifferentiation enacts the fear of degeneracy, in the Darwinian sense,¹⁹⁰ collapsing human superiority and the hierarchical binary of male/spiritual and female/matter. In the texts discussed in this section, male cannibalism represents a fear of emptiness and lack: lack of purpose, power and fulfilment. The male cannibal’s ineffectual

¹⁸⁹ The writers they specifically cite are Margaret Atwood, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Morrison.

¹⁹⁰ Degeneracy is evolution working backwards; it is, Hurley notes, ‘species “reversion”’ (Hurley 1996, p. 65). Hurley goes on: ‘degenerationism substituted a terrible regression, a downward spiral into madness, chaos, and extinction’ (ibid., p. 66). And, the seeds of this ‘spectre of reversion’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 212) as Bram Dijkstra terms degeneration are considered to be ever present within the weaker sex: women. In these Gothic texts, the female literally becomes animalistic, enacting the assumptions made about her sex. The man is the target of this threat of degeneracy, the woman the agent of that threat because ‘It is possible for him to attain to the loftiest heights or to sink to the lowest depths; he can become like animals, or plants, or even like women, and so there exist women-like female men. The woman, on the other hand, can never become a man’ (Weininger [1904], p. 188). She is already degenerated and lacks the ability to reach ‘higher’, according to Weininger.

fantasies of cannibalism are a continuation of his gluttony in the eighteenth century, explored in Chapter Three with examples from Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, the burlesque of this text by R. S. Esquire in *The New Monk* and Charles Maturin's parricide character in his *Melmoth the Wanderer*. In these texts male cannibalism is inevitably a futile desire to assume tyrannical domination. Female cannibalism, on the other hand, is animalistic and immediate; cannibalism, for her, represents liberation from societal and gender restraints. '[A]ppetite can function as a form of voice' (Heller and Moran 2003, p. 26) Heller and Moran go on to explain, and this particular voice of appetite silences all others because this hunger is unspeakable. Contemporary Gothic anxieties are cannibalistic.¹⁹¹ 'The Gothic...deals entirely with the profane. Its great themes are incest and cannibalism' (Carter 1996, p. 459), Angela Carter writes, and the last great taboo is cannibalism. Maggie Kilgour comments on the contemporary preoccupation with cannibalism asking, 'is our interest in this lurid subject a sign of the complete degeneration of modern taste, and

¹⁹¹ Peter Hulme contends, Malchow writes, that '*cannibalism*, as the image of ferocious consumption of human flesh is a term that can have "no application outside the discourse of European colonialism"' (Malchow 1996, p. 43). It is a term used to construct a nationalistic identity by abjecting and othering different peoples. Although the texts I have chosen have cultural differences, they are all Western in their perspective. Thus, the term 'cannibalism' does resonate with the connotations Hulme assigns to it; however, I am looking instead at the psychological aspects and anxieties surrounding gender in relation to the Gothic representation of the cannibal. There is also an intimate connection between the gothic and cannibalism. Edmund Burke, whose philosophy so informs the gothic mode, in 'First Letter on a Regicide Peace' in 1796, Malchow relates, is the first, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to use the term 'cannibalism' 'to denote both the actual and metaphoric cannibal practice of the mob: "By cannibalism, I mean their devouring, as a nutrient of their ferocity, some part of the bodies of those they have murdered"' (ibid., p. 63). That the gothic has 'connections with the primitive, the barbaric, the tabooed' also creates a 'connection between gothic literary sensibility and a popular culture of racial fantasy and fear' (ibid., p. 5). However, in this study, I shall focus on the gendered fantasies and fears. Malchow goes on to detail how a gothic discourse transforms travellers' tales into sensational cannibal narratives, or horror stories: see chapter 'Cannibalism and Popular Culture' in *Gothic Images of Race in the Nineteenth-Century Britain*.

our progressive acceptance of all atrocity [?]' (Kilgour 1998, p. 241).¹⁹² The degeneration of taste is what the Gothic represents and so it is fitting that this final corrupted hunger takes hold of this mode. The Gothic has become everyday; it has saturated the market and habituated the appetite and so boundaries of taste must be pushed further in order to transgress, in order for the text to be considered Gothic.¹⁹³ Although the texts in this section all deal with the taboo of eating and thus discuss Gothic concerns, they are diverse in approach. Coming from Canada, America and Britain, with *Perfume* a translation from German, these texts show how diffuse Gothic has become. The figure of the cannibal represents this diffusion as the Gothic takes genres and makes them its own. From the suburban Gothic of *Expensive People* (1968) to the detective Gothic of *Silence of the Lambs* (1989), the almost parodic *Winter Hunger* (1993) to the glam Gothic of *The Hunger*, the Gothic's ability to absorb and transform other texts (and be absorbed and transformed by them) has continued from its origins in the cannibalism of the eighteenth century, where one Gothic staple is reformed and republished as a new consumable in the William Lane manner of publishing.

The Gothic mode is one which operates under what Nicholas Williams calls 'a cannibalistic theory of taste' (Williams 1999, p. 140). The Gothic text ingests and absorbs literary status by cannibalising other texts, for example, the continuous

¹⁹² This notion of the cannibal as corrupting and an index of degeneration is one continually returned to in relation to gender, body, and culture.

¹⁹³ Fred Botting flags the 'diffusion of Gothic traces' (Botting 1996, p. 13) in his introductory study *Gothic*. He lists how 'Science fiction, the adventure novel, modernist literature, romantic fiction and popular horror writing often resonate with Gothic motifs that have been transformed [cannibalised?] and displaced by different cultural anxieties' (ibid., p. 13).

epigraphic use of Shakespeare.¹⁹⁴ This ‘autocannibalisation’, a term coined by Jonathan Freedman and explained by Williams, is the process by which ‘the mass text incorporates key values and figures of the legitimated culture’ (ibid., p. 140). The contemporary Gothic text is also autocannibalistic in its incorporation of established Gothic narratives, much like the chapbooks of the eighteenth century. Indeed, Judith Halberstam notes that ‘*The Silence of the Lambs* has cannibalised nineteenth-century Gothic, eaten its monsters alive, and thrown them up’ (Halberstan 1998, p. 177). The cannibal theme stretches the Gothic text as consumable to its limit until it collapses in on itself. The Gothic, as a rich and spicy read, cannot resist its own temptation.

The final section of this project is separated into four chapters. The first of these chapters engages with the villainous cannibalism that the later texts re-write. In this chapter the cannibalistic appetite of the eighteenth-century villain is discussed, showing here how the female body is reduced to a consumable. Yet, these villains are ultimately devoured themselves and their metaphors and tales of cannibalism in the end only act to eat them alive. The next chapter deals with the difficulties of negotiating narratives that have at their heart the unspeakable. This chapter gives a sample of various Gothic texts analysing the scenes of cannibalism within them and how the act of cannibalism is elided in the language with which they are represented. Susan Skubal writes that ‘the cannibal...knows no metaphor’ (Skubal 2002, p. 106), and this literalising of desire or fantasy reflects in a concentrated form the literalising process of the Gothic. Cannibalism has an uneasy relationship with language;

¹⁹⁴ This is literalised in Dolarhyde’s eating of Blake’s painting, also discussed in Williams.

cannibalism, as shall be shown, signals a collapse in language. As Adrian Kear notes, 'In resorting to the literal, incorporation acts against metaphor, threatening representation' (Kear 1997, p. 257).¹⁹⁵ The Gothic cannibal brings the themes and processes of the Gothic text into focus, acting as the Gothic does, to undermine the very foundations that allow it to exist: representation. This is engaged with in Chapter Four with reference to how cannibal scenes (the act of cannibalism or the impossibility of its representation and the focus on its aftermath) are represented and elided in H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger*, Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* (1986), Ann Tracy's *Winter Hunger* and Sabina Murray's *A Carnivore's Inquiry* (2004).

Chapter Five explores the representation of male cannibalism using the psychoanalytical theories with which the texts self-consciously interact, and argues, with evidence from the central male protagonists in Joyce Carol Oates' *Expensive*

¹⁹⁵ Kear uses Abraham and Torok's definition of 'incorporation' which they explain to be, 'taking possession...through *incorporation*, that is by putting it into the body or the psyche' (Abraham & Torok 1994, p. 113). Incorporation is, however, a fantasy and is linked to language as reparation for lack. Abraham and Torok, when discussing 'the early form of the ego' explain that 'the ego consists at this stage in the use it makes of ingestion and its variants (salivation, hiccups, vomiting, etc.) in symbolic expressions, such as asking for or refusing food *regardless of the actual state of hunger* or, alternatively, fantasizing the consumption and refusal of food by means of the same mechanism but when the object is absent' (ibid., p. 114 original emphasis). In this way, in the fantasy of ingestion, the ego 'signals its meaning to itself' (ibid., p. 114), it confirms its separation from what is external and rehearses its power to take in to itself that which is other. Thus 'the fantasy of incorporation is the first lie, the effect of the first rudimentary form of language' (ibid., p. 114). In the texts discussed in this project, male cannibalism has a direct connection with this fantasy element in incorporation. In each of these characters, the process of signalling meaning to itself is interrupted or incomplete because of the rejection of their demands; thus they are forced to fantasise more frequently and become fixated in this lie, or delusion of incorporation. The female characters, or cannibals, do not fantasise, they enact their desire to eat human flesh and this action of "eating"...[is] an act signifying the process of introjection and satisfaction for the ego' (ibid., p. 115).

People, Perfume, Winter Hunger, and Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon* (1981) and *The Silence of the Lambs*, that male cannibalism is a fantasy. The Gothic combination of attraction and repulsion is created by cannibalism in these texts and is inescapably attached to the erotic and destructive image of the *vagina dentata*, the image of female appetite and power. 'Classical theory has it that the boy fears castration by the father as punishment for his sexual interest in the mother. This is *not* verified by my clinical experience' posits Joseph Rheingold; instead, 'Throughout life, the man fears the woman as castrator, not the man' (in Creed 1993, p. 122 original emphasis).¹⁹⁶ This is also the fear in these texts, expressed through the fantasies about and the terror of cannibalism.

Chapter Six contrasts the detached and psychological cannibalism of men with the visceral connection with eating flesh that the female cannibal enjoys. Her representation in *The Hunger*, *A Carnivore's Inquiry*, *Winter Hunger*, Stoker's *Lair of the White Worm* (1911), and *Dracula* conveys the literalisation and externalisation of many of the misogynistic assumptions that make up the foundations of patriarchal society. Where the previous section, 'From Sensibility to Starvation', engaged with notions of eighteenth-century sensibility and its constriction of women, this section will look at what Angela Carter terms 'modern sensibility', which is signalled by its 'paranoia, its despair, its sexual terrors, its *omnivorous egocentricity*' (Carter in Sceats 2000, p. 40 Sceats's italics). Yet, along with the alienation of this new

¹⁹⁶ Barbara Creed's text *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* interrogates why 'woman-as-monster [has] been neglected in feminist theory and in virtually all significant theoretical analyses of the popular horror film' (p. 1). Her discussion of the castrating potential of women and her critical engagement with Freud is important. However, her focus is, as the title suggests, film and she only briefly mentions the Gothic.

sensibility comes female emancipation, tempered by animalism and couched in ideas of degeneration. As Dijkstra writes ‘when Darwin, in *The Descent of Man*, unhesitatingly accepted the notion of the natural inferiority of woman, and also began to stress the dangers of “reversion” in the development of species, it was easy to put two and two together’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 211). This fear that woman will be the downfall of humanity through her bestial appetites rewrites Eve in another guise, and the Gothic takes this appetite to its extreme in cannibalism.

The cannibalism under discussion throughout concerns the human body as food. The kind of cannibalism which is the result of ceremonial rites or the result of starvation and extreme necessity for survival is not under consideration. To use Malchow’s distinction between ‘the cannibal of starvation and that of perverse appetite’ (Malchow 1996, p. 57), it is the perversion and the choice to eat human flesh with which this section engages.

All of the texts mentioned above are either re-enactments of or reactions to new and contentious theories. Eighteenth-century fears of excess, appetite and consumption are literalised in the hunger depicted by the villain and his subsequent fate. *Dracula*, *The Beetle* and *Lair of the White Worm*,¹⁹⁷ work through debated issues

¹⁹⁷ See for example, Kelly Hurley’s *The Gothic Body*, Bram Dijkstra’s *Idol’s of Perversity* and Robert Mighall’s *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, which argue that these texts engage with anxieties over racial and sexual degeneration and scientific progress and fears. Mighall writes, discussing Stephen Arata’s approach where ‘horror fiction from the end of the century offers an index to supposedly widespread and deeply felt “fears”’ that ‘Stoker’s *Dracula* “articulates, in distorted but vivid fashion, some of culture’s more harrowing anxieties”’ (Arata in Mighall [1999], p. 166) about race, gender and sexuality. However, Mighall goes on to argue that ‘To read “science” as a context for horror fiction in this way actually negates the epistemological status of scientific discourse, its function to produce a special truth’ (ibid., p. 167) but this is not my intention. Instead it is the anxieties that arise from the misunderstanding of scientific discourse, or the refusal to accept its implications that are embodied, literalised or reinterpreted in Gothic texts. As Bram Dijkstra states in his interview with

of gender, such as the emergence of the New Woman,¹⁹⁸ and the anxieties that science and industry surface. Focusing on the representation of the body as food and the castrating woman in these texts conveys how these fears have been distanced, or as Hurley puts it, ‘mapped out [as] alternate trajectories of evolution than the one set down by Darwin, imagining monstrous modifications of known species [as *Moreau* does], or the emergence of horrific new ones [as in *The Beetle*]’ (Hurley 1996, p. 10). These texts, as well as following ‘alternate trajectories’, also simply act out or take to extremes ideologically enforced codes and practices. Just as the Gothic acted out sensibility as the previous section discussed, this section shows how assumptions and theories are exaggerated and literalised. This is clearer in later Gothic texts which work through the influence of Darwin and Freud in particular and show that, as Gillian Beer argues, ‘evolutionary [and I argue psychoanalytical] ideas are even more

Ron Hogan: it is important ‘to go back into history and understand what the popular understanding of science was at a given time. The scientists themselves may had [sic] a very complex understanding of certain concepts, but in trying to communicate that understanding to a large public, they used metaphors and simplifications that come across to the public as, “Women are praying mantises, they’re black widow spiders...they steal the male’s vital essence”’ (<http://www.beatrice.com/interviews/dijkstra/>). Thus it is the literalisation of such ‘metaphors and simplifications’ that are engaged with here.

¹⁹⁸ The New Woman, as defined by Sally Ledger in her text *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle*, is ‘a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century woman’s movement’ (Ledger 1997, p. 1). She also notes that, ‘gender was an unstable category at the fin de siècle, and it was the force of gender as a site of conflict which drew such virulent attacks upon the figure of The New Woman’ (ibid., p. 2). Also, Dijkstra writes of the intimate interrelation of psychological and scientific theories of gender which argued against the ‘viraginous tendencies of the New Woman’ that ‘In writing their diatribes against the unnatural acts of the feminists, [and I shall engage with one such diatribe by Otto Weininger] the psychologists and physicians – who insisted that ultimately men had nothing to worry about since, in the long run, woman’s every attempt at emancipation would of necessity have to collapse as a result of her fundamental and irremediable constitutional weakness’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 215). In these three texts, *Dracula*, *The Beetle* and *Lair of the White Worm*, there is a model of conventional and dependent femininity by way of compensation for the New Woman, or in contrast to her deviance. *Dracula* has the ever efficient and self-less Mina to foil Lucy, *Beetle* has the hyper-feminine Miss Lindon, and *Worm* has the sensitive Lilla and Mimi to counter the hard and sexually threatening Lady Arabella. The New Woman will not be looked at specifically in the following pages.

influential when they become assumptions embedded in the culture than while they are the subject of controversy' (Beer 2000, p. 2). Like evolutionary theories, psychoanalysis has become 'embedded' in culture and is consciously questioned and engaged with in these later texts, in particular *Winter Hunger* and *Red Dragon*. However, rather than applying a single theory, these texts interact with a soup of theories, rejecting parts and assimilating other arguments; thus, a single path is impossible to follow and my analysis draws on many different, and at times opposing, theories. Beer also suggest that 'because we live in a culture dominated by evolutionary ideas, [again I would also add psychoanalytical ideas] it is difficult for us to recognise their imaginative power in our daily readings of the world' (ibid., p. 2); or, as I would posit, it is difficult to escape their influence in our readings of the world. Once the Oedipal narrative becomes embedded, alternative familial relations are difficult to image; however, the Gothic raises horrific alternatives and alternatives that question assumptions and fixed notions of gender and sexuality. Most of the scientific and theoretical thought explored in this section comes from the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and, although this thinking is applied to texts as late as 2004, I argue that these opinions and ideas, from, for example, Freud, Darwin and Weininger,¹⁹⁹ do still inform 'our readings of the world'.

¹⁹⁹ It would be easy to dismiss Weininger's *Sex and Character* as extremist; however, as it shown in Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity*: 'What makes *Sex and Character* especially significant is that it took a large group of existing notions and organised them into a system that seemed scientific and consequently made a great deal of sense to the author's contemporaries...The book became a huge success and was read avidly throughout Europe by laymen and professionals alike' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 218). The collected views of the German Press given in the 1910 William Heinemann edition support this assertion. For instance, *Allgemeine Wiener Medizinische Zeitung* notes that this is 'A book that will henceforth be in the hands of every doctor who has occasion to study the antithetical character of the two sexes'; *Der Volkserzieher* suggests that: 'There is no aspect of modern thought which he (Weininger) has not touched upon'; and *Neues Wiener Tageblatt* argues: 'A great philosophical, biological, and social question [the woman question] is here treated by a gifted and learned author with

Dijkstra argues that Gothic novels and vampire movies are reincarnations of ‘an antifeminine sensibility established...by the sexist ideologies among the nineteenth-century intelligentsia’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 341). I take these ideologies and consider how texts that precede and move on from Hurley’s analysis of *fin de siècle* Gothic in *The Gothic Body* through to the modern day interrogate these ideologies and realise or explode the theories that are espoused within them.

perfect freedom and breadth, yet with a seriousness, a wealth of scientific knowledge, that would ensure the book a place in the front rank, even were the style less excellent’ (Frontmatter *Sex and Character*). For more information on the popularity and influence of Weininger’s writings see Dijkstra. These views inform thoughts that present culture is still working through.

Chapter 3: 'Distended like the jaws of an ogre': The Eighteenth-Century Villain's Gluttonous Appetite

Whatever it is that is in the closet or under the bed or in the bushes of bad dreams menaces most with its mouth (Skubal 2002, p. 103).

The Gothic villain's appetite in the eighteenth century is the 'rebellious impulse' that Helen Stoddart writes drives him to 'test and transgress human social and ethical constraints' (in Mulvey-Roberts 1998, p. 113). His hunger is excessive; this appetite for power and lust drives him to kill, rape and imprison. He takes possession of his victim's bodies and this is described within the discourse of cannibalism.²⁰⁰ As the parricide in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) explains, 'these terrors were soon exchanged for others, — and worse, —' (*Melmoth*, p. 210). The terror of rape, murder, parricide and incest are linguistically exchanged for the 'worse' terror

²⁰⁰ The extended allegorical cannibalism in Lewis' *The Monk* was exaggerated enough that R. S.'s parody hones in on this and literalises Ambrosio's metaphorical consumption with Joshua declaring 'I am an epicure and a glutton' (*TNM*, p. 23).

of cannibalism. The Gothic mode sensationalises even these taboos. The villain transgresses because he is encouraged, as Matthew Lewis's Ambrosio is by Satan, to 'Indulge in every pleasure to which appetite may lead you' (*The Monk*, p. 434). Female flesh is 'delicious' (ibid., p. 262) in Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), a 'better dish' (*TNM*, p. 47) in *The New Monk* (1798), R. S. Esquire's parody of Lewis's text, and 'a meal' (*Melmoth*, p. 213) for Maturin's villain. The villain's appetite is always cannibalistic as he feeds on the fear, pain and bodies of his victims, most often those of the heroines within the text. Fred Botting notes that the illegitimate power represented by the Gothic villain 'threatens to *consume* the world of civilized and domestic values' (Botting 1996, p. 4-5, emphasis added). His power devours to destroy.²⁰¹ In the eighteenth century this figure's appetite embodies the opposition to the moderation, simplicity and control of Enlightenment ideals, which are upheld by the heroine. As Punter and Byron note, the term 'Gothic' 'could be used in structural opposition to "classical"' and 'well ordered' (Punter & Byron 2004, p. 7) and

²⁰¹ Although Botting argues that the Romantic-Gothic villain is 'not the cause of evil and terror', that instead this lies in 'embodiments of tyranny, corruption and prejudice' (Botting 1996, p. 92), it could be countered that this villain succumbs to his hunger and that this is the cause of 'evil and terror' in the Gothic text, specifically the early Gothic text. This Romantic-Gothic as Botting terms it is a fusion of these two modes and helps to create the Byronic Gothic villain who 'retains a darkly attractive, if ambivalent, allure as a defiant rebel against the constraints of social mores' (ibid., p. 92). This is the villainy that Ambrosio embodies and helps, in part, to explain the character's gluttony but also his withered and tortured exterior. Ambrosio has a 'commanding presence. His stature was lofty, and his features uncommonly handsome...his dark brows almost joined together' above 'his eye at once fiery and penetrating' (*The Monk*, p. 18), and although Joshua is 'ugly' (*TNM*, p. 12) he also retains the gauntness that Ambrosio's extreme 'Study and watching' (*The Monk*, p. 18) connotes as Joshua is a 'long, withered fellow' (*TNM*, p. 12). The villain is consumed from within by his insatiable desires while the amiable monk in Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (1798), for instance, becomes plump and corpulent because his lusts are attainable. Indeed this monk, Father Phillip, explicitly states: 'my bulk proceeds from no Indulgence of voracious appetite' (*The Castle Spectre*, 1.1, p. 5). Food for this character does not implicitly represent anything other than food, while for Ambrosio and Joshua, for example, food is representative of sex, power, and domination, all intangible desires that only encourage further longing.

Ambrosio, Joshua and especially Maturin's parricide exemplify this manifestation of the 'chaotic' and 'barbarous' (ibid., p. 7) when they succumb to 'the cravings of brutal appetite' (*The Monk*, p. 236).

While the starved body is a representation of sterile absence, the glutton does not signify fecundity but a rotting presence 'stuffed almost to suffocation' (*TNM*, p. 1). Even though it is meant to convey the opposite, the glutton's consumption is a manifestation of his lack of control, his threatening disorder and his inescapable connection to the body. William Miller describes gluttony as 'the emblem of all sin' in that it 'favors [sic] instant gratification, the filling of present emptiness with corporeal sensation at the expense of spirit and futurity' (Miller 1997, p. 96). The parricide acknowledges his surrender of spiritual paradise for the pleasure of the flesh when he calls for Judas to 'shake his bag of silver against mine...I have got more for [my soul]' (*Melmoth*, p. 201). The Gothic villain is represented as the apex of sin; he becomes the emblem, assuming these gluttonous associations as he refuses to submit to the rule of God, pushing Him aside in favour of bodily desire. He devours to transcend God; invulnerable for that moment of enjoyment, 'superior to the rest of his fellow-Creatures' (*The Monk*, p. 40), he considers himself to be 'a hero triumphant above all' and 'noble' (*Melmoth*, p. 208) but thinks of 'no one but myself' (*TNM*, p. 23). All-consuming he usurps the appetite of any other. Miller goes on to explain that in the face of disgusting gluttony and horrific anorexia 'our only hope is the mean, the dull middle in which reasonableness governs' (Miller 1997, p. 110).

This search for moderation is, of course, the Nirvana of the Age of Reason.²⁰² However, in comparison to the extremes of the Gothic text, embodied in the heroine and the villain, such moderation indeed seems ‘dull’; the Gothic shows how the imposition of this drudgery encourages destructive appetites in the abstemious monastery or the ‘unpleasant situation of being fed on one self-same dinner the whole year round’ (*TNM*, p. 32). The gluttonous villain proposes to illustrate how ‘human...nature is prone to frailty and error’ (*ibid.*, p. 23), but the glutton becomes instead an emblem of corruption literalised by his profane body. His body ‘transforms his delectables into the quintessence of the disgusting’ (Miller 1997, p. 101). What he devours becomes his own flesh and his body is ‘rotting’ (*TNM*, p. 226), ‘formless’ (*Melmoth*, p. 256), ‘bruised and mangled’ (*The Monk*, p. 441).

The Gothic villain represents all-consuming and all-corrupting power. His appetite to possess and control spills over into his physical appetites and in the Gothic this becomes hunger. *The New Monk* literalises Ambrosio’s allegorical appetite. Ambrosio’s lust is described in a cannibalistic discourse: Ambrosio is consumed by his obsessive ‘devouring [of] those charms with his eyes’ (*The Monk*, p. 300) and he thinks on ‘The pleasures which He had just tasted’ (*ibid.*, p. 226) as he ‘fastened his lips greedily upon hers, [and] sucked in her pure delicious breath’ (*ibid.*, p. 262). Joshua, however, is a gourmand, the ‘secret glutton [who] hovers / O’er thy rest, and

²⁰² James Allan’s 1749 sermon *Moderation Explained and Recommended* communicates the importance of this ideal. He writes: ‘There is no Duty more universally acknowledged than that of MODERATION; perhaps, none less regarded...to succeed in every good Work, Moderation is absolutely necessary’ (Allan 1749, p. 3). Allan explains that the concept is derived from the New Testament and that it is ‘opposed to the Character of a Brawler’ (*ibid.*, p. 8). Further he states ‘directly opposed to all...Excess and the Cure and Remedy of them, is Moderation’ (*ibid.*, p. 21).

wants a meal' (*TNM*, p. 22), armed with a 'carving knife and fork' (*ibid.*, p. 48). The physicality of the villain is represented through his relationship to eating: while the ethereal heroine abstains, the 'beastly' (*ibid.*, p. 145) villain gluts, and his 'meal' is the lovely Emily, Antonia, or in Joshua's case, Betsy the pudding maker. The Gothic is a body-centred literature, and this is what produces much of the anxiety about the mode. The Gothic connects with the psychological through the physical. Thus the Gothic villain's greatest weapon, and his source of weakness, is his mouth. Whatever he desires 'he approach[es]...with his teeth, and [finds] it eatable' (*ibid.*, p. 38). He assimilates cannibalistically all he devours, but in his death, the glutton's body is dissipated and the text represents the release of all he has consumed. In his death there is a reversal and it is he who is eaten alive.

When the glutton gives in to his appetite he empowers the body and, as Bruhm observes, 'an empowered body...def[ies] the control of its master' and is 'placed under attack: it is rent, dismembered, afflicted, diseased, maimed' (Bruhm 1994, p. 146). His fate is sealed. Although the Gothic villain lives to consume, and the heroine is represented as his 'meal' (*TNM*, p. 22), it is the villain who ultimately becomes a consumable object. This is so both within the text and for the female reader to enjoy, subverting the established norm of male consumer of female objectification, and this reversal continues, as shall be discussed below, becoming more extreme in later examples. As has been shown, the starved eighteenth-century Gothic heroine is isolated by her hunger, restricted and confined by her denial of flesh, and here her contemporary villain is the glutton who embodies the opposite but

parallel extreme: he is fixated within his embodiment, unable and unwilling to see past his physical gratification; the glutton is possessed by his body.²⁰³

The Gothic villain is ‘all mouth’ (*TNM*, p. 77). He is either resonantly silent or a hypnotic, compulsive storyteller. A ‘fleshy’ (*ibid.*, p. 7) open mouth filled with teeth encapsulates the threat of the Gothic villain. The Gothic villain follows a long tradition that situates the satanic, villainous ogre’s horror in his mouth. Mario Praz’s chapter on ‘The Metamorphoses of Satan’ explores changing representations of the villain and the devil. He traces this figure from Marino’s *Strage degli Innocenti* (1632), which describes the villain’s mouth as ‘he vomits and brings forth fog and foulness; angry, superb and desperate, his groans are thunder’ (quoted in Praz 1951, p. 82, n.2), to the ‘sweetened Satan’ of ‘Byronic Fatal Men’ who succumb to ‘bacchantes’ and ‘banquet[s]’ (*ibid.*, p. 79). What appears to remain consistent is this figure’s gluttonous appetite. He regurgitates vapour because he is hollow; roaring he fills the emptiness he cannot conquer. Maturin’s parricide exemplifies the monstrous oral; his mouth threatens to swallow him because it is out of control. Ambrosio is encouraged to satiate his lusts only to discover that such a desire can never be fulfilled, and *The New Monk* strives to expose the workings of the Gothic, conveying the villain’s preoccupation with his orality, and the genre’s obsession with consumption. Gluttony and tyranny are aligned in the eighteenth century. In 1712 John Bockett published a *Collection of Sayings* or maxims in which he writes: ‘It is

²⁰³ This is the ultimate sin. William Adey in 1760 writes that: ‘the Soul is immortal, and will be happy or miserable according to (a) *Things done in the Body. Here* or Duty (b) to God’ (Adey 1760, p. 17 original emphasis). The responsibility of embodiment thus supersedes the duty to God.

the Property of wicked People, to apply their Minds unto Idleness, Pride, Gluttony, and Tyranny' (Bockett 1712, p. 125).

All Mouth: the Villainy of Ambrosio, Joshua and Maturin's Parricide

A trivial and ordinary want...converted [them into]...cannibals
(*Melmoth*, p. 213).

'[W]hen He spoke about Sinners He seemed as if He was ready to eat them' (*The Monk*, p. 22) Leonella exclaims after listening to Ambrosio's sermon. His speech conveys the power of his orality. Not only can he charm and enchant with his words, he can also pronounce his cannibalistic judgement. The taboos that the villain breaks are unspeakable: parricide and incest. In order to represent the severity of this transgression these texts use a discourse of cannibalism. However, cannibalism itself is unspeakable. Ambrosio's metaphors for consumption are idealistic, endowing female flesh with 'inexhaustible sweetness' (*ibid.*, p. 383). Joshua projects the desire to consume the female body onto something more realistic, but since this text is grotesque in its humour any frisson of taboo collapses when the 'savoury leg' turns out to be 'pork' (*TNM*, p. 46) and not the delectable Betsy. The parricide, however, articulates the unspeakable when he describes how the lover he spies on 'fastened his teeth in her shoulder; — that bosom' (*Melmoth*, p. 212-3). The description breaks off as his teeth sink in and the parricide draws away from the act to the relationship; this woman loved him and so his cannibalism is all the more repugnant. The dash, as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, is ubiquitous in descriptions of

cannibalism and it signifies this breaking away from the unspeakable act. Although *The Monk* discusses the power of the eyes and how ‘few could sustain the glance of his eye’ (*The Monk*, p. 18) and that the eyes are metaphorical vehicles, which ‘devou[r]’ (ibid., p. 300) sexually and violently what he would actually consume, the site of villainy is the mouth. Characterised in the figure of the orator, the mouth and the lips are the site of unspeakable sexuality, insatiable longings and fatal proclamations. This site of ambiguity negotiates the anxiety surrounding Gothic consumption. The Gothic text is described as entering the reader through their mouth: it is tasted, like poison, it is devoured and consumed; spicy and indulgently rich it piques the appetite. This metaphor is literalised within the Gothic text and the mouth within these texts represents exquisite pleasure and unbearable torture. The Gothic repeatedly represents images of orality: cannibalism, vampirism, the unspeakable, silence, and lack. The parricide feasts on the pain of others and is represented as a carnivorous beast, a ‘tiger...wolf’ (*Melmoth*, p. 238), whose mouth is the locus of his monstrosity as he is described ‘with a yawn that distended like the jaws of an Ogre preparing for his cannibal feast’ (ibid., p. 202). Joshua is also monstrously bestial; his Church training has made him into ‘an unnatural kind of biped *fit for any thing*’ (*TNM*, p. 128 original emphasis). This has left him susceptible to the seduction of appetite, literalised when he becomes like a pig, the symbol of gluttony,²⁰⁴ as he ‘wallowed in unbounded excesses’ (ibid., p. 127). Joshua’s mouth, like the

²⁰⁴ It is a pig and not Ambrosio’s serpent that attacks Joshua in the garden: ‘amongst the flowers lay the pig, who...suddenly started up...hurled me with great force’ (*TNM*, p. 39). He is repeatedly described as wallowing: ‘Joshua wallowed in pork and gravy, the pleasures of whose tit bits had been till then unknown to him’ (ibid., p. 120). This literalises the sin of gluttony. Indeed, Joshua’s first temptation comes in the form of pork: ‘This is the pig – the fatal pig: - what he has begun, he shall finish’ (ibid., p. 44).

parricide's, is voracious; it 'spluttered' as he 'crammed' food 'into his mouth' (ibid., p. 48), his appetite becomes frenzied. Just as Joshua's 'voice has perfectly astonished me' (ibid., p. 12) so Ambrosio's power resides in his mouth, in his mesmerising oration: 'all who have heard him are so delighted with his eloquence' (*The Monk*, p. 16) that they would devour him: 'You will find it [Ambrosio's name] in every one's mouth at Madrid' (ibid., p. 16). However, his eloquence is rendered impotent when he surrenders to the desires of his vampiric kisses and he 'sealed up his lips in silence' (ibid., p. 240).

The parricide is described as monstrous through images of cannibalism and through his own attraction to cannibalism. He feasts on the pain of others, specifically the pain derived from hunger. The relationship between eating and Gothic tales is enacted when he tells a horrific story of starvation to stave off his own hunger. In this text the Gothic tale is consumed; it replaces food when he and the Spaniard 'have nothing to eat' (*Melmoth*, p. 202); the narrative is shown to satisfy. The parricide tells of how two lovers are imprisoned when discovered within a monastery. Hunger takes effect astonishingly quickly as he relates how only 'One hour of hunger undeceived them' (ibid., p. 213) and found their love turned to hate since 'In the agonies of their famished sickness they loathed each other' (ibid., p. 212). Hunger is shown to remove any finer feelings; sensibility is subordinated by this physical immediacy. What he calls 'curiosity', the appetite for these scenes of horror, also bypasses the rigours of sensibility. He observes, 'that curiosity that brings thousands to witness a tragedy, and makes the most delicate female feast on groans and agonies' (ibid., p. 211), is the curiosity that has left him depraved and

insatiate for the agonies of others. However, the female in the scene he witnesses retains her own delicacy. She takes a 'lock of her long hair in her mouth' to substitute for food while her lover lies with 'his hand...between his lips' (ibid., p. 213) after he has attacked her. Female appetite is a taboo too far. Instead, she becomes the victim of male appetite as 'that bosom on which he had so often luxuriated, became a meal to him now' (ibid., 213), he 'fastened his teeth in her shoulder' (ibid., p. 212). The desire to fill his mouth becomes all-consuming, obscuring his previous love and as 'The agony of hunger increased, they shrunk from the door, and grovelled apart from each other. *Apart!*' (ibid., p. 212). They separate, 'apart', aware only of their empty stomachs. The pain of hunger and the excesses of gluttony debase the human; denying the transcendent and spiritual, hunger focuses on the flesh, reducing the human to the bestial. The parricide's own cannibalistic appetite is awakened: he exclaims 'oh what a feast to me!' (ibid., p. 212). In relating this tale, the parricide can become the cannibal as he holds the words in his mouth which detail her consumption. Peter Hulme translates Haroldo de Campos who states that 'In Latin America as well as in Europe, writing will increasingly mean rewriting, digesting, masticating' (in Hulme 1998, p. 28), and the parricide chews over his tale re-creating it, cannibalising what he has witnessed into a narrative. While he anticipates the lover fastening his teeth into the woman's flesh he is made to 'grind my teeth' (*Melmoth*, p. 210), awaiting his feast upon their 'groans and agonies' (ibid., p. 211). The victims 'swallowed down the sick sob of despair', and the parricide also gulps down their horror and savours it since he 'lived on the famine that was devouring them' (ibid., p. 211).

While the sight of cannibalism excites the parricide and stirs in him a wish to indulge this appetite again through transforming the scene into a narrative, Ambrosio is rendered speechless by his cannibalistic desire. Ambrosio is susceptible to temptation because ‘his long Fast had only given a keener edge to his appetite’ (*The Monk*, p. 225). However, this fast reaches further back than a refusal of sexual desire: it also encompasses his desire for affection and maternal love. The church has ‘cherishe[d] [him] in her bosom’ (ibid., p. 301) since being found ‘while yet an Infant at the Abbey-door’ (ibid., p. 17). There, because he is deprived the succour of his ‘real’ mother, he is nurtured by the Mother church. Unlike the eighteenth-century Gothic heroines who are condemned to re-enact and literalise their lack of a mother in their emaciated bodies, Ambrosio’s desire for this affection becomes a need to possess, or become assimilated by the imago of the mother in the form of the Madonna;²⁰⁵ however, since such possession is forbidden from his introjection, his longing for the maternal is transferred to sexual desire; he possesses the mother through incorporation enacted by cannibalistic fantasies of ‘putting it [the object] into

²⁰⁵ He idolises his painting of the Mother Mary, stating: ‘Should I meet in that world which I am constrained to enter some lovely Female, lovely...as you Madonna...!’ (*The Monk*, p. 40). His affection is clearly sexualised as the ellipses convey. The ellipses in their denial of words condense ideas of incest, lust, and susceptibility. He goes on to exclaim: ‘Never was Mortal formed so perfect as this picture’ (ibid., p. 41), never was a real person formed as perfectly as his fantasised imago. Jung describes the imago as a ‘psychic image’ and that it is ‘never exactly like the object’ (Jung in Adams 1997, p. 106); rather the imago represents ‘the subjective relation to the object’ (ibid., p. 106). Thus the impossible perfection of the Madonna image and imago signify Ambrosio’s idealised relationship with the maternal figure and that to Ambrosio the motherless child, she is unattainable, impenetrable and ultimately threatening. This imago melds together maternal and sexual beauty, immaculate purity and bodily affection. Of course, Satan sends his demon Matilda, the image of this Madonna, to tempt Ambrosio and tutor him in the pleasure of the flesh. Abraham and Torok define the imago as the ‘repository of hope’ (Abraham & Torok 1994, p. 116) promising satisfaction, but continually deferring and projecting this satisfaction. ‘[T]he desires it forbade would be realised one day’ (ibid., p. 116) they argue, only if this image is held onto and maintained (encrypted). The imago is the object that is the focus of desire, the object that the subject wants within, wants to consume and the lack of which ‘cripples the ego’ (ibid., p. 116).

the body' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 113),²⁰⁶ for Ambrosio via the lips, the mouth. Ambrosio locates his desire on his lips; he fantasizes: 'Were I permitted to' 'press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom!' 'Should I not abandon...' (*The Monk*, p. 41). The ellipses, which replace what Ambrosio would be willing to 'abandon', show how his words are displaced in favour of the imagined breast. The desire for that 'embrace' (ibid., p. 41) with the ideal maternal figure, the Madonna, suggests what Susan Skubal explains to be the motivation of cannibalism: the creation of a 'perpetuating presence' (Skubal 2002, p. 106). This is a crucial contrast with Joshua whose greedy goal is forever the consummation, the annihilation of the object. Ambrosio wishes to preserve his fantasy of wholeness, his imago, which is impenetrable and pure,²⁰⁷ while Joshua would gnaw and destroy to bring the object

²⁰⁶ Abraham and Torok in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1994) describe 'necrophagia' (eating the corpse, eating the body) as anti-incorporation, as 'exorcism' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 130) of influence, rather than an internal haunting as in Freud. Necrophagia perverts the desire to become what you have lost. The act acknowledges the impossibility of introjection because the ego is physically or demetaphorically ingesting the flesh; thus the act of eating is no longer symbolic, no longer a fantasy and loses its significance. Thus for Ambrosio and the later males who desire the consumption of female flesh, their desire must remain a fantasy because their hunger is symbolic and they wish to be haunted, not have their lost object exorcised. Abraham and Torok's text further explores ideas of incorporation and introjection that are distinct from the Freudian conception of these terms; they discuss the physical action of ingestion and the psychic process of introjection, exploring how the bereaved subject eats in order to fulfil his or her frustrated desire to introject. In this sense the action of eating signals emptiness and hunger, either emotional or physiological. The continual reference to emptiness connects to the Gothic villain's fear of the void. The illusory fantasy of incorporation projects attention on to another area. Fantasy in the Gothic holds the same danger. The imagined results of actions, the pictured desires never compare to 'reality', and reality always catches up with the daydreamer. Ambrosio declares that he loves only the portrait of the Madonna, a 'real' woman would be too full of faults to satisfy, and of course, the text realises this conclusion. Ambrosio lives in his fantasy as he projects his imago onto Matilda and then Antonio, disappointed by them once he has consummated his wish to consume them; he possesses and consumes what is refused him. However, this eating, this fantasy of introjection, 'reveals a gap' (ibid., p. 127); it reveals the space which true introjection should fill, but is unable to.

²⁰⁷ This fantasy of impossible wholeness may help to explain why Ambrosio immediately 'shuddered' and feels 'disgust' (*The Monk*, p. 384) after his sexual penetration of his imago substitutes. This drive to preservation is also enacted by later male characters in Gothic texts who harbour and attempt to realise cannibalistic fantasies. See Chapter Five.

into himself. This is illustrated in the gypsy's premonition that with 'his frequent crammings done, / The luscious treat will swift begone' (*TNM*, p. 22). The closed sanitised mouth of Ambrosio, lips dry and 'press[ed]' (*The Monk*, p. 41), is opened up and becomes Joshua's Rabelesian orifice. Aroused by all the 'things that could excite the mouth to water' (*TNM*, p. 23), Joshua 'began to swallow his spittle' (*ibid.*, p. 46). As he attempts to lure his object into the mouth the interior of his mouth is continually exposed as he obsessively 'licked his lips' (*ibid.*, p. 46) or 'He bit his lips, gnashed his teeth, and silently execrated his judges' (*ibid.*, p. 218). Like an infant Joshua is orally obsessed: every object is first brought to the mouth, where his subjectivity resides (or the erasure of his Self). He is driven by a frenzy of sensation, but his own 'picture...most exquisite' (*ibid.*, p. 23) only 'seemed real' on the point of its destruction within his mouth, when 'he approached it with his teeth, and found it eatable' (*ibid.*, p. 38).

Ambrosio's loss of words, his ellipses, conveys a powerful threat that is absent from Joshua's exultant exclamations of 'Delicious! Oh, delicious!' as he 'crammed a slice into his mouth' (*TNM*, p. 48). Ambrosio's kisses seal his lips and his language is paralysed when he gives in to his dangerous appetites. Just as the heroines are left speechless at the sight of their starving mothers, so Ambrosio loses the ability to articulate in the presence of his longed for but forever forbidden love object. His inability to speak leads to his destruction. Satan asks: 'Why did you not stipulate for life, and power, and pleasure?' (*The Monk*, p. 441). He is left unable to pronounce the conditions, which might have delayed his damnation when before 'his eloquence [was once] the most persuasive' (*ibid.*, p. 17). His 'enchanted...oratory' (*ibid.*, p. 18) is reduced to inarticulate 'shrieks' (*ibid.*, p. 441) and his only relief is

found in debased language where he is left ‘venting his rage in blasphemy and curses’ (ibid., p. 442).

Eaten Alive: the Fate of the Gothic Villain

Bodily Lusts and Pleasures, and all carnal Affections, that reign in the Heart of Man, are but Beastly and Earthly...he that hath enslaved himself to them, is more bound than any Bondslave or Captive; for Dishonour, Shame and an Evil End, wait upon Lust (Bockett 1712, p. 136).

The Gothic villain’s cannibalistic appetite has consumed him. The power of his orality turns on him and reduces his eloquence to inarticulate roars: ‘The monster howled, and withdrew into the yawning gulph [sic]’ (*TNM*, p. 15). Once the oral nexus is entered, it cannot be escaped, and fittingly ‘the punishment is oral just as the sin is’ (Miller 1997, p. 100). The vacuum of this Gothic abyss is shown to be the glutton’s punishment; he is pulled back into the perpetually open and hungry mouth where he is annihilated by his own excess. Eighteenth-century religious belief dictated that ‘Only by renouncing the body could the spirit be released’ (Porter 1996, p. 2), only in renouncing this ‘body of sin’ (Wilson 1788, p. 39) as Joseph Wilson’s treatise *Universal Redemption* advises, can the soul be saved. And so the death of the villain is protracted and horrifically violent because he is bound to his physicality; he

becomes objectified flesh, rejected by society and swallowed by the elements or eaten alive by scavenging animals.²⁰⁸ This is shown in Ambrosio, Joshua, and the parricide.

Miller describes how the sin of gluttony is ‘in a sense, murder’ (Miller 1997, p. 97), and that Renaissance thought considered it to also be suicide, that ‘whoever englutteth himself, is guilty of his own death and damnation’ (Thomas Nashe [1593] in Miller 1997, p. 101). Gluttony then is a mortal sin because the glutton’s only fate can be to ‘swallow up himself’ (*Ecclesiastes* 10:12 in *Holy Bible*, p. 440). Susan Skubal argues that our ‘desire to eat still re-enacts’ our desire ‘to know...to partake of the stuff of the gods’ (Skubal 2002, p. 46), to eat from the tree of knowledge, to understand and thus transcend what binds us, to be immortal. However, gluttony takes this desire full-circle and the glutton becomes food. Ambrosio’s name (Ambrosia) communicates his fate. He is edible; he feeds the powers that be. Ambrosio is toyed with and devoured: Satan seduces him with Matilda, then encourages him along the path to damnation, where he signs his soul away only to be cast down and rejected. Satiation turns to disgust: his body is abandoned to the earthly realm where Nature strips his carcass.

Ambrosio’s death returns him to his initial desire for reunion with the mother, his lack of maternal affection and his obsession with the Madonna. Ambrosio’s desire is fulfilled but inverted; he is reclaimed by the Mother not through

²⁰⁸ Bockett argues that ‘Gluttony is a Vice very Odious, Monstrous, and Filthy; more fit for Ravening Birds, or Brute Beasts, than for Reasonable Men’ (Brockett 1712, p. 130). It is thus fitting that the glutton’s body is devoured by such birds and beasts.

nurture, but in death. His impotence is vented through his 'shrieks' (*The Monk*, p. 441); he is 'Blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing' but still his orality rages in 'blasphemy and curses' (ibid., p. 442). His mouth is the only part of his body that he can control. Rather than a reversed biblical Creation, where Ambrosio is finally destroyed on the 'Seventh' (ibid., p. 442) day, he is returned to the womb, to oblivion, by the feminine principle of water; the water breaks 'The waves overflowed their banks' after the rain 'swelled the stream' and 'carried with them into the river the Corse of the despairing Monk' (ibid., p. 442). This assertion of the feminine is crucial because it reaffirms the power of the female to create and destroy and the fundamental impotence of the male to assume this power and attempt to dominate through consumption. The feminine is the nurturing source and is thus also the source of death. Before this cleansing, Ambrosio becomes not the giver of immortality that his name suggests,²⁰⁹ but food for the 'Myriads of insects' and 'The Eagles of the rock' (ibid., p. 442). He lies paralysed and exposed. He is doubly devoured, eaten alive by the swarm and consumed by the reader, importantly the *female* reader.²¹⁰ His body is dissected and penetrated for this double consumption: 'They drank the blood', suck their sustenance from his flesh when they 'darted their stings into his body', 'covered him with their multitudes', 'tore his flesh piecemeal', and 'dug out his eye-balls' (ibid., p. 442). His body is examined and exposed in obsessive detail, in the way that 'the eyes of the luxurious Friar devoured [the] charms' (ibid., p. 239) of

²⁰⁹ Ambrosia is the mythic food of the Gods, which granted immortality to those who consumed it. The Greek Gods are said to have feasted on ambrosia and nectar in the palace of Jupiter, see *Bulfinch's Mythology* (1855), by Thomas Bulfinch (1796-1867).

²¹⁰ William Beckford notes it is the 'Misses' (*Vathek*, p. xvi) who read voraciously.

Matilda and Antonia. His torture is magnified because of the previous excitation of his senses so that he becomes 'Naturally addicted to the gratification of the senses' (ibid., p. 380). He is castrated, violated, entered and eaten because, like the Jew in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, he 'despised angel's food, and lusted after forbidden meats' (*Melmoth*, p. 269): the forbidden meat of his sister's flesh.

The New Monk also engages directly with the horror of becoming a consumable, dissected spectacle. Betsey tries to manipulate Joshua into signing away his soul by describing his worst fear:

Oh! blood! To be stretched upon a long deal board, and carved, and hacked; your flesh sliced in pounds from your late existing carcase, and your bones dried for the observation of the surgical multitude! (*TNM*, p. 216).

The horror, more dreadful even than being displayed, is to 'be left destitute to starvation? 'tis too unconscionable' (ibid., p. 220). Joshua fears becoming feminised. The female body is inseparable from meat; food and sex are 'double pleasure' (ibid., p. 48) in *The New Monk*. Joshua mistakes his lust for Betsy for his hunger when he mistakes her body for a pork chop: 'he pressed her to his bosom, and was already on the point of satisfying his desire, when the faithless form disappeared, and left in his embraces the savoury leg of pork' (ibid., p. 46). He also wistfully muses on the beauty of his mutton as he might a lover: 'what fat - what delicious lean! how nice it hangs upon that hook! can the piony [sic] vie with the redness of the flesh? Can the lily rival the whiteness of the fat? Oh! If such a bit of mutton lives, and lives but for me!' (ibid., p. 23-4). The female body is something that the male consumes in the eighteenth century; she has no agency in her own right and is displayed for his satisfaction and delight. 'What a banquet wilt thou prove.../ Not on mutton, beef, or

veal – / He would feign thy banquet taste’ (ibid., p. 21-2), the oracle tells Ann Maria Augusta, predicting her future as devoured object. The predatory, carnivorous gaze of the male is also conveyed through imagining women as there to be devoured, like fruit on a tree: ‘feast! feast! my boy, such picking! I have marked four already; all young, lovely, and languishing’ (ibid., p. 16). Thus when Joshua is ‘stretched upon a long deal board, and carved’ he suffers the same fate that he has imposed upon the women in this text. R. S. critiques the vulnerable position that Ambrosio assumes and creates a character that would rather be flayed – ‘skin me at once’ (ibid., p. 220) - but remain whole than be ‘hacked...sliced’, and valued ‘in pounds’. However, in death Joshua becomes meat; while Ambrosio is returned to the murderous womb/abyss, Joshua is disseminated feeding the lowest forms of life and lost forever.

Joshua is discarded: ‘rotting, unburied, and the prey of maggots, worms, and birds. – Lord knows where he is now!’ (*TNM*, p. 226). His animalistic hunger results in him being bound to his body and refused spirituality. Ambrosio’s spirituality is his punishment; the narrator tells us that ‘the arrival of death destined to yield him up to greater torments’ (*The Monk*, p. 442) while Joshua is dispersed as ‘the ravens, kites, hawks, and crows, took flying picks at his face’ (*TNM*, p. 226). Not devoured by the swarm like Ambrosio, Joshua is torn up until ‘one, more lucky than the rest, darted deep into his eye, tore it out by the root, and pierced the agonizing brain of the dying criminal’ (ibid., p. 192). While Ambrosio’s death is witnessed only by the ‘multitudes’ (*The Monk*, p. 442) of creatures who slowly eat him alive, Joshua is hung up and displayed for ‘the whole multitude, Constables, Mayor, Justices’ (*TNM*, p. 225) to witness. Joshua, even at this point, is still a figure of fun and is objectified ‘like a huge ear-ring, wafted to and fro’ (ibid., p. 226), while Ambrosio is re-

humanised in death.²¹¹ The poignant impotence experienced by Ambrosio evaporates in R. S.'s parody.

The villain's body is torn from him but he is not liberated. He is annihilated. This is also illustrated in the murder of the parricide. Once the mob has vented its rage on the parricide, 'they had not left a joint of his little finger – a hair of his head – a slip of his skin' (*Melmoth*, p. 256); he is a 'bloody formless mass' (ibid., p. 256) and the officer who arrives after his death is left without a body; he asks 'Where was the victim?' (ibid., p. 256) because there is nothing left of him to see. His crimes are so unspeakable that his figure must be annihilated in order to restate equilibrium and create a kind of peace for the victims of his gluttony. The mob consumes his flesh and then regurgitates it, leaving a pulpy congealing slush, importantly 'formless'. Miller discusses the ways in which the body is a marker of inner health and spirituality: 'the state of one's body is felt to govern largely the state of one's soul' (Miller 1997, p. 109). With this understanding, the dissipation of the flesh of the villain conveys the depth of his sin: his unpardonable and cannibalistic gluttony.

Although the parricide is described as insuppressibly bestial and monstrous, an 'Ogre' with 'distended...jaw...preparing for his cannibal feast' (*Melmoth*, p. 202),

²¹¹ Ambrosio's fate is represented in a sympathetic manner. His 'dreadful' (*The Monk*, p. 441) feelings are conveyed. He repents and 'raised his hands towards heaven' but is prevented from imploring 'the Eternal's mercy' (ibid., p. 441). Ambrosio is 'the sufferer' (ibid., p. 441), he is 'miserable' (ibid., p. 442). Although a 'Sinner' (ibid.) he is not utterly dehumanised. Rather his 'tortures the most exquisite and insupportable' (ibid., p. 442) are described in such detail that his 'flesh' in its destruction is opened up so intimately that feelings of sympathy and pity are roused. His 'burning thirst' and 'helpless, and despairing' (ibid., p. 442) agonies of dread are felt in the spectator. This reciprocity, described in *Melmoth* as 'The drama of terror [which] has the irresistible power of converting its audience into its victims' (*Melmoth*, p. 257), is not created in the descriptions of Joshua. The humour detaches the viewer and objectifies Joshua's pain.

his ‘voracious oral’ (Skubal 2002, p. 117) is castrated. He is shown ‘with his tongue hanging from his lacerated mouth like that of a baited bull’ (*Melmoth*, p. 255), tamed and subdued; his mouth is now the site rather than the inflictor of pain. The parricide is also shown with ‘one eye torn from the socket, and dangling on his bloody cheek’ (ibid., p. 255); like Ambrosio and Joshua his means of metaphorical consumption, his sight, is violently ripped from him and now *he* is devoured by the ‘thirsty eyes’ (ibid., p. 255) of the mob. But still he ‘howled’ (ibid., p. 256); his mouth is destroyed last. His mouth is uncontrollable; even in his sleep he ‘talked...loudly and incessantly’ (ibid., p. 199). He is compelled to retell his narrative of cannibalism just as he retells his own crime. He ‘repeated over and over’ that ‘I have griped my father’s throat...There, — there, — there, — blood to the hilt, — the old man’s blood’ (ibid., p. 201). Not only does he ‘speak to myself’, he forces his companion to ‘liste[n] to the ravings of a —’ (ibid., p. 201). The dash, the punctuation which Ann Tracy argues in *Patterns of Fear in the Gothic Novel 1790-1830* signifies ‘some kind of Malevolent Force’ (Tracy 1980, p. 15) is used in *Melmoth* to represent the taboo crime of parricide, and is also used repeatedly by the parricide in his description of the murder. The thrusts of the knife are represented: ‘There, — there, — there, —’. This ‘—’ is also used to signify the unspeakable taboo of cannibalism, as shall be shown in the next chapter. Tracy notes that this symbol was ‘used to represent Frankenstein’s nameless monster’ and Shelley ‘approved it as a “nameless mode of naming the unnameable”’ (ibid., p. 16).²¹² The unnameable in *Melmoth* is parricide

²¹² Tracy uses it in her own novel *Winter Hunger*, discussed in detail in the next chapter. In this novel it replaces the words that her character cannot bring himself to say: cannibal.

and cannibalism, both horrifically transgressive taboos. Freud asserts in *Totem and Taboo* that ‘patricide and incest’ (Skubal 2002, p. 111) are ‘the oldest and most powerful of human desires...the centre-point of childhood wishes’ (Freud [1912-3], p. 32).²¹³ Interestingly, Freud too cannot name the act of cannibalism: for him it ‘goes without saying’ (ibid., p. 142).²¹⁴ Thus these primal desires and taboos are inextricably linked and equally unspeakable. The unidentifiable ‘Malevolent Force’ is similar in parricide, incest and cannibalism. This force disrupts modes of signification and frustrates the Gothic movement to the literal, thus maintaining the power of the unspeakable.

The villain in later Gothic texts retains this cannibalistic drive, but his efforts are more obviously frustrated and his power undermined as the female cannibal usurps his ‘Malevolent Force’ (Tracy 1980, p. 16). Yet his appetite is still compelling. Marina Warner argues that ‘The imagery of devouring’ is ‘a form of metamorphosis encountered in Hell... [which] mirrors themes of consuming, using up, hollowing out’ (Warner 2002, p. 129). The death scenes in these texts convey just such a Hellish metamorphosis. The villain’s cannibalistic desire to possess and devour turns on him and his voracious body is eaten alive. This continues in the later

²¹³ Freud writes: ‘the two basic laws of totemism [are]: not to kill the totem animal and to avoid sexual intercourse with members of the totem clan’ (Freud [1912-3], p. 32), but the foundation for this is cannibalism. The totem meal consists of consuming the murdered father, assimilating his power and internalising his rule. And categorically present in the stages of childhood are just such cannibalistic wishes as Abraham and Torok and Melanie Klein, for example, argue.

²¹⁴ See Susan Skubal’s chapter ‘It Goes Without Saying: Oral Aggression and Its Mutterings’ in *Word of Mouth*. Here she discusses how Freud cannot articulate this act because ‘the nature of the meal...reveals the criminal deed to be of a definitively oral nature’ (Skubal 2002, p. 111) and that ‘shame’ (ibid., p. 103) prevents the articulation of oral attack.

texts discussed next; the male characters fantasise about cannibalising and dominating the female body but instead their flesh is turned into meat. The villain is not simply killed: he is 'consumed' 'used up' and 'hollowed out' and the extreme violence and intimacy that cannibalism represents is as attractive as it is abhorrent and as these next texts show, the increased appetite for the cannibal has us running towards him or her as they come 'roaring and open-mouthed to devour us' (*Robinson Crusoe*, p. 459-60).

Chapter 4: 'A Deed Without a Name':²¹⁵ The Unspeakable Cannibal Scene

²¹⁵ This phrase is taken from *Macbeth's* witches while they toil over their cannibalistic cauldron:

'Scale of Dragon, tooth of wolf; / Witches' mummy, maw and gulf, / Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark; / Root of hemlock, digg'd i'th' dark; / Liver of blaspheming Jew; / Gall of goat, and slips of yew, / Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse; / Nose of Turk, and tartar's lips; / Finger of birth-strangled babe, / Ditch-deliver'd by a drab, / Make the gruel thick and slab' (*Macbeth*, IV.1.22-33). 'What is't you do?' asks Macbeth and they answer 'A deed without a name' (*ibid.*, IV.1.64-5).

Skubal comments that the Witches' 'singular response – a refusal to name the cannibalistic nature of the deed – epitomises what has become our cultural compulsion to deny the sadistic oral' (Skubal 2002, p. 132). Freud in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-3), struggles to articulate the cannibalistic act stating that: 'Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him' (Freud [1912-13], p. 142). The inability to articulate this act and the ceremonial enshrinement of it converts it into a metaphor and as Freud notes, using the ubiquitous dash: '[This was] the beginning of so many things – of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion' (*ibid.*, p. 142). Only through this internalisation and conversion away from the literal can cannibalism become the symbol for cultural control.

The Aftermath: Literal and Metaphoric Cannibalism

The act of cannibalism itself is unspeakable.²¹⁶ The ‘primal scene of “cannibalism”’ according to Peter Hulme is “witnessed” by Westerners [and] is *of its aftermath rather than its performance*’ (Hulme 1998, p. 2 my emphasis). The Gothic text, as the previous chapter discusses, represents the act with ellipses or a dash as in *Melmoth the Wanderer* where the cannibal: ‘fastened his teeth in her shoulder; — that bosom’ (*Melmoth*, p. 212-3). The Gothic moves towards this taboo and then breaks away from its graphic depiction. The aftermath, the ‘slight scar on her shoulder’ (*ibid.*, p. 213), prematurely healed to seal over the cannibalistic act, is poignantly noted.

²¹⁶ Much of what is articulated or represented within the Gothic text is unspeakable; as Eve Sedgwick’s text *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* conveys, it borders on becoming a convention of the mode. Robert Mighall also interrogates the notion of the Gothic as giving voice to fears. In response to Stephen Arata’s conception of Gothic fiction as articulating anxieties, Mighall asks ‘is it the “business” of Gothic fiction to “articulate” or “negotiate” anxieties? Is it not rather the business of the Gothic to be scary or sensational?’ (Mighall [1999], p. 167). The Gothic allows and incorporates the difficulty of expression into its discourse. The ‘scary’ elements of Gothic texts are, in part, communicated in the obscurity of language. Again as Sedgwick writes, language tangles and disorients until in the Gothic we encounter ‘language as live burial’ (Sedgwick 1980, p. 37). On another point, although the description of the act of cannibalism causes linguistic problems, hesitation, repetition and denial, the anthropological accounts of cannibals themselves, unlike *Macbeth*’s witches, suggest that cannibals are articulate. Lestringant writes that Michel de Montaigne’s cannibals are ‘orators, so loquacious and so quick in their answers that they are not always easy to follow’ (Lestringant 1997, p. 187). Montaigne, a sixteenth-century essayist, wrote ‘On the Cannibals’ (1580) and famously defended cannibalism as being ‘governed by the laws of Nature’ (Montaigne 1580, p. 232) in his or her primitivism. Montaigne exclaims, at the end of his essay, that the cannibal life was: ‘Not at all bad, that. – Ah! But they wear no breeches...’ (*ibid.*, p. 241). Early in his text, Lestringant notes that ‘For a long time the oratorical facility of the Cannibals was considered directly proportional to the fear aroused by their monstrous appetites. Their alleged eloquence, which in turn borrows Ciceronian cadences and a clipped Senecan style, was designed to transcend the horror of the act which was inherently incomprehensible’ (*ibid.*, p. 7). Rather than being the ‘hairy animal “uttering inarticulate cries”’ (*ibid.*, p. 3) the problem of cannibal communication is instead a ‘superabundance of meaning’ (*ibid.*, p. 4) and an argument that is too convincing. Part of the horror of this eloquence is that the perpetrators of something abject and disgusting are salient and intelligent. Thus, in order to properly avoid contamination with this taboo practice the cannibal is rendered mute or their articulation is repressed. However, this repression, the rendering of cannibalism to be unspeakable, only spawns more narratives as the Gothic text returns this repressed abject and *moves towards* literalising the anxieties that are wrapt in obscurity.

Cannibalism removes the mediation of language and acts rather than represents an act. Baudrillard, discussing such an actual act of cannibalism, where a Japanese man eats the Dutch woman who has rejected his advances, comments on the relationship between cannibalism and language: ‘the silence of metaphor accompanies the cruel act, thus the Japanese cannibal passed directly from the metaphor of love to the devouring of that marvellous young Dutch girl’ (in Stratton 2001, p. 167). This leaping over of metaphor or literalising what should be metaphoric is explicitly Gothic.²¹⁷ In this case, the instinctual desire to devour refuses to be suppressed and ordered within the symbolic and so creates a gap in language. Kilgour writes that ‘the cannibal is the pure direct self, uncontaminated by society – a proto-romantic reading of the “natural”’ (Kilgour 1998, p. 243). This notion that cannibalism is a natural urge is one addressed below in relation to female cannibalism, but the idea that it is the thing itself explains the problems of representation.²¹⁸ Lacan discusses that entry into language necessitates a renunciation and thus a loss of access to these natural urges through prohibition. ‘[B]y being named,’ Easthope states discussing Lacan’s theory, ‘the thing loses its self-definition, its simple capacity to be itself. Once named it could be named in *some other way*’ (Easthope 1999, p. 35 original emphasis). Thus cannibalism is unspeakable because it is a natural feeling (like incest and parricide, for example) denied by the symbolic order. Cannibalism is represented as able to fill

²¹⁷ The desire to be one with the mother again or closer to a lover is literalised in the Gothic text as the consumption of their body: the extreme of intimacy.

²¹⁸ Kilgour, throughout *From Communion to Cannibalism*, refers to ‘cannibalism as an image’ being ‘related to the breakdown of certain notions of identity and language’ either due to their being ‘too much meaning’ (p. 194) or the crisis of identity resolving (or dissolving) in ‘the cannibal joke’ and ultimately into ‘nonsense’ (ibid., p. 149).

the impossible *manque à être*, Lacan's lack-in-being that he argues is both created and salved by language.²¹⁹ Abraham and Torok also describe language as making up 'for absence by representing', by transforming 'The absence of objects and the empty mouth...into words' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 128). However, cannibalism refuses any replacement for the object and instead promises to take the object into the self, filling the self so that there is no absence for which to make up. Thus cannibalism, in these texts, renders language unnecessary.

The Gothic text reinstates the cannibal within the cannibal scene, gives access to this appetite and *attempts* to represent the unspeakable act. Hulme explains that the cannibal scene can include the cooking pot, bones and skulls, or a butcher's table with human flesh prepared like meat but is 'bereft of actual cannibals' (Hulme 1998, p. 2).²²⁰ This scene resonates within the psyche and is returned by the Gothic in order to communicate both the desire for unity and our inconsolable emptiness. Although un-representable itself, cannibalism becomes a metaphor for, Hulme suggests, 'appetite, consumption, body politic, kinship, incorporation, communion' (ibid., p. 5), or rather the *fantasy* of these. It is ironic that the act which silences metaphor goes on to spawn so many, an irony to which I will return. Cannibalism in fantasy is both attractive and erotic. Fuelled by curiosity and voyeurism, the reader is drawn to images or descriptions of the body, and cannibalism is the most intimate act

²¹⁹ See Easthope 1999, pp. 94-5 where Lacan's theory is discussed. Easthope makes no mention of the cannibal.

²²⁰ A literary example of this scene can be found in, for example, *Robinson Crusoe* where there are discovered 'great pieces of flesh left here and there, half-eaten, mangl'd and scorched...three skulls, five hands, and the bones of three or four legs and feet' (p. 317).

to which the body can be subject. However, despite this seductive draw, Skubal argues that the ‘special saying of cannibalistic desire and dread is in itself tabooed’ (Skubal 2002, p. 116). She suggests notable exceptions: ‘Science Fiction and the Gothic get by because the devourers are alien, monstrous, categorically not fully human’ (ibid., p. 116). However, this is not always the case. The ‘special saying’ remains ‘tabooed’ within the Gothic text. Those who harbour the ‘desire and the dread’ dare not articulate it because of the possible slippage into bestiality and monstrosity. The Gothic negotiation of representing the unrepresentable is a dance of approach and retreat, of glimpses and mutterings, all the more horrific because of this obscurity. *A Carnivore’s Inquiry* conveys the western preoccupation with the idea of cannibalism:

in our culture there was a weird enthusiasm for cannibalism. Cannibalism was a big thrill as long as we weren’t doing it...we still were able to believe in cannibals – their cauldrons and drums, savory [sic] stews and pit roasts – feasting at the edges of the world (*Carnivore*, p. 184-5).

The horror of the Gothic takes this Othered practice and places it in the centre of Western civilization rather than ‘at the edges’. The texts under consideration here are located in the First World (Europe, Canada and America), but focus on the remnants of a more ‘primitive’, ancient world, the vestiges of which remain even in the ‘civilised’ world. The ‘thrill’ and ‘weird enthusiasm’ for the cannibalistic text conveys the concealed wish to experience this taboo of extreme intimacy: a pure, unmediated physical connection. Cannibalism represents both the ideal and the nightmare. However, there is very little description of the act that so draws us, even within the Gothic text. Although the Gothic has a tendency towards the unspeakable, it also has a paradoxical draw towards literalising what is metaphorical and fantasy.

The Gothic approaches the cannibal scene but, in many of these texts, turns away at the moment of representation. It is the fantasy of this act, the vague image rather than the real flavour of cannibalism, that is compelling, and so the thrill felt by the suggestion of cannibalism is safe within the silence of the unspeakable. The Gothic literalises the increasing urge for closeness and its deprivation into a cannibalistic relationship between characters but still veils the act of cannibalism in obscurity.

Katherine, the cannibal in *A Carnivore's Inquiry*, for example, feels ambivalently towards eating the body. This appetite signals her rebellion; she rebels against the 'civilization' with which she is disaffected, and which is embodied by her father. Cannibalism is described as an alternative lifestyle in this text, marginal but not monstrous. It is her 'particular appetite' (*Carnivore*, p. 326) but not wrong, she insists. Katherine sees cannibalism as 'the basic hunger in us all...not based on the nurturing of the weak but on their calculated demise' (*ibid.*, p. 326). She takes metaphorical cannibalism and makes it literal and this is why her father can 'claim not to understand [her] hunger, a hunger that was everywhere – in art, in literature, at the boundaries of our knowledge, in the dark jungles of our planet' (*ibid.*, p. 326).²²¹ On the other hand, her cannibalism seems to bring shame. Although a large proportion of the text is taken up with Katherine's justification of cannibalism, its history and its representation in art, there is very little description of her own flesh

²²¹ In stating that 'They were all cannibals, all of them' (*Carnivore*, p. 37) Katherine is conflating metaphorical and literal cannibalism, but she is also re-placing the human animal within the food chain. She rearticulates *Moby Dick*: 'Go to the meat market of a Saturday night and see the crowds of live bipeds staring up at the long rows of dead quadrupeds. Does not that sight take a tooth out of the cannibal's jaw? Who is not a cannibal?', or where the reader is asked to 'Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began' (*Moby Dick* on <<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/moby10b.txt>>).

eating. Her actions are never fully disclosed and her narration seems to repress her agency as the cannibal. There are moments when her drive toward eating the human body is ambiguous: both something that is desired and a compulsion. '[H]unger', she states 'cannot be escaped...[it is] that little void always threatening to overwhelm. The soul is not what defines us as people, but this bottomless hunger' (ibid., p. 233).²²² To keep that 'threatening' 'void' at bay, Katherine eats men. Yet, she does not seem fully conscious of her actions. There are gaps in her narrative. She avoids the performance of cannibalism and focuses on the aftermath.

'Chunks of *Something*': Attempts to Describe Human Meat

I thought once more of the meat that I had seen. I felt assured now of what it was (*The Time Machine*, p. 128).

The innuendo or suggestion of cannibalism allows it to retain its 'delicious horror' (*Perfume*, p. 128) in *A Carnivore's Inquiry*. 'I had skipped dinner the night before...But my stomach was full' (*Carnivore*, p. 188) Katherine comments, refusing or unwilling to confess what might have satisfied her. The fullness of her stomach seems miraculous; the tearing and chewing of bloody mouthfuls has been denied. This civilising of the cannibalistic act, the distance from the pain and death of it, make it palatable, if a little unsatisfying for the reader. The aftermath of Katherine's feasting also often consists in her vomiting, rejecting what she has done, yet forcing her to witness, again, the fate of the body as food. In this case she mentions that

²²² Here Katherine refutes the fear that succumbing to hunger will deprive the person their humanity; according to Katherine hunger defines identity and humanness.

‘Three rounds later, I’d emptied myself out’ (ibid., p. 188). The ‘full’ stomach returns to its ‘empty’ state. When she says ‘I wasn’t prepared for what I saw floating in the basin’ (ibid., p. 188), the consciousness of her cannibalism becomes questionable; yet, she does seem to recognise what has been ejected by her body: ‘Digestion had not run its course. I saw chunks of *something* floating in clouds of yellow bile, worn at the edges by my stomach’s futile effort, a stomach unable to match the need of appetite’ (ibid., p. 188 emphasis added). Her elliptical language plays with signification. She seems perfectly aware what her ‘appetite’ craves and yet toys with the reality of those ‘chunks of *something*’. As a cannibal scene, this is a contradictory one. The excitement is encouraged but also refused. The reader is compelled to acknowledge feelings of disappointment and frustration at the lack of exposition, while the narrator feels completion: after the consumption of the body, ‘There really was nothing left for me to say’ (ibid., p. 188).

The suggestion here is that eating, specifically cannibalistic eating, supersedes language: it is the final exchange after which language becomes fragmented, or is not invested with the primacy of communication: it is redundant. Indeed, Kear points out that incorporation, the absorption and merging that occurs in cannibalism, ‘does not attempt restoration of the original meaning of words but destroys their capacity for figuration’ (Kear 1997, p. 257). Kear goes on to explain:

In order to hide the problem, the subject swallows the object and the words associated with it. As a consequence, the experience becomes unnameable – because the words capable of acknowledging loss and expressing desire have themselves been subjected to repression (ibid., p. 258).

This swallowing of words is evident in Katherine's account of her cannibalism, of her elision of its description. The description of her actions after she has consumed part of the body of 'the businessma[n]' (*Carnivore*, p. 188) (his occupation replaces his name) focuses on her appropriation of his belongings, his objects of exchange within the masculine economy of possession and consumption.²²³ She relates: 'I got up and brushed my teeth using his toothbrush. This disgusted me, but I found my delicacy hypocritical[;]...his soap...his towel...his money' (ibid. p. 188) are all used by her just as she has used his body as food. Katherine has consumed him and so appropriated his self and can thus make use of all he possessed. This appropriation, bordering on metaphoric/metonymic assimilation, that is to say the possession of things standing in for the possession of the person, is articulated rather than the act of eating.

If cannibalism is linked to the redundancy of language, it is interesting that it spawns so many narratives.²²⁴ Cannibalism is related to the fantasy of complete interaction and understanding, which language is incapable of representing. It is a way of broaching the unspeakable. Patrick Süskind's narrator in *Perfume* describes

²²³ Cixous's masculine economy emphasises what Chris Foss describes as 'the appropriating logic of phallogocentrism' (Foss 2003, p. 150), that of 'taking over' as opposed to the female economy of 'taking in' (ibid., p. 149).

²²⁴ W. Arens, in exasperation, explains: 'I can only plead that it would be impossible to examine each and every instance of reported cannibalism, since the unvarnished implication of the literature is that the act is or has been a cultural universal' (Arens 1979, p. 139). He thus implies that the amount of reported cases dilutes the credibility of all of the literature. However, it is interesting that there is a vast amount of documentation on this unspeakable topic. Arens attempts to explode the myth of cannibalism arguing that it is used to Other and that there is no convincing evidence to prove its actual performance. Arens's position is opposed in texts such as *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* and Frank Lestringant's *Cannibals*. Lestringant goes as far as to brand Arens as a 'sensation-hungry journalist' (Lestringant 1997, p. 6)

the inherent gap between the signifier and the signified. Grenouille has another more visceral way of understanding the world: through smell, and so ‘the poverty of language [was] enough for the lad Grenouille to doubt that language made any sense at all’ (*Perfume*, p. 27).²²⁵ Grenouille is able to incorporate the objects he smells ‘impregnating himself’ (*ibid.*, p. 25), rather than objectifying and naming his world through language: ‘He drank in the aroma, he drowned in it, impregnating himself through his innermost pores, until he became [in this case] wood himself’ (*ibid.*, p. 25). While absorbing the thing itself he ejects language: ‘he gagged up the word ‘wood’. He vomited the word up’ (*ibid.*, p. 26). He devours what he smells, rejecting the symbolic need to label and classify and instead fills up on these scents and bypasses the ‘grotesque incongruities between the richness of the world perceivable by smell and the poverty of language’ (*ibid.*, p. 27).

In *Perfume* cannibalistic desire is accompanied by ‘rapture’ (*Perfume*, p. 262), a trance wherein language is swept away. The cannibal scene in *Perfume* is also Grenouille’s suicide. He drenches himself in the intoxicating smell that he has created from harvesting the scent of the most attractive women and allows himself to be devoured. The prelude to this cannibalism is detailed in an orgy which is the result of exposure to Grenouille’s manufactured scent. The urge to destroy his body is described in ‘a thousand-voiced scream’ (*ibid.*, p. 242), yet the uncontrollable attraction and wish to possess, ultimately enacted in cannibalism, first brings mute

²²⁵ Grenouille is French for frog, and the stereotypical French cuisine dictates that frog is a national favourite, thus this protagonist, like Ambrosio before him, is represented as edible, consumable, as in *cuisse de grenouille* – frogs’ legs.

‘subservience’ (ibid., p. 245), uncoordinated and futile action but no speech. The resulting orgy, the outlet secondary to cannibalism, is a regression of language filling the air with ‘loud cries, grunts and moans’ (ibid., p. 248), of which the participants remain tight lipped: they ‘would have called it [the orgy] a miracle afterwards if they had taken the notion to speak of it at all – which was not the case’ (ibid., p. 244). The cannibal scene in this text signals the end of the narrative after which the participants are ‘shy about looking up and gazing into one another’s eyes’ (ibid., p. 263), never mind opening and using the organ that they so vigorously stuffed: ‘Someone would belch a bit’, after the act, but ‘no one said a word’ (ibid., p. 263).

As has been noted in the previous chapter, cannibalism’s unspeakable nature is present in the eighteenth century and before. In the sixteenth century Montaigne suggests that ‘our eyes are bigger than our bellies, our curiosity more than we can stomach. We grasp at everything but clasp nothing but wind’ (Montaigne 1580, p. 229). We are attracted to the notion of cannibalism but balk at the graphic depiction, and this continues through to contemporary texts. There are pertinent examples from the nineteenth century. The cannibal scene in Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897) is hedged and undermined by Lessingham’s self-doubt. Again it is unspeakable. He witnesses ‘orgies of nameless horrors’; his time spent captured is described as ‘two unspeakable months’ (*The Beetle*, p. 243).²²⁶ Consequently, when he does begin to detail the events he seems to have witnessed ‘through the distorted glamour of a nightmare’

²²⁶ Of course the connotations are sexual here with reference to ‘orgies’, but this sexual aspect is articulated. This is not the ‘nameless horro[r]’. Herbert Ward’s *Five Years with the Congo Cannibals* (1890), Malchow notes, writes of ‘perpetual cannibal “orgies”’ (Malchow 1996, p. 51) and so the taboo of promiscuous intimacy articulated in ‘orgy’ allows this term to act synonymously for both sex and cannibalism as they do in *Perfume*.

(ibid., p. 242) he becomes increasingly uncertain. He begins, ‘unless I was the victim of some extraordinary species of double sight’ (ibid., p. 243), and continues to question the reliability of his observation, hedging each detail: ‘unless I err...unless, as I have repeatedly observed, the whole was nothing but a dream...if I could believe the evidence of my own eyes’ (ibid., p. 244). Of course Lessingham does this in part because he is loath to admit the reality of his emasculation by this woman, but also because her actions, her cannibalism, here in a more symbolic scene, the consumption of ‘the ashes of the victim’ (ibid., p. 244), cannot be articulated. In *Dracula* (1897) Stoker’s Jonathan Harker is unmanned in a similar way, and for him ‘nothing can be more dreadful than those awful women, who were – who *are* – waiting to suck my blood’ (*Dracula*, p. 72). Even the Count himself is a preferable adversary to those hungry women. Their appetite is satisfied off-stage: Dracula gives them their snack of a child in a bag and they ‘disappeared, and with them the dreadful bag’ (ibid., p. 71). Their meal cannot be represented.²²⁷

H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), a text that works through the bestial and cannibalistic potential in the human animal and the monstrous

²²⁷ There is a sticky question here, that of the relationship between cannibalism and vampirism. ‘Cannibal’ is defined by the OED to be ‘blood-thirsty’ (<http://dictionary.oed.com/>) and *Deuteronomy* 12:23 ordains that ‘Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh’ (*Dracula*, p. 178, n.1). Again this is echoed in *Genesis* 9:4 which commands that ‘But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat’ (*Holy Bible*, p. 6). Clearly there is a cross over between the actions of drinking and eating; indeed the biblical passages suggest that cannibalism, the eating of life, can only be accomplished through eating the blood since that is where the essence or power of the person resides. Renfield’s zoophagia or ‘(life-eating)’ (*Dracula*, p. 103) is a consumption of the flesh in order to get at the blood since he repeats ‘The blood is the life! the blood is the life!’ (ibid., p. 178). The question as to whether the vampiric appetite is cannibalistic persists since the vampire is no longer exactly human and thus not of the same species. What is clear, however, is that the body of the victim of vampirism becomes food for the vampire, just as it becomes food for the cannibal, and it is the body as food that is also under discussion.

potential that evolutionary theory opens for the human species, begins with the unspeakable threat of cannibalism. The narrative begins with ‘the thing we all had in mind’, the ‘strange things’ that cannot be spoken of and so are said ‘with our eyes’ (*Moreau*, p. 8). What evades articulation here is not only the horror of cannibalism but also the grotesque position of the human body becoming food. This is succinctly expressed in *Robinson Crusoe* when Crusoe posits that being reduced to food is

the worst kind of destruction [describing it as] – viz. that of falling into the hands of cannibals and savages, who would have seized on me with the same view as I would on a goat or a turtle; and have thought it no more crime to kill and devour me than I did of a pigeon or a curlew (*Robinson Crusoe*, p. 301-2).

The terror is of becoming food and being aligned with the edible. Rather than woman being, as Weininger urges, ‘an undifferentiated part of nature’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 223)²²⁸ it is the male who degenerates (because this would be a terrible fear for him but is already the fate of woman). He becomes like the ‘goat’, ‘turtle’, ‘pigeon’ and ‘curlew’. He is forced to surrender his individuality and all of the glory with which this endows him, to the appetite of the cannibal. For Wells, cannibalism is a symptom or sign of human ‘degradation’²²⁹ or ‘liability to evolutionary regression’ (Hurley 1996, p. 58).²³⁰ This fear is acted out repeatedly within the text, from Prendick hunted

²²⁸ Dijkstra glosses Weininger here.

²²⁹ ‘Degradation’ is Wells’ term for Darwin’s degeneration.

²³⁰ In *The Gothic Body* Kelly Hurley engages with themes of evolution theory in texts at the end of the nineteenth century. In these texts the recurring fear is that the human is no longer at the top of the food chain, and thus the evolutionary ladder. In ‘A Vision of the Past’, Wells recounts a nightmare of a super-evolved ‘three-eyed amphibian’ which the dreamer ‘only awakens just in time to avoid being eaten’ (Hurley 1996, p. 58) by. ‘The Empire of the Ants’ has a ‘new species of super intelligent ants’ (ibid., p. 59) who ‘colonize, killing (and eating) the human beings who block its way’ (ibid., p. 60). The self explanatory ‘The Man-Eating Tree’ and ‘The American’s Tale’ where Alabama Joe is ‘torn and crushed into pulp by the great jagged teeth of the man-eatin’ plant’ (Conan Doyle in ibid, p. 61) show that humans can be superseded by plant life as well as animal. In her summation of these themes

by the Hog Man shortly after landing on the island and the unforgettable ‘terror of that chase’ (*Moreau*, p. 47), to the ‘imperfectly human’ beasts who do possess ‘humanity’ but also desire to eat one another, unsuccessfully suppressing their desire to be eagerly ‘thrusting thirsty teeth into [each others’] neck’ (*ibid.*, p. 94). Prendick cannot bring himself to acknowledge his transformation, that he had become, the Beast Folk observe, ‘as we are’ (*ibid.*, p. 119); he simply states ‘I, too, must have undergone strange changes’ (*ibid.*, p. 124). He needs to become part of the group because of his need to eat and his fear of being eaten. He approaches them ‘almost apologetically’ stating ‘I want food’ (*ibid.*, p. 117). With all of these allusions and half confessions his story is in the end judged to be unbelievable and it is thought ‘that solitude and danger had made me mad’ (*ibid.*, p. 129). He then determines that he will refrain from ‘telling my adventures further, and professed to recall nothing that had happened to me between the loss of the *Lady Vain* and the time I was picked up again’ (*ibid.*, p. 129); thus, his period of amnesia includes his narrow escape from becoming his companion’s meal at the beginning of the text.²³¹ Yet, as is the over-

Hurley explains that ‘the especial terror ascribed to these monstrous non-human species...is that they prey on human flesh’ (*ibid.*, p. 61).

²³¹ The case in 1884 of *Regina v. Dudley and Stephens* or ‘The Case of the *Mignonette*’, as it was known, was notorious at this time and may well have influenced how cannibals and cannibalism was represented in texts. See A. W. Brian Simpson’s *Cannibalism and the Common Law* for further detailed explication of this case and its legal impact. Tom Dudley and Edwin Stephens killed and ate their Mate Richard Parker (Edmund James Brooks was also charged). Each of the three remaining crew members wrote an account of the ‘horrid deed’ (Dudley’s account in Simpson 1994, p. 67). Like Prendick, they create a narrative of these events and their narratives were notorious in the nineteenth century. These accounts are considered, however, to be ‘letters of explanation, not confessions’ (*ibid.*, p. 72) since they were following the ‘old custom of the sea’ (*ibid.*, p. 271) and did not consider there to be any wrongdoing. Stephens’s account describes how ‘the longing for his blood came upon us’ (in *ibid.*, p. 64) after a long period of starvation, subsisting previously on turtle meat. Dudley tells of how they ‘feasted off the body’ (in *ibid.*, p. 68) and that they ‘cut out his heart and liver, which they ate’ (*ibid.*, p. 68) as part of what Dudley later calls ‘that gastly [sic] meal’ the consumption of which made them ‘like mad wolfs [sic]’ (in *ibid.*, p. 68). Brooks however, notes that ‘we ate a good deal – I should think quite half – of the body...I can say that we partook of it with quite as much relish as ordinary

riding paradox of the unspeakable, he creates a memoir, a 'narrative' from what would be the 'blank' (ibid., p. 5) in his mind.

The Hunger's Sarah is opened to the potential and complete satisfaction that food can offer in this Gothicised exploration of the love story. Sarah, after being infected with Miriam's cannibalistic blood, sumptuously describes the food to which she is accustomed, but is unable to represent what she now wants to eat: the human body. With this renewed 'added intensity' (*The Hunger*, p. 245) of appetite even 'McDonald's...[smells] of heaven' (ibid., p. 243): the burgers are 'rich with flavour, aromatic...gourmet junk food' (ibid., p. 244). Her obsessive attraction to food is clear in her descriptions: 'She could taste a peach breaking in her mouth, its juicy sweetness filling her with delight' (ibid., p. 246). However, her desire for the body is something she cannot accept. It remains a blank in her refusal to articulate the source of her real hunger which is 'still with her' (ibid., p. 245), not satiated by this food that she must imminently evacuate from her newly changing body. Her cannibalistic desire is elided. She feels 'a strange aggressive anger, an eagerness to get in there and – ' (ibid., p. 247); whatever she is compelled to do is unspeakable: blank ' – ',²³² 'How could she possibly, even for an instant, have wanted to kill innocent human

food' (in ibid., p. 68). The seamen were 'quite confident that, once the magistrates heard the evidence they would [dismiss the charges]' (ibid., p. 74); However, this was not the case. Although the jury struggled to come to a verdict and pronounced a 'special' verdict that, '*the killing of Richard Parker by Dudley and Stephens be felony and murder the jurors are ignorant, and pray advice of the Court thereupon*' (in ibid., p. 309 original emphasis), the judges, 'a bench of five judges had ruled that one must not kill one's shipmates in order to eat them, however hungry one might be' (ibid., p. ix). This case became a legal precedent and 'is a central authority on what is called "the defence of necessity"' (ibid., p. x). This 'problem of reconciling the instinct for survival with a moral code that respects the sanctity of human life' (ibid., p. x) is, in part, the problem that Wells engages with. He does this in relation to the first episode on the boat and in relation to science and vivisection later in the text.

²³² The dash ' - ' is an essential element in the idiolect of cannibalism.

beings, to crack them open like – like she had imagined’ (ibid., p. 248); again the dash, the absence of articulation or blocking of thought, and the abandoned search for metaphor ‘like – like’, represents her cannibalistic desire; what she cannot bring herself to say is that she wants to crack them open like nuts, or lobster, like food. She finds the men around her suddenly ‘curiously interesting...so helpless’ (ibid., p. 252), so appetising; she is no longer ‘victimized by her femininity’ (ibid., p. 54) as her lover Tom sees her; instead, men are now vulnerable. However, Herb, her doorman, is like ‘rotting meat’ (ibid., p. 252), while Tom, her lover, is much more appetising because the romantic attraction she felt for him is transposed onto her new hunger. He emits ‘a strong – quite wonderful – smell. It wasn’t food but at the same time it was’ (ibid., p. 252-3).

Delighting in the Cannibal Scene

[N]othing is more natural than eating each other...how could they resist the pleasure of eating their neighbours? (Verne 1876, p. 42).²³³

The fantasy of cannibalism has an interesting and politically charged history.²³⁴

Involving notions of empire, identity, savagery, ritual, and survival, the cannibal is an

²³³ Jules Verne (1828-1905) discusses Maori cannibalism in *Among the Cannibals*, his fictional account of the exploration of New Zealand by Lord Glenarvan and John Mangles.

²³⁴ Arens’s *The Man-Eating Myth* suggests that cannibalism was a European or Western invention to excuse their extreme reaction to peoples inhabiting the lands that they colonised or wished to colonise. This argument is contested on many grounds, but has also been associated with arguments which refute the existence of concentration camps and the Holocaust. See the ‘Introduction’ (p. 10-11) in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen for a full discussion of this debate.

uncomfortable icon. Yet, its symbolic and almost sacred status is attractive. Cannibalism is a representation of the un-representable. It ‘was embraced with little supporting data’ (*Carnivore*, p. 184)²³⁵ because it conveys something that cannot otherwise be articulated. Hulme writes of the paradox that ‘Even the most fervent believer in cannibal rites would have to acknowledge that cannibalism is now primarily a linguistic phenomenon, a trope of exceptional power’ (Hulme 1998, p. 4), a trope that the Gothic attempts to actualise but, in the moment of the act, is still unable to represent.

Cannibalism grounds this exceptional power in the body where it becomes a language-in-itself. It salves the desperate and physical loneliness of embodiment. The ability to completely possess and absorb another body in cannibalism brings with it a sense of comfort rather than the repulsion and horror that one might expect. This comfort is depicted in the cannibal scene in *Perfume* when the cannibals feel relief and joy once their particular hunger is satisfied: ‘Though the meal lay rather heavy on their stomachs, their hearts were definitely light. All of a sudden there were delightful, bright flutterings in their dark souls’ (*Perfume*, p. 263). This cannibal scene can be compared with Jules Verne’s New Zealand cannibal scene, where the appetite for human flesh is ghoulishly condemned as bestial but is also sensationalised and relished. These two scenes convey a community amongst cannibals that extends beyond the scope of representation. They are together ‘chiefs, warriors, old men, women, and children, without distinction of age or sex’ (Verne

²³⁵ This reference by Katherine nods to Arens’s scepticism.

1876, p. 103). The cannibals become one with each other while making the body they consume one with them.²³⁶ The unifying principle that cannibalism symbolises and enacts is described by Sir Thomas Browne whose ‘poetic conceit’ Jonathan Sawday considers to be ‘verging on the grotesque’ (Sawday 1995, p. 24); however, note how Browne attempts to distance himself from the conceit and emphasise the literal aspect of this unification: ‘not only metaphorically, but literally true...not in an allegory, but a positive truth’ he writes in *Religio Medici* (1642):

All flesh is grasse, is not only metaphorically, but literally true; for all those creatures we behold are but herbs of the fields, digested into flesh in them, or more remotely carnified in ourselves. Nay, further, we are what we all abhor, anthropophagi and cannibals, devourers not only of men, but of ourselves; and that not in allegory, but a positive truth: for all this mass of flesh which we behold came in at our mouths; this frame we look upon hath been upon our trenchers; in brief, we have devoured ourselves (Religio Medici, p. 74-5).

Sawday goes on to discuss Montaigne’s cannibals and the circularity of cannibalism, suggesting that ‘Flesh is united to flesh in an unbroken round of eating and being eaten’ (Sawday 1995, p. 24). In his essay ‘On the Cannibals’, Montaigne writes: ‘These sinews...this flesh and these veins – poor fools that you are – are your very own; you do not realize that they still contain the very substance of the limbs of your forebears: savour them well, for you will find that they taste of your very own flesh!’

²³⁶ Verne writes: ‘the New Zealanders pretend that, in devouring a dead enemy, they destroy his spiritual part. They thus inherit his soul, his strength, and his valour. These dwell particularly in the brain, which always figures as the dish of honour in their festivals’ (Verne 1876, p. 42). This is later echoed by Freud who describes in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-3) that: ‘The violent primal father...[is the] envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind’s earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed’ (Freud [1912-3], p. 142).

(Montaigne [1580], p. 239). Again, the notion that cannibalism is a metaphorical action of assimilation is rejected in favour of the actual ‘substance of the limbs of your forebears’ and the ‘taste of your very own flesh!’. This removal of the objectification of the metaphor demolishes the boundaries that language establishes. The hierarchy of naming and classifying ‘chiefs, warriors, old men, women, and children’ collapses because ‘*All flesh is grasse*’.

Verne’s cannibal scene and its parallel in *Perfume* depict a ‘cannibal feast’ (Hulme 1998, p. 24):

The sacrifice completed, the whole mass of natives, chiefs, warriors, old men, women, and children, without distinction of age or sex, seized with a bestial fury, threw themselves upon the inanimate remains of the victims. In less time than it takes to write it, the still smoking bodies were torn to pieces, divided, dismembered, cut not only into morsels, but into crumbs. Of the two hundred Maoris present at the sacrifice, each had a share of the human flesh. They disputed and fought over the least scrap. The drops of hot blood bespattered these horrible creatures. It was the delirium and the rage of tigers, infuriated over their prey (Verne 1876, p. 103).

Importantly, the body becomes food ‘In less time than it takes to write it’. And those who witness the scene are later described as ‘dumb with horror’ (ibid., p. 104). Language is an unnecessary barrier. This act seems ceremonious, since it is given the noun ‘sacrifice’, yet there is no reported spoken rite. Instead the people become animalistic and almost devolved to the point before language, described as uttering ‘cries which still issued from throats gorged with flesh’ (ibid., p. 104). These ‘horrible creatures’ experience a ‘bestial fury’, ‘delirium’ and the ‘rage of tigers’. Later the cannibals are described as having ‘nothing human left in them’ (ibid., p. 104), other, of course, than what they have eaten. They are ‘infuriated’, taken over by their passion, by their physical sensations to tear their ‘victim’ and ‘cut [it] not only

into morsels, but into crumbs’, showered, rather dramatically, by the ‘drops of hot blood’. This passion of hunger also overwhelms the cannibals in *Perfume*:

They tore away his clothes, his hair, his skin from his body, they plucked him, they drove their claws and teeth into his flesh, they attacked him like hyenas. But the human body is tough and not easily dismembered...In very short order, the angel was divided into thirty pieces, and every animal in the pack snatched a piece for itself, and then, driven by voluptuous lust, dropped back to devour it...When the cannibals found their way back together after disposing of their meal, no one said a word...to eat a human being? They would never, so they thought, have been capable of anything that horrible...Though the meal lay rather heavy on their stomachs, their hearts were definitely light (*Perfume*, p. 263).²³⁷

‘[T]o eat a human being? They would never, so they thought, have been capable of anything that horrible’, is the initial reaction of these cannibals. This is the rational proclamation against cannibalism. The tacit commandment of prohibition can be heard behind these thoughts.²³⁸ However, this act is not ‘horrible’; it is ‘delightful’ (ibid., p. 263). These people have acted out-with the rules set down by civilization and the transgression of these proclaimed taboos brings them joy. In order to make sense of this act, the narrator/observer’s language becomes elevated and removes the

²³⁷ This mob cannibalism may have resonances with Burke’s description of the “‘cannibal appetites” of the sansculottes’ (in Malchow 1996, p. 61) in the French Revolution. This mob cannibalism is described by Malchow as having its ‘roots in a repressed middle class’s need to identify social classes...particularly, below themselves, as animalistic and appetite-ridden’ (ibid., p. 61). However, there is a delicacy and gourmandism to the mob in *Perfume* which endows them with some of the qualities the middle classes would define themselves through. Another depiction of mob cannibalism is shown in Eugène Sue’s *Wandering Jew* (1844-45) describing a Paris mob: ‘Each individual, yielding to a sanguinary frenzy, came in turn to strike his blow, or to tear off his morsel of flesh. Women – yes, women – mothers! – came to spend their rage on this mutilated form’ (in Malchow 1996, p. 69). Again there is the equalizing of the mob, in this case with the sexes. There is of course the unforgettable scene of mob violence and metaphorical cannibalism in Lewis’s *The Monk* where the Prioress is reduced to ‘a mass of flesh’ (*The Monk*, p. 356).

²³⁸ As Skubal notes ‘our greatest taboo is itself unmentioned...the Judeo-Christian commandments likewise make no mention of it. No where is it written: “Thou shalt not eat thy friend nor thy foe”’ (Skubal 2002, p. 135).

human. The ‘animal’ devours the ‘angel’. The unthinkable question ‘to eat a human being?’ is avoided because they were dealing with ‘a ghost or an angel or some other supernatural being’ and not a ‘little man in the blue frock coat’ (ibid., p. 261-2).

Mythologizing the Cannibal

The cannibal scene in *Winter Hunger* is also unspeakable. It can be represented only by turning it into a myth. The ‘reality’ of Diana’s actions, her insanity and subsequent preparing, cooking and eating of their son Cam, are incomprehensible for Alan.²³⁹ Alan would ‘invent some story later’ so that this couple would ‘become part of their [the Indians’] mythology’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 164).²⁴⁰ Alan’s narratives are built in retrospect. In the present, language is contentious. Alan has a constant internal monologue, fuelled by his fantasy, which refuses any exchange. His speech to his wife becomes ‘yammer[ing]’ (ibid., p. 162) and nervous, while Diana’s language becomes ‘cool and mocking as an echo’ (ibid., p. 161) or a threatening silence. Alan’s discovery of the feast is narrated in a free indirect style which conveys his confusion of signification. Alan finds ‘a little mess of underdone stew...Reluctantly he poked at the soggy mass with the tip of his - finger? Little bones, joined together, like. Like.

²³⁹ Maternal cannibalism (like that which Diana enacts) is explored in relation to fairy tales (specifically ‘Little Red Riding Hood’, ‘Hansel and Gretel’ and ‘Snow White’) in Tracy Willard’s discussion in her essay ‘Tales at the Borders: Fairy Tales and Maternal Cannibalism’. Willard stresses that female cannibalism within fairy tales is almost exclusively aimed at children. This fairy tale tradition provides a narrative structure which allows Alan to comprehend Diana’s actions, however, this collapses when she turns her hunger on him.

²⁴⁰ The text refers to these indigenous people as ‘Indians’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 164).

Fingers? A pudgy little hand? *Cam?*' (ibid., p. 163).²⁴¹ The confrontation with the body as food forces the viewer to replace the devoured body with his or her own. They change places, just as Alan has already confused the position that he and his son hold. '[T]he tip of his – finger?' creates a doubling of the subject of this phrase and, importantly, what creates this ambiguity is, yet again, the dash, the gap in signification, the pause which indicates recognition and then the process of denial, exclusion or repression. The finger is what 'poked at the mass', but also part of the mass that is poked. The finger becomes both father and son and points to their joined fate as food in Diana's belly. The 'poverty of language' (*Perfume*, p. 27) is displayed in its inability to describe the body as food. It is caught in the ambiguity and repetition of likeness, the redundancy of metaphor and similitude: 'Little bones, joined together, like. Like. Fingers?'. The 'underdone stew' cannot be both food and his son '*Cam?*'. This is incomprehensible unless Alan situates Diana's action within a linguistic framework. He can blame her actions on her 'susceptibility to new ideas, the windigo myth' and then repress them: 'they'd never speak of' it, their 'secret' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 164).²⁴²

²⁴¹ This is reminiscent of the delicacy described by one of Verne's New Zealand cannibals: 'the hand of a little boy! I think I could crunch up the little bones with great pleasure!' (Verne 1876, p. 45).

²⁴² The description of a windigo by Steve Pitt in a Canadian magazine which features Canadian history is as follows: 'What is a Windigo? It is something like a werewolf on steroids. It stands more than six metres tall in its bare feet, looks like a walking corpse and smells like rotting meat. It has long, stringy hair and a heart of ice. Sometimes a Windigo breathes fire. It can talk, but mostly it hisses and howls. Windigos can fly on the winds of a blizzard or walk across water without sinking. They are stronger than a grizzly bear and run faster than any human being, which is bad news because human flesh happens to be a Windigo's favourite food. A Windigo's appetite is insatiable. Indeed, the more it eats, the hungrier it gets...The Canadian Encyclopedia describes Windigo spirit as a "spirit...that takes possession of vulnerable persons and causes them to engage in various antisocial behaviours, most notably cannibalism"' (Pitt 2007, etext). It would seem that *Winter Hunger* is a rewriting of Major H. Long's 1823 account of cannibalism at Wâdigó Lake where 'there remained but one women, who had subsisted on the bodies of her own husband and children, whom she had killed for this purpose. She

There is a clear divide between Alan's words and Diana's materiality and body; as Creed writes in her gloss of Kristeva, 'An opposition is drawn between impure fertile (female) body and pure speech associated with the symbolic (male) body' (Creed 1993, p. 25). There is a tidy narrative circularity to Alan's translation of events, of the 'symmetry of the feeder becoming food', of the son's 'intimacy of being back in Diana's body' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 164). This order is imposed by Alan's desire for clarity or by the symbolic order's inherent wish to make the material symbolic, to attach meaning to the incomprehensible pre-symbolic chora which welcomes undifferentiation and the chaos of un-individuation.²⁴³ Alan makes logical sense of the mythically charged consumption of flesh; he re-writes it into his own narrative while Diana, inaccessible to readers, *experiences* cannibalism. Creed suggests that

What is most interesting about the mythological figure of woman as the source of all life is that, within patriarchal signifying practices...she is reconstructed and re-presented as a *negative* figure...the all-incorporating black hole which threatens to reabsorb what it once birthed' (Creed 1993, p. 27 original emphasis).²⁴⁴

was afterwards met by another party of Indians, who, sharing in the common belief that those who have once fed on human flesh, always hunger for it, put an end to her existence' (Long in *ibid.*).

²⁴³ See Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* and Creed 1993, pp. 12-15 where Kristeva's theories are discussed.

²⁴⁴ Diana represents this fear of the archaic mother. She represents 'a notion of the feminine which does not depend for its definition on a concept of the masculine' (Creed 1993, p. 27-8). Instead, Alan is the masculine which is defined against the feminine. 'He would go back and feed off Diana's sweetness for the rest of his life...His craziness had been after all merely a nervous and misguided manifestation of his great need of her nourishing presence' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 154). Alan is dependent upon 'his great need of her [Diana's, or the mother's] nourishing presence'. He can represent this need and its refusal as the cause of 'his craziness'. Her power is turned into a negative because it is to blame for Alan's sickness, his consequent leaving and the resulting cannibalism of Cam. However, Tracy's sardonic tone allows the reader to become aware of the gap between 'reality' within the text and Alan's interpretation of this within a misogynistic narrative tradition. What Tracy presents us with is a reversal of traditional psychoanalytic theory. Rather than the female being a castrated male, or a man with a womb (a wo-man) here Alan is without a womb – he represents the lack. According to Creed, the 'womb signifies "fullness" or "emptiness"' (Creed 1993, p. 27) and Alan, unable to 'draw in'

Alan enacts this reconstruction and re-presentation in his myth. The fantasies that he harbours, detailed below, become literalised, but he has to control them by projecting his own wish for incorporation onto the voracious mother who may not share his psychological drive.²⁴⁵ This is particularly interesting in view of Tracy's ironic take on psychoanalysis. The reinterpretation of the male fear of castration is a disempowerment of the female. He fears his own inadequacy in the face of Diana's success and her ability to produce both words in her book and their son, so the mother is re-inscribed as cannibal or a 'mad wife from a Victorian attic' that the protective father must control and who is incapable of 'taking care of *his* son' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 163, my emphasis) because she has an overwhelming desire to eat him. Alan takes up an old patriarchal story to order these events. This narrative represents what he should feel as a patriarch, yet he still has the overriding (death) wish to be absorbed back into the mother.

(*Winter Hunger*, p. 101), as is the perceived action of the womb, or the vagina, is forever empty. Desiring a pseudo pregnancy in cannibalism, since he is tied to the childish image of the stomach as the origination of life ("impregnated" through the mouth...the baby grows in her stomach, from which it is also born' (Creed 1993, p. 19)) Alan wishes to 'swallow' Diana whole and hold her there in a reflection of his own desire to return to the safety of the mother's body.

²⁴⁵ His cannibalistic imaginings surface when he is exposed to the windigo myth and hears Naomi, his wife's friend, proclaim 'I have hunger...for the meat and bones of my dear pretty friend Diana' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 62). As has been discussed, this myth gives Alan a narrative through which he can understand his disturbing longings. His reaction to Naomi's hunger is indignation, 'she had no right to harbor [sic] an idea so intimate nor detonate it in his own head' (ibid., p. 68). Only Alan should have the right to consume his wife: 'Diana was *his* wife. And while he was very glad not to have eaten her himself in a rash moment, he was damned if anybody was going to commit that kind of gastronomical rape in his stead' (ibid., p. 147). The idea is not detonated, but is latched onto as an explanation for his desire to be consumed. Alan is jealous of Diana's affection for Naomi and sees her not only as a threat, but also his wife's 'lost mother-figure' (ibid., p. 78). He projects this own maternal lack onto his wife, but the image of the mother is an emasculating one for Alan. His unconscious wish to be entombed within his wife's body, or return to the womb is transferred onto a wish to entomb, thus he usurps Naomi's place – since the mother-figure represents the safety of the womb – Alan's fears turn this protection into envagination.

To protect himself from his feelings of deficiency, Alan assumes the glamour of the supernatural. To hide his impotence he envisions the potent sexualised and animalistically lustful werewolf: ‘Sometimes he imagined that he was cutting yet another set of teeth, a long wolfish set, and that his horrid thoughts would break out on his face in hairy patches for the whole town to see’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 92). The ‘long’ teeth promise penetration and his ‘hairy patches’ show off his sexual potency. His wish to devour is a wish to prove his masculinity and his inherent superiority, and also to hide his secret fantasies of feminisation. Although Alan’s imaginings revolve around the body, they involve an impossible body: ‘he saw himself shapechanging into a werewolf father and tearing at the child’s flesh’ (ibid., p. 99). He detaches from the reality of his body, instead ‘feeling hairily lean-shanked and loping, reminding himself not to let his tongue loll out between his great white teeth. “Alan the wolfman,” he said to himself, “Alan the midnight shadow, making the blackness blacker”’ (ibid., p. 106). He creates a story for himself but remains detached, watching, naming himself in the third person and creating an unbelievable ‘mythology’ (ibid., p. 164) which allows him to be more than he is. He refuses the windigo myth in favour of the werewolf because ‘his own cultural background inclined him to see himself more as a werewolf’ (ibid., p. 107). He consciously chooses the narrative to explain his behaviour, suggesting that he is not ill or deluded, but playing.²⁴⁶ Even when he returns to the leftovers that Diana has discarded of her

²⁴⁶ Using the definition of fantasy discussed by Maria Torok, it is possible to differentiate between Alan’s *imaginative* cannibalism, that is to say his creation of himself as a werewolf for example, and his ‘Unbidden’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 165) *fantasy* of being cannibalised. Imagination is, Torok suggests, authored by the ego while in fantasy the ego observes its ‘own vision like a spectator’ (Abraham & Torok 1994, p. 35). Alan constructs his cannibalism by creating conscious images of himself, and making correlative associations between Cam and pork, for instance, to mask his real fantasy, his

stewed son, Alan detaches himself through his imagination in order to distance him mentally from reality and physicality. To do this he evokes the form of the fairy tale. In doing this he not only artificially builds a predictable and thus safe structure with a happy ending around the chaos that he experiences, but he also returns himself to the position of a child, listening passively to the tale told to him. He begins the tale: ‘there was once a white man and his wife who came for a winter and were taken by the spirit of the windigo; they ate their child’ (ibid., p. 164). Although he desires to be distanced from what is happening, again in the third person, he tells the story in his head of what he imagines will be told about *him*. He writes himself into the starring role, just as the text has done thus far. It is Alan and ‘his wife’; it is ‘they’ who ‘ate their child’ when it is actually Diana alone who is at the centre of this tale; Alan is a peripheral victim in *her* myth.

Alan’s fantasy of cannibalism is refused because ‘in Wino Day...things were hideously real’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 135). *Winter Hunger*, as will become clear, confronts the contemporary ‘growing European demands for stories of savage cannibalism’ (Hulme 1998, p. 25), and presents the reader with the unspeakable reality of eating bodies and the myth of ‘total incorporation’ (ibid., p. 15). Yet, although this reality is presented, it is filtered through Alan’s perspective and he hides from details he cannot stomach. *Winter Hunger*, and the other cannibal scenes discussed in the above texts, indulge the appetite for cannibalism and tales of the

unconscious desire to be consumed. This unconscious desire erupts in the form of dreams or intrusive images. This intrusion is symptomatic of fantasy, according to Torok: ‘two of the criteria of fantasy: being an intrusion and a misfit’ (ibid., p. 34).

body, yet also convey that what is attractive about the theme or symbol of cannibalism is not the act at all but the fantasy of the act, the idea of impossible closeness and a transcendence from the body which traps and isolates. The male characters undertake Abraham and Torok's *incorporation*, that is filling the mouth with 'an imaginary thing' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 129), because of their failed *introjection* or transforming 'The absence of objects and the empty mouth...into words' (ibid., p. 128). The act of cannibalism remains unspeakable. Its myth glosses over its articulation.

Chapter 5: Male Fantasies of Cannibalism: 'A Touch of Fantastic Vanity'

To fill a Gap
Insert the Thing that caused it –
Block it up
With Other – and 'twill yawn the more –
You cannot solder an Abyss
With Air
(Dickinson [1862], p. 266)

Go ahead...try a little cannibal fantasy (*Winter Hunger*, p. 132).

Where the eighteenth-century gluttonous anti-hero of the Gothic text (Ambrosio and Joshua for example) is consumed by bodily desire, the male cannibal in these later texts detaches from his body, willing its transcendence by inhabiting his psychological desire. The gluttonous villain was 'all mouth' (*TNM*, p. 77) but here the Gothic male protagonist is victim as well as villain and he fears the mouth upon which he once depended for satisfaction. The desire and fear is internalised and in these later texts 'we need to look within to understand why the cannibal scene means so much to us' (Hulme 1998, p. 5) as Hulme writes. Yet, this insight only reveals the greatest terror: that 'Fear is of a void' (Jackson 2000, p. 109). Looking at the cannibal

scene described in *Perfume*, *Winter Hunger*, *Red Dragon*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, and to some extent *Expensive People*, the sense of this void and the disassociation from the body as part of this terror of emptiness becomes clear. The ways in which the Gothic text precipitates the need to 'look within' and the resulting uncovering of emptiness will be examined in relation to male cannibalistic fantasy. The void that men represent taps into a fundamental male fear: inadequacy. An example of this fear and its projection onto women is clear in Weininger. Weininger, in 1904, writes: 'Women have no existence and no essence; they are not, they are nothing. Mankind occurs as male or female, as something or nothing' (Weininger [1904], p. 286). Men fear and abhor emptiness but the men in the texts under discussion here are all vacuous. The female cannibal is the 'pure direct self' (Kilgour 1998, p. 243),²⁴⁷ the 'thing-in-itself' that Weininger aggressively denies woman has any 'relation to' (Weininger [1904], p. 286). She is not the inferior who 'wanted to usurp part of man's place in creation...going against nature, becoming mock-men themselves, caricatures of masculinity, viragoes' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 211). Rather these men, fixated in fantasy and unable to act, are caricatures of masculinity, hiding behind its exaggerated performance the secret desire for feminisation or infantilisation. These men fantasise about cannibalism because they are unable to accept their wish to *be* cannibalised. Abraham and Torok see 'all fantasies' to 'indicate the refusal to introject and the denial of a gap' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 128), and these men refuse to accept their lack, loss or gap. Abraham and Torok go on to suggest that 'Because our mouth is unable to say certain words and unable to formulate certain sentences, we

²⁴⁷ Kilgour refers to the cannibal in general in this phrase.

fantasize...that we are actually taking into our mouth the unnamable' (ibid., p. 128). These men cannot articulate their particular desire, in the most part for the mother, and so fantasise, as shall be shown, that they are cannibalising her.

The male characters - *Winter Hunger's* Alan, Jame Gumb from *The Silence of the Lambs*, Francis Dolarhyde from *Red Dragon*, *Perfume's* Grenouille and *Expensive People's* Richard - all harbour fantasies of cannibalism, but these are never realised.²⁴⁸ Alan imagines himself to be the monstrous hunter while his wife makes a stew of their son; Gumb's cannibalism is metaphorical as he appropriates the identities of the women he kills and amalgamates them into a Frankensteinian version of his mother; Dolarhyde bites, but it is his alter ego the Red Dragon who metaphorically consumes the lives of his victims; Grenouille absorbs the essence of women but it is his body that is devoured; and Richard's overwhelming desire to get closer to his mother causes him to kill her and then to incorporate and encrypt her within him as if he has consumed her. The image of *The Silence of the Lambs'* serial killer flaying women to make a new body exemplifies the void that these men

²⁴⁸ Fantasy signals that there is something missing. The urge to consume or possess is driven by the urge to define the self. 'I' want. Yet, this urge only causes the Self to collapse. The men in these texts are peripheral: Alan is marginal and marked by his incompetence; Gumb is taken over by his obsession with his mother to the point that he has erased his own identity; Dolarhyde has objectified and dehumanised himself by internalising the abuse he suffered as a child; and Grenouille is invisible, lacking an essential self because he has no body odour. They all represent an absence that they try to fill with women, but it is their fantasy of women that they feed on and that they would become. The gap they nurture swallows them. It is the female cannibal, as shall be shown below, which literally eats the body, while these male characters cover a wish to be cannibalised with fantasies of cannibalism. Alison Light describes the function of fantasies to be 'the explorations and productions of desires which may be in excess of the socially possible or acceptable' (in Kaplan 1986, p. 125-6). In other words, Gothic desires: excessive and taboo; their desire is to possess or recreate the maternal and in acting out these fantasies they become murderous or themselves victims. Their fantasies are the insubstantial substitutes for something that cannot be attained, something wanted or lacked.

represent.²⁴⁹ His identity is lost in a fantasy of femininity. He is a gap covered over with stolen skin. He constructs his fantasy of woman and attempts to possess it, animate it. In a grotesque simulacrum, instead of becoming the woman of his dreams, he is reduced to something monstrous and less than human. His identity is erased. The men who would be dominant are consumed by their own fantasy of consumption and possession, of cannibalism.

The Vagina Dentata in Red Dragon and Winter Hunger

The recurring fantasy of the *vagina dentata* is one which views this as an orifice of incorporation and as such, argues Creed, 'is related to the subject's infantile memories of its early relation with the mother and the subsequent fear of its identity being swallowed up by the mother' (Creed 1993, p. 109). However the characters under discussion here are drawn towards this consuming orifice and recreate it, or fantasise about it, because they were abandoned or rejected by their mothers. Each of the characters, Alan, Jame Gumb, Francis Dolarhyde, Grenouille and Richard, has an unsatisfying relationship with his mother. The mother is ideally a figure that represents nurture, safety and food, and the absence of this figure or the acknowledgement that she represents rejection, danger, and lack, results in a voracious and cannibalistic desire to consume.²⁵⁰ The mother, or rather the maternal,

²⁴⁹ Although Hannibal Lecter is the iconic cannibal from Harris' series of texts, his cannibalism recedes, as the focus upon his relationship with Starling and his psychotherapy is fore-grounded. His discussion of other killings is more significant than his own. In later texts such as *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising*, Lecter becomes a parody of himself and no longer as engaging.

²⁵⁰ Sarah Sceats explains that food represents an exchange of worth: 'Food is a currency of love and desire, a medium of expression and communication' (Sceats 2000, p. 11) and these men use the body

then becomes an idealised and monstrous figure. Sarah Sceats explains why food and the mother are interconnected:

For many people the connection of food with love centres on the mother, as a rule the most important figure in an infant's world, able to give or withhold everything that sustains, nourishes, fulfils, completes...Along with nutrition she feeds her child love, resentment, encouragement or fear' (Sceats 2000, p. 11).

These men are incomplete because their mothers have fed them with loss. These characters are still 'hungry for the food they didn't get as children' (Epstein in Sceats 2000, p. 89). In Dolarhyde's case this is literal food because, with his cleft palate, he was unable to suck, but for the other characters food, or fantasies of cannibalism, substitutes for maternal affection. Bunny Epstein, in an analysis of compulsive eaters, explains that they 'stuff [their] anger down [their] throat[s]' (in *ibid.*, p. 89). The male protagonists of all these texts are fixated by unobtainable fantasies of themselves and of the mother. Gumb wants to become envaginated and return to the maternal body; Dolarhyde is driven to kill his idealised visions of motherhood in order to 'absorb [them] that way, engulf [them], become more than he is' through dominating them and keeping with him the 'ingested' 'skin and hair' (*Dragon*, p. 138); Grenouille rejects and is rejected by his mother and so he replaces the safety he should have felt in the womb with his cave, his recreation of this place where he is as safe 'as if in his own grave. Never in his life had he felt so secure, certainly not in his mother's belly' (*Perfume*, p. 126-7) and his subsequent displacement haunts him; Richard kills his mother to possess her; and Alan's impotent mother is replaced by his fantasies of the

as food to express their wish to enter into the system of exchange that has been denied them by their mothers.

all-powerful and castrating maternal in his idealisation of his wife Diana. In each case, however, the male character is not sustained, nourished, fulfilled or complete; the need that their mothers have denied them eats at their sense of self, leaving an unfillable lack. For Alan and Dolarhyde this voracious hunger takes the form of the *vagina dentata*.

With this need for the feminine comes a hatred of its power and what was once idealised becomes monstrous.²⁵¹ Female monstrosity is embodied in obsessively recurring images of the insatiable, devouring *vagina dentata*. In Thomas Harris's text, *Red Dragon*, there is an insidious disgust of women. This repulsion is portrayed through the grotesque representation of the female body, specifically the genitals.²⁵² This abjection of the female body is directly connected to Dolarhyde who is rejected because he has a cleft palate and described as a 'Cunt Face' (*Dragon*, p. 235). He is feminised by the perception that he wears female genitals on his face, made more horrific because of the context which depicts the female body to be something both gruesome and ridiculous. Indeed 'Cunt Face' is more than a description; it is his identity, his name: 'I just know a big boy like you can say your name. Say it for me', requests his grandmother, and because 'The big boys had helped him with this...he

²⁵¹ This extreme counterbalance is explained by Dijkstra who writes that 'Reality rarely fits into the dualistic mold [sic]' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 210), and so this conception of women represents them as inherently fantastical figures either 'beast of the Apocalypse...[or] household nun' (ibid., p. 210-11). This dualism is present in *Clarissa* when Belford comments, 'to me it is evident that as a neat and clean woman must be an angel of a creature, so a sluttish one is the impurest [sic] animal in nature' (*Clarissa*, p. 1388).

²⁵² There are frequent incidental episodes of misogyny; for example, Will Graham overhears two 'conventioners' who, disturbingly like the Tooth Fairy (the name given to Dolarhyde before he demands to be known as Red Dragon), describe their sexual desire as wanting to 'tear off a piece of that' (*Red Dragon*, p. 19). The conventioners joke: 'Say, you know why a woman has legs?' 'Why?' 'So she won't leave a trail like a snail' (ibid., p. 19).

collected himself. “Cunt Face,” he said’ (ibid., p. 235). The emasculation and feminisation of the young Dolarhyde continues when his Grandmother repeatedly threatens to castrate him with ‘sewing scissors’; ‘Do you want me to cut it off?’ (ibid., p. 241) she demands.²⁵³ Dolarhyde’s subsequent obsession with biting and killing young mothers reflects his idealisation and fear of women as well as his compensation for the rejection by his own mother who ‘screamed’ (ibid., p. 232) when she saw his face. By raping the corpses of these mothers he asserts the masculinity that his overbearing maternal figure, his grandmother, took from him. The grandmother, with her distinctive teeth and propensity to bite (grandmother ‘looked sunken and strange without her teeth’ that broke the skin of Marian – Dolarhyde’s mother – causing her ‘arm [to be] bandaged too; she had been bitten’ (ibid., p. 253) and obviously badly) embodies the *vagina dentata*, a powerful and fearful cannibalistic force that Dolarhyde assimilates.

The *vagina dentata*, Creed notes, is ‘not discussed by Freud...[;] the father is constructed as the castrator’ (Creed 1993, p. 109) in traditional psychoanalysis. The mother’s body inspires the fear of castration because the ‘woman’s genitals appear castrated’ (ibid., p. 110) in the Freudian view, and so, argues Creed, her genitals are impotent (ibid., p. 109).²⁵⁴ This is not the case in *Red Dragon*. The Great Red Dragon is actually a monstrous incarnation of the dread and fear Dolarhyde feels toward his

²⁵³ His grandmother also encourages him to urinate sitting down, clearly a sign of emasculation for Harris: ‘you can sit on it [the toilet] like a good boy. You don’t have to stand up’ she tells him and he ‘finds the toilet in the dark and sits down on it like a good boy’ (*Red Dragon*, p. 242).

²⁵⁴ This impotence or ‘passive perspective’ (Creed 1993, p. 109) that is forced upon the woman is a point emphasised and disputed by Creed in her text *The Monstrous Feminine*.

castrating maternal figure: grandmother. Her power is incorporated within Dolarhyde in the guise of the Red Dragon who uses his teeth, her dentures, as his symbol of the *vagina dentata*. When Dolarhyde is taken over by the Red Dragon, grandmother's voice speaks the abusive taunts of the playground, '*I WILL NAME YOU. YOU ARE CUNT FACE. SAY IT*' (ibid., p. 331), and also re-enacts the castration terror, commanding Dolarhyde to '*HOLD YOURSELF BETWEEN THE TEETH*' threatening '*YOU KNOW HOW THEY CAN SNAP*' (ibid., p. 331) and '*I'LL TEAR IT OFF*' (ibid., p. 332). There is something incestuous about placing the penis between the teeth of grandmother and this mingling of power and sex reoccurs when Dolarhyde rapes the dead women onto whom he has projected his maternal fantasies; his attacks are described as 'strikes at a maternal figure' (ibid., p. 186). The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that this verb, 'to strike', holds connotations that suggest transformation as well as destruction. To strike is also 'to mould', to 'fashion' and thus to construct, but also to 'cancel or expunge'.²⁵⁵ To strike suggests to create a border but also to recreate borders. Dolarhyde both externalises his desire for the maternal by recreating her and also absorbs this transformed figure. The female is a castrating figure; she is the powerful force and so Dolarhyde needs to assimilate her power, to control it, to master it so that it no longer threatens him.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary Online* on <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>

²⁵⁶ The Freudian *fort/da* game could be applied to Dolarhyde's repetition of and fantasies of dominating his perverse maternal relationship.

Harris creates a self consciously Freudian scene when the young Dolarhyde and his friend play at ‘I’ll show you mine if you show me yours’. Dolarhyde ‘showed her’ (*Dragon*, p. 246) and

She reciprocated by showing him her own, standing with her pilled cotton underwear around her ankles. As he squatted on his heels to see, a headless chicken flapped around the corner, travelling on its back, flapping up the dust. The hobbled girl hopped backward as it spattered blood on her feet and legs (*ibid.*, p. 246-7).

In this episode Dolarhyde looks past the genitals to a horrific image of castration: the headless chicken; as Freud notes, ‘to decapitate = to castrate’ (Freud in Creed 1993, p. 110). The female genitals do not represent an image of a castrated body, but threaten to castrate. After this, in order to reinforce the idea of the female castrator Harris has the grandmother tell Dolarhyde: ‘Go to your room and take your trousers off and wait’ (*Dragon*, p. 247). He must wait until she comes back with her sewing scissors, the weapon with which she has already threatened castration.²⁵⁷ Dolarhyde associates his genitals with the decapitated chicken and there is thus a correlation between the presence of the female and the threat of castration. In order to take control of his fear he first attacks chickens and cuts off their heads or throttles them, all the while aware that his own penis is miraculously still there. This connection is explicit when Harris writes, ‘Sometimes when he held himself he thought he felt a blink’ (*ibid.*, p. 250) like the eye of the chicken. Indeed, having Dolarhyde witness prepubescent genitals, rather than his grandmother’s for example, is again suggestive of the castrating potential of the vagina. Creed argues that ‘(seeing a young girl’s

²⁵⁷ Scissors themselves do not act in a phallic way; they do not penetrate, and instead the blades come together and cut off, not into.

genital lips) seems most likely to lead to a fear of women as incorporator/castrator' because the genital lips are 'clearly formed' (Creed 1993, p. 114) and not hidden by hair. These fantasies about the penis and the threat of the castrating woman are, as highlighted by Creed,²⁵⁸ absent from Freud's discussion and so although Harris establishes what may appear to be a Freudian scene, he goes on to question Freud's arguments.²⁵⁹ And so Dolarhyde later progresses to murdering maternal figures in order to both master and assimilate their power; Dolarhyde uses a symbol of the *vagina dentata* in order to devour his victims.

Dolarhyde's alter ego, Red Dragon, finds identity, strength and menace in the mouth. Kear writes that 'the mouth [is] figured as an orifice of domination that devours the external and destroys its otherness' (Kear 1997, p. 254) and Dolarhyde – through the Red Dragon – uses the mouth, the site and origin of his feelings of

²⁵⁸ Creed discusses Freud's 'Some psychical consequences' and observes that 'Freud omitted to describe the boy's immediate feelings about/towards his penis...one would expect that he would...construct a phantasy surrounding it' (Creed 1993, p. 115), but, according to Creed, Freud does not discuss this phantasy.

²⁵⁹ Dolarhyde provides an interesting and complex take on the Oedipal conflict. Kear explains that 'the meta-narrative of the Oedipus complex demands that orality will be substituted with genitality, hunger will be subsumed into desire, and incorporation will be succeeded by identification' (Kear 1997, p. 254). In the character of Dolarhyde orality and genitality are conflated, the mouth and the female genitals are one and the same, and both are horrific and destructive. Desire is expressed through biting, a precursor to the satisfaction of hunger and, further, Dolarhyde's identification, perverse and malformed, is with his castrating grandmother and not with his father. Dolarhyde is left living with the monstrous incorporation of his grandmother into his psyche. Kear goes on to explicate the Oedipal triangle as follows: 'the boy's object cathexis is the mother, he is forced to abandon it because of the threat of castration embodied by the rival father. The ensuing identification with the father ensures that it is merely the object not the aim that is subjected to repression' (ibid., p. 259). However, because of Dolarhyde's lack of father and the substitution of grandmother, his cathexis is not abandoned and what is repressed is his identity as man, the identity embodied by the father. Dolarhyde is desperate to affirm his heterosexuality, his desire is still for the other, but the object of his desire is his mother. He does not see 'his female victims as avatars of the Woman' (Williams 1999, p. 137) as Nicholas Williams suggests. He takes time to select his maternal object so that she fits his particular image (or imago). Tellingly he can only rape these mother figures once they are dead and their eyes are replaced by shards of mirror. They are mute and reflect his own constructed image.

inadequacy, to empower him and destroy the barrier erected between his own otherness and the external in a way he can control. As the Dragon, the mouth also destroys sexual difference, allowing Dolarhyde to become androgynous: both female with his *vagina dentata* located in his mouth and male with his overdeveloped physique. In this joining he moves towards the Blakeian ideal where ‘young men will regain their polymorphous perverse sexuality’ (Hayes 2004, p. 141) in androgyny. According to Michael Sloan ‘A central component of Blake’s mythology is his “idea of humanity as originally and ultimately androgynous” in which he “depicts a fallen state in which sexual division, lapse of unity between male and female as one being, is the prototype of division within the self, between self and other, and between humanity and God”’ (Sloan 2007, etext).²⁶⁰ This androgyny is the ‘Becoming’ (*Dragon*, p. 204)²⁶¹ in which the Red Dragon is continually engaged. Dolarhyde’s Dragon mouth/*vagina dentata* allows him an identity. When he writes to Lecter for mentorship, he signs the note then ‘bit hard down on it...the signature was enclosed in an oval bite mark; his notary seal, an imprimatur flecked with old blood’ (ibid., p. 114); when he reveals himself to Lounds he covers his face from the nose up with ‘a stocking mask’ so that the image that identifies him is his teeth ‘all jags and stains’ (ibid., p. 202); but most importantly ‘He likes to bite’ (ibid., p. 31) his victims. The

²⁶⁰ Blake, however, embodies this androgynous figure as a young man. This quotation is taken from the article ‘Gothicism and Romanticism in William Blake’ on <<http://www.lilithgallery.com/arhistory/romanticism/WilliamBlake-GothicRomanticism.html>>.

²⁶¹ Nietzsche’s describes becoming as ‘the voluptuousness of making things become, i.e., of creating and annihilating. Becoming, felt and interpreted from within, would be continual creating by someone dissatisfied...whose only means of overcoming the torment of being is constant transformation and exchange’ (Nietzsche [1885], p. 81). This description of dissatisfaction and compensation is embodied by the Red Dragon and Dolarhyde.

Red Dragon will ‘bite you to death’ (ibid., p. 388), Dolarhyde fears (once the alter ego has split into two distinct identities), ‘the Great Red Dragon would take an hour spitting her down the stairs...She could hope to die quickly, hope that in His rage He would quickly bite deep enough’ (ibid., p. 337). In this cannibalistic activity the great masculine entity gains His (capitalised in the text to add patriarchal authority) power from Dolarhyde’s grandmother’s teeth. He has her dentures remodelled to fit his ‘distorted gums’ (ibid., p. 264). Grandmother defines herself by her ‘spiky smile’; she accepts it as her ‘beauty spot’ or ‘charming trademark’ and has dentures made by a dentist who ‘could reproduce a patient’s natural teeth exactly’ (ibid., p. 244-5).

All that is terrifying and threatening emanates from the mouth. It is his disfigured mouth that makes Dolarhyde an outcast, and causes others to call him names and make him rename himself. This is also caused in part because of his difficulty with pronunciation. Only in the guise of the Dragon with his grandmother’s dentures can he ‘fly on sibilants and fricatives’ (*Dragon*, p. 204); at all other times he covers his mouth with his hands and avoids ‘s’ sounds because he must ‘occlude his nostrils with his upper lip’ (ibid., p. 329) to speak. It is his grandmother’s teeth which snap the castrating threats: he ‘bit Lounds’s lips off’ (ibid., p. 205), and it is the teeth that mark his victims with bites.²⁶² In order to contain and control the Dragon, Dolarhyde finds Blake’s original painting of *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in the Sun* and eats it, ‘stuffing...the watercolour in his mouth’ (ibid., p. 355) until he ‘had the Dragon in his belly’ (ibid., p. 369); he ingests it to absorb its power.

²⁶² He does not cannibalise Lounds’s lips but pointedly ‘spat them on the floor’ (*Dragon*, p. 205) because he does not want to incorporate any aspect of this person he despises.

However, this only connects them again, showing the incorporative power of the mouth: ‘*WE CAN BE ONE AGAIN. DO YOU FEEL ME INSIDE YOU?*’ (ibid., p. 373) the Dragon asks.²⁶³

Dolarhyde is compelled to fill himself with a powerful image, to encrypt his grandmother within him, because he has no inherent self. She becomes his ego ideal whilst also being his internalised parent, his superego. Melanie Klein notes that ‘the beginning of the Oedipus conflict takes the form of a dread of being devoured and destroyed...[and] The super-ego becomes something which bites, devours and cuts’ (Klein in Skubal 2002, p. 109).²⁶⁴ The Gothic text has externalised and literalised this psychological schema, and the grandmother becomes the Red Dragon: devouring, biting and cutting. A description of Dolarhyde’s true emptiness is conveyed by Reba, his blind lover. With her enhanced sensitivity she senses the Dolarhyde that he tries to hide from other people and feels ‘the place where he [Dolarhyde] had stood was emptier than empty, a black hole swallowing everything and emanating nothing’ (*Dragon*, p. 307). The vast emptiness within Dolarhyde is hungry. He is driven to consume the lives of his maternal figures because, in part, he was unable to gain sustenance from his mother as a baby. His cleft palate meant ‘he could not feed. With his palate cleft, he could not suck’ (ibid., p. 231). He was starving to death; all that

²⁶³ However, there is still the sense that Dolarhyde has absorbed the dragon, he is still the subject incorporating and not as Williams argues, that Dolarhyde ‘finds himself incorporated in the body of a larger text that retains the name *Red Dragon*’ (Williams 1999, p. 151). Dolarhyde is appropriating the qualities of Blake’s narrative into the myth he has made for himself.

²⁶⁴ Whilst also being his internalised parent, his superego. Melanie Klein notes that ‘the beginning of the Oedipus conflict takes the form of a dread of being devoured and destroyed...[and] The super-ego becomes something which bites, devours and cuts’ (Klein in Skubal, p. 109).

prevented his survival was the deformation of his mouth, he ‘would live if he ate’ (ibid., p. 231); so, this initial mortal hunger stays with him and he must cannibalise the nurturing potential of the maternal to live, to satisfy his remembered hunger. But he does this symbolically. He does bite off chunks, but he does not devour her body. He records the life, the perfect fantasy of family life, on film and then he preserves this fantasy within a great ledger, ‘Fastened in the margins, ragged bites of scalp trailed their tails of hair’ (ibid., p. 111). He attempts to immortalise, to make himself, like Alan does, into a myth in his own ‘copperplate script not unlike William Blake’s own handwriting’ (ibid., p. 111), and even this is an imitation ‘not unlike’ Blake. The Dragon takes into Him the power of the maternal to ‘become Other and More than a man’ (ibid., p. 201), and he is also partly constructed from his encryption of his castrating grandmother. This powerful androgynous identity is created because his grandmother has forever deprived him of the desired identity of man. He is not man, but neither is he woman; thus, although androgyny is a mixture of both sexes, Dolarhyde is actually neither. What causes the split from the Dragon is Dolarhyde’s sexual contact with Reba, but more specifically that ‘She said “man”’ (ibid., p. 336); she, by defining him, gives him this prized identity, and pulls him out of the undifferentiation of the ‘black hole swallowing everything’.

Winter Hunger plays with the indulgence of male anxiety, culminating in the monstrous image of the ‘fang-fringed orifice’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 165): the *vagina dentata*. Stratton argues that ‘The fetishistic fear which underlies this irrational fear is of women’s consumption of the phallus, giving them the power men desire’ (Stratton

2001, p. 150) and in this text, what appears to be a fetishised ‘irrational fear’ is enacted.²⁶⁵ Diana already possesses what are considered phallic attributes - she is the one who is productive and successful, self assured - and so Alan’s fantasies of cannibalising her are also fantasies of appropriating the power he considers has been usurped from him; however, Diana becomes more than the phallic woman, she becomes the all consuming *vagina dentata*. The comic slant of Tracy’s text, however, makes this trump fear predictable. A young man jealous of his wife’s mastery of the symbolic icon – writing – and female power – childbirth – is noted to have an ineffectual mother.²⁶⁶ These characteristics combine to create the set of embedded assumptions that suggest Freudian neurosis. Tracy produces a character fixated by his own fantasy of returning to the stomach, rather than the womb, of the archaic mother.²⁶⁷ Alan craves maternal protection, but in order to evade this fantasy, Alan projects his longings onto lust, or hunger. It is clear from the brief mention of his mother in the text that he is dissatisfied with her: ‘he didn’t feel very personal about his mother. She was a pale figure in his life...no real protection against the explosion

²⁶⁵ The male fantasy of the *vagina dentata* is, Stratton contends, ‘located in the association between eating and sexual intercourse’ (Stratton 2001, p. 148), and this is clearly delineated in *Winter Hunger*. Stratton explains this association linguistically by citing Peter Mason’s explication of Levi-Strauss’s argument that ‘the terms “eat” and “copulate” are identical in a very large number of languages’ (in Stratton 2001, p. 148); however, the Gothic literalisation of this idea detaches it from male power and the *vagina dentata*, although still futilely eroticised by men, becomes a voracious animalistic maw.

²⁶⁶ ‘Diana was working on a book’ and Alan points out that ‘with her bare B.A., was compiling data on women’s indigenous art for a book that looked as though it might sell, while he, Alan, king and breadwinner, was still trapped in his dissertation’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 12).

²⁶⁷ Barbara Creed explains the ‘common misunderstanding that many children have about birth, that is, that the mother is somehow “impregnated” through the mouth – she may eat a special food – and the baby grows in her stomach, from which it is also born’ (Creed 1993, p. 19). (If he swallows her he can hold her in the stomach in a false pregnancy). Creed describes the archaic mother: ‘The archaic mother is the parthenogenetic mother, the mother as primordial abyss, the point of origin and of end’ (ibid., p. 17).

of his father' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 44). He wants intimacy on an extreme level because he 'didn't feel very personal about his mother' (ibid., p. 44). She seems a distant figure, in denial about her own relationship. The father seems equally vague, but threatening since Alan needed 'protection' from him. This lack of protection leads to his dreams of enclosure and preservation detailed below, and his desire to inhabit the body of his wife, physically. Within her flesh, he can be safe.²⁶⁸ Alan's reaction to the relationship his wife and son enjoy is one of envy:

The mother-child bond almost visibly thickened. Alan reminded himself over and over that this was not a proper cause of grievance against Cam, that he himself would revel in attention like that, was starved for it in fact (ibid., p. 79).

It is explicitly stated that Alan 'was starved for' maternal attention; he feels that 'he *should* be in Cam's place, that Cam was in his place' (ibid., p. 79 original emphasis). It is Alan who feels like 'putting his thumb in his mouth and wrapping up in the nearest blanket' (ibid., p. 51). This maternal starvation leads directly into his imaginary cannibalism and his fantasy of being cannibalised.

Vagina Envy in *Winter Hunger*: 'his penis was constructed on the wrong principle'

Diana represents the success and freedom that Alan cannot obtain. Maria Torok lists the symptoms of the lack associated with penis envy as 'Jealousy and demands, spite and despair, inhibition and anxiety, admiration and idealization, inner emptiness and

²⁶⁸ Perhaps this communicates a childhood fear that as a child he wished to curl into his mother to hide from the danger his father represented.

depression' (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 41), symptoms that Alan exhibits. His idealization of his wife denies her faults and her identity. Diana is 'madly attractive' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 23); she is the 'impeccable, lovely Diana, his queen and huntress forever, though virgin no longer' (ibid., p. 12). So absorbed by the 'phantom Diana' (ibid., p. 96) that he imagines, Alan is blind to her transformation into the windigo. He controls her in his imagination because she evades him in reality. While envisioning the absorption of Diana, he again asserts the female body's superiority. 'He felt for the first time that his penis was constructed on the wrong principle...it only put out, and he needed something that would draw in' (ibid., p. 101). His frustration is clear, as is his vagina envy. He feels that the vagina has the power to 'draw in', to absorb and contain. His phallic teeth are impotent compared to the clutching cervical muscles or the 'pink breast [which] changed to clutching fingers that nearly had *him*' (ibid., p. 108) in his dreams. The 'usual' principle of male/female is reversed.

In order to counteract female dominance, Alan fantasises about making Diana his slave in her 'properly feminine role' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 143). He daydreams of 'Diana wearing nothing but a silver slave bracelet, that bracelet, on her upper arm and kneeling in mock obeisance at his naked feet' (ibid., p. 81). His wish to consume her is a desire to control and dominate her, to make her 'a doll-woman who could be dandled and petted and reduced to utter dependency before he swallowed her' (ibid., p. 94). Of course, this misogyny only masks his worship of the female. Diana is his 'huntress' (ibid., p. 12); he evokes the mythic goddess Diana and his blustering and hollow imaginings of her submission to him are laughable in relation to his idealization of her. Diana the goddess is tellingly 'Associated with

fertility' and 'represented with many breasts' (*Brewer's Dictionary*, p. 296).²⁶⁹ His suffocating desired domination of his wife is a conscious expression of his threatened masculinity, but also masks his wish to be sublimated. 'After a few days...his fantasies had shifted' from seeing himself 'not falling but diving into Diana's belly' towards 'a desire to have Diana inside his own belly' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 93). Still this cannibalism is distasteful and so in his now solicited, controlled imaginings, 'He held at bay a tiny suspicion that the bridge between the two fantasies might have been some vision of organ-eating that his mind had censored' (*ibid.*, p. 93). His cannibalistic fantasies are more acceptably active and masculine, yet his 'appetite for a closer union with his wife' (*ibid.*, p. 93) contains within it his feelings of lack. It is Diana who accomplishes while Alan, in his mind the 'king and breadwinner' (*ibid.*, p. 12), is impotent.²⁷⁰ 'She got things done. Everything she touched turned to satisfaction' (*ibid.*, p. 33 original emphasis). She can satisfy herself, fill the lack that leaves him ravenous and cannibalistic. His self-doubts and competitiveness with his wife leave him dissatisfied and this lack is transformed into an unattainable cannibalistic hunger. The Gothic transfers these psychological obsessions and materialises them. Alan desires the 'swallowed alive' (*ibid.*, p. 93) and whole vision of cannibalism as an initiation into increased intimacy, a phantom pregnancy, but what he gets is bodily cannibalism. His unconscious wish to be cannibalised is consummated when 'he felt the first big tooth catch in his backbone' (*ibid.*, p. 165).

²⁶⁹ *Brewer's Dictionary* notes a fable associated with the goddess Diana which communicates the moral that 'self-interest blinds the eyes' (*Brewer's*, p. 297), and it is perhaps no coincidence that Alan's worship of his idealised Diana and his self absorption blinds him to the truth of Diana the woman, her loneliness, her successes and her possession by the windigo.

²⁷⁰ Alan does exhibit some irony when crowning himself 'king' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 12).

Filling the Void

Mr Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, [because] there was something wanting in him...he was hollow at the core...I saw him open his mouth wide – it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him (*Heart of Darkness*, p. 95-7).

According to William Blake's mythology, 'hell [or Ulro is], the lowest state, or limit, of bleak rationality, tyranny, static negation, and isolated Selfhood' (*NA* Vol.2, p. 79).²⁷¹ These male characters embody the 'static negation' that is so horrific and all that can save them is a 'Resurrection to Unity' (*ibid.*, p. 79) in their fantasies of cannibalism and being cannibalised; they can become something other through their connection with the maternal and this contradicts the misogynistic view Weininger espouses, which is that 'woman could only gain existence through her self-submergence in the male' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 221), that 'Man contains woman...Man not only forms himself, but woman also – a far easier matter' (Weininger [1904], p. 295). What men fear most in themselves is projected on to women.²⁷² It is then externalised so that it can safely be Othered and abjected; however, the Gothic returns it. Grenouille represents a void. Unlike the gluttonous villains of the eighteenth century from which his characterisation was drawn,²⁷³ Grenouille not only craves the

²⁷¹ This 'isolated Selfhood' (*NA* Vol.2, p. 79) is exactly what people like Weininger so prized and conferred upon the male. It is thus interesting that Blake considered it to be so hellish. *NA* refers to *Norton Anthology of Literature*.

²⁷² Weininger argues that 'Woman is nothing but man's expression and projection of his own sexuality. Every man creates himself a woman, in which he embodies himself and his own guilt' (Weininger [1904], p. 300). However, this is man's fantasy of the blank space of woman that they can appropriate, disallowing her subjectivity.

²⁷³ In many ways Grenouille is a re-enactment of the classic eighteenth-century villain. *Perfume* is set in eighteenth-century France where Grenouille stalks virginal women wishing to possess them; but

possession of his female victims, he ‘needed the girls’ (*Perfume*, p. 236) to exist. This need is echoed in *Red Dragon* where his fantasies of the maternal ‘are *what he needs*’ (*Dragon*, p. 292, original emphasis). *Expensive People*’s Richard craves this connection in order to fill the ‘peculiar hollowness inside me’ (*Expensive People*, p. 306). Like Jame Gumb, Richard recreates the maternal body but he does this in his own physique. Nada, Richard’s mother, ‘passed over from being another person into being part of myself...a kind of embryonic creature stuck in my body’ (ibid., p. 111). However, while Richard is subsumed by ‘layers of fat...encircling [his] body’ (ibid., p. 79), Jame stitches himself a new skin, a body suit that he can wear in order to become his mother. Rather than encrypting ‘my mother...not in a womb maybe but a part of my brain’ (ibid., p. 111) as Richard has done, Jame creates a performance of his mother using human skin as costume, and through this impersonation, wraps himself again in his mother’s body. Just as Alan would wallow in Diana’s gut, Grenouille would be cloaked in the scent of the women he kills, the Dragon would recreate himself in that ‘familial union’ (*NA Vol.2*, p. 79) and Gumb would be re-figured in his ‘girl suit’ (*Lambs*, p. 187), so Richard reanimates his mother, or the maternal, in his own body. What connects all of these characters is this desire to be subsumed, to return to the ‘womb-life’ (Royle 2003, p. 142) of in-differentiation from the mother and this is figured in cannibalistic fantasy. The metaphor and fantasy of cannibalism allow them to recreate their identity. It is not, as Weininger asserts,

rather than having a firm foundation of power in wealth or a feudal family economy, that previous tyrants enjoyed, Grenouille’s only power is in his production of consumables. He creates perfumes for women. He is financially dependant upon their whims as he is dependent on their scent physically. Gluttony was the downfall of the eighteenth-century villain whereas Grenouille makes himself the object of desire.

women who represent the 'endless striving of nothing to be something' (Weininger [1904], p. 297) but, in these texts, men.

Like Gumb, who is 'not anything, really, just sort of a total lack' (*Lambs*, p. 197), Grenouille is nothing, 'impalpable, incorporeal, like a ghost' (*Perfume*, p. 204), until he covers himself in the scent and essence of the women he kills. Without this manufactured scent, a blend of the smells taken from his victims, Grenouille is nothing, an 'odourless figure dressed and made up like a man' (ibid., p. 150). A 'normal person' must be 'made...out of him' (ibid., p. 150). He is like the invisible man, wrapt in order to be defined. '[W]hen asked about his motives', the narrator explains, 'His repeated reply was that he had needed the girls and that was why he had slain them'; all he repeats is 'I needed them' (ibid., p. 236). His cannibalism is metaphorical in the sense that he does not eat the flesh of the women he kills; instead, he consumes their scent.

Although *Perfume*, as the title would suggest, is concerned with scent and 'incorporeal odours' (*Perfume*, p.126), the text transforms the body's scent into food and obsessively describes the act of smelling as if it were the act of eating. Baby Grenouille is described as if 'it were using its nose to devour something whole...smelling right through his skin, into his innards...[with his] greedy little nose' (ibid., p. 18). Food is, in one sense, marginalised but is also the predominant metaphor and symbol. Grenouille has no interest in what he eats: his food is scent. He eats indiscriminately; 'He devoured everything' (ibid., p. 39) although 'He required the minimum ration of food' (ibid., p. 21). Indeed, what he eats is disgusting, barely food at all. He eats 'the rottenest vegetables and spoiled meat' (ibid., p. 21), and 'he

wolfed down anything vaguely edible that had crossed his path. He was anything but a gourmet' (ibid., p. 126) because 'He'll gobble up anything' (ibid., p. 8). His taste buds do not revolt against 'a dead raven [which] lay at the mouth of the cave. He ate it' (ibid., p. 137). He sustains his body on the most meagre vegetation, and it is clear that he eats purely as a function of the body, undifferentiated from the evacuation of waste: 'He ripped a few scraps of moss from the stones, choked them down, squatted, shitting as he ate' (ibid., p. 136). He exists in a realm disconnected from his body as 'he had no use for sensual gratification, unless that gratification consisted of pure incorporeal odours' (ibid., p. 126). He is thus somehow 'incorporeal' and 'pure' but also 'devilish' (ibid., p. 15). The food metaphors are employed by the narrator, for whom Grenouille is alien. The narrator can understand him only through the physical and human passion for food. Grenouille himself has no interest in this base and bodily preoccupation; what is described as 'the primitive organ of smell' (ibid., p. 15) is, for Grenouille, the most sophisticated. Eating is a necessity only; his smell is what defines him as cannibalistic: 'Its nose awoke first...like the cups of that small meat-eating plant' (ibid., p. 17). His nose is likened to a carnivorous plant; it is 'meat eating', and what he craves is human.²⁷⁴

Smelling becomes a cannibalistic act, although it does not become murderous until Grenouille needs to preserve the scent. Grenouille lacks a scent of his own and is terrified of 'drowning in himself' (*Perfume*, p. 138) in the 'odourless fog

²⁷⁴ Grenouille does not understand the world first through his mouth and so he is considered monstrous and abject. The baby is abjected as the stereotypically gluttonous Father Terrier felt a 'rush of nausea' and would have 'hurled it [baby Grenouille] like a spider from him' (*Perfume*, p. 18).

trying to suffocate him' (ibid., p. 139).²⁷⁵ He needs to cloak himself in another scent, and he covets the smell of 'humans who inspire love' (ibid., p. 195) because he thinks that is what he lacks.²⁷⁶ In his attempt to escape himself he fills himself up with smells: 'He drank in the aroma, he drowned in it, impregnating himself through his innermost pores, until he became' (ibid., p. 25) the object he smelt. His chameleonic appropriation of the 'scented soul' (ibid., p. 100) only reinforces his own vacuous presence, sucking into himself the life of others. Only through this absorption and consumption can Grenouille exist. However, the abyss of fog is only suppressed and it lurks, threatening him with annihilation as although 'he was masked with the best perfume in the world...beneath his mask there was no face, but only his total odourlessness' (ibid., p. 250).

Grenouille's cannibalistic hunger mimics the omnivorous greed of the eighteenth-century villain, of Vathek's insatiable appetite and Ambrosio's lack, but he does not exist as masculine reassertion or aggrandizement; rather, he only exists because he consumes. Without the absorption of others (women) Grenouille is nothing. The repeated image of the 'tick' (*Perfume*, p. 23) suggests Grenouille's cannibalistic and vampiric but above all his parasitical nature.²⁷⁷ The tick is invisible

²⁷⁵ The fear of being 'drowned' or 'suffocated' in nothingness in the absence of Self is the recurrent fear of male characters in these Gothic texts. All certainties collapse and men flounder, grasping in their desire to own, only to find their possession evaporates. For female characters, used to inhabiting a site of absence, this uncertainty is liberating.

²⁷⁶ This is unfortunately interpreted by Andrew Birkis's screenplay for the 2006 film *Perfume* to suggest that Grenouille killed his first victim by accident and was in fact in love with her and his subsequent search for her scent was, on the one hand a search for female beauty and on the other an attempt to bring this first loved woman back. In both cases, the original text disputes this reading. Beauty and love are considered to be a universal effect of scent.

²⁷⁷ The spider and the carnivorous plant together with the image of the tick secure Grenouille in nature. His abilities are not considered demonic or supernatural. Cannibalism *per se* is not unnatural. Darwin

until it falls onto its prey, latches on and gorges with blood. The tick is a passive hunter. It crawls to a height and then hopefully drops or positions itself, waiting for its prey to brush past. Grenouille is such a parasite. He ‘devoured everything, everything, sucking it up into him’ (ibid., p. 39) until he is that thing. Smelling wood, he stops only when ‘he [was] filled with wood to his ears, as if buried in wood to his neck, as if his stomach, his gorge, his nose were spilling over with wood’ (ibid., p. 26). His consumption is not a display of power, but an act of necessity. When he is buried in his cave, he lives on the smells of which he has taken possession; he ‘wallowed in disgust and loathing, and his hair stood on end at the delicious horror’ (ibid., p. 128) of the captured smells. He re-lives his memories through scent, but this scent also satisfies some hunger since it is ‘delicious’. When the narrator explains that Grenouille began to ‘crave’ that ‘he was addicted’, the manifestation of this hunger is presented in his ‘stomach’, which ‘cramped in tormented expectation’ (ibid., p. 133). Smells are Grenouille’s food and this food is the bodies of young and beautiful women. He consumes their bodies through smell and becomes them, as this linguistic sleight of hand shows, by ‘drinking up her scent, her glorious scent, his scent’ (ibid., p. 227).

Self-Preservation: *Perfume*, *Silence of the Lambs* and *Winter Hunger*

[T]he sense of guilt relating to harm done by cannibalistic and sadistic

talks of cannibalism in animals in the *Voyage of the Beagle*; for example he relates: ‘I found one cannibal scorpion quietly devouring another’ (Darwin [1839], etext). The view of women as ‘in essence, human parasites’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 219) is adopted for the male.

desires...gives rise to the urge to make reparation to the harmed love object, to preserve or revive it (Klein [1950-2] 1998, p. 44).

The male cannibal in these texts enacts a 'sublimation of cannibalism' (Skubal 2002, 105) onto tokens and trophies. He treasures instead the 'preserved...beneficial sign...the instinct/desire to consume the victim is controlled in favor [sic] of a *symbol*' (ibid., p. 105 original emphasis).²⁷⁸ Grenouille wishes to preserve and not destroy what he devours; he is described as a 'collector' (*Perfume*, p. 210); his treasures are truly his 'possession' (ibid., p. 212), and this is an interesting commonality among these male cannibals. They wish to consume women, but their wish is that the essence of these women lives on, improved in them. Grenouille's cannibalism is described: 'He had preserved the best part of her and made it his own' (ibid., p. 47).

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Jame Gumb is symbolically associated with the moth, as Grenouille is the tick. However, rather than the focus on transformation and change, this image can be seen as one of regression and fixation. Maggie Kilgour reads Gumb's appropriation of the female body as 'a literalisation of the marriage ritual in which man and woman become symbolically one flesh' (Kilgour 1998, p. 253); however, Gumb is driven to make 'himself a girl suit out of real girls' (*Lambs*, p. 187) in order to recreate his mother's body and his desire is not the type of union that marriage represents, but an inhabitation. Jame's wish is to be joined again with his mother. Before he kills his victims or rather, 'harvested a hide' (ibid., p. 321), he

²⁷⁸ Skubal discusses the move away from cannibalism to 'head-hunting' which precipitated a 'totemic/taboo system' (Skubal 2002, p. 105).

watches a video of his mother: 'There was Mom...buxom and supple' (ibid., p. 322-3). He imagines the finished suits and comments, 'Mommy's gonna be *so* beautiful' (ibid., p. 324 original emphasis). He is reconstructing his mother's body so that he can put himself inside it again, so that he can return to a union with her rather than the union of marriage. This reading is reinforced by Lecter's interpretation of the presence of the moth chrysalis in the throat of Gumb's victims. Lecter tells Clarice:

A caterpillar becomes a pupa in a chrysalis. Then it emerges, comes out of its secret changing room as the beautiful imago. Do you know what an imago is, Clarice?...An imago is an image of the parent buried in the unconscious from infancy and bound with infantile affect (ibid., p. 186-7).

The chrysalis placed in the throats of the victims is intact; the imago never emerges. It stays 'buried' with the encrypted image of the parent. Gumb creates his own imago, which itself becomes his chrysalis. Kilgour argues that 'the presence of a moth in the mouth of his victims indicates...[that] Buffalo Bill's motives are renewal and change' (Kilgour 1998, p. 253); I would argue that his motives are regression, fixation and preservation. Harris gives the 'old definition' of moth as "anything that gradually, silently eats, consumes, or wastes any other thing." It was a verb for destruction too' (*Lambs*, p. 120), he explains, and this could be applied to Gumb, but, if the moth is an imago made flesh, it could also be applied to Gumb's absent mother. Gumb himself is consumed by the memory of his mother; he is eaten away and wasted because he is fixated on her. He is destroyed. He is described to Lecter in a therapy session as follows: 'He's not anything, really, just sort of a total lack that he wants to fill, and so angry. You always felt the room was a little emptier when he came in' (ibid., p. 197). He is not a fully-fledged individual. Obsessed with change but desiring only to cover his lack, his symbolic use of the moth chrysalis represents arrested development; with

the cocoon in the throat, half-swallowed and half-formed, he creates an image of himself. His wish is to become subsumed within the body from which he never fully separated: his mother.

Gumb attempts to resurrect his mother's body, to create a preserved, hand-picked model, which will endure and accommodate his adult body, and, in a different manner, Grenouille's desire is also that of endurance and preservation. Bizarrely, the analysis of Grenouille, that 'the murderer was not a destructive personality, but rather a careful collector' (*Perfume*, p. 210), describes the cannibalism of both Gumb and Grenouille. They do not adopt the *vagina dentata*, but they do constantly recall images of the womb.²⁷⁹ They wish to incorporate these lives within them, hold them and become one with them. Their fear is the destruction of these women so they must kill them and cannibalise them in order to preserve them. This process, for Grenouille, is one of womb-like containment: 'he would smell at just this one odour, holding it tight, pulling it into himself and preserving it for all time' (*ibid.*, p. 35). His own essence is described as an uncontrollable 'ghastly fog inside, outside, everywhere' (*ibid.*, p. 139), a fog which 'slowly climbed...[until he was] completely wrapped in fog, saturated with fog...The fog was his own odour...[and he] could not smell it'; he was 'suffocat[ing]' and 'drowning in himself' (*ibid.*, p. 138). So, to abate this constant threat of loss and fear of being overwhelmed, a terror that occurred 'in the heart of his fantasies' (*ibid.*, p. 138), Grenouille counters it with reinforced fantasies of enclosure: stoppered bottles, encapsulation and ownership, an eternal

²⁷⁹ The wish is to be held within, to draw in to the self rather than bite and destroy.

pregnancy. Grenouille's seven-year inhabitation of his cave is an enactment of his desire to return to the womb, but a womb in which he controls that he 'took possession of' (ibid., p. 126) and can feel safe in, since, as has been noted above, he did feel 'secure' here but 'certainly not in his mother's belly' (ibid., p. 127). However, 'At the end of the tunnel it was pitch-black night even during the day, it was deathly quiet, and the air he breathed was moist, salty, cool' (ibid., p. 126), and 'he lacked for nothing' (ibid., p. 137), until his odourlessness invades him, filling him with nothing in his 'internal' 'catastrophe' (ibid., p. 138). He strives to create the perfect perfume so that he can become 'scent-logged' (ibid., p. 134), full up and carrying with him his recreation of this womb/cave. His murders show him removing and then burying the hair and clothes, a process called 'digestion' (ibid., p. 217), and a treatment of the body which covers and seals it repeatedly. Ensuring every surface is sealed in fat, he wraps the body in 'oiled linen', leaving 'Not a slit, not a hole, not one bulging pleat' (ibid., p. 225). He strives to leech out the perfume that these bodies carry so that he can apply it to himself to prevent his lack of smell from escaping from inside himself. He then scraps the animal fat from the body and bandages and renders it down to its essence, distilled and concentrated. Lastly, he carefully bottles these drops of oil. Corked, sealed, mine, 'She was perfectly packed' (ibid., p. 225). She lives on and for him.

Grenouille's scent, manufactured to inspire love, has an unfortunate side effect. It also incites the same desire for possession that he experiences. This craving takes the form of hunger and an urge to consume. Grenouille witnesses this when Laure, the ultimate beauty and final ingredient to his perfume, is devoured by onlookers' eyes: 'practically licking that face with their eyes, the way tongues work at

ice-cream, with that typically stupid, single-minded expression on their faces that goes with concentrated licking' (*Perfume*, p. 207). Laure is objectified into a possession; indeed, she is 'The most precious *thing* that Richis [her father] *possessed*' (ibid., p. 207, my emphasis). She becomes something consumable, a food, which stupefies and obsesses those who look at her, a clue to the cannibalistic fate of Grenouille himself. Once in possession of this scent, the essence of this love inspiring beauty, or attractiveness, Grenouille too inspires an overwhelming hunger.

They tore away his clothes, his hair, his skin from his body, they plucked him, they drove their claws and teeth into his flesh, they attacked him like hyenas. But the human body is tough and not easily dismembered, even horses have great difficulty with accomplishing it. And so the flash of knives soon followed, thrusting and slicing...the angel was divided into thirty pieces, and every animal in the pack snatched a piece for itself, and then, driven by voluptuous lust, dropped back to devour it (ibid., p. 262-3).

He is eaten. He is 'divided' and returned to his state of nothingness. The violence with which he is consumed, 'tore...plucked...drove...attacked', contrasts with the dispassionate way that he planned and executed his murders. His true nature is concealed in this insanely attractive scent. His 'evil' (ibid., p. 161) is masked by his disguise as 'the angel'; he is a blank canvas on which he creates his 'picture of absolute beauty' and thus he becomes 'no longer...of human, but of divine origin' (ibid., p. 211). His cannibalism becomes a transcendent immortalisation rather than the complete obliteration of the eighteenth-century cannibalistic villain.

Like Grenouille, Alan is driven by the urge to possess, to consume but also to preserve, and thus his cannibalism is only a fantasy. Instead, he links his wish to eat his wife to 'love...romance' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 165), to 'amorously ramming her down his throat, whole and living' (ibid., p. 94) because he desires to 'put Diana

inside his body without having to devour her' (ibid., p. 95). Alan's desire is to conserve every detail of Diana's body, safe from corruption and decay: 'he wanted all of her...every finger-tipping, eye-lashed, down-haired mote of her body and all her intangible self as well' (ibid., p. 51). He wants to 'make Diana a part of his body' (ibid., p. 100) and he already experiences 'a feeling like ripping flesh', when he 'moved away from her' (ibid., p. 64). Alan fantasises:

could she not be sucked inside out like a pink silk stocking and rearranged under his own skin, stretched so that her fingers fit inside his fingers, her knees cupped into his own, and her nipples charged his from behind like the positive ends of two dry cell batteries? (ibid., p. 101).

Rather than Diana possessing him in this invasion, he assumes ownership of her body in his 'greed to have all of her' (ibid., p. 101), subordinated completely and mutely within him. This is how he wants to eat her: he wants her body indigested, swallowed alive; his is 'a desire to have Diana inside his own belly' (ibid., p. 93) but as an indestructible 'doll-woman' (ibid., p. 94).

The terror of his latent fantasy of absorption is obscured by this conscious desire to devour his wife. He masks his desire to be cannibalised in a desire to be the cannibal. Alan's recurring dreams with motifs of being 'trapped in a snoglobe' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 142), of creatures under the surface, together with his jealous identification with his son Cam, communicate his real wish, which is to return to the womb or rather to be curled inside the body of his wife. The windigo Naomi, with whom he identifies, haunts him in visions:

He would look toward the lake and suddenly imagine her under the ice. Any clear surface, water in the basin, his shaving mirror, might seem to contain her form. Sometimes the picture came into his mind with no external prompting (ibid., p. 72).

The idea that these images occur ‘with no external prompting’ suggests that they communicate a desire that Alan suppresses. The sense that ‘her form’ is contained repeats the womblike obsession Grenouille enacts to preserve and enclose. The safety that Diana symbolises as an archetypal maternal imago creates envy in Alan. ‘Diana was so withdrawn, so closed in upon herself’ (ibid., p. 104); she enjoys the self-sufficiency that the infantile and regressive Alan lacks. Diana is ‘safe inside her packaging’ (ibid., p. 102) while Alan is susceptible to feeling ‘unmasked to his marrow’ (ibid., p. 109), begging ‘Let me in’ (ibid., p. 102). Alan desires and fears being entombed. The notion that his fantasy calls up images of ‘ice’, or ‘any clear surface’, suggests preservation and visibility. Alan wishes to be enclosed but protected and whole. His cannibalistic desires preclude any thoughts of digestion, or chewing. Alan’s relationship to food is an artificial one. He is not a vegetarian. Yet, after going on a hunting expedition, the narrator explains: ‘As for the meat - well, really he didn’t enjoy quite so visceral a connection between the killing and the eating; he preferred his meat to come on little styrofoam or cardboard trays with cellophane over it’ (ibid., p. 49). Again, the idea of containment and preservation is repeated. The flesh is sealed under ‘cellophane’, protected from contamination or from contaminating. Alan’s ideal of cannibalism does not include ‘pain and gastric juices and an ignominious end in the intestines’ (ibid., p. 165). Alan ‘wanted her [Diana] inside’ but also ‘him inside’ (ibid., p. 51) in a clean and unreal way. His fantasy to be inside her is one which does not include the reality, smells and sensations of cannibalism; instead, his fantasies are childlike and comforting: ‘he found himself lusting to hide his face in Diana’s entrails, saw himself sinking through

her skin into a pit of coloured spirals like the beads on his mukluks, but warm and soft and wet, Diana's core' (ibid., pp. 90-1).

Consuming Fantasies

Alan's desires are detached from the realities of the body. Diana's wet and slimy 'entrails' become hard and shiny 'beads' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 90-1); the after thought that they would be 'warm and soft and wet' (ibid., p. 91) acts to temper the unreality of the previous image but maintains a sanitised version of viscera. Alan exists within the 'womb of his mind' (ibid., p. 147). His wish is to transcend matter. In his 'greed to have all of her...he hoped for a magical interpenetration' but 'Flesh met flesh and stopped' (ibid., p. 101). When his wish is granted and he is actually held within the body, the stomach of another, it repels him. Alan falls into the body of his neighbour who is 'cut' (ibid., p. 88), or rather slashed open, by the wife he has just beaten.

He felt too profoundly sick to vomit as he scrubbed and shivered and danced and tried to master his disgust, which at the moment was directed mostly at his own body. He fought an impulse to rip off chunks of his violated flesh and throw them into the dark (*Winter Hunger*, p. 87).

Yet, 'Even in the midst of his passionate revulsion some part of him stepped back briefly and assessed this as the worst moment of his life' (ibid., p. 87). He disconnects and is able to resort to sexual comparison in order to try to maintain his identity: 'It felt like being inside a woman' (ibid., p. 86). This internal contact is a 'fearfully intimate thing' (ibid., p. 89) and causes Alan to dissociate from his own body, which is where he directs his disgust. He feels, perhaps, that he has absorbed part of this man, or has had some manner of homosexual experience, by inhabiting the cavity of

his body. Alan primarily exists in his mind. His body can be ripped off in ‘chunks’, while his mind observes the scene from an elevated, external position. However, Diana exists for him physically. He does not allow her psychic existence. This is why he can visualise her matter burrowing into his body and filling it up without altering the possession of his mind.

Yet when he is finally allowed access to Diana, when she is no longer like ‘a can of sardines but no key, or a...shrink-wrapped lollipop’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 103), he becomes the food. In the horrific moment of his wish-fulfilment, Alan still resists. ‘Time stopped as his mind protested at the wrongness of it – no, no, this was not fair. He did not want them to be one if it meant her absorption of him. This was not what he’d intended, not at all!’ (ibid., p. 165); this is not his happy ending. Of course Alan’s objectification and belittlement of women makes this fate ‘right’.²⁸⁰ Alan has brought this on himself. If he had been more attentive, more mature, he may have recognised Diana’s transformation and saved himself and his son. This, like *Red Dragon*, revises the Oedipal narrative. Here, the wife/mother is no longer the passive love object over which male fantasies are cultivated. Here she breaks free of these imposed desires; she chooses, rather than being the prize. Ann Tracy’s text layers these psychoanalytical narratives only to allow their collapse. The sense of maternal lack or maternal impotence could explain Alan’s latent desire, the Oedipal conflict may explain his jealous desire to devour his son, but there is no clear path to reading

²⁸⁰ Alan can only feel empathy for women’s violation when he experiences the crossing of physical boundaries. ‘He recalled vaguely the psychological complications of rape victims and began to believe in them’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 89); it is difficult for Alan to recognise that women have a psychology to traumatise.

this text. Alan's academic desire to contain is also refused. He 'perceived the symmetry of the feeder becoming food', but is denied the 'intellectual pleasure' (ibid., p. 164) of this observation because he is embroiled in the bodily immediacy of this scene. He is no longer the objective anthropologist recording data. His imposed order and structure wilts in the face of Diana, mockingly reflecting his flaws back 'sitting at the table naked' (ibid., p. 161), stripped of all projected desire, even the 'artificial scents' that Alan 'identified...as hers' (ibid., p. 165). The final fantasy of the *vagina dentata*, where Alan sees himself and his son 'sucked into a monstrous, fang-fringed orifice' (ibid., p. 165), conveys the threat of female mystery. This is the final horror because it is a terror of being assimilated into an abyss, not the clear preservation of ice or the snoglobe. Diana's is a body that cannot be contained or known: it is out of control. Diana's fantasies are silent. Does she crave to possess the bodies she devours or does she view them simply as food? She is as inaccessible to the reader as she is to Alan.²⁸¹

While the male wishes to cover over a lack or inadequacy, the female wishes to satisfy her physical hunger. Chris Foss's discussion of cannibalism in Hélène Cixous's *The Book of Promethea* explains that for Cixous female cannibalism is 'good cannibalism' (Cixous in Foss 2003, p. 150). For her, cannibalism is 'central to [a]...re-visioning of the self-other relation' where there is an 'ethic of

²⁸¹ Access to Diana and her emotions is gained somewhat through her strong connection to Naomi who is killed because she shows windigo symptoms. Diana's 'Tears leaked...she wheezed between sobs' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 63) because she fears Naomi will be killed. However, her emotions, viewed through Alan's perspective, are considered 'excessive' (ibid., p. 63) and he toys with whether to 'slap her if she produced unmistakable hysterics' (ibid., p. 64). Thus the emotion she does show is resisted and so this narration creates a distance. The reader is forced to occupy the same excluded position as Alan because the world of this text is focalised through him.

generosity...(with its emphasis on “taking in” rather than “taking over”)’ (ibid., p. 149). The masculine economy is representative of the ‘taking over’ movement. However, although it is clear that the male cannibal desires to ‘take over’ the female in his wish to preserve her, he also wishes to take her in to himself in a similar way to Cixous’s definition of female cannibalism as ‘generous and loving and fulfilling’ (ibid., p. 150). The male’s wish is to be filled by his love object. Female cannibalism, I shall argue, is not this benign act. The female cannibal is destructive and bestial; she ‘takes in’ to satisfy her hunger and her wish is not to absorb and keep what she cannibalises but to use it up. Indeed, the female cannibal continues the figure of the *vagina dentata*. Although Creed writes that ‘two explanations have been given for the *vagina dentata* [that the feeding mother will turn to feed on her child and the dyadic mother will engulf the child] – both stress the incorporative rather than castrating aspect of this figure’ (Creed 1993, p. 109); however, this fantasy can also be empowering. ‘[F]rom a woman’s point of view...the connotations of the mouth *dentata* can be positive – power, freedom, independence’ (Stratton 2001, p. 150). The male’s attraction to cannibalism and his, perhaps unconscious, desire to be cannibalised is related to his desire for control, mastery of his fear of castration, of his loss. Although this will be shown to be untrue, Jon Stratton argues that ‘it is the male who eats and the woman who is eaten. In Western culture it is only the male lover who means to flatter when he says, in adoring tones, “You look so good I could eat you”’ (ibid., p. 168).²⁸² Men assume the privileged position as top of the food chain,

²⁸² Clearly affection is articulated this way by mothers to their children, for example, and not exclusively used by men.

even able to devour women, yet this is only in fantasy.²⁸³ Stratton goes on to suggest that ‘Freud’s use of it [cannibalism] as a metaphor in his discussion of the oral stage can be understood as a late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century male sexual fantasy of adult life’ (ibid., p. 166), that cannibalism is ‘a male fantasy of men acquiring power by consuming the phallus’ (ibid., p. 167). Stratton explains how the modern fashion for female bodies as lean, hard and suggestive of adolescent males, is a construction of the phallus that is consumable by men. He states that ‘cannibalism [is] ultimately men’s concern’ (ibid., p. 171).²⁸⁴ What is actually conveyed in all of the texts under discussion here is that men fantasise about cannibalising to hide their desire to be eaten and it is women who actually consume human flesh. Men call to be eaten and

²⁸³ Sawday notes that Francis Bacon considers the ‘human body’ to be ‘At the top of this primitive food chain...an infinitely rapacious receptacle of all other bodies’ (Sawday 1995, p. 94). Bacon writes in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), quoted in Sawday: ‘all substances which nature hath produced, man’s body is the most extremely compounded. For we see herbs and plants are nourished by earth and water; beasts for the most part by herbs and fruits; man by the flesh of beasts, birds, fishes, herbs, grains, fruits, water, and the manifold alterations, dressings, and preparations of the several bodies, before they come to be his food and aliment. Add hereunto, that beasts have a more simple order of life, and less change of affections to work upon their bodies: whereas man in his mansion, sleep, exercise, passions, hath infinite variations: and it cannot be denied but that the body of man of all other things is of the most compound mass’ (Bacon [1605], p. 106). However, it is not man’s body that is ‘the most compound’, and it is not he who stands at the top of the food chain in these texts; it is instead the female cannibal. The man who, Sawday describes Bacon’s framework to determine, as full of ‘cavities, nests, and receptacles’, the ‘all-consuming body’ which waits to ‘hoard’ (Sawday 1995, p. 95), fills these voids with encrypted fantasies.

²⁸⁴ Indeed, as Arens explains, female cannibals are more abject, more taboo than the ‘noble’ and ‘honourable’ male: ‘They [Tupinamba women cannibals, the ‘most savage of the savages’] debase the noble captive who meets his fate at the hands of another male in an honourable fashion’ (Arens 1979, p. 26). Arens also writes that ‘although Staden [this testimony is taken from Hans Staden and is disputed by Arens] makes it clear that women cook and eat human flesh, he is not as explicit about the involvement of males’ (ibid., p. 26). Lombroso and Ferrero in *The Female Offender* (1897) suggests that male cannibalism of women is a ‘natural’ part of natural selection. They write: ‘Another very potent factor has been sexual selection. Man not only refused to marry a deformed female, but ate her, while, on the other hand, preserving for his enjoyment the handsome woman who gratified his particular instincts. In those days he was the stronger, and choice rested with him’ (*The Female Offender*, p. 109 original emphasis). They continue: ‘It is almost superfluous to record once again the instance of the aboriginal Australian, who, in reply to an inquiry as to the absence of old women in his country, said, “We eat them all!” and on being remonstrated with for such treatment of his wives, answered, “For one whom we lose, a thousand remain”’ (ibid., p. 109-10).

shrivel when rejected, left with the uncomfortable and unmentionable hope that ‘my aspect was not so – what shall I say? – so – unappetizing: a touch of fantastic vanity’ (*Heart of Darkness*, p. 71).

Chapter 6: Becoming Woolly and Toothy: the Female Cannibal's Animal and Monstrous Appetites

A she-wolf
Was at his heels, who in her leanness seem'd
Full of all wants, and many a land hath made
Disconsolate ere now. She with such fear
O'erwhelmed me, at the sight of her appall'd,
That of the height all hope I lost.
(*The Divine Comedy* (a))²⁸⁵

The female cannibal's appetite for human flesh eradicates 'some of the taste of the original apple that remains still in our mouths' (*Dracula*, p. 220). The female cannibal ignores and rejects the enforced denial and fear of her appetite. She is her body, the body alien, or as Sawday writes of the context of the cannibal body as placed within 'an alien world of values in which the body existed. It [the cannibal body] was neither subject to laws of community, nor was it an emblem of civilization. Instead, it lived by its own animalistic desires' (Sawday 1995, p. 24). Weininger claims that 'it well

²⁸⁵ Text from <<http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/d/dante/d19he/canto1.html>>.

may be asked if women are really to be considered human beings at all, or if my theory does not unite them with plants and animals?...Man alone is a microcosm' (Weininger [1904], p. 290). The Gothic representation of the fear of women and her materiality simply externalises and embodies the deep-seated opinion that woman is already a voracious 'parasit[e]' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 219), always already the cannibal alien in a world that strives to control her urges. Following Klein's theories, Skubal notes that 'fear of retaliation derives from the individual's own aggressiveness as it is manifested in the form of phantasized oral attacks on the mother [embodied by the male cannibal] and on the internalization of a devoured, and therefore devouring, breast' (Skubal 2002, p. 109).²⁸⁶ Thus from 'the beginning of life' (Klein [1950-2], p. 5) the mother's body is feared because it is 'devouring'. Malchow is drawn to interpreting the cannibal threat as linked with 'femineity [sic]' (Malchow 1996, p. 61). He distinguishes 'woman' to be a 'category of domestic representation' of cannibalism because her 'physiological and mental weaknesses make her both vulnerable to abuse and subject to hysteria' (ibid., p. 61). Thus poverty, femininity, and criminality are three categories of 'white man-eaters' (ibid., p. 55). However, her influence is not limited to the domestic sphere; the jungle becomes 'something of the Garden of Eden, an eternally feminine seduction, offering ripe fruit but also pollution and corruption' and the vines that festoon this landscape suggest 'darkness and

²⁸⁶ Klein explains in *Envy and Gratitude* that the cannibalistic impulse or 'oral-sadistic impulses towards the mother's breast are active from the beginning of life' (Klein [1950-2], p. 5); this impulse is repressed and denied because there is a 'connection of anxiety and guilt associated with cannibalistic desire', and this anxiety and guilt are present 'at a much earlier stage' (ibid., p. 26) than Freud suggests (post Oedipal: four-five years old) and projected onto women, specifically the mother. As Klein continues, the infant 'projects his own aggression [his own aggressive impulses and phantasies] on to the internal figures which form part of his early super-ego' (ibid., p. 27).

obscurity...coiling, deceitful entrapment, and so to the female: the masses of creepers were, Wolseley said, "like the tangled locks of some giant Meg Merrilies" (ibid., p. 50-51).²⁸⁷ The Gothic awakens and externalises brooding and deep-seated anxieties and terrors of womanhood. Woman is already the animal, the devourer who would drag 'the "half-criminal" hidden, according to Lombroso, in every normal woman's bosom' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 346)²⁸⁸ out to play. The female is always the other; even in her 'normal' state she is abnormal and thus the female cannibal doubly embodies and symbolises 'progressive degeneration' (Lestringant 1997, p. 6).²⁸⁹ Mighall notes that for Lombroso the 'fully human subject was the (non-criminal) white European adult male' (Mighall [1999], p. 167). Woman is not a human subject and so is automatically monstrous. The Gothic text literalises these suppressed fears and expresses them in the transgressive appetite of the female cannibal. Dijkstra argues that Gothic novels and vampire movies are reincarnations of 'an antifeminine sensibility established...by the sexist ideologies among the nineteenth-century intelligentsia' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 341). And, it is true that the female cannibal embodies the animalistic traits feared in degeneration: she is lustful and tied to the material by her physical hunger, yet she is also empowered in these texts and liberated from the conceptualisation that men impose upon her. In the secular world where there is little faith in the transcendent spirit she rules the realm of matter and

²⁸⁷ 'Meg Merrilies' is a poem by John Keats describing an old gypsy woman with an affinity with raw nature.

²⁸⁸ Dijkstra comments upon Lombroso here and his theories of criminology.

²⁸⁹ Lestringant discusses the cannibal that is 'subject to hostile environment and bereft of all liberty' (Lestringant 1997, p. 6) when he uses this particular phrase.

her appetite for human flesh serves her well. As Katherine notes, ‘as our faith in God failed, we still were able to believe in cannibals’ (*Carnivore*, p. 184).

Unlike the male cannibals discussed in the previous chapter who ‘didn’t enjoy quite so a visceral connection between the killing and the eating’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 49), the female cannibal connects with the physical. The female cannibal’s connection to eating is ‘hideously real’ (*ibid.*, p. 135). The ‘life...waking in her’ has, Sarah explains, ‘converted a simple thing as hunger into a gluttonous lust’ (*The Hunger*, p. 248); nevertheless, this simple thing is also the most complex and her new hunger is both what cannot be articulated and what is obsessively returned to. The female cannibal is ‘alien’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 150) and so her ‘strange diet’ (*Carnivore*, p. 262) is described: Harker is a ‘banquet’ (*Dracula*, p. 83); Holt is meat for the ‘butcher’s stall’ (*The Beetle*, p. 57); Diana eats her son and he is made into ‘an under-done stew’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 163); Katherine looks at her lover and ‘the thought occurred to me that Boris, like grilled fish, might offer the best eating in his cheek’ (*Carnivore*, p. 54), while her other victims have their necks ‘peeled open, flaps of skin flung to right and left’ (*ibid.*, p. 246-7), the succulent flesh exposed like an exotic fruit; Lady Arabella’s well-hole in *Lair of the White Worm* is her ‘slaughter-hous[e]’, where she takes her ‘Many deaths’, and its odour of ‘the drainage of war hospitals...the refuse of dissecting rooms’ (*Worm*, p. 69) conveys the carnage of her kitchen; all *The Hunger*’s Sarah ‘could think of was eating’ (*The Hunger*, p. 296) and ‘life itself was the food she required’ (*ibid.*, p. 307).²⁹⁰ When Sarah realises that she

²⁹⁰ Creed argues that Miriam is like a ‘suffocating mother’ (Creed 1993, p. 68) and certainly, the life food that is offered to Sarah is described like a suckling: ‘A fleshy something was thrust into her mouth. “Suck!” More came when she did, better than what had come before. Each time a new swallow

has consumed a 'person', that 'this was Miriam's "food"', she is disgusted and 'gagged' but is conflicted by the feeling of it as it 'sang in her veins' (ibid., p. 318). The female cannibal transforms the body into food and with the horror of this act comes the 'agonizing thrill' (ibid., p. 252) of her own transformation.

The female cannibal undergoes a bestial metamorphosis. Weininger states that 'Women are matter, which can assume any shape' (Weininger [1904], p. 293-4), but although he considers this ability to convey an image of woman as jellied flesh, sex-crazed, idiotic, and vacuous, this ability, for the female cannibal, is liberating and empowering. There is 'a mysterious link between the woman and the animal' (*Worm*, p. 37), Adam Salton and the other scientific detectives in Stoker's *Lair of the White Worm* believe.²⁹¹ Although this linking aligns women with unreasoned, low,

of it entered her mouth stars exploded in her mind' (*The Hunger*, p. 308-9). Sarah describes the blood as 'a hot stream...hot and pumping...for a horrible instant Sarah thought that this was a stream of urine, it was so hot and saline' because she cannot see her food, she feeds in 'a dark room...the darkness was absolute' (ibid, p. 308). See Creed for further discussion of this lover/mother duality in Miriam. Creed discusses Tony Scott's 1983 film adaptation of *The Hunger*.

²⁹¹ There is an opposition between the unnatural monster and the natural animal. The female cannibals fall into both of these categories, but it seems that monstrosity is projected onto them by male anxiety of inappropriate female behaviour. The male doctors, historians, or researchers, attempt to contain their fears, but the female cannibal cannot be classified. In *The Beetle* The Woman of Songs represents the primitive, archaic and mystic and she is demystified, annihilated by the 'telescoped' train carriages, leaving behind undefined 'stains' which 'gave out a most unpleasant smell' (*The Beetle*, p. 318). Lady Arabella in Stoker's *The Lair of the White Worm* is destroyed by the precise engineering of a bomb. All that remained of her was a similar stench and 'a mass of blood and slime' (*Worm*, p. 114). The link between progressive male science/reason and primitive femininity is explicit in *Lair of the White Worm* and although less obvious in *The Beetle* because of the ambiguous gender of the creature, the link can still be drawn. From this conquering of the female anti-heroine, there evolves an undermining of patriarchal science. Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* creates an anti-heroine who is undefeated and unexplainable and Katherine from Sabina Murray's *A Carnivore's Inquiry* is an unapologetic cannibal who defeats her father, one of the many representatives of patriarchy in ruins. The female cannibal threatens masculinity and manliness. The men who gather together in the face of Lady Arabella and the Lady of Songs constantly battle to prove and reinforce the manliness that crumbles in the face of the voracious woman. The later representations of the female cannibal convey masculinity in ruins. Katherine adopts the *modus operandi* of Bad Billy, a male serial killer who preys on young women, but she preys on men, and Miriam's hunger transcends gender and collapses imposed notions of femininity. The 'threat of being eaten stands for the dread of being immured, confined' (Warner 1998,

instinctual behaviour, the bestial aspects recurrently associated with female perpetrators and, in the texts under discussion here, with the female cannibal, reflect her strength, freedom and power. She makes men her food and refuses their power; as the terror in *The War of the Worlds* (1898) articulates: man is ‘no longer a master, but an animal among the animals’ (in Hurley 1996, p. 62). These Gothic texts, *Dracula*, *Lair of the White Worm*, *The Hunger*, *Winter Hunger*, and *A Carnivore’s Inquiry*, illustrate the heroine’s ‘self-fashioning through animal transformation’ (Warner 2002, p. 209)²⁹² and cannibalism. The heroine of the eighteenth century is a consumable: she is devoured physically and metaphorically by the gluttonous villain; her characterisation shows her renouncing her body in the doctrine of sensibility and starving herself in order to have a voice. The nineteenth century saw her internalising the tyranny of the Gothic villain and dominating her body, forcing it to conform to patriarchal ideals, and in the twentieth and twenty-first century, the heroine as cannibal is a figure of dark liberation.²⁹³ The external body, the form which is complicit in restricting the woman, is burst open to allow her inner self, her animal, to surface. This action opposes the covering over that the male cannibal hides under. The male would be buried alive, while the female desires (a return to) a state without boundaries. The mediation of an animal identity distances the female cannibal from the ideas of incorporation or absorption through the consumption of flesh and suggests instead that the craving for the body is simply a peculiar appetite. Her need

p. 166); it symbolises fears of being buried alive, of being subsumed, but for the female eating symbolises freedom: ‘Know hunger and satisfy it...it’s the key to freedom’ (*Carnivore*, p. 335).

²⁹² Marina Warner refers to the ‘Swiftian’ text from Marie Darieussecq where ‘a woman...(jubilantly) turns into a sow’ (Warner 2002, p. 209).

²⁹³ In many of these texts, the heroine is actually an anti-heroine.

is physical and bodily, rather than psychological. She allows her appetite to take her over until 'It asserts itself and I must follow. I remove my robes and soon become woolly, toothy, close to the ground' (*Carnivore*, p. 304).²⁹⁴

Taking Animal Form: 'Something Enormous Was Stirring'

Katherine evokes the archetypal image that strikes horror in the heart of men: female appetite. The image she discusses is Dante's infernal she-wolf. Katherine quotes: "her leanness seemed to compress all of the world's cravings," and her image, slinking about the slopes, fills him with such despair' (*Carnivore*, p. 192-3). C. H. Sisson's translation states that in 'that fear, which issued from her image, /...I lost hope' (*The Divine Comedy* (b), 1.53-4). The image is that she is 'nothing but excessive appetites' (*ibid.*, 1.50), that 'The hunger of the beast was in her loins' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 335) and he is 'transformed by that restless animal' into a state of 'sorrow and tears' (*The Divine Comedy* (b), 1.58,57). She drives him 'Back to the region where the sun is silent' (*ibid.*, 1.60) and this silence is significant. To escape his terror he 'cried out' to Virgil, his 'author', the 'spring / Which spreads abroad that wide water of speech' (*ibid.*, 1.65, 85, 79-80). Terror is located in the ability of the female's animal appetite to silence men, to cause their degeneration before speech, to destroy them, 'transformed by that restless animal'.

²⁹⁴ This phrase is taken from Katherine's tale of the werewolf of Bisclaveret. This is a male character, but, as shall be shown, Katherine's examples of cannibalism from the narratives her mother has told her merge into her own incarnation of this identity. She too becomes the wolf although she uses this other narrative to describe her transformation.

Malchow writes of cannibalism that ‘the transgression of taboo evokes an essentially gothic unnaturalness – a crossing of lines, a contamination, and an obscenity – not merely an “otherness”’ (Malchow 1996, p. 45). The cannibal is essentially Gothic. It represents the collapse of binaries, the in-between and the conflation of self and other, human and animal, male and female; the female cannibal takes on ‘a form suspended between forms that threaten to smash distinctions’ (Cohen 1996, p. 6). However, although Cohen’s definition of the monster can be used to convey an image of the female cannibal, there is also a sense that because her cannibalism is seen to be borne of an animal appetite, it is ‘natural savagery’ (Worm, p. 42).²⁹⁵ The female cannibal is ‘worse than a monster. Much worse!’ (*The Hunger*, p. 343) because she cannot be wholly Othered and condemned; she is worse because even the monster has the potential to be ‘divine’ (Mighall [1999], p. 172) and the female, let alone the female cannibal, is ‘soulless’ (Weininger [1904], p. 188).²⁹⁶ She

²⁹⁵ If a woman is not the wife and mother, she becomes the ‘female monster’ (*The Beetle*, p. 296), like the Lady of Songs, but as Tom confesses, ‘I have no idea what it is. To me a monster is a monster’ (*The Hunger*, p. 169). Tom ascribes to the dualistic model where woman is either angel or devil. On the other hand, Sarah sees Miriam as ‘the old definition of a monster, the Latin one’ (ibid., p. 169), which denotes a warning or portent. Sarah fears that the cannibalistic hunger which drives Miriam will over take her, or signal the way humanity is evolving, or devolving as Darwin’s fears, in ‘the spectre of reversion’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 212), that ‘Not all that nature wants from its children is innocence’ (*The Hunger*, p. 332) while Tom dismisses her as an individual abomination of femininity reminding him of the envaginating predator ‘the flowers that eat flies’ (ibid, p. 333). *The Hunger*’s Miriam is repeatedly described as ‘A female of another species’ (ibid., p. 325), something that has evolved with alternative characteristics to the human. Miriam contradicts the tight definition of womanhood: ‘A woman is a human being...Women stand for life, Miriam stands for death’ (ibid., p. 325). The generalisation that women stand for life, that their purpose is to reproduce and to nurture is challenged by the cannibalistic female who ‘threatens to reabsorb what it once birthed’ (Creed 1993, p. 27). The female cannibal stands for the power of women to take life as well as create it and this is considered unnatural. This power is unfathomable for the male characters who have fixed notions of what a woman is. Sarah does not consider Miriam unnatural as Tom does, but worries that her hunger is all too understandable.

²⁹⁶ Weininger writes that he has proof of the ‘Soullessness of women’ (Weininger [1904], p. xx), for example, he uses evidence from other cultures and philosophy: ‘The Chinese from time immemorial have denied that women possess a personal soul. If a Chinaman is asked how many children he has, he counts only the boys, and will say none if he has only daughters. Mahomet excluded women from Paradise for the same reason...Aristotle...held that in procreation the male principle was the formative

represents the power and terror of the predator, yet again the *vagina dentata* which ‘some myths represent [as]...an animal or an animal companion’ (Creed 1993, p. 105). Carmilla transforms into a ‘sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat’ (‘Carmilla’, p. 278). She paces before her prey ‘toing and froing with the lithe sinister restlessness of a beast in a cage’ (ibid., p. 278).²⁹⁷ The ‘fair girl’ within Dracula’s castle ‘licked her lips like an animal’ (*Dracula*, p. 69), ‘Lady Arabella is a snake’ (*Worm*, p. 33), Miriam is ‘a female of another species’ (*Hunger*, p. 325), Diana is ‘feral’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 163) and Katherine is ‘not domesticated’ (*Carnivore*, p. 230). Cannibalism is, as Katherine quotes Dali’s words, ‘a phenomena of natural history’ (ibid., p. 157), and thus ‘the basic hunger in us all’ (ibid., p. 326).

Katherine, unlike the other female cannibals mentioned above, wishes to draw out her animal within. She consciously desires to be cannibalistic; it is not, as she tries to persuade herself and the reader, something that takes her over unbidden. When confronted by ‘the big cats’ she describes how ‘The menace intrigued me. I was down the food chain. My big eyes were the eyes of a mouse, or maybe something more exotic. A monkey or a lemur. I was dinner’ (*Carnivore*, p. 140), and she wants to take on this menace and become a more powerful animal than the victimised ‘mouse...monkey or...lemur’ and move up the chain. She asks, attracted to the idea of metamorphosis into the totem animal, ‘Why do we always transform into

active agent, the “logos,” whilst the female was the passive material...Aristotle uses the word “soul” for the active’ (ibid., p. 187). He writes on this topic at length, see *Sex and Character*.

²⁹⁷ Carmilla is more terrifying when she appears as ‘a female figure standing at the foot of the bed...in a dark loose dress, and its hair was down and covered its shoulders’ (‘Carmilla’, p. 278). The predatory stance is easily adopted by the female form. Her loose hair and dress convey wildness, a disregard for the confining props that keep women trussed up and inhibited. This woman is free to leap, and bite.

something wild?’ and the answer given is that we are ‘domesticated’ (ibid., p. 230) and so must become other to connect with the animal.²⁹⁸ This domestication and suppressing restraint is what Katherine’s cannibalism resists; her terror is that ‘There were no longer wildernesses, only zoos’ (ibid., p. 253). Yet her transformation into her totem is not a physical one. Although she feels ‘some new me...was emerging’ it looks ‘remarkably like the old me’ (ibid., p. 20). It is Katherine’s cannibalistic attacks which reflect her rejection of domestication; they centre on the neck:

the wound on Johnny’s neck, a ragged tear. It started in the front and wound around his neck, not a neat incision, but a ripped section of skin and flesh – a pillow losing its feathers. I stood back up and was soon getting sick into a clump of wild sage (ibid., p. 240).

The bite is like that of an animal; it is ‘not a neat incision, but a ripped section of skin and flesh’. In a way that is unusual for the female cannibal, there is an element of performance in Katherine’s attacks. They are peripheral; she does not dive in to the guts, or cook and eat the flesh of her victims. This ‘ragged tear’ is the same wound inflicted on all of her victims and her body reacts in the same way. ‘Silvano’s neck was peeled open, flaps of skin flung to right and left like a loose leather ascot’ (ibid., p. 246-7) and ‘There was a cold chill in the coils of my stomach’ (ibid., p. 247). Her cannibalism seems symbolic, but she does actually consume human flesh; her connection to the cannibalistic appetite is not the abstracted fantasy of the male cannibal. However, as much as she tries, she cannot fully assume the persona of the

²⁹⁸ In the text, Katherine has a strong affiliation with dogs and wolves. She has a pet dog and rescues a wolf from a park and befriends it. Lestringant explicates the etymology of the word ‘cannibal’ and its origins in ‘canine’ suggesting that ‘For generations of sailors and navigators...the Cannibal undoubtedly remained the son of a dog’ (Lestringant 1997, p. 18).

cannibal because her body lets her down. She is too conditioned to reject human flesh as food that, in the cold light of day, after her cannibal attacks, she vomits up her repressed shame. Her cannibalism is her bid for freedom. She talks of how ‘the Anasazi [cannibal peoples] were so fucking civilized that all the animal was building up, and then it bubbled over...When a thing becomes its most extreme, the seeds of its opposite are planted’ (ibid., p. 160-1), but there is a sense that she is forcing this to be true. In Katherine’s case there is a more obvious ‘self-fashioning through animal transformation’ (Warner 2002, p. 209).

What attracts Katherine is the female cannibal’s connection with ‘the ancient instincts’ before civilization, the natural power of the human animal that Miriam feels ‘pouring forth’ (*Hunger*, p. 71). According to Adam, Lady Arabella ‘revived old legends of transformed human beings who had lost their humanity in some transformation or in the sweep of natural savagery’ and this made her appear ‘like a soulless, pitiless being, not human’ (*Worm*, p. 42).²⁹⁹ Diana’s consumption of her child is refused a supernatural cause and is instead seen to be the ‘naturalised’ ‘symmetry of the feeder becoming food’ (*Winter Hunger*, p. 164). Katherine considers that her father ‘was wrong’ to think that ‘I, because of my particular appetite, was the “other”’ (*Carnivore*, p. 326). Miriam is convinced that the ‘cannibal life’ (*The Hunger*, p. 86) she shares with John is ‘not evil’, that they are ‘part of the

²⁹⁹ ‘[T]here is a sense in which the woman’s look at the monster...is also a recognition of their similar status as potent threats to vulnerable male power’ (Linda Williams in Creed 1993, p. 6). The animal metaphors in these texts slip into metaphors of the monstrous. Jeffery Jerome Cohen focuses on this cultural production of the monstrous as a reflection of social anxieties. Cohen argues that ‘The monster is born as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment’ (Cohen 1996, p. 4). The cultural moment that gives rise to the female cannibal is one of supposed female emancipation.

justice of the earth' (ibid., p. 64). This refusal of the supernatural and justification in nature locates female power in physical, material and animal existence. She is connected to the earth and the animal in the human. Carl Vogt, Dijkstra cites, 'had pointed to woman's tendency to "preserve, in the formation of the head, the earlier stage from which the race or tribe had been developed, or into which it has relapsed"...and had thereby raised the spectre of reversion' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 212). This fear of the 'spectre of reversion' is part of the terror of cannibalism, especially the female cannibal; however, the female cannibal is not a dumb animal or Dr Moreau's hybrid, but instead she is represented as more than human.

While Gerard Lenne describes how the woman is 'Perfect as the tearful victim, what she does best is to faint in the arms of a gorilla, or a mummy, or a werewolf, or a Frankensteinian creature' (quoted in Creed 1993, p. 4), these texts show that it is the woman who is the threat that causes men to swoon. Unlike other female cannibals in fairy tales, for example, the Gothic cannibal heroine triumphs and escapes. The fairy tales Malchow cites: 'The Juniper Tree', 'The Little Bird', 'The Milk White Doo [Dove]', 'achieve their effect,' he explains 'of course, by perverting the maternal relationship, turning the nurturing female into witch (in both ['The Little Bird', 'The Milk White Doo [Dove]] her punishment is violent death)' (Malchow 1996, p. 58).³⁰⁰ In the nineteenth-century texts the female cannibal is annihilated, dramatically obliterated (Arabella is blown up, her body and that of the snake

³⁰⁰ The female cannibal who 'threatens to reabsorb what it once birthed' (Creed 1993, p. 27) stands for the power of women to take life as well as create it and this is considered unnatural. However, rather than suffering 'violent death' (Malchow 1996, p. 58), Miriam, for instance, goes on to give her 'gift' to a 'new companion' (*The Hunger*, p. 356-7).

inseparable in the swamp of gore, and the Beetle reduced to a slimy, odorous smear); however, the later cannibals, Miriam, Katherine, and Diana, escape punishment. Diana is left in the dark kitchen enjoying her sinister meal, and Miriam and Katherine remain at large. However, Stratton considers 'Female eating of men...to be still too powerful a transgression for mainstream horror films' (Stratton 2001, p. 171), although the male eating of women is a recurrent theme.³⁰¹ Yet in these mainstream Gothic texts the woman is the werewolf, the creature, the animal eating men. Katherine describes how 'I thought my skin was splitting and that some new me...was emerging' (*Carnivore*, p. 20); the female body which is commoditised, restricted, and domesticated, literally breaks free from the confines of its own skin when her 'savage inner being' (*The Hunger*, p. 71) rises. The female cannibal represents the terror of 'the hunter being hunted' (*Worm*, p. 104); she inverts the objectification that the female body undergoes when she uses the male body as food. She breaks free from the models of femininity tied to love and the role of the female in romantic narratives because this role cripples her: 'Love seemed to Sarah more and more an urge to containment, a hunger to fill oneself with another' (*The Hunger*, p. 127). This containment is refused by the female's surrender to her cannibalistic appetite. She fills her self up with another, but she fills her stomach, 'her belly' (*ibid.*, p. 352), in a 'bloody incorporation' (Creed 1993, p. 107) and maintains her own independent identity no longer, as Tom considers Sarah to have been in her 'sexual conditioning', 'victimized by her femininity' (*The Hunger*, p. 54). Instead, Tom has

³⁰¹ Stratton cites a list of horror films which depict male cannibalism of women, but see specifically *Bloodsucking Freaks* which shows the graphic and horrific subjection of women by male cannibals.

become food for her 'strange hunger' (*Carnivore*, p. 262), her 'new lusty appetite' (*The Hunger*, p. 252).

Cannibalism Can Fill You Up: *The Hunger's* Sarah and Empty Love

Loving somebody was exactly the same as eating something good
(Karl Abraham in Skubal 2002, p. 4).

Creed, before beginning her reading of the film adaptation of Strieber's *The Hunger*, suggests that 'The most persistent threat to the institution of heterosexuality represented in the horror film comes from the female vampire who preys on other women' (Creed 1993, p. 61), and Miriam seems to offer an intoxicating alternative to the vapid love interest that Tom represents. The narrative of romantic love, which the heroine is caught up in telling, leaves her empty and denies her appetite. It is love, that 'strange infatuation that had proved so fatal' (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 376), which reduces Emily's Aunt to the 'pale and emaciated' (*ibid.*, p. 364) form that she becomes in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; it is for love, her 'ungoverned passion' (*The Recess*, p. 269) that Elizabeth in *The Recess* becomes 'the emaciated Queen [who] withers in royal solitude' (*ibid.*, p. 269). The examples of women starving for their love, especially in the eighteenth century, are, as the first section of this project delineates, numerous. Even Jane Eyre, the strong heroine resisting her overwhelming passion, will 'eat nothing' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 160); her feelings of jealousy when witnessing Rochester's attentions toward Blanche deprive her of appetite. The Gothic heroines of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, for whom love is 'ungoverned' or an 'infatuation', conform to the notion that French philosopher Pierre-Joseph

Proudhon expounds in *On Pornocracy, or Women in Modern Times* (1858), which is that ‘love is the great, if not only, occupation of her life’. According to Proudhon,

Nature has given her [woman] a greater penchant for lewdness than man; first of all because she has a weaker ego, and liberty and intelligence therefore struggle less fiercely in her against the animalistic tendencies and secondly because love is the great, if not only, occupation of her life (Proudhon in Dijkstra 1986, p. 211).

These early Gothic texts reflect the fears and what Dijkstra terms the ‘existing notions’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 218) about women that have coloured Darwin’s interpretations and fed into Weininger and Freud’s theories. Clearly this model of woman is rejected by the female cannibal. She is aligned with ‘animalistic tendencies’ but not because she lacks identity or intelligence but because she rejects the orders and structures created by patriarchal civilization. The female cannibal, in these later texts, represents a Gothic working through of the anxieties and incongruities that these previous theories have given rise to. These theories, in particular from Darwin and Freud, which have become as Beer notes, ‘assumptions embedded in the culture’ (Beer 2000, p. 2), are exaggerated and denaturalised in the Gothic text. Thus the female cannibal reverses the previous notion that love is for the man a ‘clinging vine’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 222), the parasitical and strangling attachment to matter which prevents his true spirituality from soaring; here love is what traps and anchors *her*.³⁰² Not only is it not her ‘great...occupation’ but her

³⁰² Indeed, Otto Weininger proposed ‘reasons in favour of the possibility that homo-sexuality is a higher form than hetero-sexuality’ (Weininger [1904], p. 66). He argues that ‘homo-sexuality in a woman is the outcome of her masculinity and presupposes a higher degree of development’ (ibid., p. 66). The homosexual male is also, of course, freed from the cloy of female matter and sexual preoccupation.

hunger supersedes her affection for her children and her paramours. Love depends on a particular type or rather lack of appetite.

Sarah places emphasis on her career as a doctor and researcher, yet her love life constrains her. She tells Tom 'I guess what scares me is that I love you so much. I feel so vulnerable' (*The Hunger*, p. 108), while Tom was 'avid to possess her' (ibid., p. 61) so that her time 'would belong only to him' (ibid., p. 59). The sickly dialogue between Sarah and Tom³⁰³ and his desire to 'hurl Sarah back into the depths of her relationship with him' (ibid., p. 54) leads her to think there must be more to life: 'she wondered if there could ever be anything more than the desire to fill the hollowness inside' (ibid., p. 127-8). Miriam, by giving Sarah immortality and eternal hunger, offers to free her from 'This age, [which is] so full of equivocation and guilt...It was the age of the lie...Miriam could fill the hollow that a lie leaves in a human being' (ibid., p. 163) and Tom's love is the lie that has left Sarah empty.

Tom's love is dependent upon Sarah's denial of her own passions: he fears that she will grow fat, and wishes for her professional failure. In giving Sarah a satisfiable hunger, Miriam bypasses the impossibility of gaining satisfaction from love; as Kilgour notes 'love is ultimately unsatisfying for the reason that it craves but fails to recreate the absolute intimacy between subject and object which we experienced in infancy' (Kilgour 1998, p. 246). Or, as Antony Easthope writes,

³⁰³ For example: "'Do you really believe I love you?'... 'I love you, Tom. God help me but I do'" (*The Hunger*, p. 112-3). Although Tom suggests that 'Love solves problems' (ibid., p. 111), it is interesting that in this text love does not conquer all. Sarah is condemned to a life of eternal hunger and slow decomposition, Tom and what turns out to be his conditional love, cannot save her. She chooses her work.

condensing Lacan's theory, 'Love, says Lacan, is giving what you don't have' (Easthope 1999, p. 101). In satisfying the cannibalistic appetite that Miriam awakens in her, Sarah has access to the 'absolute intimacy' that is heretofore denied her. Miriam gives her a transfusion of her voracious blood and with it her desire; this causes Sarah's appetite to become all-consuming as the 'warmest, most delicious feeling' (*The Hunger*, p. 249) enters her. Sarah needs to consume blood because 'New blood is the stuff's food supply' (ibid., p. 286). If Sarah consumes blood, takes 'hot life in her throat...to fill her belly' (ibid., p. 352), her previous hollowness can be satisfied; when she eats she feels the food '*filling* her with delight' (ibid., p. 246, emphasis added) if for a fleeting moment, and this satisfaction, this fulfilment, leads her to want to consume more. Miriam feels that 'She could fill the hollow in Sarah' (ibid., p. 163) through this new food. She fills her up literally and thus satisfies her emotional lack. When she touches Sarah, reads her mind, or her deep feelings, Miriam feels that 'There was an impression of an empty forest. Here was Sarah, desperately lonely, rushing into the details of her outer life to avoid the secret emptiness within' (ibid., p. 163). The emptiness is a prerequisite for the narrative of romantic love, an emptiness that her lover is supposed to fill, but is not capable of doing; however, 'Miriam could bring Sarah the gift she most craved: the opportunity to fill that void, absent as it was of real purpose, bounded by the terror of a pointless death...hollowness' (ibid., p. 163). Miriam feels sure of her power to satisfy Sarah because her own 'belly was always full' (ibid., p. 177);³⁰⁴ her cannibalism satisfies

³⁰⁴ Although Miriam is a vampire, she drinks the blood of her victims, drains them until they are husks desiccated 'so light' like 'paper' (*The Hunger*, p. 24); they are called 'food' (ibid., p. 95) and it is hunger, not thirst that is satisfied. John ponders the question 'Was the hunger satisfied by their being or just their blood?' (ibid., p. 86), a similar issue raised by Renfield.

her and although she endlessly searches for a companion, her lovers are forever with her, literalised in the encryption that Abraham and Torok describe. In the ‘refusal to mourn, we are reduced to a radical denial of the loss...The words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed – everything will be swallowed...Swallowed and preserved’, Abraham and Torok explain and this ingestion of loss creates a crypt where the lost love object is ‘buried alive...as a full-fledged person’ (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 130). Miriam cannot disclose her loss; it is unspeakable because her only confidante is, by necessity, her transformed companion who will suffer the same fate as her previous lovers. Thus Miriam must pretend that she ‘had absolutely nothing to lose’ (ibid., p. 130). This encryption is literalised in the Gothic text: Miriam’s lovers are ‘Swallowed and preserved’ in ‘a tiny room, one wall of which was stacked with chests of various ages’ (*The Hunger*, p. 353). Her companions are eternally held ‘never, by [their] own free will, [able to] move again’ (ibid., p. 312) ‘in total darkness’ with the echo of Miriam’s promise, ‘the same promise I’ve made all the others. I will keep you with me for all time...you will always have a place in my heart’ (ibid., p. 354).

Miriam gives Sarah a literal hunger to replace her metaphorical or emotional lack. Thus she gives Sarah the potential to satisfy herself. Before receiving the gift of appetite, Tom ‘Sometimes...thought a handful of birdseed a day was all she really needed. “At least you’re really hungry for once”’ (*The Hunger*, p. 237) he tells her, at first happy that she has a ‘healthy’ appetite. She retorts with the weight conscious reply: ‘I’ll be as plump as a pigeon’ (ibid., p. 237); however, she really feels that ‘Tonight I want to eat’ and ‘There’s nothing the matter with that...I’m ravenous, as a matter of fact’ (ibid., p. 237). This new feeling liberates her, gives her license to eat.

However, Tom soon begins to feel disgusted by her appetite, which he now considers to be out of control: 'An appetite was fine, but she was going to turn into a sausage if this kept up' (ibid., p. 237).³⁰⁵ He gets angry with her, thinking 'She didn't have to eat like a hippo' (ibid., p. 239). Her appetite threatens Tom's image of her. He fears that she will begin to look like 'a sausage' or 'hippo', her body becoming a mass of inhuman flesh. Sarah, however, revels in the liberation and satisfaction of her appetite; the imagery of a 'plump...pigeon' is not grotesque but somehow comforting and appealing. 'It's disgusting,' she says to appease Tom, but she is more puzzled than repelled by her desire, the need that she feels because she is 'incredibly hungry again' (ibid., p. 242). Her hunger fills the emptiness she feels, 'Her hunger was still with her, but it only added intensity to the glorious way she was beginning to feel' (ibid., p. 245). She feels glorious because she has a goal, something tangible and attainable, something necessary and rewarding and visceral: hunger. 'The beat started again: food, foodfood, food, FOODFOODFOOD!' (ibid., p. 136). The heartbeat, the focus and seat of romantic love, is replaced by hunger.

'He is Only a Wreck of Himself': *The Beetle's* Paul Lessingham and *Dracula's* Jonathan Harker under the Female Cannibal's Emasculating Power

'[T]imes have changed!' (*The Beetle*, p. 160), Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* anxiously states, acting out the fear and anxiety of female subjectivity and agency.³⁰⁶ This fear,

³⁰⁵ Unable to accept Sarah as the consumer, he transforms her into something edible: 'sausage'.

³⁰⁶ The character of the Beetle, though of ambiguous sex, represents the fear of female appetite. She defies the fixed categories which make sense of the world for the rest of the characters. Instead the

illustrated clearly in *The Beetle* and *Dracula*, is one that persists through all the texts of female cannibalism mentioned above. The cannibals here do not conform to Dijkstra's theory that 'most of the late nineteenth-century's crop of female vampires, [are] not permitted any direct vampire power over men' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 341). The vampires Dijkstra mentions, Carmilla and Lucy Westenra, prey on children, or other women, but the female cannibal's terror is directed at men. In *Lair of the White Worm*, Lady Arabella has nothing but disdain for the men around her even though Sir Nathaniel considers 'Her only hope [to be] in a rich marriage' (*Worm*, p. 16); her target is 'only a man' and she felt 'sufficient confidence in her own womanhood to carry her through' (*Worm*, p. 52). Although Malchow also considers the representation of the *vagina dentata* to be a manifestation of male fear of women, he contends that the 'devouring, emasculating woman, reinforced by a vivid sexualised imagery, achieves its ultimate expression, no doubt, in *The Lair of the White Worm* with the Lady Arabella, a snake-demon who drags men down into her well-hole...Lady Arabella's well-hole, like the mouth of Lucy Westenra, is a *vagina dentata*' (Malchow 1996, p. 142). However, he posits that her power comes from 'her masculinity rather than her femininity – that Lady Arabella, has after all, been transformed into a serpent, an image of the male member. Having been injected, as it were, with the virus of maleness, the female vampires could be said to have become unnatural men' (ibid., p. 142).³⁰⁷ However, this text is a game 'to play our masculine

beetles are considered to be forms 'neither of men nor women, but of creatures of some monstrous growth' (*The Beetle*, p. 320), or 'the Thing...a creature born neither of God nor man' (ibid., p. 322). However, there is something shamefully erotic about this hybrid. After all, the 'brief glimpse' Atherton enjoyed of 'her body' revealed it to be 'by no means old or ill-shaped' (ibid., p. 152).

³⁰⁷ Yet, as Arabella's power is sourced from 'revived old legends' (*Worm*, p. 42), the ancient legend of the serpent, Stone writes, primarily revered it 'as a female' (Stone 1976, p. 199). Stone explores many

against her feminine' (*Worm*, p. 81), where the feminine controls this 'primeval serpent' as it is still under the 'ever-varying wishes and customs of womanhood' (ibid., p. 105). In *Worm*, Arabella's femininity is emphasised, and this is where her horror originates. Part of the fear of women's power, from a male perspective, converts her strength into a masculine trait – something that does not inherently belong to her but is assumed or unnatural. *The Hunger*'s Miriam is 'larger than she should be' (*The Hunger*, p. 207, my emphasis) with 'both male and female components' (ibid., p. 298) and her 'larger' and more powerful physicality is interpreted as masculine. Diana represents the phallic power that Alan craves to possess but lacks. Katherine is the beautiful young woman who surrounds herself with men whom she victimises but is never under suspicion because she could not be capable of such crimes.³⁰⁸ This recurrent anxiety over female power, the power to reduce a man to a 'fibreless, emasculated creature' (*Beetle*, p. 245), is found in all of these texts but is crystallised in *Dracula* and *The Beetle*. These texts are written at a time in which much of the theories and assumptions they engage with are still in the process of being 'assimilated and resisted' (Beer 2000, p. 2). From being the pursuers

ancient religions citing the archaeologist Stephen Langdon and his finding that: 'The evidence points to an original serpent goddess' (Langdon in ibid, p. 199). Stone lists evidence which documents the connection between effigies of snakes and queens and goddesses, specifically Egyptian; see *When God Was a Woman*.

³⁰⁸ Instead of looking towards the obvious suspect, Officer Brown thinks the culprit is Arthur her boyfriend motivated by his 'jealousy' (*Carnivore*, p. 319). Exasperated, almost wanting to be discovered, Katherine cries 'Oh, what's the use?' (ibid., p. 319) and goes along with the Officer's assumption. Her father knows she 'was responsible', but constructs a reason, an explanation: 'You killed him in self-defense [sic]' (ibid., p. 325), he entreats her. She understands that 'My father's horror of me was not one of incomprehension, but fear' because she asks 'Was I not him?' (ibid., p. 326); she has appropriated the hunger and drive of her father and of the serial killer Bad Billy. Although Katherine's appetite is masked by male hunger, her real inspiration is her mother; the men that Katherine takes into her life are all destroyed, even her father is left 'utterly defeated' (ibid., p. 327). She, however, 'had to escape' (ibid., p. 325), to 'try my luck in a new country' (ibid., p. 327), running but free.

of female flesh, male characters become wasted and emaciated, or simply meat. Both texts assume the male perspective in their victimisation, and both Harker and Lessingham share a strange erotic attraction to the women who would cannibalise them.

While ‘This is the age of feminine advancement’ (*Beetle*, p. 129), Lessingham explains, this advancement causes masculine retreat. The appetite of the female creates images of emaciated and emasculated men. Emasculation seems to be connected to a reduction of the male presence and body. Lessingham is literally belittled. From being ‘the great’, Lessingham becomes ‘smaller’ until the Beetle asks ‘Was there ever a man so less than nothing?’ (ibid., p. 85). By its very nature, the female appetite is shown to be emasculating. These women might represent the ‘gynander’. Stratton explains that ‘The term “gynander” was introduced by Joséphin Péladon in the late nineteenth century to describe the woman men most feared, “the predatory woman, the autoerotic or lesbian woman who consorts with males in a futile attempt to absorb or siphon [sic] off their masculine energies”’ (Stratton 2001, p. 149); however, in these texts her efforts are not futile. ‘In the eyes of many fin-de-siècle males, woman had become a raving, predatory beast, a creature who preyed on men out of sheer sadistic self-indulgence’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 234), and these female cannibals embody and literalise this fear. She deflates the overreaching self importance of these male characters. The men in these texts are not godlike: they are flawed and the material temptation that the female proffers is not met with the resistance befitting the transcendent and soaring spirit that the masculine is supposed to be endowed with. Skubal writes that ‘the European mind struggled more with the dread of degeneracy into savagery than with the fear of falling victim to the

tomahawk or even the cooking fire' (Skubal 2002, p. 122), but in the female cannibal both of these terrors are combined and embodied.

Lessingham, by his very name is *less* than a man. He is relegated to the position of spectator in the 'slaughterhouse' (*Beetle*, p. 244), but he is also identified with the female victims in *The Beetle*. He describes how he is forced to watch the Lady of Songs consume 'A woman – a young and lovely Englishwoman' (ibid., p. 244). This 'sacrificial object' is 'burnt alive, while I [Lessingham] lay there helpless, looking on' (ibid., p. 244). Afterwards 'The ashes of the victim had been consumed by the participants' (ibid., p. 244).³⁰⁹ He is 'emasculated' (ibid., p. 245). He passively observes but is deprived the consummation of this 'young and lovely' flesh. Indeed, Lessingham sees himself as being devoured as he describes these 'English girls' (ibid., p. 297) to be 'of my own flesh and blood' (ibid., p. 298) while his body mirrors their destruction when it too becomes 'fibreless' (ibid., p. 245). Lessingham's feelings of emasculation are literalised in Robert Holt, the man the Beetle uses to do her bidding. He is, again literally, used up, consumed until there is nothing left:

A more deplorable spectacle than he presented I have seldom witnessed. He was decently clad in a grey tweed suit, white hat, collar and necktie, and it was perhaps that fact which made his extreme attenuation the more conspicuous. I doubt if there was an ounce of flesh on the whole of his body. His cheeks and the sockets of his eyes were hollow. The skin was drawn tightly over his cheek bones, - the bones themselves were staring through. Even his nose was wasted, so that nothing but a ridge of cartilage remained. I put my arm beneath his shoulder and raised him from the floor; no resistance was offered by the body's gravity, - he was as light as a little child (ibid., p. 303).

³⁰⁹ This dry feast seems much like Alfred Russel Wallace's 1853 description of Amazonian cannibalism where the corpse is 'Baked "with a most horrible odour" until reduced to a powder, this was then, he said, mixed with a liquor and drunk' (Malchow 1996, p. 53).

This description is uncannily similar to the descriptions of the eighteenth-century heroine, buried alive and starved. Just as Lorenzo ‘trembled at the spectacle...grew sick...His strength failed him’ (*The Monk*, p. 369) when he witnesses Agnes’s ‘wasted...shivering...sunk’ (ibid., p. 369) body, so the ‘spectacle’ of Holt’s ‘hollow’ visage with ‘bones...staring through’ is ‘deplorable’. Also, the juxtaposition of this skeletal frame with the outward signs of the gentleman, the ‘tweed suit, white hat, collar and necktie’ do indeed make it clear or ‘more conspicuous’ that his starved body is a sign of emasculation. Again, Lorenzo ‘doubted to think her Woman’ because she is ‘so wretched, so emaciated, so pale’, her ‘extreme attenuation’ transforms her into a ‘Creature’ (*The Monk*, p. 369), while it emasculates Holt. This extreme emaciation of the body erodes all soft tissue: ‘even his nose was wasted, so that nothing but a ridge of cartilage remained’; thus, it enacts a literal, but unspoken, castration. The spectacle is ‘deplorable’, suggesting pity and powerlessness, not what masculinity strives to elicit. The skeletal bodies of the eighteenth-century heroine assume the appearance and presence of something other, and monstrous. The eighteenth-century heroine’s emaciation is a product of her oppression by the all-consuming appetite of the villain and, in these nineteenth-century texts female appetite is reflected in images of destroyed masculinity manifested in the starved male body.³¹⁰

Jonathan Harker, after his objectification as food, is unmanned. It is Mina who must protect him, she is the one who must ‘speak for him and never let him be

³¹⁰ The subsequent emptiness of the male cannibals is externalised in these emasculated and starved male bodies. Their emasculation is internalised to become vacuous interiority.

troubled or worried' (*Dracula*, p. 216-7). He sleeps 'with his head on my [Mina's] shoulder' (*ibid.*, p. 210), and Mina is 'always anxious about Jonathan' (*ibid.*, p. 209). He becomes, as Holt does, like 'a little child' (*Beetle*, p. 303) because 'the very essence of [his nature's] strength is gone' (*Dracula*, p. 194). This emasculation is also figured physically in his wasted body; Mina describes Jonathan to be 'thin and pale and weak-looking', and notes that 'he is only a wreck of himself' (*ibid.*, p. 139). Mina provides support so that he may 'put some flesh on his bones' (*ibid.*, p. 191) because without her 'to lean on and to support him he would have sunk down' (*ibid.*, p. 209). Jonathan's emaciation is a stark contrast to the examples of his appetite given in his journal entries with which the text begins.

On the very first page of the text Jonathan describes that he 'had for dinner, or rather supper, a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was good but thirsty (*Mem.*, get recipe for Mina.)' (*Dracula*, p. 31). His appetite helps to construct his masculinity and place Mina in the subservient role of satisfying his hunger.³¹¹ Here, though, food is Gothicised and given agency because it is 'thirsty' and linked to his 'queer dreams':

I did not sleep well, though my bed was comfortable enough, for I had all sorts of queer dreams. There was a dog howling all night under my window, which may have had something to do with it; or it may have been the paprika, for I had to drink up all the water in my carafe, and was still thirsty (*ibid.*, p. 32-3).

His dreams do not prevent him from eating this paprika again and again desiring Mina to prepare it for him: 'I had for breakfast more paprika, and a sort of porridge of

³¹¹ This becomes problematic, of course, when it is the Count who provides his meals.

maize flour which they said was “mamaliga,” and egg-plant stuffed with forcemeat, a very excellent dish, which they call “impletata” (*Mem.*, get recipe for this also) (ibid., p. 33). He details what he consumes obsessively and it is clear that his appetite is large and adventurous. He writes that ‘There are many odd things to put down’, yet he chooses to explain his eating habits ‘lest who reads them may fancy that I dined too well before I left Bistritz’ (ibid., p. 36). He avoids this presumption by putting ‘down my dinner exactly’ (ibid., p. 36). He lists his menu: ‘I dined on what they called “robber steak” – bits of bacon, onion, and beef, seasoned with [the seemingly ubiquitous] red pepper, and strung on sticks and roasted over the fire, in the simple style of the London cat’s-meat’; he then notes that to accompany this peppery dish, he was served ‘Golden Mediasch, which produces a queer sting on the tongue, which is, however, not disagreeable’ (ibid., p. 36). He seems to want to be clear that he is not eating extravagantly; however, what is conveyed is the otherness of this food, the ‘thirsty’ effects and the ‘sting’ it produces in the mouth, the awakening of oral pleasure, to which Jonathan is attracted. When reaching Dracula’s castle, after being terrified by the coachman, he still retains his appetite: ‘I was half famished with hunger’ he explains and the Count himself must ‘see to your comfort’ handling the food that he will ‘not sup’ (ibid., p. 47). Again Jonathan lists his meal: ‘I fell at once on an excellent roast chicken. This, with some cheese and a salad and a bottle of old Tokay, of which I had two glasses, was my supper’ (ibid., p. 48). This meal, in comparison to the hot spicy dishes to which he has become accustomed, appears bland: chicken, salad, cheese. The flavours are mellow rather than sharp, savoury rather than spicy.

It is in the presence of Dracula that Jonathan first loses his appetite. The Count's breath is 'rank' and causes 'a horrible feeling of nausea' (*Dracula*, p. 48), and after this point Jonathan rarely describes his food. Breakfast is simply 'cold' with 'coffee' (*ibid.*, p. 49) and supper is 'excellent' (*ibid.*, p. 55), but the menu is not listed and there are no more recipe memorandums for Mina. The next sensory descriptions come from Jonathan's encounter with the 'three young women' (*ibid.*, p. 68). These women share the bitter-sweet attraction of the red pepper. They create a 'wicked, burning desire' and an 'intolerable, tingling sweetness' (*ibid.*, p. 69). These women are represented as appetizing although it is they who 'see my own body a banquet' (*ibid.*, p. 83). Jonathan assumes the 'accepted' position of the male as the consumer, disregarding any menace the women project, or seeing this menace as titillating and attractive. Her breath is 'Sweet...honey-sweet' although he explains there was a 'bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood' (*ibid.*, p. 69). He mistakes the movement of her mouth for erotic promise, while she actually displays the anticipation before food. She 'licked her lips' (*ibid.*, p. 69) and her tongue is 'churning' (*ibid.*, p. 70) in her mouth, the saliva flowing in preparation for her meal. Once Jonathan realises that the women were 'waiting to suck my blood' they become 'dreadful...awful women' (*ibid.*, p. 72); however, this reaction seems in part to deflect his feelings of desire and the thrill that these dangerous women aroused in him, since part of his excitement seemed to be the result of the 'dreamy fear' (*ibid.*, p. 69) with which they were somehow connected.³¹² The contact with this female appetite drains Jonathan. The women are more horrible than the Count, 'nothing can

³¹² This seems to connect these women to his 'queer dreams' (*Dracula*, p. 32) induced by the paprika.

be more dreadful than those awful women' (ibid., p. 72); they become, with their emasculating promise, the most fearful threat. Susan Skubal argues that 'the greater horror in this tale [*Dracula*, using Mina as an example], and in Western consciousness, is to be the devourer rather than the devoured' (Skubal 2002, p. 120). Yet, Mina and even Lucy are imbued with power in their cannibalism. Mina, in Skubal's own words, becomes 'truly dangerous' (ibid., p. 120) while the potentially devoured Jonathan is a shadow, a wreck. The greater horror is still in becoming food.

Men are reduced to matter in a woman's mouth. Jonathan writes that his body was to become a 'banquet...to those horrid three' (*Dracula*, p. 83), and Holt relates how 'Fingers prodded me then and there, as if I had been some beast ready for the butcher's stall' (*Beetle*, p. 57). Men are 'made...as wax in her hands' (ibid., p. 240), objectified, reduced to matter, malleable and powerless. Jonathan and Lessingham suffer a similar paralysis under her lips, forced, under her power, to witness her cannibalism. The lips that have and will touch him indecently caress this unspeakable meat. Both of these characters describe the cannibal kiss as 'thrilling and repulsive' (*Dracula*, p. 69). Lessingham describes how his body betrays him. '[S]he wooed my mouth with kisses', he explains while his mind is filled with a 'sense of horror and of loathing' (*Beetle*, p. 241). He ineffectually attempts to mask his body's reaction to the attention of her lips. He cannot contradict his flesh; as his language falters he is 'incapable of even hinting to you the nauseous nature of that woman's kisses', he is filled 'with an indescribable repulsion' and he states that he recalls these events with 'a feeling of physical, mental, and moral horror' (ibid., p. 242-3). His moral horror is felt from the regret and contradiction between his physical reaction and his mental denial. He confesses that he was 'wholly incapable of offering even

the faintest resistance to her caresses...She did with me as she would' and all the while he 'lay there like a log' (ibid., p. 243). This position is interpreted as sexual arousal by Kelly Hurley. Hurley not only sees Lessingham as behaving like 'a female subject – passive, resistless, voiceless, and inert' (Hurley 1996, p. 144), but she also considers Lessingham to be a 'non-subject...whose essential identity is only bodily, only sexual' (ibid., p. 145). He must suffer what his body seems to take pleasure in. '[I]n dumb agony I endured' (*Beetle*, p. 243), he remembers. He is like meat; he does not speak, nor does he seem to move. He is 'wax in her hands' (ibid., p. 240), 'oppressed' (ibid., p. 241). However, what truly relegates Lessingham to this position is the appetite of the Woman of Songs; it is her 'inhuman longings' (ibid., p. 244) and the denial of his own desire. What makes the Woman 'ultra-masculine' (Hurley 1996, p. 144), as Hurley terms her, is her ability to consume. Jonathan describes this same physical 'longing' married with his psychological 'dreamy fear' or 'deadly fear' (*Dracula*, p. 69). While Lessingham's repulsion of the female mouth comes from its 'oppress[ion]' (*Beetle*, p. 241) which approaches suffocation, Jonathan seems to retract at the sight of the 'sharp teeth' (*Dracula*, p. 70) escaping the covering of the 'voluptuous lips' (ibid., p. 69). Yet, he is also strangely attracted by these 'brilliant white teeth' (ibid., p. 69). The teeth dazzle him, or rather they thrill him. This use of 'thrilling' and 'tingling' (ibid., p. 69) describe how his body vibrates at the touch of the female mouth and suggest that, like Lessingham, there is a terrible eroticism.

The mouths of the women in *Dracula* are clean; the teeth are 'pearls' beneath the 'ruby' lips (*Dracula*, p. 69). The teeth are 'brilliant white' (ibid., p. 69) and shining. Even her breath is 'sweet' (ibid., p. 69). The Beetle's mouth is, in comparison, horribly abject. This is an image of the threatening woman, her 'mouth,

with its blubber lips' (*Beetle*, p. 53). At this time the figure is of indeterminate gender, but is generalised as male, the norm, yet the descriptions of this figure and its mouth and movement suggest abject femininity.³¹³ When the mouth is described and 'His jaw dropped open so that his yellow fangs gleamed through his parted lips' (*ibid.*, p. 86), there is that same suggestion of attractive repulsiveness. The 'parted lips' convey an erotic image, welcoming and sensuous, but within are 'yellow fangs', unclean and threatening. There is a mixture of the sexual and the monstrous in this which culminates in envagination. The Beetle begins to 'climb my [Holt's] body', '[the legs] embraced me softly, stickily' moving 'Higher and higher!' until it 'gained my loins' and at the chest 'I became more and more conscious of an uncomfortable wobbling motion' (*ibid.*, p. 51); eventually 'It reached my chin, it touched my lips, – and I stood and bore it all, while it enveloped my face with its huge, slimy, evil smelling body, and embraced me' (*ibid.*, p. 52). The female envelops the 'shrinking' (*ibid.*, p. 51) male body and he 'bore it' passively, succumbing to her overpowering smothering 'embrace'. In this image Holt is feminised: he feels the Beetle touch 'my lips', and the emphasis moves to the vulnerable entry into the male body. Stratton argues that 'The mouth *dentata* has become the signifier of the phallic woman, the virago, as opposed to the phallicised woman whom men want to assimilate, consume' (Stratton 2001, p. 149), thus suggesting that women either 'borro[w]' (Creed 1993, p. 160) power from men, as Creed puts it, adopting the phallus or are constructed as the phallus and thus consumed by men. Yet, these texts show the *dentata* as a castrating

³¹³ Even when considered male there is something 'so essentially feminine' (*The Beetle*, p. 86) recognised about the creature.

symbol of female power. The female mouth was never 'passive and submissive' as Stratton views it; its potential is always to become 'active and consuming' (Stratton 2001, p. 149).

Transformation: 'The Familiar Face Shifted into Ferocity'

The eating of human flesh is not merely an excess of occasional revenge, but is actually a luxurious gratification of appetite (Taylor in Malchow 1996, p. 41).

Sarah undergoes the change into her cannibal form, into 'Something not quite of this world...tall and pale and as quick as a hawk' (*The Hunger*, p. 248); she sheds the 'fetching' demeanour that Tom is accustomed to because she is no longer 'his magic lady' (ibid., p. 61), giving in to Tom's 'loving dismissal' and eager to 'affir[m]...her love and respect for him' (ibid., p. 61-2). The female cannibal transformation is terrifying because, seen from a male perspective, it is an inversion of all he conceives woman to be; all he has learned to expect woman to be capable of is questioned. Elisabeth Bronfen analyses Lacan's argument that 'Woman doesn't exist' by suggesting that the feminine 'is defined purely against the signifier man...that her function is to support the fantasy of self-realisation and wholeness to be gained in relation to an Other' (Bronfen 1992, p. 213).³¹⁴ When the female as cannibal unfixes her 'fixed designation' within 'this norm' the male can no longer 'define itself with

³¹⁴ Weininger states something similar: 'The meaning of woman is to be meaningless. She represents negation, the opposite pole from the Godhead' (Weininger [1904], p. 297-8). He continues, 'Woman has a meaning and a function in the universe as the opposite of man' (ibid., p. 297).

and against her' (ibid., p. 214). Of course the female cannibal is Other, but she is beyond Other; she collapses the safe distinctions that border her. Tom awakens, surprised and 'afraid' (*The Hunger*, p. 253), because Sarah is no longer 'familiar...comfortable' (ibid., p. 60); he cannot see Sarah: 'He couldn't see her face with the light behind her, but her hair looked wild' (ibid., p. 253). By shrouding the female form in obscurity, in darkness, the Gothic text refuses the male viewer the power of his defining gaze, the cannibalistic way in which 'He feasted his eyes on Sarah's body' (ibid., p. 336). Sarah has broken free of the 'purity of her womanhood', a meaningless projection Tom has imposed upon her as he considers her to be 'more a woman than any other he had known' (ibid., p. 61).³¹⁵ Her wildness throws these cripplingly vague expectations into relief through its tangible, somehow 'natural' expression. Her 'wild being' comes from within from "'in me, deep back behind the me I know"...Hidden, but there' (ibid., p. 248); it is not the created set of assumptions gleaned from the surface that 'men's eyes always followed' (ibid., p. 61).

There is tension between how the male would perceive her and the reality of the female cannibal. Men continually wish to project sweetness onto these 'sour' (*The Hunger*, p. 16), 'bitter' (*Dracula*, p. 69), 'sharp, sweaty' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 162) cannibals. These women are actually 'evil-smelling animal[s]' (*Beetle*, p. 223) with

³¹⁵ This idea of woman as interchangeable comes from Weininger's theory that woman is 'part of nature, a "henid"' and 'man was an individual, a "monad"' (Dijkstra 1986, p. 223). This 'among the variegated shadows of a single undifferentiated form' of womanhood man undertakes a 'heroic search for the perfect embodiment' of his ideal (ibid., p. 224). In this model, woman has no wishes, no thought, and so the cannibal, the archetypal individual driven by their own desire and hunger, condemns all other bodies to the fate of becoming food, undifferentiated meat, interrogates this model through its total opposition.

traces of human blood on their breath, flesh rotting in their teeth, but they are represented by male eyes to be strangely attractive. John's attraction in repulsion is clearest when 'He kissed her [Miriam], kissed into her open mouth – and tasted sour, oddly cold breath' (*The Hunger*, p. 16). The sweetness that is continuously connected to women and to femininity is something that the female cannibal's transformation seeks to depart from.³¹⁶ Jonathan Harker is confronted by female vampires and is struck by their simultaneous conformation to and transgression of the male idea of femininity. When considering one of these vampires Harker observes: 'I seemed somehow to know her face' which is 'fair, as fair as can be' (*Dracula*, p. 69). He recognises in her the archetypal image of femininity. She has 'great, wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires' but he connects 'some dreamy fear' (ibid., p. 69) with her appearance. Her image, laden as it is with its connotations and projections of the construct of gender, hides a threatening uncontrollable reality underneath; 'underlying' this controlled, weak, 'sweet' image is a rebellious 'bitter offensiveness' (ibid., p. 69). The form, which she transforms into, like Miriam, is wild, rank, and opposes the conception that men force upon her. Through the unspeakable act of cannibalism the female can silence the words that men attempt to contain her with. Cixous's notion that 'one always finds oneself "preceded by words"' (Foss 2003, p. 150) is eluded by the female cannibal. Words are 'closed...immobile...petrifying' (ibid., p. 150) but through her power to go beyond words the female cannibal is open, fluid and un-containable. Men make women into

³¹⁶ Sweetness is often linked to femininity, for example, in the rhyme 'What Are Little Boys Made Of?' from *The Real Mother Goose* (1916): 'What are little girls made of? "Sugar and spice, and all that's nice"' (Wright [1916], etext).

infantile, sanitised and thus safe creatures through the ways in which they describe and articulate them.

Winter Hunger's Alan is confused by Diana's 'real' female smell because 'he hadn't realised how much he had identified artificial scents as hers, as her in fact' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 165). Her transformation into her 'feral' (ibid., p. 163) cannibal self obliterates Alan's conception of her. Her 'natural' 'scent...held him at bay' (ibid., p. 162) while her artificial 'perfume, her soap' (ibid., p. 162) attracts him. Grenouille is attracted to female flesh that he describes as smelling of 'sea breeze...nut oil...water lilies...apricot blossoms' (*Perfume*, p. 43), refreshing, clean sweetness. The 'cheesy smell of humankind' (ibid., p. 189) is absent from the female body, or at least the female body which can 'inspire love' (ibid., p. 195). Alan's cannibalistic hunger assumes that Diana's flesh is sweet; he dreams of 'cotton candy...cookie' and conflates these flavours with the taste of 'human leg' (*Winter Hunger*, p. 108). While dreaming of these confections Alan bites Diana:

His yell of triumph rose unmuffled by the sweetness that crammed his mouth...It took a moment for the horror of his waking situation to catch up with him. Diana was crouching on the far corner of the bed in the darkness, weeping and cursing and clutching her shoulder..."You bit me, you asshole" (ibid., p. 108-9).

In his dream her flesh is the 'sweetness that crammed his mouth' because he is still detached from the 'horror of his waking situation', where the metallic taste of blood would flood his mouth. The surface of the female is imagined as sanitised, appealing and sealed. Alan describes Diana as 'so safe inside her packaging that she could afford to let him fumble at the surface' (ibid., p. 102) and Grenouille 'smelled her over from head to toe' (*Perfume*, p. 45), sweeping her skin and surface scent. It is

when the interiority of the female leaks into the surface, her sweat, her odorous saliva, the myriad of slimy excretions that make her abject and un-containable, that she becomes threatening. The male cannibal is empty inside; he is a void, while the female is horrifyingly full of unknowable fluids, substances and wild animal identities.

When Alan imagines the windigo transforming before his eyes, what is most horrific is the moment when ‘the familiar face shifted into ferocity’:

Alan could imagine too vividly that heart-stopping moment when the windigo’s nature declared itself and the familiar face shifted into ferocity. The hair at his collar prickled as he stared at his fellow passengers and pictured each face melting into something alien, eyes widening maniacally, lips drawing back from teeth (*Winter Hunger*, p. 150).³¹⁷

In her critical analysis of Gothic texts, Ann Tracy, the author of *Winter Hunger*, stresses the importance of the ‘ways in which familiar things can seem to contain the terrible and the strange’ (Tracy 1980, p. 21). Of course, the strange and familiar are subjective concepts and depend upon perspective. Alan’s perspective is clear. He focuses on the features that are most emphasised as attractive on the female face: her ‘lips’ and ‘eyes’; yet in the place of soft welcoming lips, he sees the ‘lips drawing back from the teeth’, and rather than dilated, liquid eyes he sees ‘eyes widening maniacally’. Her simple transformation of expression, there are no whiskers sprouting or ears lengthening, turns her into the unspeakable ‘something alien’. The female

³¹⁷ This image also contains the idea of the ‘familiar’ that is evident in Katherine’s description of her transformation into ‘some new me’ that is ‘remarkably like the old me’ (*Carnivore*, p. 20); the old, ancient and primitive together with the new, alien and unexpected are constantly returned to in relation to female cannibals. As Stoker’s narrator in *Lair of the White Worm* states ‘the every-varying wishes and customs of womanhood, which is always old – and always new’ (p. 105).

cannibal is both alien and familiar, both monster and natural animal. She represents 'the variety and unpredictability of material life [that] is not contained by the taxonomies designed to hold it' (Hurley 1996, p. 26).³¹⁸ The male victims attempt to 'fix the boundaries between normality and deviance' (ibid., p. 27) by eroticising her, but, as has been shown, this collapses. *The Beetle* creates a being beyond the comprehension of the conservative characters within the text: 'the face is a man's...and the voice is a man's...but the body...is a woman's' (*Beetle*, p. 180-1). There is 'something animal' (ibid., p. 53) about her.³¹⁹ The female cannibal comes to represent 'all the toothy things leaving their prints upon the snow, their gnawing hunger and snuffling' (*Carnivore*, p. 237); she elicits love and terror, wildness and domestication. However, she is comfortable in her skin, regardless of the shape it assumes because she recognises that to 'Know hunger and satisfy it...it's the key to freedom' (ibid., p. 335).

³¹⁸ Hurley here discusses the refusal of classification that *Dracula's* Renfield represents.

³¹⁹ However, what is really incomprehensible in these characters in their mixture of masculine and feminine, a mixture that becomes normalised in their animal persona. Although the male victims 'wanted to believe that she was a passionless monster' (*The Hunger*, p. 95), they are drawn to her. It could be argued that he is drawn to his own homoerotic desires because 'He no longer thought of it as male or female' (ibid., p. 187).

Coda: All the Same Under the Skin

Do you think nobody is capable of noticing that you're a human being underneath? (*Under the Skin*, p. 232).

Michel Faber's text *Under the Skin* (2000) exemplifies the anxieties of becoming food, of crossing the 'dividing line into bestiality' (*Skin*, p. 250). The noun 'human' in his text signifies the quadruped alien which hunts men, and humans are renamed 'vodsel', a 'fleshy biped' (*ibid.*, p. 3) hunted for its meat and eaten. The text emphasises 'How terrifyingly fragile human life [is], that it could be forfeited' (*ibid.*, p. 129) and that embodiment, within an edible body, is horrific, restrictive and inescapable. Faber describes how Isserley's body is surgically altered so that she appears 'beautiful' (*ibid.*, p. 87 original emphasis) to the men, or vodsels, that she must attract and deliver to the farm. In doing so Faber conflates the misogyny to which women are subject illustrating that their 'external appearance' (*ibid.*, p. 203-4) dictates their lives. Isserley is disgusted and in constant pain because of the surgical modifications her body has undergone: 'She lathered up her breasts and rinsed them, with distaste. The only good thing about them was that they prevented her seeing

what had been done to her down below' (ibid., p. 68). She, too, is made into a 'hideous animal' (ibid., p. 75) because she is made to look like a vodsel. Faber represents the horror of indifferentiation and possible degeneration, that we are 'all the same under the skin' (ibid., p. 152).

In Faber's text Isserley is the predator, but she is of an alien race and so the human/vodsel body is not cannibalised (although with the confusion of the human/animal signification, language creates barriers in the discussion of this text, much like the texts of cannibalism). It is thus not the 'shared humanness of cannibals and their victims' but the 'recognition of corporeal similarity' that 'activates our horror', (Guest 2001, p. 3); it is the objectification that the body undergoes which is so horrific. Although the men who are made into meat are usually depraved, offensive, brutal characters, they regain their humanness by the very process that strips them of their humanity. The men are brought to a farm and processed; their bodies manipulated so that they are stripped of their identity and forced instead to conform 'towards a natural mean' (*Skin*, p. 170). The brutality of their treatment is a literalisation, in the Gothic manner, of the terror of degeneracy, of devolving to a vulnerable, animal state. They become 'a nightmare made flesh' (ibid., p. 97). The bodies are doubly castrated. Their tongues are cut out, and when one of the vodsels attempts to communicate with Isserley she notices that 'inside of his gaping mouth was roasted black where the stub of tongue has been cauterised', but the observation that 'white spittal clung to his moustache' (ibid., p. 170) emphasises that the human is not wholly replaced by the animal. Just like Holt, the remnants of his masculine identity make his present fate 'the more conspicuous' (*The Beetle*, p. 303). They are deprived of the masculine, the symbolic, as they grunt: 'Ng-ng-ng-ng!' (*Skin*, p.

100). Grasping to regain his power through the word ‘the vodsel scrawled a five-letter word with great deliberation’ and wrote ‘MERCY’; however, ‘the word was untranslatable’ and so the creature remains one of the ‘vegetables on legs’ (ibid., p. 171). Their testicles are removed as brutally as the tongue leaving behind a ruin, a lack to testify what used to be full and is now an ‘empty scrotal sac...speckled with dried blood...[which] swung back and forth’ (ibid., p. 171). Because of their treatment by the ‘butcher’ (ibid., p. 214), these men become bestial: ‘a mound of fast-panting flesh’ (ibid., p. 169) with eyes described as ‘porcine’ (ibid., p. 218). They are dehumanised because they have been ‘shaved, castrated, fattened, intestinally modified, [and] chemically purified’ (ibid., p. 97). However, it is unclear whether the men are alienated from the ‘sensibility which inhabited’ (Sawday 1995, p. 25) their bodies. The human seems not to be fully erased. Regardless, their fate is to become the delicious meat ‘shimmering in an orange halo, six spits rotated slowly, each loaded with four or five identical cuts of meat. They were as brown as the freshly tilled earth, and smelled absolutely heavenly, sizzling and twinkling in their own juices’ (*Skin*, p. 161).³²⁰

³²⁰ The man’s body is suggested here and elsewhere in the texts discussed to be what tethers him and makes him vulnerable, both to his passions and to mortality. This representation reflects the set of assumptions that Dijkstra notes fed into the misogynistic perspective of ‘the nineteenth-century intelligentsia’ (Dijkstra 1986, p. 341). That woman was ‘mindless materiality’ (ibid., p. 221) while man was ‘embodied spirit’ awaiting transformation into ‘immortal mind’ (ibid., p. 217). In many ways the texts discussed have conformed to this division: the female cannibal’s hunger is physical, while the male characters used cannibalism symbolically to fill their emotional lack, while they face the terror of being edible. This terror is not represented for women because there is a sense that she already faces this objectification and that her ‘self-fashioning through animal transformation’ (Warner 2002, p. 209) is instead a reclamation of the body that is manipulated and reconstructed without any sense of interiority. In other ways, of course, the Gothic text refutes this simplification and conveys hollow men gluttonous and ravenous, desperate to fill themselves in order to assume an identity, while women teem with possible unknown identities.

Where cannibalism, and the conflation between human and animal that this practice instigates, seems to represent, in the other texts, something almost hopeful, in *Under the Skin* the unification that it connotes is horrific. In the previous texts discussed, cannibalism or its fantasy recreates identity: the female is liberated and the male grasps onto the fantasy of cannibalism in order to imagine their reconnection with the mother, while in Faber's text all selfhood is obliterated. Phillips, considering the negative qualities of the cannibal, argues that it represents 'the dangers proffered to the "universal" subject – dismemberment, ingestion, castration, the measures of bestial appetite' (Phillips 1998, p. 184).³²¹ This is the fate of the human turned animal in Faber's text. In the texts discussed above, with this danger comes the promise of fulfilment and liberation from the isolation of embodiment. The cannibal, Kilgour writes, 'is now the *idealised* rather than the *demonised* opposite' (Kilgour 1998, p. 243-4 original emphasis). The cannibal represents the Other by which civilization constructs itself, but in times of extreme individualism, isolation and loneliness, the cannibal represents unity.³²² Unity with all of its pleasure, horror and revulsion, a unity which forces the self and the body to become one when embodiment is the worst human fear.

³²¹ Phillips discusses the implications of the cannibal motif for 'the Jew or the colonised native' (Phillips 1998, p. 184).

³²² Kilgour elaborates: 'cannibalism can become an image for an intense and ambivalent hunger for liberation from a discrete individual identity through reabsorption into a greater corporate identity' (Kilgour 1998, p. 246). However, the cannibal also represents, in psychoanalytic terms, a pathology linked to a regression to Freud's oral stage, where the child has no separate identity and is one with the world and its mother. Kilgour notes, 'The oral cannibal stage must be left behind' (ibid., p. 244).

Conclusion

[F]ood above all is not neglected
(*Julie*, p. 444).

At the beginnings of the Gothic, in the eighteenth century, there was an anxiety or taboo surrounding consumption and appetite for the Gothic text itself and for the excessive and sensational themes that the Gothic discussed. The female body, becoming a commodity in society, was objectified within the texts and consumed by the villain (both metaphorically and literally) who represented the perils of gluttony and indulgence and the horrors of cannibalistic desire. The female was the object of consumption and thus was denied appetite and was depicted as starved and starving. This also communicated the taboo of female appetite, a taboo that persists and changes within the Gothic as the female assumes the status of subject and the power to devour; she moves from being ethereal to bestial in the nineteenth century. With her renewed hunger, she becomes the consumer, devouring the villain who would eat her alive. The two sections of this study discuss the extremes of appetite and the extremes of bodily representations: starvation and cannibalism.

From the transcendent abstinence of the heroine, the carnal gluttony of the villain, and then to the lonely and hungry cannibal, the voracious appetite for the Gothic continues to be graphically literalised within its texts by the Gothic body. The recent strain, or flavour, seems to be for the zombie and its homogenized and indiscriminate appetite.³²³ Recent offerings include Max Brooks' *Zombie Survival Guide* (2004) (and calendar in time for Christmas), David Wellington's *Monster Nation* (2007) and *Monster Island* (2007) and the console game *Dead Rising* (2006). The zombie cannibal epitomises Gothic consumption as it objectifies its own entrails as its next meal. This graphic consumption is also textually literalised by John Martin's extended essay on zombie cannibal films: *Cannibal: The Most Sickening Consumer Guide Ever!* (2007). This text is arranged as a menu with set courses 'GUARANTEED TO UPSET YOUR STOMACH!!!' (*Cannibal Ferox* poster in Martin and Tarantino 2007, p. 141) rather than chapters and the bottom right corner of each page has an image of a bite taken out of the paper. Thus the tradition of viewing the Gothic text as consumable is realised. The zombie cannibal embodies abject appetite and, like the cannibal before it, is unimpeded by sex or race. The zombie cannibal crystallises the literalising movement of the Gothic. The zombie cannibal lurches forward, teeth gnashing, brain dead, and 'pure body' (Cohen 1996, p. 4) driven only by its desire to devour.

³²³ At a recent symposium held at Stirling University (Global Gothic Symposium, 1st December 2007) Fred Botting discussed the zombie, its racial past and future driven by consumer culture in his paper: 'Zombie Questions for Global Gothic' (unpublished at time of writing).

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