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SIGNIFICANT SILENCES AND MUTED MACHINES:
Textile Tropes in British Literature Around the Industrial Revolution

by

Kathleen L. McConnell

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University
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by Kathleen McConnell

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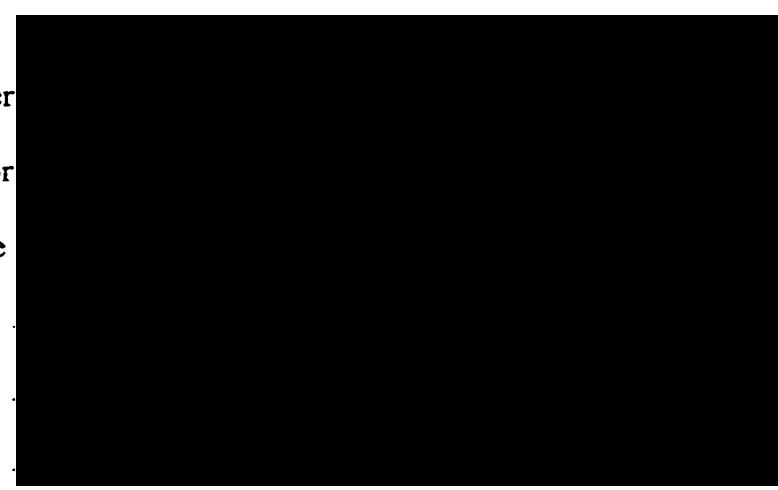

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Abstract

Textile metaphors are as common in literature as actual textiles in the material world. Their familiarity, combined with potential for describing complex relationships, renders them useful to literary critics and creative writers alike. Roland Barthes describes literature as an "*hyphology*;" Elaine Showalter chooses a quilting metaphor to describe the fragmented texts of women writers; N. Katherine Hayles models the intersection between literature and science as a "cosmic web." The complexity of textile metaphors also ensures that they provide apt vehicles for chapter one's theory based on pattern, rather than on agonistic oppositions. Patterns include contrasts, but are not limited to them: like a weft thread that doubles back on itself, sometimes apparently discrete elements actually consist of sameness.

For example, in chapter four of this thesis, Freud's description of the Fort/Da incident illuminates the conceal-and-reveal aspects of Jacques Derrida's essay "A Silkworm of One's Own," Pherekydes's cosmogonic myth (in which the sky father Zas fashions an uncanny cloak for his betrothed Chthonie, which invests her with her identity of earth mother Ge) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet "Lift not the painted veil...." From this analysis comes the elegantly simple premise that veil tropes, like veils, function by transferring attention from the thing(s) cloaked to themselves, thus doubly repressing the hidden. This understanding in turn reveals a pattern in the use of cloak and veil imagery in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, though not before a short exploration of contemporary Islamic feminism. Finally, the chapter draws on aspects of domestic culture to explore some narrative "folds," a word significantly reiterated in *Frankenstein*, but also metonymic of the chapter itself.

The rest of the thesis proceeds in a similarly intertextual manner. By drawing on primary, theoretical, mythological, and etymological sources, each chapter discerns some of the ubiquitous yet rarely celebrated patterns of textile metaphors underlying literary culture. In so doing, the analysis reminds us that both text and textile are rooted in the Latin word *texere*, "to weave."

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Introduction

The web of Collins's pictorialism is of too fine a weave for unraveling.
Hagstrum, "The Sister Arts" 286

The effects of technology on language piqued my interest long before I undertook this project: since my initial degree was a BFA with an emphasis on textile production, I found myself particularly attuned to the unobtrusive ubiquity of textile metaphors. Almost universally accepted as understood where they appear, they appear almost everywhere. For example, "internet" and "world wide web" are two prominent textile tropes currently in constant use. Though sensitivity to textile metaphors began the critical process which resulted in this thesis, sometime between that *alpha* and this *omega* came the realization that the critical practices in which I had been trained required recasting in order to encompass the varied and multiple implications of literary textiles. I've dubbed my approach "pattern theory" and describe it thoroughly in chapter one.

The unprecedented stress textile symbols and tropes in literature underwent during the industrial revolution (also known as the textile revolution) caused me to

focus on that era's literature. Though the Industrial Revolution is often dated from the invention of the spinning jenny in 1764, historian T.S. Ashton starts it at 1760 (48). Its social effects did not really come to occupy writers and cultural theorists until later, during the traditionally defined Romantic period (1798-1832). In *The Visionary Company* (1971), Harold Bloom observes that

> [w]hen Blake was born, in 1757, and even as late as 1770 when Wordsworth was born, England was still fundamentally an agricultural society. When Blake died in 1827, England was largely an industrial nation, and by 1850, when Wordsworth died, England was in every sense the proper subject for Marxist economic analysis that it became in *Das Kapital.* (xiii)

Consequently most of the texts chosen for chapters two to five were written in the heyday of industrialization, between Hannah More's "The Two Weavers" (1793) and the 1837 revision of William Wordsworth's "Extempore Effusion on the Death of James Hogg."

To demonstrate textile metaphors unaltered by industrialization, this introduction first looks at William Collins's "Ode on the Poetical Character." Collins's poem employs an extended textile metaphor and its 1746 publication predates the tensions and anxieties begot by the industrial revolution. In the poem, the narrator proposes a parallel development between God's creation of the world and Fancy's creation of the Cest given to divinely inspired poets — a garment which both inspires them and recognizes their worthiness to be inspired (l.22). The complex mutability of textile terminology lends itself to the task of describing the parallel development of divine and textual creativity.

That very complexity and mutability also threatens to render the poem incoherent, which explains the lack of critical consensus surrounding it. William Hazlitt wrote, "[b]ut perhaps his Ode on the Poetical Character is the best of all. A rich distilled

perfume emanates from it like the breath of genius; a golden cloud envelopes it, a honeyed paste of poetic diction encrusts it, like the candied coat of the auricula" (155). On the other hand, Anna Lætitia Barbauld called it "one of the most difficult and perhaps least satisfactory of the Odes" (xxiii). Then again, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote to John Thelwall that

> Collins' Ode on the poetical character — that part of it, I should say, beginning with — "The Band (as faery Legends say) was Wove on that creating Day," has inspired & whirled *me* along with greater agitations of enthusiasm than any the most *impassioned* Scene in Schiller or Shakspeare.... (40-41)

This lack of consensus has continued into the twentieth century, with scholars like Wasserman, Wendorf, Brown, Van de Veire and Frye championing "Ode on the Poetical Character," while others — for example, Hartman (in "Romantic Poetry and the Genius Loci"), and Bloom (in *Anxiety of Influence*) placing it as a lesser lyric in comparison with the "Ode to Pity" or "Ode to Evening," or Spacks, who writes of Collins's entire book of Odes that "the poems sound visionary and exciting, but they do not compose any coherent poetic fabric (The 'Ode on the Poetical Character' is a conspicuous case in point)" (22).[1] Collins's phrases are sometimes indeterminate, and

[1] Spacks, Hartman and Bloom all give "Ode on the Poetical Character" a place in their critical canons, but always with the unstated coda "despite its flaws." For example, Bloom uses Collins to demonstrate his agonistic theory of textual provenance in *Anxiety of Influence:* "Here is Collins, invoking Fear, yet what has he to fear except himself and John Milton?" (110), and to provide an original moment of canon building in *The Western Canon:* "[t]he *Odes* of William Collins trace the Sublime canon in Sensibility's heroic precursors from the ancient Greeks through Milton and are among the earliest poems in English written to propound a secular tradition of canonicity" (20).

Spacks and Hartman are not so interested in Collins's predecessors as in his inheritors: Spacks observes that Collins "earns attention by his promise of a glorious future: Wordsworth and Keats achieve the fruition which their predecessor intermittently foretells" (9). Hartman thought that it was not Wordsworth or Keats but Blake who eventually achieved that which Collins attempted: "Collins rarely breaks through to the new poetry. His personifications are divinities, principalities, Blake's later 'giant forms,' which seduce or compel our imagination" ("Romantic Poetry..."

critical thought sharply divides on whether or not such indeterminacy marks a flawed or a precocious aesthetic.[2]

Yet I take issue with Hagstrum's contention in the epigraph to this introduction, that Collins's writing — or any textile metaphor, for that matter — will be destroyed if analyzed (*The Sister Arts* 286). The problem rests in Hagstrum's assumption that literary critics necessarily follow the empirical precept expressed by Ian Stewart in *Does God Play Dice?* that "[i]n order to disentangle the web of interrelated influences that control the natural world, it is best to begin by studying a single strand at a time" (30). Such an approach will indeed destroy the text being analyzed, especially if it takes advantage of the complexity available to textile tropes.

In order to develop a method for discerning not single strands but entire patterns — specifically in the use of textile metaphors — I contingently adopt Barthes's idea of the critical reader as someone who "tries to perceive the [textual] fabric in its texture, in the interlacing of codes, formulae and signifiers" ("Theory of the Text" 39): the intertextual references of Collins's "Ode on the Poetical Character" lend themselves to such a method. First, classical mythology informs both the genesis of the "cest of amplest power" (l.19) which Vulcan made for Venus (Spenser IV.v.3-4), and the "rich-haired youth of morn" (l.39), generally interpreted as Apollo, "the god of prophecy, poetry, and music" (Wendorf 48). As well, both Wasserman and Kirk show that the biblical character Wisdom (see, for example, Proverbs 8:22-31) provides a model for both Fancy of "Ode on the Poetical Character," and for Wisdom

325). In all three cases, Collins's work is valued less on its own merits than as a necessary stage through which literature had to pass to get to the Romantics.

[2] For example, Hartman notes that "a phrase like 'Nigh sphered in Heav'n' becomes freefloating or bireferential" ("A Project..." 154), referring both to Milton's ev'ning ear (l.64) and to the Clouds (l.65), just as the earlier phrase "prepared and bath'd in heav'n" (l.18) refers equally to Fancy (l.17) and to the Cest (l.19).

in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (VII.1-11), references which Barbauld apparently missed when she called the mesode "neither luminary nor decent" (xxiii).[3] Spenser's *Faerie Queene* supplies the story of the girdle wearable only by the virtuous Florimell and Amoret (V.iii.24-28) which comprises the premise for the poem, that Fancy's inspiration is a cest awarded only to the most worthy poets. The antistrophe names both Milton and Waller, the former representing the true Florimell of poets, the latter as the false Florimele who melted away when the cest was put on her (V.iii.24). Finally, concerns about the poet and the nature of creativity voiced in "Ode on the Poetical Character" so aptly anticipate Romantic preoccupations that scholars like Frye and Woodhouse court tautology by calling Collins's poem "pre-romantic" (Frye 148, Woodhouse 93). All this intertextuality demonstrates that the "Ode on the Poetical Character" lends itself to Barthesian textile-informed criticism, even before considering Collins's deliberate use of textile terminology.

Collins's use of textile metaphors is at least as subtle and amenable to exegesis as his layered references to his textual predecessors, despite a general critical hiatus on this subject.[4] For example, in the mesode Collins draws the relation between sound, text and textile with simplicity:

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[3] Wasserman states that "the model for Collins' Fancy is the female figure of Wisdom pictured in Proverbs and the apocryphal Ecclesiastics and Wisdom of Solomon" (95), though the pre-eminent reference is to Proverbs, because it is that specific text which inspired Milton, who in turn inspired Collins (96). Sherwin further extends Collins's debt to Milton with the suggestion that the engenderment of the "rich haired youth of morn" by God and Fancy parallels the propagation of Death by Satan and Sin in *Paradise Lost* (34, 36)..

[4] We are faced here with the problem of "reading" Collins "aright": Spacks's suggestion that "[o]ne can say almost anything about Collins while remaining within the limits of plausibility: a fact that may either unnerve or encourage the would-be critic" (10) is only true if the would-be critic ignores (or, as I suspect is more often the case, simply *doesn't see*) the central trope of textiles. In all my research on "Ode on the Poetical Character," only Fry and Finch deal directly with Collins's use of textile tropes. Finch limits discussion to the veil metaphor, which he characterises as

The whiles, the vaulted Shrine around,
Seraphic Wires were heard to sound,
Now sublimest Triumph swelling,
Now on Love and Mercy dwelling;
And she, from out the veiling Cloud,
Breath'd her magic Notes aloud:
And Thou, Thou rich-hair'd Youth of Morn
And all thy subject Life was born!
(ll.33-40)

The most obvious example of the convergence of sound and thread comes in the notes of a stringed instrument. As well, the tension on the warp threads of a handloom causes them to thrum while they are being woven. Collins built upon this simultaneity of aural and object production when he wrote the lines quoted above. In this instance, Collins has added the concept of hair to the fibre metaphor, a convention borrowed

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"language itself, or, more properly, the linguistic medium, the very thing that can never simply be 'lifted' away. As we have seen, the veil undergoes a double movement in Collins. For Fancy — the very force that in the 'Ode to Fear' 'lifts the veil' [l.4] and elsewhere gives birth to poetry itself — also curtains off the scene, presumably of her own inspiration." (290).

On the other hand, Paul Fry in *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode* (1980) looks more deeply into the relation between text and textile:

> [t]he cest, which 'was wove on that creating day,' the Creator uses as an *ad hoc* blueprint for his tenting, dressing (27), engirting (28), and veiling of phenomena. From the standpoint of the reader, however, it is difficult to keep the invocation and the weaving separate, just as it has been difficult to find the poet's tacit invocation embedded in his mythology. The poem at every level presents the Logos as a woven voice. (107)

Other scholars who write on "Ode on the Poetical Character" largely ignore the textile metaphors which imbue it, except where specific words refer to a pretext. For example, Wasserman discusses the line "To gird their blessed prophetic loins" (l.21) in terms of Spenser and *The Bible*: "Since Scripture speaks of the girdles of truth, righteousness, and faithfulness (Ephes. v.14; Isaiah xi.5), the exegetes interpreted the many Scriptural girdles as signs of spiritual purity. 'Ungirt, unblessed' was a popular saying, an instance of which appears in Spenser's fable of Venus' girdle" (103-04). This is typical of critical treatment of textile metaphors: though the connections thus revealed are telling in themselves, the trope is considered for its function as a referent rather than its own inherent complexities. (See also note 8 below.)

from Renaissance courtly love sonnets which refer to the beloved's hair as "golden wires."[5]

The casual reader is forgiven for assuming the "Seraphic Wires" of line 34 are the strings of harps or lyres played by a heavenly host surrounding Fancy as she sits on the throne of God. At this point in the mesode there has been no mention of a host: on the contrary, God and Fancy are depicted as being alone together (l.31). Instead, these wires refer to Fancy's hair which become threads of the cest which she sings into existence. Collins makes no clear delineation between music and weaving, hair and warp, an ambiguity that leads to speculation about the nature of the obscurity which surrounds the sapphire throne: it could simply be a manifestation of the glory of God, on which mere mortals cannot gaze. On the other hand, the clouds are described as "veiling" and veils are usually made of fine cloth, suggesting that the clouds are the physical manifestations of notes sung by Fancy, with each note becoming a hair-fine thread on the world-warp of creation. This elision of note and thread evokes *Timæus*, in which Plato explains how the demi-urge — Creator as artisan — composes the World-Soul from a blend of Sameness, Difference and Existence in proportions that end up corresponding with the intervals between tones and semitones in an octave (27-8).

Nor does Collins actually state that Fancy sang, but that she "Breath'd her magic Notes aloud" (l.38), as pretty a euphemism for orgasm as a reader could desire. From this breath comes the "rich-hair'd Youth of Morn" suggesting that her sound elides

[5] The "golden wires" convention to describe hairs also affects the way we read the analogy comparing Fancy's girdle with Venus' Cestus. Because its creator Vulcan was a smith, most interpreters of myth assume that the girdle was some kind of hinged decorative golden plate, like a wrestling trophy. Collins, however, may have known what is common knowledge to jewelers and goldsmiths: an ounce of gold can be spun into a mile of thread which can then be woven. Consequently the girdle is the product of both weaving and singing.

orgasm and a seraphic labour which joyously produces ... something. But is it the child Apollo, avatar of the sun, music and poetry, as is the usual interpretation? Or is it the cest, a tangible product of Fancy as artisan? Or is it the gift of creativity given only to poets exalted enough to wear the Cest — Milton/Florimell and, contingently, Spenser/Amoret?

Yes, to all of the above. Throughout this poem, Collins deliberately blurs the line between action and object.[6] The cest is an artifact created by Fancy alone, or by Fancy and God, and bestowed on those few worthy of her "Visions wild" (l.22).[7] It is also the act of inspired creation, Fancy's "Flame" (l.22), which at its most exalted produces nothing less than the sun god Apollo. The amorphous significance of Fancy's "zone" (l.16), concurrently serving as both process and product, exemplifies a signature attribute of textile tropes: the difficulty in delineating such a mutable trope, in conjunction with widespread cultural devaluation of textile processes (a phenomenon thoroughly explored in chapter two) results in their widespread critical

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[6] Collins also blurs the distinction between action and action: the "shad'wy Tribes of *Mind*" murmur a "braided" dance (l.47-8), an elision of sound and movement informed by an understanding of how weaving is like a dance to the weaver.

[7] As Fry points out,

> "Cestus" is from *caedo*, "to fall," and more directly from *caestus*, "a boxer's gauntlet or defense." There is no real etymological linkage between "Cestus" and *castus* (chaste), or between "Cestus" and its phantom opposite *incestus* (incest), but the spelling of both Spenser and Collins forces these coincidences into view. (106)

Nor is there any direct link to "ancestor" (Ayto 24), but given the multiple indeterminate referents and preoccupation with textual progenitors in "Ode on the Poetical Character," it is not too big a stretch to consider that a conceptual interweaving of the terms "ancestor," "cest," "incest" and "chaste" informs this poem.

neglect for most of literary history in the past two hundred years,[8] despite the common etymological root of text and textile — *texere*, or "to weave" (Ayto 526).

• • •

The initial intent of this dissertation, then, was to discover patterns in the use of textile tropes in literary language without limiting the complex mutability that both recommends textile tropes to creative writers and renders them opaque to critical analysts like E. G. Ainsworth. Ainsworth's 1937 book *Poor Collins: His Life, His Art and His Influence* delineates Collins's influence on at least one author from each chapter of this dissertation. Most of my subject texts come from Romantic era writers because that literary period coincides with an awakening to the social effects of the industrial revolution, effects which necessarily heighten the significance of textile tropes. However, by concentrating on variations of the trope, this thesis requires a critical practice unanticipated by more familiar literary analyses which focus on temporal or authorial relationships.

Contrasts currently occupy literary analysts extensively. For example, already in this thesis I have presented as useful the information that Spacks, Hartman and Bloom dismiss Collins's "Ode on the Poetical Character" where Wasserman,

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[8] The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the expansion of critical practice to include cultural concerns, especially in Feminist and New Historicist analyses. Within this receptive environment, works like Hedges's "The Needle or the Pen" (1980), Showalter's "Piecing and Writing"(1986), Hillis Miller's *Ariadne's Thread* (1992) and Maitzen's "Stitches in Time" (1998) have become far more acceptable.

Prior to the onset of cultural criticism, there were a few, isolated analyses based on textile tropes (i.e., Paley's 1973 essay "The Figure of the Garment in *The Four Zoas, Milton* and *Jerusalem*."). However, the far more common treatment (or lack thereof) of textile metaphors is exemplified by Bloom's analysis of Collins' "Ode on the Poetical Character" in *The Visionary Company* (6-15, 1971). Nowhere in the pages devoted to the *Ode* does Bloom turn his critical focus to the very trope that informs the poem. When he does mention the textile metaphors, they are treated incidentally as either vehicles for reference to Spencer's *Faerie Queen* (9-10), or as images subordinated to the implied sexual relationship between God and Fancy (13).

Wendorf, Brown, Van de Veire and Frye value it. In contemporary critical practices, similarity tends to be valued only for its function of emphasizing difference — *these* people all disagree with all *those* people. The problem for the analysis of textile metaphors was the continual discovery of similarity in all sorts of disparate places. Textile metaphors arise in everything from the myths of classical antiquity to the prose of contemporary theory (to say nothing of the backs of cereal boxes and shampoo bottles). In order to explore them thoroughly, then, my analytical method appreciates the potential agonisms of contrast as part of a larger paradigm in which similarity represents the rule more often than the exception. To draw out the contexts of specific contrasts, each chapter here includes some or all of the following elements: an etymological aspect; a story taken from classical antiquity; a central text; a foil text (used to show off elements of the central text); and some sort of critical context from the late twentieth century.[9] Each of these elements relates to textiles: they rebound upon each other to illuminate their variously related significances.

The practice of discerning patterns in diversity applies not only to analysis of textile metaphors: chapter one uses the paradox theories of Klaus Krippendorff and Thomas Kuhn, and the field and chaos theories propounded by N. Katherine Hayles to explain the necessity of distinguishing pattern in order to break down arbitrary distinctions of genre or period. Pattern theory entails revising habitual reading strategies to give equal weight to complements. A statistical analysis of the use of textile words in the total *œuvre* of three authors from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries — William Collins, William Wordsworth, and Felicia Hemans — informs the exploration of patterns of critical thought in chapter one. (This analysis is supplemented by more specific listings of the use of the word "fold" in

[9] See Appendix 1: Table of Main Chapter Elements.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* [see Appendix 9] and "loom" in William Blake's *Jerusalem* [see Appendix 10] — terms important to chapters four and five.) A classical element enters into chapter one's analysis through Plato's extended metaphor in "The Statesman," wherein Socrates likens the political structure of a city to the process of weaving a cloak, all the way from the sheep's back to a person's back. The interrelations and divergences in the etymologies of "card" and "weave" — the *alpha* and *omega* of cloakmaking according to Plato — provide a microcosmic demonstration of the possibilities of pattern theory as propounded in this chapter.

Chapter one acts as an empirical foil to chapter two's more traditional hermeneutic of essays by Charles and Mary Lamb. Pattern theory did not spring fully formed from my head: it developed through a process of exploration and evolution. Chapter two's textual analysis initiates the process by questioning the delineation and opposition of gendered literary strategies: a classically correct, "masculine" writing style conveys the feminist message of Mary Lamb's essay "On Needlework," while the Charles Lamb's "On the Melancholy of Tailors" presents us with patronizing message dressed in "feminine" prose. Though E. G. Ainsworth published *Poor Collins* eight years after Virginia Woolf articulated ideas of masculine and feminine writing styles (*A Room of One's Own* 1929), Ainsworth clearly misses Charles Lamb's "feminine" style in Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge on December 10, 1796:

> [t]he tender cast of soul, sombred with melancholy and subsiding recollections is favorable to the Sonnet or the Elegy, but from
> The sainted growing woof
> The teasing troubles keep aloof.
>
> (Lamb, *Letters I* 77; see also Ainsworth 282-3)[10]

[10] The lines actually read: "The dang'rous Passions kept aloof, / Far from the sainted growing Woof" (Collins ll.41-42).

Lamb's telling misprision of Collins's "Ode on the Poetical Character" illuminates "On the Melancholy of Tailors" which hinges on the narrator's inaccurate citation of sources, thus providing a lovely comparison with Mary Lamb's rigorously correct essay. Juxtaposed, the two Lamb essays demonstrate the arbitrary construction of gender difference where the production of both texts and textiles is concerned. The analysis here adopts Roland Barthes's definition of myths as phenomena removed from their historical antecedents (*Myth* 110), and then examines mythical innateness of feminine responsibility for textile production *versus* masculine writing and fighting. Charles Lamb's references to Juno Lucina's interference in the birth of Hercules provide the classical context for this chapter, while the evolution of the meanings of "fabric" and "material" in the eighteenth century provide etymological content.

Chapter three continues and deepens the critical questing begun in the Lamb essays by examining the textual relationship between Felicia Hemans and various poets. Among them, William Wordsworth merited mention by Ainsworth, who observed "Collins ... exercised a slight but definite influence" over the laureate (Ainsworth 259). This chapter not only makes use of textual trends identified in chapter two: it also uses some of the statistical analysis from chapter one. Examining and ultimately abandoning a binary comparison of Hemans's poetry with that of Wordsworth leads to a more open weaving of textual allusions to wreaths and breaths in elegies by Wordsworth, Hemans, Landon, and Barrett. Integrated into an exegesis informed by the etymology of "spin," and the myth of Er as told by Plato, and Ovid's Arachne, Hemans's writing aptly illustrates Nancy K. Miller's critique of Barthes in

"Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text and the Critic" (1986), Miller emphasizes western culture's tendency to "forget" the weaver as artisan, and "remember" her or him as a predatory spider.

Though the analyses offered in chapters two and three begin to explore a less antagonistic criticism based on patterns of imagery, chapter four first successfully demonstrates that the changed emphasis on pattern incorporates binaries without assuming their critical primacy. The chapter begins with an examination of the cosmogonic myth of the pre-Socratic philosopher Pherekydes wherein the sky-father Zas's betrothal gift to Chthonie of a woven and embroidered cloak transforms her into the earth-mother Ge. Jacques Derrida's essay "A Silkworm of One's Own," and Sigmund Freud's famous "Fort/Da" analysis provide critical contexts for the subsequent discussion of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which the creature begins his cognizant existence with the theft of a cloak in the forest of Ingolstadt. Percy Bysshe Shelley's untitled sonnet which begins "Lift not the painted veil..." acts as a foil to *Frankenstein*. Surprisingly, Ainsworth suggests that "one is surprised to find no evidence that Shelley was touched by the glorious *Ode on the Poetical Character*, which in spirit and enthusiasm and myth-making faculty must have struck a responsive chord in his sensitive nature" (272). Not only could the phrase "gloomy scene" from "Lift not the painted veil..." (l.12) be a direct reference to the embrowned glooms in the antistrophe of Collins's ode (l.60), but in denying Collins's influence on P.B. Shelley, Ainsworth demonstrates his critical blindness to the textile tropes which imbue both of these poems, as well as better known works by Shelley like *Prometheus Unbound*. The implications of "fold" as used in *Frankenstein* complicates the conceal/reveal trope presented in chapter four. "Fold" is usually interpreted in a psychoanalytic, labial manner that once again privileges the innate

over the artisanal: looked at empirically, it leads to another possible analysis based on the daily activities of domesticity.

Chapter five extends the analysis in chapter four, as well as integrating aspects from earlier chapters: the tropes of weaving looms and Vala's veil in William Blake's *Jerusalem* convey Blake's multiple visions of industrial and intellectual disintegration and morbidity. Ainsworth suggests that

> Blake's love of shadowy and visionary forms — the side of his genius closest to that of Collins — turned him at this early stage to a poet with whom he had imaginative kinship. And even when in the *Prophetic Books* he had developed his own power in a thoroughly original way he perhaps remembered Collins when he wrote in *Tiriel*, 179 'When evening drew her solemn curtain' or in *Europe — a Prophecy* 'And fold the SHEETY waters as a mantle round my limbs.' (250, emphases in original)

Ainsworth equates the use of textile metaphors with a familiarity with Collins's poetry. As well, Harold Bloom suggests that Blake "wants to be an incarnation of the Poetical Character, as Milton was before him" ("Commentary" 909): surely Collins's "Ode on the Poetical Character" provides the seminal instance equating Milton with the archetypal poetical character which Blake so desired. Hannah More's work-informed poem "Turn the Carpet, or the Two Weavers" complements Blake's work in this chapter, while Homer's *Odyssey* provides the classical reference, with Penelope's weaving compared to the stringing of Odysseus's bow. T.S. Ashton's *The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830* constitutes the chief critical text for this chapter, and the importance of the word "loom" leads to a look at Blake's idiosyncratic uses of its various meanings.

The conclusion uses analysis of George Eliot's short story "The Lifted Veil" as emblematic of post-industrial revolution uses of textile tropes. It demonstrates that the patterns already discovered in the use of textile tropes in Romantic literature — for

example, the cultural construction which aligns femininity, privacy and textile work (chapter two); or the way a veil trope itself becomes the object of interest thus doubly repressing the veiled (chapter four); or the idea that a frame narrative can be analyzed equally effectively with a folding metaphor (chapter four) — not only continue into the Victorian era, but are in some ways distilled. Sophocles's mention of the "voice of the shuttle" invokes Ovid's rendering of the myth of Philomel, the sole classical tale examined here that manages to conflate texts and textiles in a non-hierarchical manner. Critical texts by Geoffrey Hartman ("The Voice of the Shuttle," 1969) and Patricia Klindienst Joplin's response to Hartman ("The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours," 1984) explain Sophocles's phrase in very different ways.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this thesis was determining which texts and authors to include. Keats's *Endymion* and *Lamia*, P.B. Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* and "The Sensitive Plant," Cowper's *The Task*, W. Wordsworth's "The Thorn," Charlotte Brontë's "Retrospection," Anne Grant's "Familiar Epistle to a Friend," Anna Lætitia Barbauld's "Washing Day," Thomas Hood's "The Song of the Shirt," and Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Restartus* are only a few texts from the period using textile tropes but omitted from the current analysis.[11] However, no matter which texts and analyses finally appeared, the initial desire — to trace textile tropes through Romantic literature — remains constant. Though industry's machinery really only matters in

[11] Whenever I explained my thesis topic to other scholars, and no matter what their reaction — which ran the gamut from "how fascinating" to "how strange" and beyond — inevitably they would get back to me with a textile trope from their own area of interest. The response was sometimes immediate, and sometimes took days or even weeks, but it always happened. That's how I found out about the knitting women (Fates) in the office of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the letter likened to an embroidery in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and the pink-eyed shepherdess of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, to name a few.

reference to Blake's *Jerusalem* (chapter five), the machinery of muted, conventional thought provides the ground from which patterns of literary language arise.

Chapter One

COMPARING TO COMPLEMENT:

Textile Words In Collins, Hemans, and Wordsworth

[S]cience will become literature, to the same extent as literature, growingly subject as it is to an overturning of the traditional genres of poetry narrative, criticism and essay, already is and always has been a science.

Barthes, "Science Versus Literature" 98

Omens of discouragement (if not out-right doom) were depressingly thick on the ground as I began researching the theoretical aspects of this chapter. For example, in "The Statesman" Plato traces the production of a woollen cloak all the way from a sheep's back to a human's back, and applies that process as a metaphor for the multifaceted abilities required of a public figure. In the course of the dialogue, the Stranger says to a concurring Socrates: " it surely follows that no one with any wit would be willing to hunt down the speech of the weaving art for its own sake" (III.37). N. Katherine Hayles's *Chaos Bound* (1990) seconds the Stranger's pronouncement, though she bases her complaint on textual rather than textile terms: "it is misleading to analyze a metaphor at the level of individual words, for the essence of a metaphor is the relation it establishes between words" (32). Where

Hayles dislikes the formal goal of my statistical analysis, Plato derides its subject matter. However, this chapter — and indeed, my whole thesis — seeks not to "hunt down the speech of the weaving art for its own sake," but to better understand the literary-critical culture that has long ignored such ubiquitous textual tropes. In doing so, I found it necessary not only to fly in the face of Hayles and Plato, but to contravene the precept of empirical research that Ian Stewart champions in *Does God Play Dice?* (1989) when he states that researchers should "Think first, compute later" (201). Certainly most humanist writing does just that, sometimes without reaching the computing stage. But a statistical analysis of word use provides some useful insights supplementing my humanist-informed intuitions.

Though the statistical analysis offered here is itself straightforward, the very inclusion of statistics has complex theoretical implications. First of all, this chapter understands pattern as comprised of contrasting elements: in weaving, a single, straight strand doth not a fabric make. However, both scientific and literary analyses operate on the assumption that the contrast necessary to pattern must involve opposition. Alternatively, "pattern theory" allows for contrast without opposition, a critical method desired by Don Bialostosky in his 1992 book *Wordsworth, dialogics and the practice of criticism*. Bialostosky tries not only "to 'teach the conflicts' but also to present the convergences of my own and others' work" (xix: internal quote from Gerald Graff *Professing Literature* 1987).[12] Though Bialostosky concentrates on presenting dialogues between literary critics who take Wordsworth's critical precepts as their originals, both my work and that of Bialostosky aspires to achieve an

[12] Bialostosky also anticipates my hubris in presenting a named critical method: he observes that "more and more critics have chosen to name their own theories lest they be theoretically characterized by another critic" (xiv).

understanding of contrast as a function of complements — or, to use the more spatial metaphor, "convergences."

The second complicating factor for pattern theory presented here involves the use of statistics to supplement literary analysis. Doing so situates pattern theory solidly in the midst of ongoing controversies about the relationship between scientific and literary methods, controversies raised and reified by the effect of chaos theory on literature. For example, in the introductory paragraph I justified the use of statistical analysis to guide my humanist-informed intuitions, while Gleick informs us that the need to *create intuition* has become a cliché within Chaotic sciences (178). Finally, there is the related issue of noise and information: the thesis for this chapter assumes that critical "blind alleys" (noise) exist and must be separated from useful analyses (information), an assumption with which I ultimately concur but not without questioning the cultural processes in which some tropes become information, others noise.

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Consider literary discourse a pattern of arguments in which the proponents of schools of thought propose ideas about texts: some ideas are extrapolations from what went before, others are refutations ... a situation which lends itself to confrontation. After all, as Trevor Ross succinctly asserts in *The Making of the English Literary Canon* (1998) "[b]ashing the sell-out is a familiar gesture within the struggle for the cultural field" (236). Too often in supposedly meta-textual discourses, contrast equals opposition. The woven pattern provides an alternative model concerned more with understanding complements than exploiting contrast as an antagonistic opposition. In textiles, pattern arises from the juxtaposition of different colours or textures: textiles emphasize the relationship between different aspects, rather than difference itself.

Contrast inheres in pattern, patterns are not limited to contrasts — they necessarily include complements as well.

In weaving, the weft can be one continuous thread which doubles back on itself so that what appears opposed is in fact just another part of a continuum. In literary discourse, we would consider such doubling back an earmark of self-reference which always evokes anxiety — and understandably so, given the agonistic assumptions of the "contrast" paradigm. If textual analysis rests on a process of defining oppositions, then the "self" of self-reference must be divided and warring within itself. Consequently, in a conventional cultural paradigm unified identity is paradoxical. Nor is there any escape from self-reference, according to N. Katherine Hayles's 1984 book *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Field Models and Literary Strategies in the Twentieth Century*, which states

> [b]ecause everything in the field view is connected to everything else by means of the mediating field, the autonomy assigned to individual events by language is illusory. When the field is seen to be inseparable from language, the situation becomes even more complex, for every statement potentially refers to every other statement, including itself. (10)

Hayles differentiates the quantum field model of analytical discourse from its scientific precursor, the Newtonian ground-particle model predicated on a notion of objectivity which excludes self-reference. The older model depends on the false assumption that an analyst does not interact significantly with the system being observed:

> [t]he "Received View" held that it was possible to distinguish unambiguously between theory and observation, and therefore possible to establish well-defined logical rules of correspondence between the two. The Received View came under increasing attack because the distinction between "observational terms" and "theoretical terms" could not be sustained as rigorous or complete. (*Cosmic Web* 38)

In "A Calculus for Self-Reference" (1975) Francisco Varela notes that literary criticism tends to parallel Newtonian theory exactly where self-reference is concerned:

> it is ordinarily assumed that self-reference leads inevitably to contradictions even in ordinary discourse, let alone in formal languages, and hence... is carefully avoided. Yet, true as this may be, language is self-referential, and, if we are not prepared to avail ourselves fully of self-referential notions, it is not possible to deal either with this aspect of discourse or with the many systems where self-reference is a central feature of their organization. (6)

Hayles's field model considers objectivity illusory and self-reference inevitable: "there will always be one place we can never see at all — the spot we are standing on" (*Cosmic Web* 20). Consequently, no text escapes self-reference with its anxiety-producing blind spots.

Hayles deliberately chooses a web to describe literary theory: she appreciates how the web metaphor "communicates something of the interconnectedness and 'stickiness' of self-reference" (*Cosmic Web* 10). Like a spider's web, Hayles's cosmic web "is designed to entrap ... the dynamic, holistic reality implied by the field concept" (21). But by characterizing the cosmic web of field discourse as a spider's predatory trap rather than the less inimical loom-woven web, Hayles implicitly accepts the agonistic "contrast" paradigm of analysis. This choice results in what that paradigm can only express as a paradox: the passage quoted above goes on to state that

> the prey always escapes, precisely because the web is articulated; ... to speak is to create, or presuppose, the separation between subject and object that the reality would deny. What is captured by the cosmic web is thus not the elusive whole, but the observer who would speak that whole. Hence the cosmic web is inherently paradoxical, deriving its deepest meaning from a whole that it can neither contain nor express. (21)

So, textual self-reference leads to crisis not only because of the inherent blind spot where observers stand, but also because of the paradox implied by the oxymoronic "divided self" implicated in analysis by opposition.[13]

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In order to "solve" the oxymoron of the "divided self" — characterized by the combination of textual self-reflexivity and oppositional dialectics — it helps to examine how other disciplines have approached similar problems. Science theorists such as Klaus Krippendorff and Thomas Kuhn posit that paradox arises when observers' current conceptual paradigm no longer suffices to describe their cultural context: the way to resolve a paradox requires that a more complex understanding of its context be developed, until over-simplified assumptions are perceived and changed. Consequently, according to Krippendorff's 1984 article "Paradox and Information," "Paradox ... might be a stimulus, if not the stimulus, for human cognitive growth and for social-organizational development" (46), because "the impossibility that does become apparent through paradoxes cannot but be a property of the observed and stem from *his or her own* difficulties in describing a phenomenon in the terms available to him or her" (51, emphasis in original). When an individual (or organization, or society) finds a way to re-cast the description in new terms, then the paradox is not so much resolved as shown to be illusory. Such a re-casting represents growth.

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[13] In "The Theory of the Text" Roland Barthes, like Hayles, also recognizes the significance of the choice of metaphor — "The language we decide to use to define the text is not a matter of indifference"(35) — and also chooses the spider web, in his case in order to describe the interrelatedness of literary texts: "A lover of neologisms might therefore define the theory of the text as a 'hyphology' ('hyphos' is the fabric, the veil, and the spider's web)" (39, parentheses in original). Some of the implications of Barthes' "hyphology" are examined in chapter three: in the current context, it is sufficient to note that Barthes, like Hayles, chooses the agonistic web of innate predators instead of that of artisans who produce through conscious intent.

In *The Essential Tension* (1977), Thomas Kuhn states that scientists "need a new vocabulary and new concepts for analyzing events like the discovery of oxygen" (171), a sentiment with which N. Katherine Hayles concurs. Hayles points out how educational traditions within the discipline of science tended to keep within Newtonian bounds until so many anomalies, exceptions and paradoxes arose that the limitations of that system could no longer be ignored:

> scientists, during their apprenticeships in their fields, absorbed a set of more or less unconscious assumptions about how science was "done." These assumptions, transmitted by learning model experiments or by mastering currently accepted theories, comprise the intuitive part of what Kuhn called the "paradigm" for that field. Kuhn pointed out that there are always known facts that contradict accepted theories; but these will be ignored as long as the paradigm allows enough other data to be correlated satisfactorily. It is only when the paradigm begins to break down that anomalies will be noticed, or even reported. Only in this period of "revolutionary science," as Kuhn called the transition between paradigms, does an open-ended search for new kinds of facts come into play. (*Chaos Bound* 39)[14]

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[14] James Gleick's 1987 book *Chaos* supports Kuhn's assessment that scientific change stems from cultural rather than empirical change. Gleick points out how, before the advent of Chaos theory, scientists-in-training would be discouraged from departing from tradition:

> nonlinear equations defy solutions, so why waste a graduate student's time? Gratification was programmed into his training. As long as he kept the experiments within certain bounds, the linear approximations would suffice and he would be rewarded with the expected answer. (56)

In this, Gleick and Hayles are in agreement, despite Hayles's perceptive and aspersive critique of Gleick's reinscription of prevailing cultural paradoxes:

> Gleick's text ... depicts chaos theory as the achievement of extraordinary individuals who stepped out of the mainstream; but this scenario of the solitary man who opens up a frontier is itself deeply a part of the American mainstream.... It intimates that scientific discovery is an activity that men engage in when they separate themselves from their families and from the larger culture; but the theories these men formulate imply that the individual unit is not important....When there is this kind of complex interplay between science and culture, science cannot be separated from the cultural matrix. Like literature, science is always already cultural and cannot be otherwise.
> (*Chaos Bound* 174)

Science analysts succeeded in overcoming limitations entrenched in their disciplines by questioning the cultural assumptions that give rise to paradoxes ignored within the traditional paradigm. Similarly, text analysts need to examine the underlying assumptions that contextualize anomalous moments in order to encompass them. After all, contextual limitations are culturally imposed, and thus apply equally to the humanities as to the sciences: just as "the scientist's cultural and linguistic set helps determine what he or she sees" (Hayles, *Cosmic Web* 40), so too does that of literary critics.

In Hayles's description of the transition from Newtonian particle to quantum field theories, the conceptual revolution was a matter of changing analytical focus from discrete objects to patterns:

> [i]magine, for example, that we are sitting in a diner, waiting for a hamburger. In the ordinary view, the plate, knife, fork, and ketchup bottle are 'real,' while the pattern they form is a transitory artifact of their relative position. But suppose that we were to shift our perspective so that we regarded the *pattern* as 'real,' and the ketchup bottle, plate, knife, and fork as merely temporary manifestations of that particular pattern. This radically altered perspective is analogous to the shift in view suggested by quantum field theory. (*Cosmic Web* 19)

Focusing on pattern supplies a useful alternative to the paradox-engendering critical habit of comparing only to contrast, which leads to oxymoronic problems such as the

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Stewart reiterates the sentiment that science is culturally defined, however he does so using the metaphor of knowledge as fabric rather than Hayles's familiar spider-web: "But what one generation of scientist *knows*, beyond any shadow of doubt, with a knowledge that is built into the very fabric of their world, is precisely what the succeeding generation will challenge and overturn" (55). In Stewart's metaphor the scientific world-view is not an alluring trap for neophyte scientists but a construction to be questioned, and changed if necessary. Furthermore, the word "fabric" became associated with cloth only as late as the eighteenth century: prior to that, it alluded to building materials (Ayto 216), a buried connotation which bodes well for the possibility of cultural growth.

"divided self." As Hayles's rather quotidian example above demonstrates, patterns are everywhere. However, the linearity and complexity of patterns produced by textiles — which encompass criticism by both oppositional contrast and complement — provide a particularly useful metaphor for literary critical processes.

The English language abounds with the paradoxes which signal that a transformative critical methodology waits somewhere in the wings. Meanings which literary culture would consider "mutually exclusive" are integral in the etymology of many words. For example, according to John Ayto the history of "weave" is two-fold:

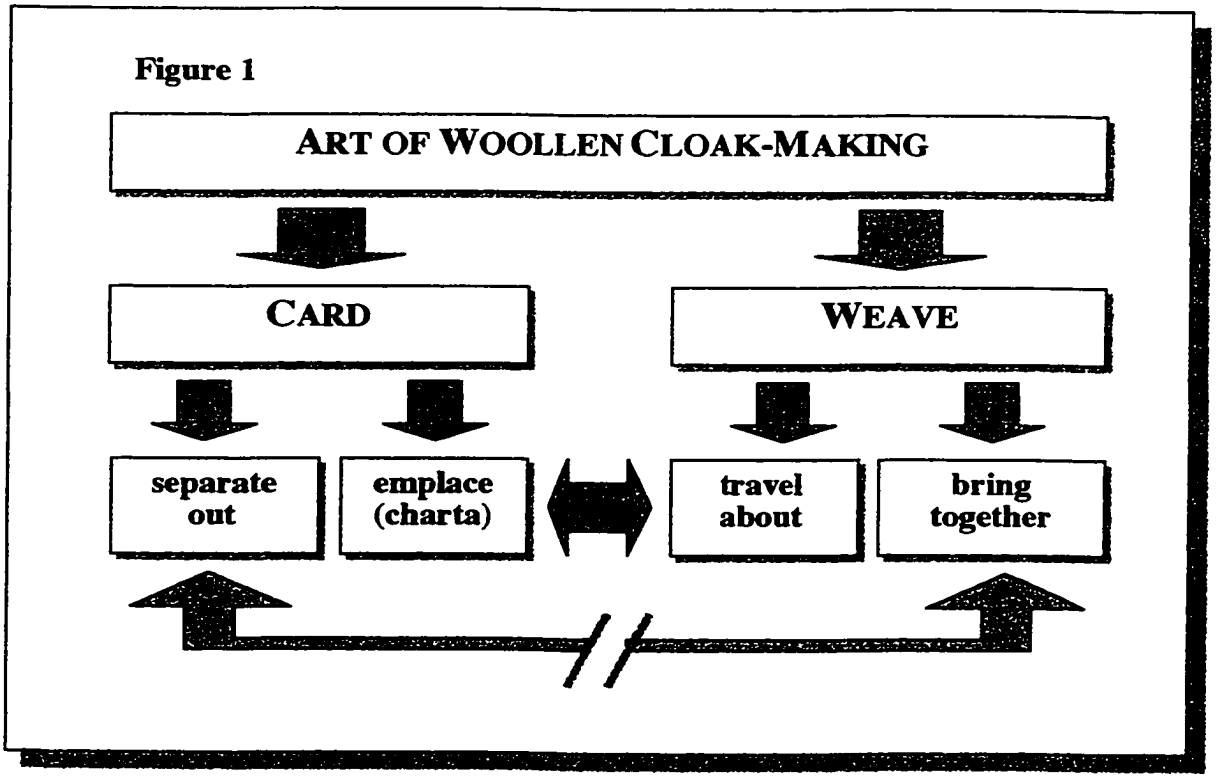
> English has two distinct verbs *weave*, but they have grown to resemble each other closely over the centuries. *Weave* "make cloth" [OE] goes back to... Indo-European **webh-*, **wobh-*.... *Weave* "take a zig zag course" was probably borrowed from Old Norse *viefa*.... At first it meant "move about, travel." The notion of "moving from side to side, threading one's way" did not emerge until the 16th century, presumably through the influence of the other verb *weave*. (569)

"Weave" as we use it today is a homograph, a word derived from two roots which have converged, one of which Plato's "The Statesman" presents as a syncritical process of bringing together separate elements (III.31), and the other which meant travelling, with its implications of moving away.

"Card" demonstrates an inverse etymological development to that of "weave." "The Statesman" considers "carding" (or combing fleece) diacritical, since it names the process by which things are differentiated "one from the other" (III.31). But the more familiar meaning of card is its noun form, derived from the Latin *charta* — the root of "chart," or map (Ayto 97). Carding separates, charts emplace: both meanings inhere in "card." Despite their different etymological developments, apparently irreconcilable meanings reside in "card," just as they do in "weave."

The relationship between the two words further complicates their etymology. Not only are they similar in the "oppositions" which reside in each alone, but their textile connotations comprise the alpha and omega of cloak-making as delineated in "The Statesman," since the whole process begins with the carder making separate those elements which the weaver ultimately brings together (III.31). On the other hand, the non-textile meanings complement each other: card's *charta* provides a map for the "zig-zag course," or travel, of *viefa*, weave. The result is a pattern of relationships encompassing the process of woollen cloak-making, which has the diacritical carding — separating out — at the beginning and syncritical weaving — bringing together — at the end. Each word's two meanings appear to be mutually exclusive, and the two textile meanings appear to oppose each other, but the second meanings are complementary (see Figure 1). Though the oppositions and alignments which

Figure 1



comprise these words provide some information, when we examine the whole complex of inter-relationships, a pattern of complements and oppositions becomes apparent.

That this kind of encoded pattern of meanings is not more frequently the subject of textual analysis indicates conceptual inadequacy. Just as scientists ignore paradox and anomalies until they crop up so frequently that they virtually demand attention, and a subsequent revolution of scientific thought, so oppositionally-biased literary theorists treat the paradoxes inherent in language and literature as received and unchangeable rather than as cultural artifacts.[15]

Though both scientific and literary analyses tend to ignore anomalies until forced to integrate them through change, the relationship between the two disciplines does lend itself to patterns as easily as that between "card" and "weave." Hayles describes the difference: "Because of the social nature of literary constraints, it is tempting for literary theorists to believe that physical constraints are also constructions, and thus incapable of unambiguously indicating whether a physical theory is false" (*Chaos Bound* 225). She juxtaposes physical limitations — the subject of scientific theorizing — to culturally inculcated limitations — the subject of literary theory — in order to achieve the following comparison: "the difference between physical and social constraints lies in the fact that physical constraints manifest themselves in isomorphic ways in different representations, whereas social constraints are specific to the representation within which they occur" (226). Scientific theories are considered

[15] In her 1993 book *Disputed Subjects: essays on psychoanalysis, politics and philosophy*, Jane Flax notes the tendency of "Western philosophers" to ignore problematic aspects of arguments by reducing their arguments into "binary and supposedly natural oppositions. Order is maintained by displacing chaos into the lesser of each binary pair, for example culture/nature or male/female" (139). Chapter one of this thesis explores the arbitrariness of the valuation assigned to the halves of binary pairs.

useful if they are repeatable in multiple contexts: literary theories are determined to be useful by their relevance within specific contexts.[16] Consequently, chaos theory has been embraced by the humanities for very different reasons than those of the sciences: "In the physical sciences, for example, nonlinear dynamics is seen as a way to bring complex behaviour within the scope of rational analysis. Analogous theories in literary studies, by contrast, are often embraced because they are seen as resisting

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[16] Trevor Ross, in his 1998 book *The Making of the English Literary Canon from the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century*, situates the split between empirical scientific and rhetorical literary methods in the eighteenth century: "Its social utility seemingly negligible compared with science's, poetry could not be readily defended according to any principle of direct instrumentality or referentiality" (158). With this description of the moment of change comes an appreciation of the still-existing tension between the "applicable" sciences and the "theoretical" humanities.

However, these differences concern the differing *subjects* of science and of literature. In terms of *dissemination*, the difference between the two is largely chimerical: both are mediated by language. As Barthes points out in "Science Versus Literature," scientific research is necessarily couched in words, and those words belie the objectivity of scientists. Barthes states "the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity or, if one prefers, the place of the subject in his own work, can no longer be thought of as in the halcyon days of positivist science" (96). Furthermore,

> To resort to scientific discourse as if to an instrument of thought is to postulate that there exists a neutral state of language, from which a certain number of specialized languages, the literary or poetic languages, for example, have derived, as so many deviants or embellishments....
>
> [W]riting alone can smash the theological idol set up by a paternalistic science, refuse to be terror-stricken by what is wrongly thought of as the 'truth' of the content and of reasoning, and open up... language to research with its subversions of logic, its mixing of codes, its shifts of meaning, dialogues and parodies. (97)

Thus objective science depends upon the very language that it seeks to abrogate, a tradition which helped foment the revolution known as chaos theory. Unlike their scientifically-trained predecessors but like literary theorists, chaos theorists seek self-consciously to recognize their own culturally-inculcated structures. Furthermore, as Stewart notes "the primary motivation of a research scientist is *the act of solving problems*, not the solutions themselves" (287), just as for literary theorists, the passion lies in the exegesis — so much so that the notion of a universally "correct" reading of any given text is considered naive.

totalizing theories" (xiv).[17] Despite this difference in perceived end, in the context of this chapter chaos provides for literature the same thing it does for science: a way of looking at information for conceptual pattern rather than discrete incident.

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Analysts, be they textual or scientific, have always been interested in discerning patterns. For example, in 1947 Cleanth Brooks published *The Well Wrought Urn*, which seeks means for discovering "the essential structure of a poem" in its "pattern of resolved stresses" (203). Brooks deliberately limits his analysis to the text, without allusion to the *cultural* stresses that formed it, in order to avoid "the poetry of the past becom[ing] significant merely as cultural anthropology, and the poetry of the present, merely as a political, or religious, or moral instrument" (xi), critical directions which he later characterizes as "dangerous" (209). In calling critical ends other than his own "dangerous," Brooks demonizes difference. Similarly, in the chapter "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness" Brooks uses the textile-based scholarship of the (oft mentioned but uncited) Miss Spurgeon as the basis of his own argument:

> But, though we are all in Miss Spurgeon's debt for having pointed this out, one has to observe that Miss Spurgeon has hardly explored the full implications of her discovery. Perhaps her interest in classifying and cataloguing the imagery of the plays has obscured for her some of the larger and more important relationships. At any rate, for reasons to be given below, she has realized only a part of the potentialities of her discovery. (33)

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[17] Hayles illustrates the difference between scientific and humanist "takes" on chaos theory by comparing Bell Labs researcher Claude Shannon and Structuralist literary theorist Rolande Barthes on the subject of "noise": "They concur that noise is inevitable. But Shannon wants to minimize noise, Barthes to maximize it. Similarly, Shannon regards redundancy as a necessary evil, whereas Barthes sees it as an erotic pleasure that swells a compact text into a gargantuan commentary"(*Chaos Bound* 191).

Rather than merely acknowledging "Miss Spurgeon's" scholarship as the basis for his tellingly insightful analysis of *MacBeth*, Brooks chooses to deride her as a pedant. Juxtaposing Brooks's deliberate limitations on textual analysis with his uncharitable assessment of Ms. Spurgeon demonstrates how literary scholarship can explore patterns in literature through processes of exclusion rather than emphasizing inclusion.

Just as formalist literary critics like Brooks sought analyses without reference to culture, so in the classical "received" view of Newtonian science, analysts create patterns by conceptualizing an abstract, blank ground on which the isolated elements of their experiments stand out. Hayles describes this approach as follows:

> Newtonian paradigms focus on individual particles or units. The assumption is that if these units are followed through time, their collective actions will add up to the system's behaviour. The emphasis is therefore on isolating the appropriate unit and understanding the mechanisms that bind units into larger groups. (*Chaos Bound* 169-70)

Similarly, in discussing Galileo's experimental techniques, Stewart articulates the traditional approach to pattern: "In order to disentangle the web of interrelated influences that control the natural world, it is best to begin by studying a single strand at a time" (30). The patterns created in this paradigm have the advantage of being simple and clear, though they don't usually survive contact with the complexity of interactions outside of the experimental realm. As Feigenbaum puts it,

> "[t]here's a fundamental presumption in physics that the way you understand the world is that you keep isolating its ingredients until you understand the stuff you think is truly fundamental. Then you presume that the other things you don't understand are details. The assumption is that there are a small number of principles that you can discern by looking at things in their pure state — this is the true analytic notion — and then somehow you put these together in more complicated ways when you want to solve more dirty problems. If you *can*." (qtd. in Gleick 185, emphasis in original)

The problem is, you can't: classic experiments that work in isolation are not repeatable in more complex contexts. It requires "a new kind of science ... to cross the great gulf between knowledge of what one thing does — one water molecule, one cell of heart tissue, one neuron — and what millions of them do" (Gleick 8). We call that "new kind of science" Chaos.

Instead of abstracting specific bits of information and ignoring everything else as insignificant, chaos theory works to include all the complex interactions of a given situation (hence the alternative name, "complexity theory"). The idea that noise equals information crucially informs this experimental model: all data indicate *something*, and if they seem to function like annoying static, then the problem rests with limitations in the analyst's experimental assumptions, not the data itself. This explains Krippendorff's assertion that he finds it "useful to regard information as a *change in an observer's state of uncertainty*" (49, emphasis in original).[18] This small

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[18] The experimental tendency to treat troublesome information as noise which should be ignored is reminiscent of Krippendorff's evaluation that "paradoxes result from an observer's descriptive inabilities" (52) rather than an actual irresolvable situation. "Noise" is only valueless when examined from a limited perception, just as self-reflexive situations are only paradoxical when perceived from a shallow understanding of their context. The way chaos theory tends to deepen perception is to focus not on discrete phenomena, but on reiterating patterns:

> [t]he fundamental assumption of chaos theory ... is that the individual unit does not matter. What does matter are recursive symmetries between different levels of the system. Chaos theory looks for scaling factors and follows the behaviour of the system as iterative formulae change incrementally. The regularities of the system emerge not from knowing about individual units but from understanding correspondences across scales of different lengths. It is a systemic approach, emphasizing overall symmetries and the complex interactions between microscale and macroscale levels. From this perspective, a proper explanation is one that is able to model large-scale changes through the incremental evolution of a few iterative equations. (Hayles, *Chaos Bound* 170)

Varela, too, suggests that reiteration across scales is one way in which what appears to be random on a micro level may resolve into pattern: "by taking self-reference and time as our *filum ariadnis* through a succession of levels, we dwell upon the re-union of the constituents of these levels up to our own union with the world" (23, emphasis

statement represents a conceptual revolution which makes "it possible to see chaotic systems as rich in information rather than poor in order" (Hayles, *Chaos Bound* 6), or as Livingston phrases it in *Arrow of Chaos* (1998): "noise is only noise with reference to a certain code: noise is the unconsciousness of information, a pattern of the gaps in play" (135). This paradigm applies directly to literature, in which "the canonical text will always have riches in store" (Ross 211) — be "rich in information" — which are "resistant to full discovery" (211), or "poor in order."[19]

Consider the cultural determinism behind the selection of which bits of data will be valued at any given point in history. They are rather like tests for colour-blindness,

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in original). The self-referential *filum ariadnis* here is the textile metaphor, and the incursion of time is the necessarily sequential manner in which words are read.

It is one thing to deride the Newtonian paradigm of an additive accrual of experimental elements, and to laud the quantum field idea of a multiplicity of interacting elements. It is another thing to describe that field. One property of reading is the sequential presentation of words, and another property of Western culture is the tendency to assign value to precedence: consequently, elements presented first are both likely to be considered most important, and culturally determined. Even Hayles could not escape this quandary: in *Cosmic Web*, she chooses to "treat a few models and authors in depth rather than mention many superficially" (11). Despite this common limiting factor, one important difference between traditional and chaos analytical theories remains: Newtonians treat most data as noise to be filtered out by analysts, where to quantum theorists all noise is data rich in information, which they work to integrate.

[19] When he makes these assertions, Ross is concerned with the elements which critics since the eighteenth century have hit upon to designate a text as canonical:

> the critic will tend to focus on those canonical texts whose worth and meaning may not be immediately apparent, and which seem to promise a depth of significance that the critic can then train readers to master.... [I]f canonical texts are to be valued not for their persuasive, productive force but for their service in refining the sensibilities and tastes of readers, or in authorizing critics to assist readers in developing certain special forms of attention, it follows that the most continually valued writings are those that are most receptive to contemplation yet equally most resistant to full discovery. Though the relations between a canonical text and its context of origin or use may be quite complicated, the assumption that the canonical text will always have riches in store is central to modern criticism, and modern literary education, for it provides them with an ongoing legitimacy and function and helps to sustain a structure of belief about the exclusivity and special difficulty of acquiring cultural capital. (211)

graphics in which people who are colour-blind will see one pattern, while people who see the usual spectrum of visible colours discern another. For example, in Western literary-criticism most analysts easily perceive patterns of nature imagery but are blind to patterns of textile metaphors, despite their ubiquity. Thus the virtual exclusion of textiles from critical discourse (until the past twenty-five years or so) reveals more about our cultural preoccupations than it does about literature. Ian Stewart's dictum to "Think first, compute later" (201) misleads: such a methodology necessarily follows culturally inculcated habits, and thereby misses potentially important, though neglected, patterns of information. Instead, sometimes a huge lot of data must be triaged in order to revive the patterns of a culturally undervalued subject.

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The desire to see patterns rendered invisible by the habits of abstracted criticism, then, justified my months spent gathering data on the use of textile terminology in literary language around the time of the industrial revolution in England — months during which I sometimes raised my head from the computer to wonder just what the daughter of my father thought she was doing. Specifically, I compiled a list of textile-related terms (see Appendix 2: Textile Vocabulary, and Appendix 3: Texts and Words not Searched), and then searched for those words in the *œuvres* of Collins, Hemans, and Wordsworth. (In addition to their *œuvres*, statistical analysis on the total works of Joanna Baillie, Thomas Chatterton and John Keats was also undertaken. However, the information gleaned on Baillie, Chatterton and Keats ended up irrelevant to this dissertation and so has largely been omitted.) After completing the search using various on-line and hard-copy databases and concordances, I began determining possible patterns of textile word use.

I compared the number of textile words in each author's *œuvre* to the total number of words (see Table 1 below), which led to the discovery that the percentage of occurrences of textile terms remains consistent across the three writers, always falling between 0.5% and 0.9%.

Table 1
FREQUENCY OF USE OF TEXTILE TERMS, EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL *ŒUVRE*
(See Appendix 4 for complete calculations)

	Collins	Hemans	Wordsworth	ttl
Total # of Textile Wds	**98**	**1710**	**1840**	***3648***
Total # of Words in Poetry *Œuvre*	**10793**	**250390**	**343268**	**604451**
% of TextileWords in Poetry *Œuvre*	(0.908) **0.9%**	(0.683) **0.7%**	(0.536) **0.5%**	(0.687) **0.7%**

Next I determined which words were used typically by which writers, followed by determination of which words were used idiosyncratically by whom. These calculations resulted in two lists, showing first who used the most common words most frequently (Table 2), and who used the less common words most frequently (Table 3). In order to maintain statistical relevance, textile words used less than the average number of times (34) were dropped. The remaining 42 terms became the subject of scrutiny as follows.

The percentage use of each word was calculated. Then the average percentage of textile words for that author was subtracted from the percentage use of each word. This gives the *difference from average* for each author's use of that word. For example Hemans used 32.1% of the total number of textile words counted. She used the word "fold" 86 times out of a total of 143 occurrences, which means that 60.1% of the uses of "fold" appeared in her *œuvre*. Subtracting her percentage of the textile words (32.1%) from her percentage use of the word "fold" (60.1%) gives a difference

of 28. Since "fold" appears more often than average, and since more often in Hemans's *œuvre* more than in that of the other authors, this indicates that her use of this word was typical – a pattern repeated in many of the frequent-appearance words, which leads to the conclusion that Hemans used textile words typically (Table 2).

Wordsworth, on the other hand, tended to use words which appeared less often than average, indicating idiosyncratic word use (Table 3).

Table 2

LARGEST POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR 15 WORDS USED OVER 30 TIMES
(Showing typical word use)

Array	**Hemans**
Banner	**Hemans**
Chain	**Hemans**
Cloth	Wordsworth
Dress	*Collins*
Fold	**Hemans**
Gird	**Hemans**
Robe	**Hemans**
String	Wordsworth
Tie	Wordsworth
Twine	**Hemans**
Veil	**Hemans**
Wear	Wordsworth
Wind	Wordsworth
Wreath	**Hemans**

Table 3

LARGEST POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR 15 Words USED BETWEEN 11 AND 30 TIMES
(Showing idiosyncratic word use)

Attire	**Wordsworth**
Basket	**Wordsworth**
Braid	Hemans
Canopy	Hemans
Cloak	**Wordsworth**
Cord	**Wordsworth**
Curtain	**Wordsworth**
Embroider	Hemans
Knot	**Wordsworth**
Mail	Hemans
Silk	**Wordsworth**
Snare	Hemans
Spin	**Wordsworth**
Strip	**Wordsworth**
Tangle	**Wordsworth**

Before discussing the *positive* significance of different word use among the three authors studied, I'd like to note both what is beyond the scope of this analysis, and some negative conclusions. First of all, because of the multiple significances of many of the words on the search-term list — as verbs *and* nouns (weaving), to denote textiles *or* describe nature (winding thread, winding river) — and the small number of authors surveyed, this sample does not prove blanket conclusions like "women

writers tended to use textile words more than men," or "the more popular Romantic writers used words differently from their neglected contemporaries." Nor could I determine an obvious conceptual pattern to the differences in word use. This means that I couldn't predict trends — which words would be used idiosyncratically, which consistently. They do not organize themselves into conceptual groups, like textile processes (spin, weave, etc.), or icons of the conceal/reveal trope (armour, mail, chain, vs gauze, veil, etc). That said, there are at least three positive evaluations of specific authors's word use:

1. Despite their comparable popularity (see Feldman 176, and also the discussion in chapter three of this thesis), Hemans and Wordsworth used words very differently: of 43 words included here, in 31 cases those two ended up on the opposite side of "0" from each other (i.e.: in three-quarters of the cases, if he used a word more than the average number of times, she used it less than the average, and vice versa).

2. Further to the Hemans/Wordsworth comparison: when we look at 15 frequently used words (gird, twine, tie, cloth, dress, string, wind, robe, fold, wreath, array, banner, veil, chain and wear), in nine cases, Hemans had the highest percentage, which indicates that she used common textile words more often than the others.

3. When we look at 15 words used between 11 and 30 times (attire, basket, braid, canopy, cloak, cord, curtain, embroider, knot, mail, silk, snare, spin strip, tangle), in twelve of those cases, Wordsworth had the highest percentage, which indicates that he tended to use less common textile words more often.

These conclusions indicate a possible empirical indicator of the split between Hemans as a popular people's writer, versus William Wordsworth as a more critically-acclaimed scholar's writer, a dichotomy which chapter three touches on in

its discussion of the historically divergent critical reception of Hemans and Wordsworth.

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After all this work, I discovered why I didn't become an engineer like my father before me: the empirical data gleaned from months spent counting words offered up few concrete results (though those few results prove useful in chapter three), while the theoretical approach developed here provides an important unifying thread throughout all subsequent chapters. Specifically, Krippendorff's perspicacity in observing that "paradoxes paralyze an observer and may lead either to a collapse of the construction of his or her world, or to a growth in complexity of his or her representation of this world" (52) suggests that the way to begin perceiving patterns of textile metaphors is not only on the microcosmic level of counting words, but also on a macrocosmic level of understanding why related concepts like textile metaphors have not often been the subject of comprehensive critical concern. (Krippendorff's statement also suggests an explanation for the plethora of "Abandon hope..." messages that punctuated my research: the messages were acting as virtual mines dispersed by the hegemonic literary-critical mode to discourage exploration of the alternative discourses that its own limitations demonstrate are necessary.)

In this chapter, I work against my cultural conditioning which discourages valuing, or even noticing textile metaphors, despite their consistent ubiquity in literature. In some ways, what I do here does not "change the recipe," but simply claims a "piece of the [critical] pie" for textiles. In other ways, pattern theory is transformative, suggesting that critical analyses do not gingerly tread sticky webs of predatory opposition, but appreciate and even weave culturally constructed webs of complementary, often self-similar, elements.

Chapter Two

TEXTILES AND THE MYTH-CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

in "On the Melancholy of Tailors" by Charles Lamb, and "On Needlework" by Mary Lamb

To Captain Sword and Captain Penn, we must add the Lady Needle,
to complete the number of the ruling powers.

Anonymous, *Athenaeum* 149

Any analysis seeking to distinguish the subtle patterns produced by textual textiles must first sift the contextual "noise" surrounding them. One of the more easily discernable patterns links textile production to femininity. Literature written during the inception, era, and aftermath of the industrial revolution in England bulges with allusions to both classical and contemporary stories about textile processes and products: though these stories originate at widely varied periods and locations in western culture, all support the myth that women and textiles are as innately connected as spiders and webs. This paradigm traditionally has been used in literature to "illuminate" — justify — two larger cultural myths: first, that things female are the purview of the physical realm, as opposed to the masculine intellectual and spiritual realms; and second, that physicality has less cultural status than intellect or

spirituality. To use the epigraph for an example, in the conventional iconography of this hierarchy Captain Penn stands for intellect, the cruciform Captain Sword for spirit, and the ever-late, always marginal Lady Needle for physicality.

In "Stitches in Time: Needlework and Victorian Historiography" (1996), Rohan Maitzen delineates the process by which the needle became aligned with domesticity and privacy, as opposed to the pen and publicity:

> [s]ince Roman times, a girl's education had consistently included instruction in some form of needlework, and associations between needlework but associations between sewing or embroidery and particular, class-specific definitions of femininity accreted gradually between the Middle Agegs and the eighteenth century and hardened into dogma during the Victorian period.... By the seventeenth century ... needlework was one of the primary means by which every girl was trained in her society's ideology of womanhood.... As the separation of the world into masculine and feminine spheres continued in the eighteenth century, amateur needlework became unambiguously and inextricably linked with women and domesticity and thus opposed to the masculine world of public affairs, high culture, and, of course, literary production. (63)

The attribution of textile proficiency to the realm of the feminine and literacy to the masculine is an historically attributable construction, which has been presented to theorists of both genders as *fait accompli* for centuries. Theorists and critics long have used these gender discriminations to "discover" — construct — innately gendered aspects of writing ever since women rebelled against their inarticulate, retired "natures," and published.

Charles Lamb's 1814 essay "On the Melancholy of Tailors," and Mary Lamb's 1815 essay "On Needlework" exemplify very different ways the textile myth and its corollaries inform the literature of Western culture in its early nineteenth-century British incarnations. Concurrent with showing how this cultural prejudice operates in the two Lamb essays, the analysis provided here also shows that the associations

between textiles and women, and women and physicality serve historically longstanding ideological objectives.

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In "Myth Today" Roland Barthes characterizes myths as phenomena divorced from their own history such that, though made, they appear to be received without mediation: "We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature" (129). One consequence of this illusion of ahistoricity is that the constructedness of any given mythology becomes apparent if one can discover its initial appearance as a text. Given history's textual construction, it is difficult to maintain an illusion of eternal existence when faced with a specific historical moment before which a myth did not exist in writing.

Barthes' definition of myth extrapolates from Ferdinand de Saussure's axiom that the relationship between sign and signified is arbitrary (67). Barthes applies Saussure's premise to mythology with the assertion that "The myth consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system" ("Myth Today" 131). Just as a signifier's relation to that which it signifies results from habit rather than logic, so too the relation between the icons and the dogma of a myth represents tradition, not necessarily reason. Because of the similar ways in which words and myths accrue meaning, evidence of mythologization can rest in etymological development. If one can discover when a word's meaning changes to signify something previously unrelated to that word, one has put one's finger on the moment of a myth's genesis.

For example, John Atyo pinpoints the inception of the industrial revolution as the time when the word "fabric" came to be associated with woven textiles: "It was not until the mid eighteenth century that the underlying notion of 'manufactured material'

gave rise to the word's main present-day meaning 'textile'" (216). The *Oxford English Dictionary* supports Ayto's findings: it lists a 1791 example of the first use of "fabric" to denote not an architectural material but a textile: "4. A manufactured material; now only a 'textile fabric', a woven stuff.... 1791 ROBERTSON *India* ii.88 Working up its [silkworm's] productions into .. a variety of elegant fabrics." Prior to this change, "fabric" referred to building materials in an architectural milieu: a person might refer to the "august fabriq of Christ Church" (Evelyn 1666, qtd. in OED). The conceptual leap from describing the surface of a wall to the surface of a cloth is not a very large one, especially if the cloth was manufactured industrially, and if the speaker wishes to emphasize its sturdiness. In this particular change of meaning, the wall-like qualities transfer from a place where they exist — in walls — to one where they are myths — in cloth. In the subsequent centuries, the wall associations of "fabric" have gone underground: they are no more than tacit implications of the word's textile significance.

Though it happened later, "material" acquired textile connotations in a similar but more complicated accrual of meaning which brings into play the textile mythology mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. The OED shows the use of "material" in reference to cloth as a new development in an old word:

> B.2.a. The matter from which an article, fabric, or structure is made.
> ...
> ...**1865** LUBBOCK *Preh. Times* 25 Considering how perishable are the materials out of which clothes are necessarily formed.
> ...**1796** HUNTER tr. *St. Pierre's Stud. nat.* (1799) III.648 By drawing from a foreign country the raw material of their clothing.... **1835** URE *Philos. Manuf.* v. 207 Flax ... constitutes the material of linen cloth.
> B.4. A stuff or fabric; in *dressmaking*, woolen or cloth stuff as opposed to silks, etc.
> **1860** DICKENS *Uncomm. Trav.* iv. A cool material with a light glazed surface, being the covering of the seats. **1875** *Plain Needlework* 10 The material used in the South to strain milk, called 'Cheese Cloth' in the trade.

The above shows how "material" once referred only to the raw stuff from which cloth was produced, though by the second half of the nineteenth century it referred specifically to the finished product. Unlike "fabric," however, the change of meaning of "material" has a significance beyond providing an example of the effect of industrial processes on language. Rooted in the Latin *materia* (Ayto 341), "material" appeared in English around the late fifteenth century and referred at that time to either philosophical differentiation between the concrete and the formal, or important consequences (OED). Four centuries later, concurrent with gaining a textile signification, it came to mean "Relating to the physical, as opposed to the intellectual or spiritual, aspect of things; concerned with physical progress, bodily comfort, or the like." Clearly, "material" suffered retrograde progress in terms of its conceptual status at the time that it came to be related to textiles.

This change occurred because "material" had come to be allied with textiles, and in our patriarchal traditions, textiles have ancient mythological roots linking them with women. Classical myths portraying women as weavers have persisted through the centuries, despite the historical reality of textile production as public business and therefore as much the purview of men as of women. The stories of Arachne, Penelope, Ariadne, and Philomel are fairly common knowledge today, but hardly anyone knows about Pherekydes' cosmogonic myth in which Zeus creates the world as a woven and embroidered cloak which he gives to his bride Chthonie (Schibli 51). These stories have their equal in those of psychoanalysis propounded by Sigmund Freud in his 1933 lecture on the psychology of women:

> [p]eople say that women contributed but little to the discoveries and inventions of civilization, but perhaps after all they did discover one technical process, that of plaiting and weaving. If this is so, one is tempted to guess at the unconscious motive at the back of this achievement. Nature herself might be regarded as having provided a model for imitation, by causing pubic hair to

> grow at the period of sexual maturity so as to veil the genitals. The step that remained to be taken was to attach the hairs permanently together, whereas in the body they are fixed in the skin and only tangled with one another. If you repudiate this idea as being fantastic, and accuse me of having an *idée fixe* on the subject of the influence exercised by the lack of a penis upon the development of femininity, I cannot of course defend myself. (*New Introductory Lectures* 181)

Further, women have long been identified with the physical rather than with spirit or intellect: Carl Gustav Jung's insistence on identifying *eros* with women and *logos* with men (*Aion* 13, *Commentary* 336) represents a contemporary abstraction of the ancient earth-mother/sky-father duality that defines Hera and Zeus, Juno and Jupiter, Freya and Odin, Mary and God.[20] Consequently, when "material" came to mean cloth, it became subject to the deeply-rooted gender associations that inevitably accompany textiles in western culture.

In fact, *materia* itself originally derived from *mater*, which is also the root of "mother" (Ayto 356). Neither Ayto nor the OED cite this relationship in the entries on "material": it only appears under "mother." Clearly, the woman-related connotations were lost somewhere in the time between the development of *mater* into *materia* and the sixteenth century English uses of "material." In a sense, the nineteenth-century association of "material" with cloth and therefore women does not provide a new meaning, but rather reinstates a very old one. What is new is the additional nineteenth-century connotation of "relating to the physical, as opposed to the intellectual or spiritual, aspect of things" (OED). In this, body deliberately opposes brain and soul, a divisive and value-laden set of oppositions in a culture which worshipped above all else the disembodied masculine trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

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[20] Certainly, the tradition of sky-father and earth-mother is not the only construction of mythological dieties; however, it informs the history of the texts studied in this thesis.

Nor is this change in the meaning of "material" an isolated case. In *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Merry E. Wiesner points out how identification with women occurred concurrently with the cultural devaluation of the textile process of needlework:

> [t]he best example of loss of status in an art form is embroidery, which in the Middle Ages was practiced by both women and men often organized into male-directed craft guilds and paid on a scale equivalent to painting, but which throughout the early modern period became increasingly identified as feminine. Middle- and upper-class girls were taught to embroider because embroidered clothing and household objects became signs of class status, and because embroidery was seen as the best way to inculcate the traits most admired in a woman — passivity, chastity, attention to detail, domesticity. As more embroidery was produced in the home for domestic consumption, it was increasingly considered an 'accomplishment' rather than an art, and those who embroidered for pay received lower wages, except for the male designers of embroidery patterns and the few men employed as court embroiderers by Europe's monarchs. (148-9)

In its etymological change, "material" simply followed a cultural trend exemplified more dramatically by the devolution of embroidery from an art to an accomplishment.

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Thus far, I have analyzed the textile implications of the evolution of two words, "fabric" and "material," using Barthes' concept of mythologizing as "passing from history to nature" ("Myth Today" 143). In the case of "material," etymological development signals those moments when it became subject to the textile myth — that textiles are identified with the female — and its corollaries — that physicality is also identified as a female attribute (as opposed to the male attributes of spirituality and intellect) and that physicality has a lower cultural status than spirit or intellect.

When a myth is embedded in an essay, the entire text can mark the myth's evolution, and demonstrate its cultural function, as in "On the Melancholy of

Tailors."[21] In this 1814 essay, Charles Lamb — writing under the pen name "Burton, Jr." — mythologizes tailors' melancholy by treating it as a natural attribute of what he calls the "race" of tailors (390). Of course, "On the Melancholy of Tailors" intends to amuse the reader, so it is uncertain whether or not C. Lamb meant his "myth" to be taken literally: such indeterminacy marks clever humour. What matters to the current analysis is the extent to which the already extant textile myth informs, and is perpetuated by, C. Lamb's superficially spurious arguments.

"On the Melancholy of Tailors" opens with a classic case of Barthesian mythologization: "[t]hat there is a professional melancholy, if I may so express myself, incident to the occupation of a tailor, is a fact which I think very few will venture to dispute" (390). Tailors' melancholy is introduced as a "natural" (Barthes, "Myth Today" 129) phenomenon, which the balance of the article purports to explain, eschewing any impulse to prove that they *are* melancholy. The narrator holds the pensiveness of tailors to be self-evident, and appeals first to the experience of the reader — "Do you ever see him go whistling along the foot-path like a carman...?" (Lamb, "On the Melancholy..." 390) — and then to the absence of evidence to the contrary — "But the partial omissions of historians proving nothing against the existence of any well-attested fact" (390) — as sufficient justification for the theme of his essay.

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[21] "On the Melancholy of Tailors" was originally published in the December 1814 issue of *The Champion*, which is the version generally cited in this paper. The entire essay is reprinted in the more accessible *Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb* of 1908. C. Lamb also authorized an edited version for his *Collected Works* of 1818.

The device of assuming proof through the absence of contrary evidence acts throughout C. Lamb's essay. In the most obvious example, the narrator laments the lack of treatment of tailors' melancholy in other literary compendia on the subject:

> [t]his characteristic pensiveness in them being so notorious, I wonder none of those writers, who have expressly treated of melancholy, should have mentioned it. Burton, whose book is an excellent abstract of all the authors in that kind who preceded him, and who treats of every species of this malady, from the *hypochondriacal* or *windy* to the *heroical* or *love melancholy*, has strangely omitted it. Shakspeare [sic] himself has overlooked it. "I have neither the scholar's melancholy (saith Jaques), which is emulation; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's which is politick; not the lover's, which is all these:" — and then, when you might expect him to have brought in, "nor the tailor's, which is so and so" — he comes to an end of his enumeration, and falls to a defining of his own melancholy.
>
> Milton likewise has omitted it, where he had so fair an opportunity of bringing it in, in his *Penseroso*. (390, emphasis in original)

By invoking the names of Burton, Shakespeare, and Milton — and then increasing their reputations for veracity by referring to them as historians — Burton, Jr. perversely exploits their authority: perversely, in that he has referred to them in order to enumerate how they have failed to support his own thesis, which he persists in attributing not to himself, but to common experience. The narrator does not admit the possibility that the omission of tailors from the works of Burton, Shakespeare and Milton might suggest that his thesis is, in fact, wrong. Instead readers are invited to speculate on why these writers have forgotten to include tailors. Thus Burton, Jr. turns omission by the most reputable sources into proof rather than disproof.

What else has been omitted from the above passage? In *As You Like It*, Jacques actually states:

> I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's, which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all these.... (Shakespeare IV.i.10-15)

The less-than-reliable narrator of "On the Melancholy of Tailors" compounds the soldier and the lawyer, and entirely leaves out the musician and the lady. On one hand, these errors constitute evidence that the narrator is at least as culpable of sins of omission as the author/historians whom he takes to task, a further example of the wit of the essay at work since the narrator himself frequently alludes to other historical and literary phenomena. C. Lamb has created in Burton, Jr. that common figure of fun — an indifferent scholar who takes himself far too seriously. We as readers are invited to take the narrator's assertions with a grain of salt.

On the other hand, since we cannot trust Burton, Jr.'s inclusions, that which he has excluded or treated as superfluous becomes subject to scrutiny. Although his assertions are less than credible on their own merit, they become important for what they imply about the cultural matrix supporting these humorous gaffes. Consequently, the gender-role stereotyping of the textile myth becomes crucial to "On the Melancholy of Tailors," though its potential as a source of sorrow in tailors escapes overt explication by the narrator.

Instead, he openly speculates on one "final" cause and three "efficient" causes for the characteristic depression of tailors. He proposes that Eve's sin and Adam's fall are a final cause:

> [a]nd first, may it not be, that the custom of wearing apparel being derived to us from the fall, and one of the most mortifying products of that unhappy event, a certain *seriousness* (to say no more of it) may in the order of things have been intended to be impressed upon the minds of that race of men to whom in all ages the care of contriving the human apparel has been entrusted, — to keep up the memory of the first institution of clothes, and serve as a standing remonstrance against those vanities, which the absurd conversion of a memorial of our shame into an ornament of our persons was destined to produce? (390, emphasis in original)

As for efficient causes, he cites:

The sedentary habits of the tailor. —
Something peculiar in his diet. —
Mental perturbation from a sense of reproach &c. — (390)

Nowhere in these four stated causes does Burton, Jr. suggest that tailors' melancholy stems from the fact that they are men doing women's work.

Unlike Burton, Jr., I am unwilling to assert this omission alone as proof. Fortunately, textual evidence supports the premise that gender-role stereotyping underlies Burton Jr.'s thesis: the narrator imposes attributes of femininity onto tailors in four cumulatively informative instances. In the Virgilian epigraph, the word "*Infelix*" describes Theseus. *Infelix* has the dual connotations of "unhappy" and "unfruitful." Although this detail remains opaque during the opening of the essay, its importance increases when remembered in conjunction with later images of fertility.

The second mention feminizing tailors is equally subtle. After his panegyric on tailors' depressing knowledge that their vocation results from the fall of man, the narrator cryptically states: "[c]orrespondent in some sort to this, it may be remarked, that the tailor sitting over a cave or hollow place, in the cabbalistic language of his order, is said to have *certain melancholy regions* always open under his feet" (390, emphasis in original). Though the "certain melancholy regions" refer to hell, the "cave or hollow place" initially appears to be more cryptic.

The narrator's elucidation of the first efficient cause for tailors' melancholy sheds some light on the earlier statements: "[t]he unnatural and painful manner of his sitting must also greatly aggravate the evil, insomuch that I have sometimes ventured to liken tailors at their boards to so many envious Junos, *sitting crosslegged to hinder the birth of their own felicity*" ("On the Melancholy..." 390, emphasis in original). According to J.G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*:

> [w]hether you cross threads in tying a knot, or only cross your legs in sitting at your ease, you are equally, on the principles of homeopathic magic, crossing or thwarting the free course of things, and your action cannot but check and impede whatever may be going forward in your neighbourhood.... The stock instance of the dreadful consequences that might flow from doing one or the other [crossing legs or clasping hands] was that of Alcmena, who travailed with Hercules for seven days and seven nights, because the goddess [Juno] Lucina sat in front of the house with clasped hands and crossed legs, and the child could not be born until the goddess had been beguiled into changing her attitude. (240)

In "On the Melancholy of Tailors" Juno hinders not the product of another's womb, but the "*birth of her own felicity*" (390): the narrator has conflated Alcmena and Juno, leaving the reader with the image of an angry goddess denying her own body. Read in the light of this reference to Juno and the appearance of "*Infelix*" in the epigraph, the "cave or hollow place" (390) becomes another womb image. However, these are not just any wombs: one is hollow and synonymous with hell, and the next sites contention between will and body. Clearly, an undercurrent of *unease* (to say no more of it) acts in the narrator's implicit allusions to the female body.

In the fourth example, the narrator expands upon the sedentary habits of tailors by feminizing their work. He asserts that a sitting posture "is that, in which the hen (a creature of all others best fitted to be a pattern of careful provision for a family) performs the most beautiful part of her maternal office" (390). Here, as in the "cave or hollow place," the womb is external. However it is no longer hellish or dreaded: in fact, the narrator mingles traditional gender roles by holding up the sedentary status of the hen as a pattern for the male role of providing for the family.

But we must remember to be suspicious of anything proposed to us by the narrator. Psychoanalysts have long justified the tradition of passivity as a virtue in women (cf. Wiesner 149) with a biological argument suggesting that the difference

between "doing" and "being" is the difference between men and women. Karen Horney states it as follows:

> [n]ow one of the exigencies of the biological differences between the sexes is this: that the man is actually obliged to go on proving his manhood to the woman. There is no analogous necessity for her: even if she is frigid, she can engage in sexual intercourse and conceive and bear a child. She performs her part by merely *being*, without any *doing* — a fact which has always filled men with admiration and resentment. The man on the other hand has to *do* something in order to fulfill himself. (359, emphasis in original)[22]

So when the narrator of "On the Melancholy of Tailors" suggests that more men should sit still like tailors, he imposes on men what has long been considered not just a good trait in women, but an innate one. C. Lamb's epigraph emphasizes that such stillness, unnatural in a man but essential to a tailor, will lead inevitably to depression: "*Sedet, æternumque sedebit, / Infelix Theseus*" ["Sitting, always sitting / Unhappy [Unfruitful] Theseus"] (*Champion* 390). What may be *felix* in a woman is *infelix* in a man.

Nor is passivity the only feminine virtue that the narrator celebrates in tailors. He lauds them for their curious lack of vanity: "Nay, I doubt whether he would discover any vain-glorious complacence in his colours, though 'Iris' herself 'dipt the woof'" (Lamb, "On the Melancholy..." 390).[23] Thus, according to Burton Jr., "natural" traits

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[22] See also Carol Shiner Wilson's "Lost Needles, Tangled Threads" (1990) for a culturally based argument linking women and passivity. Wilson observes that "For all classes, the needle was an instrument of social control that kept girls and women sedentary for hours." (168)

[23] The narrator *does* deride tailors for excessive pride: "Therefore a tailor may be proud," and "The peacock is not more tender, from a consciousness of his peculiar infirmity, than a gentleman of this profession is of being known by the same infallible testimonies of his occupation"(390). However, this may be a veiled reference by the cockney C. Lamb to Thomas Love Peacock, who published "The Philosophy of Melancholy: A Poem in Four Parts" in 1812. Lucas, C. Lamb's biographer, states that

that have traditionally applied to a good woman apply equally to a good tailor, an assumption which reinforces the textile myth — after all, according to the myth textile production is as innately feminine as passivity and modesty.

Just as the "cave or hollow place" image invites an overt and implicit interpretation — both hell and womb — so too does the progression of references to the female include an obvious and a subtextual interpretation. On the surface, the movement from a hellish empty womb to a womb of contention — labouring, but unnaturally hindered by an exercise of will — to the pastoral image of a contented hen sitting on a fecund egg, seems to be a positive progression. But, though the narrator treats the connection between tailors and women subtly, the myth that women are identified by their bodies, and that textile work is more rightfully that of women acts implicitly: it provides the unquestioned subtext upon which the humour rests. In "On the Melancholy of Tailors," images of bodies are associated with tailors, who are also exemplars of womanly virtues. Though "On the Melancholy of Tailors" is full of people who sew for a living, and of wombs both barren and fecund, there are no actual women. Instead readers find unhappy, unfruitful tailors.

> Procter tells us that on the evening at Hunt's when he first met Lamb he made the acquaintance also of Hazlitt, Walter Coulson and Thomas Love Peacock. I can find no other evidence that Lamb and Peacock ever met; but they certainly ought to have done so, especially as Peacock entered the Examiner's office of the East India House [where C Lamb had held a position since 1792] in 1819. (463)

Lucas's assumption is firmly refuted by Peacock's editor Brett-Smith: "There is ... no conclusive evidence that he [Peacock] met Lamb: Procter does not say, as Mr. E.V. Lucas has assumed, that he encountered them on *the same* evening at the Hunts', and at Leadenhall Street [East India House] Lamb was engaged on a lower grade of service and in a different department" (xcvii). Given the subtext suggested by the Lucas and Brett-Smith, I find it quite plausible that class tensions led C. Lamb to indulge in some literary sniping at Peacock's expense by referring to the pride of peacocks in a humourous essay on melancholy published just two years after Peacock's serious attempt upon the same subject.

Nor does Burton Jr. admit that textile production provides tailors with a felicitous alternative to gestation. On one hand, Horney raises the possibility that "one of the principal roots of the whole masculine impulse to creative work [is] the never-ending conflict between man's longing for the woman and his dread of her" (349). On the other hand, textile work traditionally supplied one of the few socially condoned outlets for women's expressivity, though, as Rozsika Parker states in *A Subversive Stitch*, that creativity was subordinate to the task of instilling womanly virtues:

> [t]he role of embroidery in the construction of femininity has undoubtedly constricted the development of the art.... Limited to practicing art with needle and thread, women have nevertheless sewn a subversive stitch — managed to make meanings of their own in the very medium intended to inculcate self-effacement. (215)

Josephine Donovan's 1991 article "Women and the Rise of the Novel" raises the issue of how people turn the instruments of their oppression into modes of expression: she observes that "knitting, baking, needlepoint, and quilting are just a few of the household tasks that blur the line between use-value products and art" (446). In C. Lamb's essay, even those contingent modes of expression are appropriated by men.

However, that appropriation does not result in creative satisfaction for tailors. According to Burton, Jr. not even a tailor's pattern-book gives him pleasure:

> [t]he display of his gaudy patterns in that book of his which emulates the rainbow never raises any inflations of that emotion in him, corresponding to what the wig-maker (for instance) evinces, when he expatiates upon a curl or a bit of hair. He spread them forth with a sullen incapacity for pleasure, a real or affected indifference to grandeur. (C. Lamb, *Champion* 390)

It's no wonder that C. Lamb's tailors are a melancholy lot. Not only are they feminized men in a patriarchal culture, but they fail to express themselves through the

work that causes their feminization. In this case, the dread of women which Horney asserts as the cause of men's desire to create is compounded by the bitter realization that the genre which some men usurped from women cannot satisfy: hence the uneasy depictions of wombs in C. Lamb's essay. The very barrenness, tribulation, and passive gravidity emblematic of the three womb images also describe a tailor's experience of creativity and self-expression when attempted through textile production.

Nor is it any wonder that C. Lamb settles on the situation of tailors as a subject for humour. The butt of the joke — men in vocational drag, as it were — must be a source of unease in an aggressively masculine culture. Readerly amusement simply expresses that unease on the part of a threatened cultural *status quo*. If the social fabric can contain the systematic usurpation of a feminine creative outlet by men, then what's to stop women from attempting traditionally masculine creative media such as literary production (Captain Penn) or violence (Captain Sword)? Furthermore, tailors have experiential proof of the relative inadequacy of sewing compared to writing as a means of expression: as far as they're concerned, anyone, male or female, would prefer writing or fighting to sewing. History concurs, as Kathryn R. King observes in "Of Needles and Pens and Women's Work" (1995):

> when set against the activities of the pen, needlework ... always assumes negative values, signifying a restrictive female role and often projecting a disturbed, even claustrophobic experience of femininity and the domestic role — its immobility, inactivity, boredom, and so on — against the possibilities for intellect and learning, expansion and movement ... associated with the pen. (84)

Unlike male tailors, published females go against the traditions of patriarchy — hence C. Lamb's invocation of the conservative textile myth at a historical moment when women are becoming established as writers.

According to Anne K. Mellor in *Romanticism and Gender*, when women began to publish popularly, their historically assigned cultural attributes were usurped by the men who became the icons of the Romantic era:

> [w]hen he claimed that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" from a man who has thought "long and deeply," Wordsworth and the Romantic poets who followed him effectively stole from women their primary cultural authority as the experts in delicate, tender feelings.... (23)

The iconic Lady Needle joins Captains Penn and Sword at this point in history, not only because women have become recognized as writers but also because male writers have usurped what little, domestically-based cultural authority women enjoyed.[24] Mellor demonstrates ways in which a male author can write what

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[24]Although Burton Jr. sees no need to mention the rise of literary women, the concurrent feminization of writing affects "On the Melancholy of Tailors." The discussion of the first efficient cause of tailors' melancholy — sedentary habits — begins with the following:

> [i]n Dr. Norris's famous narrative of the frenzy of Mr. John Dennis, the patient, being questioned as to the occasion of the swelling in his legs, replies that it came "by criticism"; to which the learned doctor seeming to demur, as to a distemper which he had never heard of, Dennis (who appears not to have been mad upon all subjects) rejoins with some warmth, that it was no distemper, but a noble art! that he had sat fourteen hours a day at it: and that the other was a pretty doctor not to know that there was a communication between the brain and the legs.
>
> When we consider that this sitting for fourteen hours continuously, which the critic probably practiced only while he was writing his "remarks," is no more than what the tailor, in the ordinary pursuance of his art, submits to daily (Sundays excepted) throughout the year, shall we wonder to find the brain affected, and in a manner over-clouded, from that indissoluble sympathy between the noble and less noble parts of the body, which Dennis hints at? (Lamb, *Champion* 390)

With the above quote, the narrator equates critical writers with tailors, except that tailors work harder, and are, if anything, more sedentary. Still, both male-dominated occupations elicit from their practitioners the passivity which Horney identifies as innately female, and which Wiesner cites as historically highly sought in women.

(NB: Though I have failed to unearth "Dr. Norris's famous narrative," the Mr. John Dennis referred to here is almost certainly the English critic and playwright born in London in 1657, who "produced biting criticism to support the Whigs" until his death in 1734 [*Cambridge* 408].)

gynocriticism denotes a feminine text: her discussion focuses on Keats, who, Mellor asserts, defines the true poet as "one who possesses a self with permeable ego boundaries that exists *only* in its relations with others, [and who] also locates poetic creation in the realm of the feminine, identifying it with pregnancy or, in another metaphor borrowed from the realm of female production, as weaving or spinning."(175) The form of "On the Melancholy of Tailors" typifies this permeability.

For example, in her 1977 essay "This Sex Which is Not One," Luce Irigaray achieves an appreciation of women's use of language by examining female sexuality — specifically the female body — and extrapolating from that to language:

> [i]n her statements — at least when she dares to speak out — woman retouches herself constantly. She just barely separates from herself some chatter, an exclamation, a half-secret, a sentence left in suspense — When she returns to it, it is only to set out again from another point of pleasure or pain. One must listen to her differently in order to hear an *"other meaning" which is constantly in the process of weaving itself, at the same time ceaselessly embracing words and yet casting them off to avoid becoming fixed, immobilized.* For when "she" says something, it is already no longer identical to what she means. Moreover, her statements are never identical to anything. Their distinguishing feature is one of contiguity. (103, emphasis in original)

Like Horney's construction of gender roles, Irigaray's claims about female utterance arise from the habit of defining women by their bodies. Jane Marcus arrives at a very similar conclusion, though her arguments are based not on biology but on culture. In her 1984 essay "Still Practice, A/Wrested Alphabet" Marcus suggests the daily repetitive work of women leads to linguistic metamorphoses: "[t]ransformation, rather than permanence, is at the heart of this aesthetic [women's poetics], as it is at the heart of most women's lives" (84). But this transformative departure-and-return paradigm, which Irigaray calls "weaving" (103), describes one of the narrative devices employed extensively by C. Lamb.

Early in "On the Melancholy of Tailors" the narrator begins and then drops discussion of the peacock's "peculiar infirmity." Two paragraphs later, he returns to the subject of pride, this time in combination with an illness metaphor: "Drink itself does not seem to elevate him, or at least to call out of him any of the external indications of vanity. I cannot say that it never causes his pride to swell, but it never breaks out" (Lamb, *Champion* 390). Pride once again exists as a kind of illness in the discussion of criticism quoted at length in note 24 above: Dennis's response to Norris's patronizing dissembling characterizes a proud, if unwell, man. Dennis attributes his illness to the interference of his body in the workings of his brain where Hera creates illness through the interference of mind with the workings of the body. Thus in "On the Melancholy of Tailors," discussion of mental and physical health cycles through issues of innate illness (pride in peacocks); festering, undiscovered illness (pride in tailors); diagnosed illness (criticism); and maliciously wrought illness (Hera's unnatural travail). Clearly, C. Lamb has written in what Irigaray would consider a female way, returning over and over to a subject which changes with every return.[25]

Multiplicity, another formal aspect of writing popularly gendered feminine, relates closely to the transformative aspects of repetitive utterance. The metaphor most commonly used to describe it is that of quilt-making, in which a number of pieces join in an organized but not necessarily hierarchical manner. Donovan borrows the central metaphor of Jane Barker's 1723 novel *A Patchwork Screen for the Ladies* in order to analyze that text: "thematically and formally Barker critiques the authoritative word of the fathers — establishing the critical, polyvocal, 'patch-work'

[25] Another textual departure and return is the previously discussed trope of womb images, which begins with the implication of the epigraph, then proceeds to the hellish "cave or hollow place," Hera's "hindering the birth of her own felicity" and ends with the image of a contented hen sitting on an egg (C. Lamb *Champion* 390).

perspective that is essential to the novel's identity" (462). Elaine Showalter's 1986 paper "Piecing and Writing" first shows why the quilting metaphor adapts so easily to writing (although her reference to Henry James's short story "The Figure in the Carpet" mixes the metaphor with weaving):

> the process of making a patchwork quilt involves three separate stages of artistic composition, with analogies to language use first on the level of the sentence, then in terms of the structure of a story or novel, and finally the images, motifs, or symbols — the "figure in the carpet" — that unify a fictional work. (223)

Showalter goes on to suggest that adopting the emblems of past oppression is not, perhaps, the best strategy for a feminist literary critic (245). While a man may pen what Mellor would call a traditionally feminine text, the cultural prejudices that underlie the gendering of a textual strategy like multiplicity remain largely unexamined.

In what does multiplicity rest? Is it in multiple references to texts outside of the one currently being read?[26] If so, then "On the Melancholy of Tailors" surely qualifies: in it the narrator uses a Virgilian epigraph, refers to the writings of Sir Thomas Browne[27], Dr. Norris, Galen and Isaack,[28] (mis)quotes Shakespeare,

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[26] The many allusions in "On the Melancholy" (and their often erroneous presentation by Burton, Jr.) would remain opaque to those without the classical education to recognize them, including the majority of women. Though a multiplicity of references is usually considered a female textual strategy, understanding them would be most difficult for uneducated women, a situation which further calls into question the gender delineation of multiplicity.

[27] The narrator cites Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82), in order to describe the similarities between Browne's innate seriousness and that of the typical tailor (C. Lamb, *Champion* 390). Browne was an English author and physician, born in London, author of the *Religio Medici*, (1635), and *Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Enquiries into ... Vulgar and Common Errors* (1646), "a strange and discursive amalgam of humour, acuteness, learning, and credulity" (*Cambridge* 215).

invokes the names of Burton[29] and Milton, alludes subtly to Peacock and paraphrases a verse painted into the wedding portrait of Sir Charles Brandon with Henry VIII's sister in 1515.[30] As the last example shows, the allusions are not limited to texts — in addition to the wedding portrait, the narrator refers to the defense of Gibraltar, commanded by General G. A. Eliott,[31] and superstitions among the Turks,[32] as well

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[28] Galen and Isaack are offered as authorities to explain the saddening effect of eating too much cabbage: "Galen (Claudius Galenus) (c. AD 129-99), perhaps the most influential of ancient physicians" (*Oxford Companion* 376).

[29] The pen name "Burton, Jr." alludes to the author of "An Anatomy of Melancholy," who signed *his* book "Democritus, Jr." Democritus was called the "laughing philosopher" (*Oxford Companion* 266), an appropriate literary grandparent for Charles Lamb.

[30] Burton, Jr. writes "Cloth of gold neither seems to elate, nor cloth of frize to depress him — according to the beautiful motto which formed the modest imprese [sic] of the shield worn by Charles Brandon at his marriage with the king's sister" (C. Lamb, *Champion* 390), which is a reference to the lines that delineate the low status of Brandon compared with the royalty of Mary: "*Cloth of gold do not despise, / Though thou be match'd with cloth of frieze; / Cloth of frieze, be not too bold, / Though thou be match'd with cloth of gold* (Richardson 116).

[31] This reference is still problematic. The narrator appeals

> to those who were witnesses to the exploits of Eliot's famous troop [of tailors], whether in their fiercest charges they betrayed anything of that thoughtless oblivion of death with which a Frenchman jigs into battle or whether they did not shew more of the melancholy valour of the Spaniard on whom they charged; that deliberate courage which contemplation and sedentary habits breathe? (C. Lamb, *Champion* 390)

In 1777, General George Augustus Eliott was appointed Governor of Gibraltar, and was appalled at the conditions of the defences. He instituted a regiment of artificers (engineers) to rectify the situation (Bradford 67), and it is uncertain whether this is the troop to which C. Lamb's narrator refers. Eliott also fought the Spanish in Cuba.

[32] In the discussion of the cross-legged posture, the narrator asserts that "The Turks, who practise it at this day, are noted to be a melancholy people" (C. Lamb, *Champion* 390). Frazer cites Pliny among the ancients, and the Tolumbuluh in Africa, the Bulgarians and Bavarians in Eastern Europe as peoples who believe that crossed legs can be hazardous (240).

as a number of references which the narrator's unreliability renders largely opaque to this contemporary reader.[33]

If feminine multiplicity rests in formal structure as well as in allusion, then C. Lamb's essay still qualifies. Burton, Jr. indulges in some Shandian typography: in the statement "[t]he legs transversed thus X cross-wise, or decussated" (390), the "X" is sideways in the original text and the 1908 reprint. Further, the digressive narrative construction results in a multi-layered structure. Not only are there short digressions within parentheses in a number of places in the essay, there are two long, digressive footnotes.[34]

The structure fragments further (an integral aspect of the quilting metaphor: one must have pieces to stitch together) by the editorial treatment it received from its author. In the 1814 version, which has been the text used thus far in this chapter, there are three efficient causes enumerated in the sixteenth paragraph, each explained at length. When C. Lamb prepared this text for his *Works* of 1818, he eliminated the third cause, "Mental perturbation from a sense of reproach, &c. — " (Lamb, "On the Melancholy..." *Works in Prose and Verse* 830), and omitted what had been the final

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[33] Most of the allusions which remain obscure are uncited quotations, possibly Biblical misquotes: "Walk that I may know thee"; "still the world prevails and its dread laugh"; and "sitting in the seat of the scornful." (C. Lamb, *Champion* 390)

[34] Exemplifying digressive structure, in the first footnote the narrator discusses barbers as a congenitally cheerful and talkative race in comparison with morose and silent tailors: this is not long after a comparison of tailors and wigmakers in the body of the essay. Within that footnote, there is a parenthetical evaluation of the conversational management styles of two particular barbers. In other words, the discussion moves from the main subject of tailors, to a comparison with wigmakers, to a footnote on barbers, to a digression within the footnote on specific barbers — a veritable cornucopia of levels for such a short essay.

paragraph, including the second footnote.[35] This version finishes on the discussion of the deleterious effects of cabbage on the mental state: "[i]t is well known that this last-named vegetable has, from the earliest periods which we can discover, constituted almost the sole food of this extraordinary race of people" (221), an ambiguous and abrupt end indeed.

Susan Winnett situates such terminal ambiguity as characteristic of women's writing. In her 1990 article "Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure," Winnett urges us to attempt to "glimpse the kinds of pleasure narrative provides when the 'pearls of detail' are strung differently — or not strung at all" (516). Among the paradigms she critiques is the standard narrative development along the lines of male sexual experience, popularly told as tumescence, climax, and detumescence — a model which assumes that story proceeds unidirectionally, toward a fixed closure. When Winnett looks to the female body for experiences of tumescence and detumescence, she finds models which have a very different relationship to the idea of ending or completion: "Most important for our narratological purposes, however, both childbirth and breast feeding force us to think forward rather than backward: whatever finality birth possesses as a physical experience pales in comparison with the exciting, frightening sense of the beginning of a new life" (509). Given this paradigm, ending is not closure, but simply the place where the narrator stops. Certainly that describes the 1818 version of "On the Melancholy of Tailors," the edition finally authorized by C. Lamb.

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[35] The 1908 *Works in Prose and Verse* in which I originally found the article includes the third cause and its explication as an editor's note, separated from the first part of the essay by 600 pages.

The unboundedness of "On the Melancholy of Tailors" manifests in the dual endings, in the multiple allusions to texts, artifacts, histories, and superstitions outside of the essay, and in its layered structure — aspects of textuality that gynocritics tend to gender feminine (Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* 175), and discuss using a quilting metaphor (Donovan 462, Showalter "Piecing and Writing" 223). Also evident in C. Lamb's essay is a transformative discursive style, which Irigaray characterizes as female, and describes as "weaving" (103). However, my earlier analysis of the content of "On the Melancholy of Tailors" demonstrated ways in which the essay participates in patriarchal denigration of things identified with women by holding tailors up as objects of scorn because they are feminized by making a career out of textiles. In C. Lamb's "On the Melancholy...," form partakes of modes of expression critically gendered feminine, while content invariably denigrates those very modes.

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The contradictory pattern between the feminine form and masculine content of C. Lamb's "On the Melancholy of Tailors" shows the crucial function of myths relating textiles and gender. Part of that analysis included Anne Mellor's observation that the preeminent male Romantic poets usurped societal attributes commonly assigned to femininity (*Romanticism and Gender* 175). However, her subsequent exploration of Romantic women writers itself reveals a critically gratifying symmetry. Though the male Romantic poets may have stolen from women "their traditional gender roles and cultural authority as experts in feeling, love, and maternal care, as the educators and moral guardians of the young, and as the respected rulers of the domestic sphere"(29), the common element which Mellor discovered in Romantic women's writing is that bastion of the masculine preserve, rationality. She shows how women writers in

England between 1780 and 1830 "insisted that women as well as men are rational creatures who must be educated in the same way to develop their rational faculties to the highest possible point" (212). Mellor speculates that this rationality originates in the fact that women simply could not afford to "obey the impulses and dictates of their feelings" because of their "economic dependence ... upon men" (59). Certainly one woman who knew intimately the dangers of excessive emotional expression was Charles Lamb's sister, Mary Lamb.

In April 1815, *The British Lady's Magazine and Monthly Miscellany* included Mary Lamb's letter to the editor entitled "On Needlework."[36] Published under the pen name "Sempronia," the essay argues on behalf of lower-class sempstresses, to an audience of middle-class women. It exhibits none of the multiplicity or fragmented subjectivity which has come to be associated with women's textuality (cf. Irigaray 103, Donovan 462, Marcus 84, Showalter "Piecing and Writing" 223). As Crabb Robinson's diary entry for December 11, 1814 demonstrates, M. Lamb was very concerned with writing an essay which could not be discounted for any defect in style:

> [a]fter reading at home from eight to ten I called on Miss Lamb, and chatted with her, her brother being in bed, from 10 to 11. She was not unwell, but she had undergone great fatigue from writing an article about needlework for the new *Ladies' British Magazine*. She spoke of writing as a most painful occupation, which only necessity could make her attempt. She has been learning Latin merely to assist her in acquiring a correct style. (463-64)

M. Lamb's determination to write "correctly" appears to support the tripartite model of women's writing advanced by Showalter in "The Female Tradition":

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[36] The 1815 *British Lady's Magazine* version of "On Needlework" is cited in this chapter. It is also reprinted in the more accessible *Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb* of 1908.

> [f]irst, there is a prolonged phase of *imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and *internalization* of its standards of art and its views on social roles. Second, there is a phase of *protest* against these standards and values, and *advocacy* of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy. Finally, there is a phase of *self-discovery,* a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity. An appropriate terminology for woman writers is to call these stages *Feminine, Feminist,* and *Female.* (274, emphases in original)

In this usage, Feminine means imitative of the patriarchal *status quo*, rather than of anything constructed as innately female. Crabb Robinson's diary entry shows M. Lamb's determination to learn "the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition" (274). Further, Sempronia's argument that more fortunate housewives should aid "the poorer sort of women" (259) by hiring them to do the household sewing indicates that M. Lamb has internalized dominant "views on social roles" (Showalter, "Female Tradition" 274) of women, which Wilson lists as including "a variety of philanthropic and reformist activities: visiting the sick and poor, teaching Sunday school classes, making clothing for the poor or worked goods for charity bazaars, working in clothing clubs that bought and sold fabric, [and] contributing to lying-in charities" (178). In writing "On Needlework," M. Lamb supported the patriarchal *status quo* by both imitating traditional forms and internalizing prevalent attitudes towards social roles for women.[37]

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[37] However, Crabb Robinson's observations call into question Showalter's categories by illustrating that the defining aspect of "correct" style is not gender but education. Certainly women were far less likely to receive the classical education necessary for "acquiring a correct style" (Robinson 454, see also Mellor *Romanticism and Gender* 6). Calling classically correct literary modes "masculine" is a clear case of mythologization, in which a historically specific situation — the relative abundance of educational opportunities available to men — is naturalized to prove men's innate inclination to produce "correct" texts, while the lack of education for women is overlooked in favour of the cultural prejudice that women are inherently disinclination to use correct textual strategies, or any textual strategies at all. In its ultimate implication, the textile myth leads us to expect that women will express themselves through textile production and physical embellishment, instead of rational articulation through textual production.

Sempronia authorizes herself to discuss needlework with her opening assertion that "[i]n early life I passed eleven years in the exercise of my needle for a livelihood" (M. Lamb, "On Needlework" 257). This experiential source of authority differs greatly from that of Burton Jr. in "On the Melancholy of Tailors," who justifies his arguments through references to other texts, and through what he asserts to be common (rather than personal) experience. In "On Needlework," phrases like "I affirm that I know not" (257), "[a]s I desire to offer nothing to the consideration of your readers but what, at least as far as my own observation goes, I consider as truths confirmed by experience" (259), and "I who have known" (259) indicate that M. Lamb's narrator accepts the veracity of personal experience, without resorting to external sources of authority. Sempronia projects a subjectivity untroubled by concerns of fragmentation or unboundedness.

The correlation between the narrator's professed eleven years as a professional needlewoman, and the fact that Mary Lamb spent the years from 1783 to 1796 supplementing the family's income through needlework (Lucas 56, 113), suggests minimal narratorial distance from Mary. The chosen form of "On Needlework" — a letter to the editor, rather than an essay or fictional narrative — also appears to support identification of Mary with the narrator. However, Mary was very aware of the audience for whom she wrote: there are aspects of her experiences as a sempstress and as a woman which are assiduously omitted from "On Needlework." She asserts that the common "place in society" for a woman is that of "a *happy* English wife" (259, emphasis in original), but she herself never married, and described marriage as "a hazardous kind of an affair" (Lamb, *Letters* 229), a contradiction which indicates significant differences between Mary and her construct, Sempronia.

Mary was, in fact, the legal responsibility of her brother Charles because she suffered from intermittent fits of insanity, during one of which she stabbed their mother to death. Her first breakdown was attributed to the strain of excessive needlework:

> [i]t seems the young Lady had been once before, in her earlier years, deranged, from the harassing fatigues of too much business. — As her carriage towards her mother was ever affectionate in the extreme, it is believed that to the increased attentiveness, which her parents' infirmities called for day and night, is to be attributed the present insanity of this ill-fated young woman. (*Morning Chronicle* September 26 1796, qtd. in Lucas 115n)

None of this distress appears overtly in the narratorial position of "On Needlework" which professes a desire to alleviate the situation of needleworkers, but proposes to do so through the very means which initially drove Mary mad — by giving them more business. In this, Sempronia appears to privilege the textile myth over contrary experiential evidence, just as she professes marriage to be the end of a woman's ambition, despite M. Lamb's stated opinion. The result of these fictionalizations is a constructed narrative unity identified more with the monolithic masculinity of "correct style," than the frightening mental transformations initiated by M. Lamb's experience of "needlework *done at home*" ("On Needlework" 257, emphasis in original). The tenaciously classic style, the constructed narratorial unity, and the internalization of prevalent social attitudes demonstrate that "On Needlework" uses dominant social patterns traditionally gendered masculine.

Although "business" was blamed for Mary Lamb's murderous psychotic episode, to borrow a phrase from her brother she "appears not to have been mad upon all subjects." Sempronia's preoccupation with economic matters exhibits the masculine rationality Mellor predicts for the inverted gender prejudices of Romantic women's writing (212). M. Lamb's narrator exhibits a lucid grasp of the economics of sewing:

> "A penny saved is a penny earned," is a maxim not true, unless the penny be saved in the same time in which it might have been earned. I, who have known what it is to work for *money earned*, have since had much experience in working for *money saved;* and I consider, from the closest calculation I can make, that a *penny saved* in that way bears about a true proportion to a *farthing* earned. ("On Needlework" 259, emphasis in original)[38]

"Needle-work *done at home* ... for which no remuneration in money is received or expected"(257, emphasis in original) has what Karl Marx terms use-value, or "value ... realized only in the process of consumption" (Marx 20) rather than exchange-value, in which "all commodities are but definite measures of *congealed labour-time*" (24, emphasis in original). Donovan further defines the two as follows: "A woman who sews for her daughter is engaged in use-value production, whereas a seamstress in a factory is engaged in exchange-value production" (445). M. Lamb's suggestion that domestic needlework be allotted to professionals transfers textile production from use-value to exchange-value.

This perspective on the business potential of needlework done at home pushes the female sphere of household management beyond the pale of tradition. In the prevailing cultural paradigm, housewives are given household allowances, which are their responsibility to manage, frugally or otherwise. But by considering the worth of their own work in comparison with that of professional sempstresses, M. Lamb's narrator encourages middle-class women to recognize that they are not just passive consumers, but active contributors to the household economy, a role discouraged among the rising bourgeoisie in their bid for domestic respectability. Furthermore, by suggesting that they are getting only one quarter of the value of their work (a farthing for a penny), the narrator implies that women who sew at home are not managing

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[38] According to the OED, a farthing was worth one quarter of a penny.

their resources very well, an implication certain to upset women who pride themselves on good household management. Consequently, the argument about economics in "On Needlework" abrogates the textile myth by encouraging women to subordinate textile production to another feminine virtue — frugality.

The intention to bring homemade textiles from the realm of use-value into the realm of exchange-value suggests more than a biographical reason for the lukewarm terms with which the narrator describes needlework done for its own sake: Sempronia wants women to consider the market worth of their labour, not the intrinsic satisfaction of production. Donovan notes that the appreciation of domestic production as creative work renders it difficult to evaluate as exchange-value: "[a]rtistic production resembles use-value production in that the latter retains an artisanal character because its products are valued for their personal, 'sacred' use rather than for the price they can bring on the market"(446). Economic arguments in the plea on behalf of impoverished textile workers necessarily exclude the suggestion of textile production as a mode of creative expression. Consequently, Sempronia calls needlework "self-imposed slavery" (260), in which women "lose their labour" (260). "Needle-work, taken up as an amusement, may not be altogether unamusing" (260) is her vacillating statement, which she further qualifies as not her own experience: "[w]e are all pretty good judges of what entertains ourselves, but it is not so easy to pronounce upon what may contribute to the entertainment of others" (260). The sole description of creative needlework is similarly ambivalent:

> [e]ven fancy work, the fairest of the tribe! — how delightful the arrangement of her materials! the fixing of her happiest pattern, how pleasing an anxiety! how cheerful the commencement of the labour she enjoins! But that lady must be a true lover of the art, and so industrious a pursuer of a predetermined purpose, that it were a pity her energy should not have been directed to some wiser end, who can affirm she neither feels weariness during the execution of

> a fancy piece, nor takes more time than she had calculated for the performance. (257)

Describing the sempstress with words like "anxiety" and "weariness" suggests that Sempronia puts small store in the creative satisfaction purportedly intrinsic in needlework, while the terms "labour," and "industrious" demonstrate a preference for a public, exchange-value paradigm of textile production.

Disdain for the expressive possibilities of needlework was also a culturally prevalent attitude at the time. After centuries of increasing marginalization and feminization, creative needlework suffered a *coup-de-grace* in the form of the early nineteenth-century's flourishing model of woman as domestic angel:

> [e]ndless hours spent in fancy work, especially embroidering gowns to adorn herself for display at frivolous events like balls, was antithetical to the new moral woman: early rising, tending to the comforts of her husband and children, attending to their moral good, supervising the work of servants, making sure the household accounts were in order, and sewing for her family, home and the poor. (Wilson 175)

Specifically, needlework helped to instill the virtue of selfless anonymity: "[e]mbroiderers were not trained to view their work as a product of individual genius, so they rarely included their names on their work, other than on samplers which were meant to demonstrate a girl's growing proficiency with a needle" (Wiesner 149). M. Lamb's neglect of the expressive possibilities in textile production not only dovetails with her economic argument: it also allows her to condone the social *status quo* by upholding cultural prejudice towards anonymous womanhood. If artists create work for public appreciation, then creative production has the potential to lead to publicity. Therefore, in order to retain the tradition of domestic retirement for women, textile production must not be creative.

M. Lamb had personal experience of both unsung daily perseverance, and the fame — infamy — which attends the execution of one monumental exploit. As acts of self-expression, both were horribly flawed. On one hand, we have already seen how the demands of professional textile production are indifferent to the situation of the producer, treated as an interchangeable component in an increasingly industrialized trade. Thus the creative aspects of needlework — one of the few artifact-producing modes of expression traditionally allowed women — became more and more tenuous as the centuries progressed, until by the time of the industrial revolution it was so constricted, it led not to self-expression but madness. In the case of the murder of her mother, Mary wrought the death of her own creator, an act which she achieved through the usurpation of what has always been constructed as a man's mode of expression: violence with the use of a blade (Captain Sword). This act brought her public attention, where sewing brought her faceless anonymity.[39] But neither her abject duty to the traditional woman's role, nor the ultimate violation of that role brought her even the hope of "enjoyment of life" which "On Needlework" places at the centre of human desire (257). For her, the middle ground between these two attempts at expression was textuality: writing "On Needlework." Furthermore, the tension between her legal need to remain unknown (due to her tenuous status as a madwoman)[40] and the desire to publish this essay on behalf of impoverished

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[39] To this day M. Lamb is best known for causing the death of her mother (cf. *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature* 656, *Oxford Companion of English Literature* 545-50).

[40] In "'On Needlework': Protest and Contradiction in Mary Lamb's Essay" (1988), Jane Aaron notes that the late eighteenth-century saw a relaxation in the treatment of mental patients, until

> [i]n 1796, persons found guilty of committing an act of manslaughter while mentally impaired were not required to suffer permanent incarceration

needleworkers was effectively resolved by the use of a pseudonym. That this essay was written by Mary Lamb was not generally known until thirty-six years after her death.[41]

One reason for the conservative cultural emphasis on the textile myth and feminine anonymity in the early nineteenth century was the increasing number of famous woman writers. Barthes points out that myths are instruments which uphold the cultural *status quo*, and as such are invoked more strongly when an empowered position seems threatened:

> [t]he oppressed *makes* the world, he has only an active, transitive (political) language; the oppressor conserves it, his language is plenary, intransitive, gestural, theatrical: it is Myth. The language of the former aims at transforming, of the latter at eternalizing. ("Myth Today" 149)

Consequently, when women writers gain popularity in a rigidly patriarchal culture, one can expect to encounter revivals of stories about the traditional self-effacement of women. "On Needlework" represents one facet of a remarkably successful conservative shift in this regard, a shift that eventually resulted in the critical eclipse of Romantic women poets. The popularity of poets such as Felicia Hemans, whose contemporary readership rivaled that of William Wordsworth (Feldman 176), fades in comparison with a critical construction which, by the 1970s, focussed "almost

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> provided that sufficient surety could be given that they would be taken care of as potentially unstable for the rest of their lives.... By 1800, however, owing to the public outcry over the attempted murder by a lunatic of the king, George III, himself suffering from insanity, a parliamentary act had been passed enforcing the detention of the criminally insane.... From this date on, given her past record, any action of Mary's that drew public attention to her case could have had very serious consequences. (177-78)

[41] Where M. Lamb's Sempronia was a social necessity, C. Lamb used "Burton, Jr." simply to take advantage of the opportunity for allusion: since "On the Melancholy" was included in his *Collected Works*, just four years after its initial publication in *The Champion*, it has no tradition of anonymity.

exclusively upon the writings and thoughts of six male poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Byron, Shelley and Keats)" (Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* 1).[42] Thus it is unsurprising to find the textile myth revitalized in an essay which engages the arguments of a woman writer like Mary Wollstonecraft.

In many ways, "On Needlework" presents a hybrid response to "A Vindication of the Rights of Women." M. Lamb's argument for supplying work to lower class women sounds very similar to that of Wollstonecraft, who wrote

> when a woman in the lower rank of life makes her husband's and children's clothes, she does her duty, this is her part of the family business; but when women work only to dress better than they could otherwise afford, it is worse than sheer loss of time. To render the poor virtuous they must be employed, and women in the middle rank of life, did they not ape the fashions of the nobility, without catching their ease, might employ them, whilst they themselves managed their families, instructed their children, and exercised their own minds. Gardening, experimental philosophy, and literature, would afford them subjects to think of and matter for conversation, that in some degree would exercise their understandings. (75)

However, Wollstonecraft goes on to inveigh "against the custom of confining girls to their needle, and *shutting them out from all political and civil employments*" (169, emphasis added). According to Mellor, Wollstonecraft's desire for women's education promoted "revolutionary rights for women" among which was "the right to work in the most prestigious professions, including business, law, medicine, education and politics" (Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* 35). This flies in the face of M. Lamb's conclusion: "[m]uch has been said and written on the subject of men engrossing to themselves every occupation and calling. After many years of observation and reflection, I am obliged to acquiesce in the notion that it cannot well be ordered otherwise"("On Needlework" 258). She did feel that women could surpass

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[42] See the discussion of the construction of Romanticism in chapter 3.

men in "[t]he whole mechanical business of copying writings in the law department, for instance" (258), but in the end argued against practical education for women because she believed it would render a woman less marriageable (259), and therefore less likely to remain in domestic retirement.[43]

In order to save Britain's social fabric from the unbearable stress of women in clerical positions, M. Lamb's narrator suggests that women who can depend on the men in their lives to provide for them should help "the corset-maker, the milliner, the dress-maker, the plain-worker, the embroideress, and all the numerous classifications of females supporting themselves by *needlework*" (258, emphasis in original) by giving them the household needlework, occupations which she describes as "that great staple commodity which is alone appropriated to the self-supporting part of our sex" (258).[44] Thus, twenty-three years after Wollstonecraft called for women to take on a more public role in society, M. Lamb appears to add to the conservative backlash against Wollstonecraft by concurring with Wollstonecraft's arguments, but only up to the point where they threaten the anonymity of women. At that juncture, M. Lamb invokes the textile myth, denying women the right to paid work other than sewing: stating that she "should be inclined to persuade every female over whom [she] hoped to have any influence to contribute all the assistance in her power to those of her own

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[43] Aaron's research supports this supposition:

> [h]istorical studies of the period do indeed indicate that a practical education would have detracted from a woman's opportunities in the upper- and middle-class marriage market: to be trained for any profession would have entailed a loss in status and marital appeal in an age in which it was considered an "affront against nature," and an indication of "moral and spiritual degradation," for a woman to earn her own wages. (172)

[44] Mary Lamb clearly doesn't recognize the sex trade as an alternative profession for women.

sex who may need it, in the employments they at present occupy, rather than to force them into situations now filled wholly by men" (259). So, although "On Needlework" was purportedly written in order to alleviate the distress of working needlewomen, Sempronia appears to concur with the conservative tradition that deems masculine roles inappropriate for women, just as Burton Jr. avers that feminine roles are debilitating for men.[45]

That appearance is as misleading as Burton Jr.'s scholarship. The narrators of "On the Melancholy of Tailors" and "On Needlework" both place issues of relative happiness (rather than economic opportunity or social function, for example) at the centre of their essays. However, C. Lamb's narrator assumes that the traditional gender split along the lines of women/private/sewing and men/public/all other trades implies that women are inherently inferior. This implication informs the humour of "On the Melancholy" — if tailors were not mortified at being socially placed as "mere" women, they wouldn't be melancholy. On the other hand, the narrator of "On Needlework" does not assume that women are the cause for sewing's inferiority as a

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[45] Though the Feminine/Feminist/Female critical model (Showalter "The Female Tradition" 274) seems to explain M. Lamb's conservative position on gender, Showalter's analysis perceives gender differentiation where educational opportunities are the source of difference. Elsewhere, Showalter has rejected defining women-centred critical practice based on biology, language, or psychology, opting instead for a cultural model (Showalter "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" 250-9), which supports her Feminine/Feminist/Female analysis. But cultures are constructions based on prejudices which serve to maintain the prevailing situation. Barthes conceived this as a straightforward oppressor/oppressed relationship ("Science Versus Literature" 149). Describing the language of oppressed populations as transformative implies a very different conceptualization from Showalter's view of women's linguistics as speaking *through* the language of the dominant order ("Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" 262). In Showalter's conception, oppression is literally pressing — the "underdog" is underneath. Barthes' transformative paradigm is probably a more accurate model of the hybrid interaction between what he calls the oppressed and the oppressor in a text like "On Needlework."

profession: instead she blames sewing for women's relative inferiority. She asserts that, when middle-class women give up their needlework to poorer women,

> so much more nearly will women be upon an equality with men, as far as respects the mere enjoyment of life. As far as that goes, I believe it is every woman's opinion that the condition of men is far superior to her own.
>
> "They can do what they like," we say. Do not these words generally mean, they have time to seek out whatever amusements suit their tastes?
>
> ("On Needlework" 257)[46]

Sempronia argues that women's leisure stultifies in comparison with that of men, and women do not have enough time to study the subjects that would make them fit "help-mates of *man*" (258, emphasis in original) because they are constantly under pressure to do more sewing: "I would appeal to all the fair votaries of voluntary housewifery, whether, in the matter of conscience, any one of them ever thought she had done as much needle-work as she ought to have done" (257). For this reason the narrator baldly states "Needlework and intellectual improvement are naturally in a state of warfare" (257). According to the narrator of "On Needlework" the primary inequality between men and women rests not in the traditions which situate women in

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[46] Though it courts anachronism, I'd say that Sempronia's "we" includes cultural theorists such as Hilda Smith, who defines feminism as

> a view of women as a distinct sociological group for which there are established patterns of behaviour, special legal and legislative restrictions, and customarily defined roles. This definition includes the obvious corollary that women's roles and behaviour are based on neither rational criteria nor physiological dictates. It assumes a process of indoctrination from earliest childhood, both by overt and covert means which determines the differing life styles of men and women. And, finally, it views the role of women as more restricted and less personally fulfilling than that of men. (370)

The "process of indoctrination" of which Smith speaks includes compliance with the myths, specifically about women and textiles, which I am isolating in this paper. Although Sempronia overstates the relative freedom of men (a myth which complements the retired domesticity associated with women), she concurs with Smith's analysis that men have fewer restrictions on their lives.

the private home and men in public business — *that* meets with her approval — but in the annexation of all women's leisure to the perusal and production of textiles rather than texts.

Sempronia has a ready solution to the problem of women's lack of true leisure. The corollary of the suggestion that all the household sewing should be allotted to support women outside of the household is that the women inside the household would no longer sew. According to the otherwise conservative narrator, this will leave housewives true leisure time, which they will undoubtedly use for study, in order to become more fit companions for their fathers, husbands, and/or brothers, just as Wollstonecraft advocates (Wollstonecraft 170). Sempronia declares, "To make a man's home so desirable a place as to preclude his having a wish to pass his leisure hours at any fireside in preference to his own, I should humbly take to be the sum and substance of a woman's domestic ambition" ("On Needlework" 258). The way to "accomplish this end is to fit herself to become a fit conversational companion; that is to say, she has to study and understand the subjects on which he loves to talk"(258). And in order to have the time to achieve this pinnacle of domestic management, women may have to ensure that the "the needle-book and thread-case were laid quite aside, and she cheerfully contributed her part to the slender gains"(253) of needleworkers. Although specific female virtues are not overtly questioned in "On Needlework," they have been organized into a hierarchy which places entertaining one's menfolk intellectually above mending their shirts.

M. Lamb's narrator takes her argument even further. Anticipating that some women will protest that they enjoy needlework for its own sake, and would choose to occupy their leisure with sewing, she allows that they may consider executing economically unfeasible work:

> [i]f *saving* be no object, and long habit have rendered needle-work so delightful an avocation that we cannot think of relinquishing it, there are the good old contrivances in which our grand-dames were used to beguile and lose their time — knitting, knotting, netting, carpet working, and the like ingenious pursuits — those so-often praised but tedious works, which are so long in the operation, that purchasing the labour has seldom been thought good economy, yet, by a certain fascination, they have been found to chain down the great to a self-imposed slavery, from which they considerately, or haughtily excuse the needy. These may be esteemed lawful and lady-like amusements. But, if those works, more usually denominated useful, yield greater satisfaction, it might be a laudable scruple of conscience, and no bad test to herself of her own motive, if a lady, who had no absolute need, were to give the money so saved to poor needle-women belonging to those branches of employment from which she has borrowed these shares of pleasurable labour. (260, emphasis in original)

In order to ensure that all the work possible goes to professional needleworkers, the narrator advocates that middle-class women who absolutely crave sewing should do fancy work, and if their true joy is in plain work, then it would be a good moral exercise to negate the advantage of sewing at home by giving to charity the pittance that one has thus "saved." Of course, doing so would render one's time spent sewing completely wasted, and again, the "waste not, want not" stricture of the frugal housewife encourages her to desist from such folly. Consequently, while the narrator has staunchly upheld the premises of gender mythology, she has arrived at a conclusion in which some women should give up sewing.

Just as she implies that good economic management outranks needlework, so too Sempronia argues that it is more important for women to be fit companions for the men of her family than to be diligent sempstresses. In both cases, "On Needlework" presents a conflict of gender interests in which textile production loses to another feminine virtue which Sempronia argues should be given precedence. Far from abandoning Wollstonecraft's call for improved educational opportunities for women, by insisting on women's retirement Sempronia recasts that call in terms palatable to

the most conservative members of English society in the early nineteenth century. She uses the textile myth to contravene its crucial corollary discouraging intellectuality in women.

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So, what have we discovered in "the story so far"? *First:* on one hand Charles Lamb wrote "On the Melancholy of Tailors" in a transformative, multiple, allusive, and fragmented manner which gynocritics term "interwoven," "patchwork" and especially "feminine." On the other hand, Mary Lamb intentionally invoked the strictures of a classically "correct" style in "On Needlework," a style which has long been denoted masculine — not because of any innate tendency on men's parts to write thus, but simply because they had access to the education necessary in order to master it.

Second: the textile myth (which states that women and textiles are innately connected, just as men and pens/swords are connected) operates implicitly in "On the Melancholy of Tailors," informing the explicit humourous gaffes of Burton, Jr.. Though its operation is implicit, the strictures of the textile myth are not questioned in "On the Melancholy." "On Needlework" ostensibly supports the textile myth and its corollary that women should remain immured in the private sphere, but Sempronia's argument — more fortunate women should surrender their household needlework to women who sew to sustain themselves — implies that those more fortunate women will then have the time to develop their intellects in a way which had hitherto been the privilege of men, through texts rather than textiles. "On Needlework" thereby contravenes the textile myth and further undermines the tradition of writing as a masculine occupation.

Third: C. Lamb's essay constructs and then examines unhappiness in tailors, attributing their grief in part to the fact that they are men unnaturally forced into

women's roles: not only must they "create" textiles, they discover that textile production is not usually satisfying in any creative or self-expressive manner. In "On Needlework," M. Lamb's narrator professes the desire to equalize both genders' chances of enjoying life: she proposes doing this, not by forcing men into women's roles, but by cautiously and contingently opening one masculine role — literacy — to both genders. This would provide a positive creative venue for both genders rather than the stifling alternatives which M. Lamb experienced: years of anonymous "feminine" needlework, or one monumental act of "masculine" violence.

Finally, the cultural recalcitrance of "On the Melancholy..." renders it largely irrelevant today other than as a historical textual artifact: the very allusivity which probably entertained the original readers by engaging eighteenth- and nineteenth-century events makes the essay very difficult today. Further, where tailors were once a necessity for every person, industrially produced clothing has rendered them largely obsolete. On the other hand, Sempronia's recognition of the anonymity of textile workers is as lamentably current today as it was when "On Needlework" was written. According to Elaine Hedges, "the conditions of women's lives that in the nineteenth century forced them into exploitation as piece-workers and seamstresses are with us still, as women throughout the world provide the low-paid labour for handicraft and industrial textile work" (359). Nancy K. Miller states it as follows: "[t]he spinning spider is after all female, as is the lacemaker. In both cases a female subject is bound to the mindless work now performed by women, overwhelmingly of the third world, in what has come to be known as the 'integrated circuit'"(289n2). That the identification of women as textile workers has persisted so stubbornly suggests that, rather than being explicable solely through Mary Lamb's biography, Sempronia's insistence on anonymity for women textile workers reinscribes an overwhelming

cultural "recognition" (construction) of women as the "natural" producers of needlework.

The textile myth is a historical construction mythologized to appear innate and therefore independent of cultural pressures. Such constructions are pervasive, but not inevitable. Adrienne Rich points out that

> [y]ou can't escape history because it is everywhere. The blue jeans we wear are part of it, long stitched by women in the nonunionized factories of the American South, now also in the nonunionized shops of the Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand. An international female proletariat of textile workers continues today, as it has since the industrial revolution. ("Resisting Amnesia" 151)

However, Rich does not advocate M. Lamb's anodyne of giving more work to impoverished needleworkers to alleviate the situation. In order to address the continued conceptual imbalance between the genders, she suggests that

> we need to be looking above all for the greatness and sanity of ordinary women, and how these women have collectively waged resistance. In searching that territory we find something better than individual heroines: the astonishing continuity of women's imagination of survival, persisting through great and little deaths of daily life. (148)

This celebration of the ordinary calls for an elision of the myth of self-expression, which insists upon the greatness of the artist, and the textile myth, which takes the anonymity of the producer for granted.

Almost before Rich's proposes her strategy for cultural transformation, conservative stresses arise against it. On one hand, in *Minor Prophecies*(1991), Geoffrey Hartman states his suspicion of the idea that creativity can persist in anonymity. In his chapter on the New Historicist project of reclaiming lost voices (which he names after that mythical weaver, Philomela, whose story informs chapter five of this thesis) Hartman hedges about anonymity: "There may be a greatness in

not being monumental but in disappearing into the stream of life, the stream of language. I don't quite believe that myself" ("The Philomela Project" 166, emphasis in original). On the other hand, Showalter also suspects, but turns her distrust toward suggestions that textile metaphors will transform language away from its patriarchal bias. She notes that

> [f]or at least the past decade ... metaphors of pen and needle have been pervasive in feminist poetics and in a revived women's culture in the United States. The repertoire of the Victorian lady who could knit, net, knot, and tat, has become that of the feminist critic, in whose theoretical writing metaphors of text and textile, thread and theme, weaver and web, abound. The Spinster who spins stories, Ariadne and her labyrinthine thread, Penelope who weaves and unweaves her theoretical tapestry in the halls of Ithaca or New Haven, are the feminist culture heroines of the critical age. ("Piecing and Writing" 224)

Showalter does insist that we need to be aware that "these traditions may be burdens rather than treasures of the past, and that there may be something mournful and even self-destructive in our feminist efforts to reclaim them" (245). Between them, Showalter and Hartman prove that the textile myth is so prevalent that needlework can only continue to be perceived as a method of oppression, and that any textile artifact is historically inarticulate without the textual attachment of the names of its maker.

Barthes insists that no symbol — be it a needle, sword or pen — is inherently attached to its significance: "Are there objects which are *inevitably* a source of suggestiveness, as Baudelaire suggested about Woman? Certainly not" ("Myth Today" 110, emphasis in original). Rich picks up Barthes's theme in her caution to contemporary critics: "As we reclaim metaphors of women weavers and spinners, and the word *spinster* itself ... let us not fail to be aware of the history still being played out" ("Resisting Amnesia" 151-2, emphasis in original). With "On Needlework" M. Lamb achieves the kind of mingling of myths advocated by Rich. After suffering

through both feminine retirement and masculine infamy, M. Lamb constructed a way of reconciling these apparently exclusive opposites in the anonymous publication of "On Needlework." Of course, she hedges her construction about with restrictions which ensure it is less threatening to the dominant social paradigm: in the situation proffered in "On Needlework" not all women will have the leisure to write, and those who do, will do so only in order to please their men. But where cultural prejudice had "always" considered sewing feminine (Lady Needle) and writing (Captain Penn) as masculine an activity as fighting (Captain Sword), in "On Needlework" M. Lamb transforms the textile myth to construct a culturally acceptable model in which writing is appropriate for both genders: Captain Penn might well be a woman.

Chapter Three
PRAISE AMONG PEERS:
Texts, Textiles, and Contexts for Felicia Hemans

But this woman suffers from the opposition of her imagination, worked out in tapestry, and her life-style, "ringed with ordeals she is mastered by."
Rich, "When We Dead Awaken" 171

Felicia Hemans's work suffered a critical eclipse during the first three quarters of the twentieth century, in part because she was "ringed with ordeals" of propriety: her reputation as a good woman in the nineteenth century (when one of the central tenets of good womanhood was aversion to public notice) not only survived but grew after her death, and is partly responsible for the long-term critical amnesia toward her. Reasons for this eclipse come clear through examination of textile imagery both associated with her, and in her writing. Because these tropes act as markers along the way of her critical progress, this chapter involves a search for patterns indicated by textiles but sometimes extended beyond them: the analysis offered here, more than in the previous two chapters, demonstrates the clarity-in-complexity which a critical method based on pattern can provide.

This chapter begins with a look at Roland Barthes' characterization of literature as a textual web, then goes on to sift through a web of critical comparisons between

Hemans and Minerva. Since Roman Minerva's purview includes war (one of Hemans's most common subjects), wisdom, and weaving, the association appears to be positive for the poet. However, the shadow of the Minervan archetype is the story-telling weaver Arachne, whom the goddess transformed into a spider — a mute spinner of thread. Hemans has undergone a transformation in critical reception similar to that of Arachne, from virtual apotheosis while she was alive to a nadir of contemptuous neglect during most of the twentieth century.

I will then move on to compare several poems of Felicia Hemans and William Wordsworth. It takes Harold Bloom's reading of Wordsworth's "successful" poem "Nutting" (first published in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*), as defining the kind of poetry which a culturally conservative critical model particularly admires. The textile connection here comes in the following examination of what Bloom would call a "failed" lyric, "On Seeing a Needlecase in the Form of a Harp" (1827). Subsequent analysis of Hemans's "Wood Walk and Hymn" (1834) — which takes the final lines of "Nutting" as its epigraph — shows that Hemans's poetry champions an aesthetic that simply does not fit the Bloomian mould. The critical focus goes on to look at two of Hemans's poems, "Woman and Fame" (1829) and "To the Mountain Winds" (1830) in which she voices frustration at culturally imposed dictates surrounding women's creativity. The final section picks up on the earlier examination of creativity and fame through tropes of breath and wreaths — inspiration and expiration — in a textual web of elegies, including one by Hemans to Mary Tighe, and several to Hemans by Wordsworth, Lætitia Landon and Elizabeth Barrett.

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Barthes's concept of the textual web helpfully informs the implications of Hemans's identification with Minerva, Arachne and spiders. In the "Theory of the Text" Roland Barthes advocates a

> theory of the text [that] turns away from the text as veil and tries to perceive the fabric in its texture, in the interlacing of codes, formulae and signifiers, in the midst of which the subject places himself and is undone, like a spider that comes to dissolve itself into its own web. A lover of neologisms might therefore define the theory of the text as a "hyphology" ("hyphos" is the fabric, the veil, and the spider's web). (39)

Certainly this appears to be an appropriate critical approach to Hemans's work, both because of her association with the goddess of textile arts, and because her poetry is apparently "hyphographic" — full of epigraphs and internal references to other texts written by herself and others.

Nancy K. Miller's 1986 article "Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text and the Critic," observes the irony in Barthes' declaration of the death of the author at the point in history when women writers are gaining cultural agency. Miller objects to the destabilization of the subject implicit in Barthesian post-structuralism (271). However, Miller embraces Barthes' use of textile terminology in criticism, advocating a critical method which she calls "arachnology" rather than "hyphology":

> [b]y arachnology, then, I mean a critical positioning which reads *against* the weave of indifferentiation to discover the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity; to recover within representation the emblems of its construction.... Arachnologies, thus, involve more broadly the interpretation and reappropriation of a story. (272, emphasis in original)

Miller uses the tale of Arachne's challenge to Minerva and subsequent metamorphosis into a spider as the model for her theory. According to Miller, Arachne demonstrates her genius through "the making of a text" (286): in her contest with Minerva, the mortal weaver chooses to depict images of the gods'

indiscretions involving humans. Although the goddess privately opined that Arachne's work was on par with her own images of gods' benevolence towards humans, Arachne's subject matter was such an insult that Minerva drove Arachne to hang herself, afterwards reanimating the mortal in the form of a spider, with her noose rope as a spider's thread (Ovid, "Arachne" 167-73). The latinate classification of spiders — arachnids — ensures that we will associate Arachne with spiders long before we find out she was also an artist. By consistently omitting the goddess's admiration of Arachne's artistry, and emphasizing Arachne's transformation into a spider, reinscriptions of this story transform it into a mono-lineal cautionary tale about a woman who challenged a cultural hierarchy and lost. Miller resists this culturally-biased remembrance: "[t]o remember Arachne as the spider, or through the dangers of her web alone, is to retain the archetype and dismember, once again, with Athena, the subject of its history: to underread" (288). Barthesian hyphology results in dismemberment, because "the productive agency of the subject is self-consciously erased by a model of text production which acts to foreclose the question of identity itself" (Miller 271): Barthes' textual "hyphology" operates within the textile myth, wherein woman's creativity is considered as innate as a spider's ability to produce a web (or a hen's ability to hatch an egg, in C. Lamb's paradigm). Alternatively, Miller's arachnology involves readings which demythologize the text by ensuring that it retains its history.[47] She encourages the critical reader to acknowledge the agency of the text's subject — its author.

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[47] This statement is based on a Barthesian appreciation of myth as "constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it [myth], things lose the memory that they once were made" (Barthes "Myth Today" 142). See chapter 2 for a more extended examination of Barthes and mythology.

Is it really that much worse to be remembered as a spider and not a weaver? According to Miller's analogy, yes. Spiders work with one thread at a time; weavers with hundreds or thousands. Spiders spin innately, without volition; weavers are conscious of the decisions they make and the effect those decisions will have on the finished work. Remembering the spider alone entails forgetting the named woman, erasing the artisan and replacing her with unconscious impulse. To help counter creatrix erasure, Miller suggests that rather than underreading, contemporary analysis of women's creative work should *over*read, searching for signature elements of a creativity in anonymous productions (288).

Even if the analogy is changed to remove the spider and retain the spinning, the spinning/weaving hierarchy remains in place: various vestigial cultural references suggest it is demeaning to be considered a spinner rather than a weaver. Using traditional hand-powered methods of textile production, it takes five or six spinners to supply sufficient thread to keep one weaver working (T.S. Ashton 42). Consequently, weaving was a higher-status occupation than spinning, which explains why the term "spinster" rapidly became derogatory after its seventeenth-century mutation into a designation for an unmarried woman (Ayto 493). As Retha Warnicke points out in "Private and Public: The Boundaries of Women's Lives in Early Stuart England" (1993), even before "spinster" was applied to unmarried women, such a cultural situation implied a low status:

> [w]hen they [women] failed to marry, they doomed themselves to performing tasks that were described by their contemporaries as "servile," since they continued merely to work for someone else rather than to function as a mistress with authority over children and servants. (132)

By definition, a spinster always labours in the service of a weaver, providing a metonym for a woman who never becomes chatelaine of her own household.

Although the invention of the spinning jenny in 1764 rendered the spinster/weaver hierarchy obsolete in a practical sense, the concept continued to operate vigorously while Hemans wrote in the early nineteenth century, and in fact, is still evident today. The OED entries for "spin" lists eleven examples relating spinning with story-telling, ten of which I read as derogatory:

Derogatory
6a. 1633 Ford *Broken H.* 1.i You spin out your discourse.
6c. 1652 N. Culverwell. *Lt. Nature.* xi (1654) 97 Mans reason is fain to spend time ... in spinning out a Syllogisme.
4b. 1664 Cotton *Scarran*. 56 Should I begin my story spinning, From the first end to the last beginning...
6a. 1673 *Lady's Call.* 1.v. 75 This section is spun out to a length very unproportionable to the former.
5a. 1690 Temple *Ess., Poet. Wks*.1720 I.249 To spin off this Thread, which is already grown too long.
1746 Francis tr. *Horace Sat.* II.i.4 My lines are weak, unsinew'd others say — A Man might spin a thousand such a day
6d. 1758 J. Burton. *Monast. Ebor.* Pref. p. xi. This preface has spun out to a greater length than I expected
4c.1792 Mme. D'Arblay. *Diary* V.vii.323 The little novel ... would not have gone on improving, as the latter part already seems spun.
5b. 1895 *Daily News* 24 Apr.7/4 He ... used to spin off novels in the intervals between signing piles of papers.
4b. 1864 Thackeray. *D. Duval* viii. (1869) 107 He could spin out sentences by the yard

Positive
3b.1830 Shelley *M Gisborne* 154 How we spun A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun Of this familiar life

In contrast, there are ten examples relating "weave" with story-telling, only two of which are derogatory.

Positive
1h.1648 Gage *West Ind.* 19 The Indians uproar had weaved for us a thread of long discourse.
1e. 1656 Earl Monm. tr. *Boccalini's Advts. fr. Parnass*. 1.xxv. (1674) 44 The Author's subtilty in weaving of his Poem
1e. 1799 Campbell. *Pleas. Hope*. I.165 Then weave in rapid verse the deeds they tell.
4c. 1816 Byron *CH.Har.* III.cxii And for the words, thus woven into song...

1h. 1856 Kane *Arctic Expl.* II.xxv.249 The men weave their long yarns with peals of rattling hearty laughter in between.
1b.1874 M. Creighton. *Hist. Ess*. i. (1902) 42 The ... desire for reality that made him [Dante] weave his poem around himself.
1b. 1893 F. Thompson *Poems* 59 Better thou wov'st thy woof of life than thou didst weave thy woof of song.
4c. 1903 Bridges *Voltaire Poems* (1912) 381 Grave Dante weaving well His dark-eyed thought into a song divine.

Derogatory
4c. 1711 Addison. *Spect. #40* ¶2 An author might as well think of weaving the Adventures of Æneas and Hudibras into one Poem
1b.1913 W.K. Fleming. *Mysticism Chr.* 108. In his writings, his weakness lay in his proneness ... to weave endless allegories out of the Old Testament writings.

Furthermore, of the eight positive uses, the two noted under definition 1h are deliberate misuses, where "spin" would have been more appropriate:

1h. In figurative use app. sometimes confusedly: To spin, twine (a cord, a thread).
1648 Gage West Ind. 19 The Indians uproar had weaved for us a thread of long discourse.
1856 Kane Arctic Expl. II.xxv.249 The men weave their long yarns with peals of rattling hearty laughter in between.

This deliberate misuse of "weave" for "spin" in positive contexts suggests that the negative implications of "spin" outweigh its pragmatic correctness: the authors clearly opined that it was better to commit a mixed metaphor than a correct one with negative connotations.

As the dates on these examples show, many were either current during Hemans's career, or part of the cultural history which informs her work. Those written after her death show that the spin/weave hierarchy operated throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries — the period when Hemans's *œuvre* underwent a huge change in critical reception — and indeed, continues to operate today. After all, these examples come from that recognized authoritative text and source for current

scholarship, the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Even now, "word-weaver" carries more cultural authority for a writer than "yarn-spinner," with its implications of servitude, mono-linearity, and deliberate mendacity.

Since the seventeenth century, "spinster" and "spinstress" have been synonymous in referring both to a woman who spins and an unmarried woman.[48] The same is not true of "weaver" and "weaveress": "weaver" is not gender specific. Consequently, the connotations of "spin" are not only usually derogatory: they are also invariably gendered female. Not surprisingly, thread-spinning has gained champions among feminist scholars and critics. Mary Daly explains her endorsement in *Gyn/Ecology* (1978):

> the word *spinster* is commonly used as a deprecating term, but it can only function this way when apprehended exclusively on a superficial (foreground) level. Its deep meaning, which has receded into the Background so far that we have to spin deeply in order to retrieve it, is clear and strong: "a woman whose occupation is to spin." There is no reason to limit the meaning of this rich and cosmic verb. A woman whose occupation is to spin participates in the whirling movement of creation. She who has chosen her Self, who defines her Self, by choice, neither in relation to children nor to men, who is Self-identified, is a Spinster, a whirling dervish, spinning in a new time/space. (3-4)

Daly goes on to provide an example of the OED's "1h" definition of "weave" as used interchangably with the more negatively connoted "spin":

> our process of cosmic weaving has been stunted and minimized to the level of the manufacture and maintenance of textiles. While there is nothing demeaning about this occupation in itself, the limitation of women to the realm of "distaff" has mutilated and condensed our Divine Right of creative weaving to the darning of socks. (4-5)

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[48] The OED does note that "spinster" can refer to a male spinner, but that the usage is rare. It is not represented in any of the examples.

Here, as in Miller's exegesis of the Arachne myth, Daly characterizes the creative disenfranchisement of women as a demotion from weaving (which she elides with spinning) to aspects of textiles that offer little possibility for self-expression: distaff spinning and darning.

The radical feminist Daly has an unexpected supporter in her characterization of a spinster participating in "the whirling movement of creation." In Book Ten of *The Republic*, Plato — surely one of the original patriarchs of patriarchy — relates the myth of Er, who journeyed through the afterlife and returned to life with his memory intact. While dead, he witnessed "the ends of the chains of heaven let down from above.... From these ends is extended the spindle of Necessity [Nemesis], on which all the revolutions turn" (*The Republic* 414), a vision which he further describes as a "spindle" which "turns on the knees of Necessity" (415). Necessity's three daughters are the Fates. Famous spinners in their own rights, according to the myth of Er they are responsible for binding life choices to the souls who make them:

> [a]ll the souls had now chosen their lives, and they went in the order of their choice to Lachesis, who sent them the genius whom they had severally chosen, to be the guardian of their lives and the fulfiller of the choice: this genius led the souls first to Clotho, and drew them within the revolution of the spindle impelled by her hand, thus ratifying the destiny of each: and then, when they were fastened to this, carried them to Atropos, who spun the threads and made them irreversible. (418)

Thus, the cyclical nature of life — birth, youth, adulthood, old age, and death — extrapolates into the afterlife as a spinning that intertwines souls with their life choices, a spinning accomplished by three female spinsters, the Fates. This occurs within a paradigm which personifies the physical spinning of the cosmos as the female Necessity.

Yet the nature of Necessity is implied by her very name: because she is Necessity, not Possibility, creative expression remains outside her purview. Nor do the Fates choose: they serve to accomplish others' choices. Even these extra-human spinster avatars have no creative volition. They are incontrovertibly spinners and not weavers. Consequently, when Daly adds the word "cosmic" to her call for women to participate in "the whirling movement of creation," she adds implications of reification, essentialism and limitation, rather than self-expression and freedom.

In the etymology, mythology, history, and even radical feminist philosophy that informs western culture, the concept of spinning bears subtle negative connotations best appreciated when compared with weaving. These traditions led Adrienne Rich to state in her 1986 essay "Resisting Amnesia": "[a]s we reclaim metaphors of women weavers and spinners, and the word *spinster* itself ... let us not fail to be aware of the history still being played out" (151-2, emphasis in original). The spinster is either less-than- or more-than-human. In neither position does she have access to creative expression: her production is innate, fated.

Adrienne Rich wrote one of the most succinct expressions of the equivocal situation that afflicts women artists. She says of her 1951 sonnet "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers,"

> [i]n writing this poem, composed and apparently cool as it is, I thought I was creating a portrait of an imaginary woman. But this woman suffers from the opposition of her imagination, worked out in tapestry, and her life-style, "ringed with ordeals she is mastered by." ("When We Dead Awaken" 171)

Meek and obedient, Aunt Jennifer works vivid, wild tigers in her tapestry: her imagination seems far removed from her experience. Opposition between imagination and imposed life-style aptly describes the situation of Felicia Hemans (1793-1835) as a proper woman compelled into public life at a time when publicity was considered

improper for women. She succeeded in her writing career by reifying a conservative model of good womanhood — publicly endorsing privacy and thus defining the conceptual tightrope she herself had to walk in order to retain her all-important reputation. This balancing act increasingly circumscribed the kind of writing she produced as her career continued, which affected the very critical reception that enforced her need to be morally impeccable.[49]

Until recently, Hemans criticism placed her as a spinster either divine, like Necessity and the Fates, or reflexive, like a spider. But I propose that she was no kind of spinster. Instead, she should be considered an Arachne figure — a word-weaver whose exceptional ability formed her fate, first with a critical apotheosis that identified her with Minerva (the Roman incarnation of Athena, goddess of wisdom, war, and weaving), and later by critical neglect and disdain as the perpetrator of texts assumed to be without art or inspiration but written solely for practical purposes.

The history of Hemans's identification with Minerva begins with her anonymously published *Modern Greece* (1817). The poet's vision of the Elgin marbles includes a description of the goddess:

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[49] In "The Poet and the Profits: Felicia Hemans and the Literary Marketplace" (1997), Paula Feldman argues against my position by asserting that Hemans was not straitened as her career progressed, but freed. An 1825 change in publisher meant that

> [s]he would no longer feel constrained to make her work compatible with Murray's travel book / memoir list, though she would continue, at least for the next few years, to make use of exotic settings and to base important poems on historical record. But with the artistic freedom Blackwood accorded her, her work would increasingly become more explicitly autobiographical and eventually devotional. (168-69)

However, I contend that as Hemans's writing grew more popular, it became more appropriately feminine: she replaced one set of writerly restraints — which forced her into unconventionality — with a less visible and therefore more insidious set, which "freed" her to be conventional.

> But oh! what words the vision may portray,
> The form of sanctitude that guards thy shrine?
> There stands thy goddess, robed in war's array,
> Supremely glorious, awfully divine!
> With spear and helm she stands, and flowing vest,
> And sculptured aegis, to perfection wrought,
> And on each heavenly lineament imprest
> Calmly sublime, the majesty of thought;
> The pure intelligence, the chaste repose, —
> All that a poet's dream around Minerva throws (ll.751-60)

Here is Minerva in her glory — almost indescribable (ll.751-2) and yet the poet's subject, a concept made real by being clothed in words from the poetic imagination (l.760). Like Arachne, Hemans implies that her talent is not a gift of the goddess. Instead, the goddess is a manifestation of poetic ability: the better the poet, the more vivid the manifestation and the more powerful the deity. Hemans thus insinuates that the poetess is the parent of the goddess, and sets the stage for identification between the two.

Modern Greece both laments and embraces history's violent displacements, as of the Elgin marbles. The subject also arises in a form suspiciously similar to Byron's *Curse of Minerva*, which appeared in a pirated edition in 1815.[50] However, Byron's description of the diminished and disempowered Minerva contrasts markedly with the Hemans passage quoted above:

> Gone were the terrors of her awful brow,
> Her idle Aegis bore no Gorgon now;

[50] This is not to say that Hemans deliberately plagiarized Byron: Feldman notes that Hemans was acutely aware of the poetry market, and quotes a February 1817 letter to her publisher John Murray defending her choice of subject matter in *Modern Greece*: "'Had I been more fully aware of the very limited taste for the Arts which you inform me is displayed by the Public, I should certainly have applied myself to some other subject: but from having seen so many works advertised on Sculpture, Painting, &c, I was naturally led to imagine the contrary'" (qtd. in "The Poet and the Profits" 153). Hemans worked deliberately, and with marked success, to ensure her poems would be saleable.

> Her helm was dinted, and the broken lance
> Seem'd weak and shaftless e'en to mortal glance;
> The olive branch, which still she deign'd to clasp,
> Shrunk from her touch and wither'd in her grasp;
> And ah! tho' still the brightest of the sky,
> Celestial tears bedimm'd her large blue eye;
> Round the rent casque her owlet circled slow,
> And mourned his mistress with a shriek of woe! (ll.79-88)

Although not specifically pointed at Hemans, Byron's description suggests that identification with this particular deity at this particular time does not bode well for any mortal.

The next obvious Hemans/Minerva association is similarly ominous. In 1837 — twenty years after the publication of *Modern Greece* and two years after Hemans's death — William Wordsworth published a revised version of his "Extempore Effusion on the Death of James Hogg," adding four lines of poetry and a Preface memorializing Hemans. In that Preface, Wordsworth says "She was totally ignorant of housewifery, and could as easily have managed the spear of Minerva as her needle" (736).[51] Such an ironic identification of Hemans with Minerva casts aspersions on Hemans by noting her unfeminine inability to sew. But the comparison of the spear to a needle also implies the continued belittling of the goddess begun in 1815 with Byron's *Curse of Minerva*. Thus the "Poet of Home" (Wordsworth, so called by Hemans [Chorley I.141]) undermines the cultural authority of Hemans, "the icon of female domesticity" (Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* 123) through comparison with the goddess that Hemans first evoked/created twenty years earlier.

Late twentieth-century criticism of Hemans has picked up on the Minerva connection with a vengeance. The critical linchpin in Nanora Sweet's 1997 discussion

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[51] See Appendix 6 for the text of "Extempore Effusion on the Death of James Hogg, including pertinent excerpts from the Preface.

of processionals in "History, Imperialism and the Aesthetics of the Beautiful: Hemans and the Post-Napoleonic Movement" rests in the image offered near the end of *The Restoration of Works of Art to Italy*, of the veil of Minerva paraded around Athens during festivals (178). The title of Kevin Eubanks' 1997 article "Minerva's Veil: Hemans, Critics, and the Construction of Gender" reinscribes Hemans' identification with Minerva through reference to a line from *Modern Greece*, "Minerva's veil is rent — her image gone" (809). Like Eubanks, Susan Wolfson's " 'Domestic Affections' and 'the Spear of Minerva': Felicia Hemans and the Dilemma of Gender" (1994), includes a titular reference to the Goddess, but this time to the mention from Wordsworth's Preface to "Hogg." The negative connotations of that reference should give contemporary scholars a hint that Minerva is not just arbiter of Arachne's fate and avatar of weaving, wisdom, and war. When connected to Hemans, the Roman goddess also raises the spectres of Hemans's construction that poetry begets deity, Byron's diminished Minerva, and Wordsworth's ironic comparison of needle and spear. Although late twentieth-century mentions of the goddess may be bids to glorify Hemans, closer examination suggests that they also connote disempowerment for both the goddess and the poet identified with her, just as Daly's use of a spinning metaphor to describe women's creativity carries irreducible negative connotations.

It seems that the negative ramifications of the textile myth were lost on Hemans. As time passed, she increased the number of different textile words used in her poems. The table in Appendix 5 shows that her textile vocabulary increased over the years, and that textile terms which appeared throughout her career were used more frequently in the final third: she absorbed the prejudice of her cultural milieu that textile terminology would render her writing more acceptable to a judgmental public. (See chapter two for a discussion of the longstanding tradition aligning women and

textile production.) Following the Romantic veneration of creative self-expression, Hemans characterized the increasing concern with domesticity in her work as a sign of literary growth. In an Oct 23 1828 letter to her publisher John Blackwood, she wrote,

> I am sensible how very great a difference there is, I will not say of merit, but of subject and interest between my earlier and later poetical works; whatever they may contain of character at all peculiar to themselves, began, I think, to develop [sic] itself in the volume of the Siege of Valencia, an[d I] attribute this greatly to my having gained courage, about that time, and not before, to draw from my own thoughts and feelings, and also to the ardent study of German literature. — I had before written with great timidity, at an early age, and in a situation remote from all literary connexion, and was glad to take shelter under fact and authorities and classical names, from which I have since freed myself. I have mentioned these particulars because they throw light upon the change of style. (qtd. in Feldman 167)

So, Hemans herself realized that her writing had changed radically over time, though from her perspective the change did not look like one of increasing domestication, but of self-expression.

I am far from alone in noting Hemans's transformation into an "icon of female domesticity" (Mellor *Romanticism and Gender* 123): Paula Feldman characterizes the change in Hemans's later career as positive, suggesting that "[t]he move to Blackwoods [from publisher John Murray, in 1825] was a fortunate one" because "with the artistic freedom Blackwood accorded her, her work would increasingly become more explicitly autobiographical and eventually devotional" (168-69, see also note 49 of this thesis), a statement that privileges autobiography over history, in a properly Romantic manner. In a more negative light, Eubanks traces "the development of the Hemans persona through the course of her career" by following

> ideas of gender simultaneously through the Hemans canon and her contemporary reviews. This analysis reveals that the Hemans persona arose, in part, out of the interaction of her texts and the contemporary critical texts.

> Taken as a whole, Hemans' literary output shows a movement from early works which often do not reflect society's views of women to later ones which are more conventional. (342)

He ends with observation that, by 1825, "Hemans had ... become afraid to lift the veil of respectability with which critics had wished to enshroud her life and writings" (352). The statistical evidence presented in chapter one corroborates Eubanks's assertions: as Hemans gained professional confidence, she wrote less like a textually-educated man, and more like a textile-informed woman.

The statistics also show that Hemans's textile language is conventional in comparison with that of William Wordsworth: she used common words more often than he. This suggests that Hemans's critical erasure during the Modern period may not be due entirely to sexism. In a time when New Critical close-reading held the ascendency, the predictability of her vocabulary may have left Hemans open to disdain. Her current critical resurrection implies not only that Feminism and New Historicism have made space to appreciate a less classically exclusive aesthetic, but also that aesthetic tastes have changed over time. Novelty on the level of language is not necessarily required for greatness any more. The following reading of Hemans's "Wood Walk and Hymn" shows how different kinds of novelty operate in her work.

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Like Arachne, Hemans's genius initially evoked comparison with Minerva, and later resulted in the poet's transformation into a something culturally negligible. The critical task now remaining involves recalling her poems not as the work of undeserved deification or as mindlessly spun "correct" verse, but as pieces of creative self-expression that arose from a specific cultural milieu. We need to find in Hemans Arachne-as-weaver, not Minerva, or Arachne-as-spider.

Comparison with the poetry of William Wordsworth rather than Byron, helps clarify Hemans's identity as poet by demonstrating that her poetic ends diverged from those of the laureate, though literary criticism tends to assume that Wordsworth's aesthetic was the pinnacle of poetic achievement in the Romantic period. Both Hemans's admiration of Wordsworth and her desire to situate herself as his amanuensis are well documented.[52]

Less well known, perhaps, is the fact that her readership outnumbered his in their time: Feldman observes that "total book sales during her lifetime [reached] approximately 18,000 volumes" (176), while during his life, "Wordsworth sold approximately 13,000 books" (176n69). But literary history has undervalued her poems while lauding his. The following section suggests some reasons for Hemans's critical neglect by comparing Hemans's later lyric "Wood Walk and Hymn" with two of Wordsworth's poems — "Nutting" and "On Seeing a Needlecase in the Form of a Harp" — as interpreted by Harold Bloom, in order to demonstrate how his definition of greatness in poetry excludes Hemans.[53]

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[52] See Kennedy's "Hemans, Wordsworth, and the 'Literary Lady'" (1997) and also my own "Praise Between Peers: Felicia Hemans in the Wordsworth Household" (1999).

[53] I use Bloom as critical bell-wether for three reasons. First, his 1994 book *The Western Canon* confirmed his acceptance as that virtually oxymoronic creature, a popular academic writer (it was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection), suggesting that he adequately represents popular perceptions of literary history. Second, Anne Mellor cites him among Meyer Abrams, John Beer, Geoffrey Hartman, Paul de Man, Carl Woodring, Jerome McGann, and their many acolytes as people for whom "The Romantics" means the "Big Six" writers (*Romanticism and Gender* 1). Finally, the seven chapters of Bloom's *The Visionary Company* (1961) include one for each of the "Big Six" and one tacked on the end for "Beddoes, Clare, Darley, and Others." He does not justify this selection in his introduction: I assume this omission implies that doing so is the function of the book in its entirety. Instead he merely states that "[o]ut of the ferment that failed to produce a national renewal [a "French Revolution' in England] there came instead the major English contribution to world literature since the Renaissance, the startling phenomenon of six major poets appearing in just two generations" (xiii).

In his seminal text *The Visionary Company* (1961), Harold Bloom situates Wordsworth's "Nutting" as an outtake from *The Prelude* (128). Prior to making this assertion, Bloom describes *The Prelude* as a celebration of the "marriage between the Mind of Man and the goodly universe of Nature" (125): "[f]or Wordsworth the individual Mind and the external World are exquisitely fitted, each to the other, even as man and wife, and with blended might they accomplish a creation the meaning of which is fully dependent upon the sexual analogy" (127). "Nutting" provides a glimpse into the darker possibilities of such an analogy. The poem tropes the exploitative sexism of Western culture as rape, rather than an equitable contract.

The passage describing the groom's disguise suggests a subversion of the social norms of wedding:

> a Figure quaint,
> Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds
> Which for that service had been husbanded,
> By exhortation of my frugal Dame —
> Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
> At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, — and, in truth,
> More raggèd than need was! (ll.8-14)

Line 14 implies that the narrator feels more comfortable in disguise, an early clue that all is not entirely correct or honourable about the proposed outing. Readerly unease exacerbates with the narrator's voyeuristic gazing upon the object of his intention:

> A virgin scene! — A little while I stood,
> Breathing with such suppression of the heart
> As joy delights in; and, with wise restraint
> Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
> The banquet — (ll.21-25)

Finally, the narrator ends his fastidious anticipation and defiles the defenseless hazel in its abode: "Then up I rose, / And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with

crash / And merciless ravage" (ll.43-45). The harvest is a bitter one: in reference to "The silent trees" and "intruding sky" (l.53), Bloom observes

> [h]ere, because of the boy's action, there is no reciprocal giving between earth and sky. The trees are silent, and the sky is an intruder. The dialectic of generosity between Man and Nature must operate before there can be a mutual giving within Nature herself. (*Visionary Company* 130)

According to Bloom, the narrator's ravagement precludes an equitable marriage between Man and Nature (hence, perhaps, the omission of "Nutting" from "The Prelude").

Bloom goes on to misread the final lines of the poem: "[i]n a touching displacement of responsibility for his act, Wordsworth transcends the directly sexual element in his poem by adjuring a gentle Maiden to move among the same shades, and so restore the spirit he has driven away" (*Visionary Company* 130). The actual lines are:

> Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades
> In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
> Touch — for there is a spirit in the woods. (ll.54-56)

Clearly, the spirit is not driven away but raped, and the maid's duty is not to restore something removed, but to provide physical and spiritual healing by her very presence.[54] Bloom would have the rape efface the survivor, where Wordsworth implies a much more difficult situation — damage has been done, some sort of

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[54] In an earlier draft of this poem Wordsworth cautions the maiden (his sister Dorothy), to be less destructive in the wood by contrasting her current wildness with his own as a boy: "Ah what a crash was that — with gentle hand /Touch those fair hazels; my beloved Maid, / ... From such rude intercourse the woods all shrink" (ed. Butler and Green, 302), opening the possibility that both Bloom and I misread the poem. However, Dorothy's wildness was erased in rewriting, so I stand by my interpretation of the published poem.

restitution must be offered, and the perpetrator is patently inappropriate for the task. If Nature will be reconciled with Man, it will be through qualities traditionally assigned to the virginal brides-maid such as gentleness ("Nutting" ll.55, 56), rather than those of the putative groom.

Despite the misreading of the final lines, Bloom's analysis of "Nutting" demonstrates the kind of poetical content appreciated by some very successful critics of Romantic poetry. Primary importance rests in the concern with the relationship between man and nature: according to Bloom's analysis, an appreciation of her own transcendence is the bride-gift of Nature to the enlightened mind of the groom-poet (*Visionary Company* 128). Second, the connection between feminized nature and the male narrator/poet takes a sexual form, a variation on the convention of that relationship as a marriage (129). Third, the final lines do not supply a moral *per se*. Rather, they invite the reader to speculate on the connection between humanity and nature without overt signposting (130). Finally, the introduction of the ineffable "spirit in the woods" at the end of the poem emblematizes Romantic poetry's signature manner of dealing with matters spiritual, not through the dictation of appropriate sentiments to the reader, but by raising a spectre, and leaving the reader to speculate (131). The manner in which these four poetical attributes interact has long piqued the interest of professional readers such as Bloom.

Wordsworth's "On Seeing a Needlecase in the Form of a Harp" (1827) is a whimsical poem dedicated to Edith May Southey, who created the offending titular artifact. The poem is amenable to analysis with the four attributes identified above, though it lacks the entrancing ambiguity that so engages the critical reader of "Nutting". The moral of "On Seeing a Needlecase..." is bluntly stated. After the narrator voices disapproval of the degradation of the lyre into a functional little

needlecase, the "knowing Sprite" (l.37) admonishes him, saying "Love stoops as fondly as he soars" (l.40). Narratorial trust in the reader to draw intelligent, measured conclusions has been thus replaced with overt direction.

In the first four quatrains the narrator expresses disapproval of using a harp as a pattern for so prosaic a bit of domestic paraphernalia as a needlecase, ending with the words:

> And this, too, from the Laureate's Child,
> A living lord of melody!
> How will her Sire be reconciled
> To the refined indignity? (l.13-16)

The last six quatrains present a rebuttal by the Sprite, who asserts that the fairies require musical instruments as much as anyone else. Thus, the transcendent Spirit of "Nutting" has multiplied and degenerated to become a "knowing Sprite" (l.37), "Pygmean bands" (l.21), "Dwarf Genii" (l.22), "Fays" (l.22), "Gay Sylphs" (l.29), and "sullen Gnomes" (l.31) — a host conceived to entertain and instruct children and child-like women rather than inspire awe or contemplation in adults.

Granted, early references to Minerva, Arachne and Vulcan could engage mythic spirituality, but the actual use does not encourage cogitation:

> Minerva's self would stigmatize
> The unclassic profanation.
> Even her own needle that subdued
> Arachne's rival spirit,
> Though wrought in Vulcan's happiest mood,
> Such honour could not merit. (ll.7-11)

The goddess and the woman with a goddess-like gift for weaving are mentioned solely to invoke the disapproving authority of deity, rather than to engage in speculation about the creative potential of textile work. As predicted, Minerva's

recognition of Arachne's comparable ability is completely omitted, though her punishment is gratuitously mentioned. This is the first time that Wordsworth's narrator recasts Minerva's shuttle as a needle, an image he resurrects in his discussion of Hemans in the preface to "Extempore Effusion on the Death of James Hogg." In any case, raising the spectre of Arachne's punishment serves no purpose other than reinforcing the idea that one should not aspire to creativity when producing textile work.

Another bathetic difference from "Nutting" apparent in "On Seeing a Needlecase..." concerns the marriage between man and nature, here degraded into a hopelessly unconsummated not-quite betrothal between the "love-sick maiden dear" (1.33) and some utterly absent other. "On Seeing a Needlecase..." has neither masculine presence — a lack which robs the maiden of her *raison d'être* — nor a natural locus of wild power. After the ineffectual maiden displaces nature as potential bride, she distracts herself with needlework to no other purpose than to "cheat the thought she cannot cheer" (35). This demonstrates Carole Shiner Wilson's perspicacity in "Lost Needles, Tangled Threads: Stitchery, Domesticity, and the Artistic Enterprise in Barbauld, Edgeworth, Taylor and Lamb" (1994), where she states "the needle is an instrument of social control that kept girls and women sedentary for hours" (168). Unlike the maiden at the end of "Nutting," the maiden in "On Seeing a Needlecase..." doesn't enjoy enough autonomy to move through woods. This seems a moot point, since there are no woods in the poem: nature has become either the unreal haunt of the fantastical little people, or a rigorously controlled bower appropriate for accomplishing embroidery with no intrinsic value.

Opportunities to appreciate the signifying potential of textiles abounded in the period, despite the prevalent cultural blindness towards them. For example, the

closeness between the Wordsworth and Southey households ensured that the Wordsworths knew of the Southey household practice of covering books with cloth. According to Charles C. Southey,

> [a]nother fancy of his [Laureate Robert Southey] was to have all those books of lesser value, which had become ragged and dirty, covered, or rather bound, in coloured cotton prints, for the sake of making them clean and respectable in their appearance, it being impossible to afford the cost of having so many put into better bindings.
>
> Of this task his daughters, aided by any female friends who might be staying with them, were the performers; and not fewer than 1200 to 1400 volumes were so bound by them at different times, filling completely one room, which he designated as the Cottonian library. With this work he was much interested and amused, as the ladies would often suit the pattern to the contents, clothing a Quaker work or a book of sermons in sober drab, poetry in some flowery design, and sometimes contriving a sly piece of satire at the contents of some well-known author by their choice of its covering. One considerable convenience attended this eccentric mode of binding — the book became as well known by its dress as by its contents, and much more easily found. (vi.17)

Despite such a glowing example, "On Seeing a Needlecase...." treats textile production in the most culturally conservative terms — as either mere drudgery, association with which defiles the harp; or as a "jumping off point" for a bit of ephemeral imagining, neither of which indicates any appreciation for the ingenuity motivating Edith May Southey to produce such a playful little icon. Her needlecase visually suggests that a woman's needles, like a harp's strings, provide possible means for creative inspiration to come into being. The text of "On Seeing a Needlecase in the Form of a Harp" abrogates that meaning, and instead reinscribes textile production as distracting drudgery.

The dictated moral message, conception of nature as either controlled or fantastical, degradation of the idea of spirit, and the fact that the only potential marriage in the picture doesn't look like it will get as far as the betrothal stage — all

ensure that critical readers of Wordsworth's "On Seeing a Needlecase in the Form of a Harp" tend to dub the poem uninteresting ... that is to say, critically intransigent.

According to the precepts championed by Bloom, then, "Nutting" represents Wordsworth's writing during his "great decade" (*The Visionary Company* 198), and "On Seeing a Needlecase..." remains a negligible later lyric. However, as the Cottonian Library intimates, the poetic squib has rich possibilities for analysis outside of Bloomian precepts. It is not surprising that such significances have been critically ignored, since the culture that produced the critics allows the denigration of the poem's subject matter — textiles — not only to pass without comment, but to provide the measure for non-creative activity. In his 1970 overview of English literature, Ian Jack observes "[f]or her [Hemans], we feel, poetry was a feminine accomplishment more difficult than piano-playing and embroidery but no less respectable" (168). Jack lumps poetry, piano-playing and embroidery under the rubric of "feminine accomplishment" and damns all with the faint praise of "respectable," thereby creating a tautology, all elements of which pale in comparison with the implied measure of "real," masculine textual creativity.

From a Bloomian perspective, Felicia Hemans's 1834 poem "Wood Walk and Hymn" appears even weaker than "On Seeing a Needlecase..." — so much so that one suspects the poet was not concerned with producing the kind of work which later inspired Bloom's ideas about Romantic poetry. In fact, "Wood Walk and Hymn" evinces a pattern of concurrent repudiation and endorsement of the poetic traits isolated in "Nutting," indicating that Hemans deliberately "misreads" the Wordsworth poem which supplies her epigraph. Hemans' allegorical lyric takes as its conceit a father and son traversing a forest, the father explaining some myths which superstitious people mistakenly contrive to lend Christian explanations to the

attributes of various natural phenomena. For example, aspen leaves tremble because Christ's cross was made of aspen wood (ll.1-18), and the Arum leaf has blotches because it grew beneath the cross and some of Christ's blood fell on it (ll.39-54). All of this is couched in terms that demonstrate the father's/church's careful and fond instruction of his son/congregation away from error — a far cry from the peregrinations of the lone nutter in Wordsworth's poem, which lead to what his later feelings construe as error ("Nutting" ll.49-53). On the other hand, when father and son reach "the very inmost heart / Of the old wood" ("Wood Walk and Hymn" ll.74-75), the wilderness oppresses the child, whose parent then remonstrates: "Nay, fear not, gentle child! / 'Tis love, not fear, whose vernal breath pervades / The stillness round" (ll.100-102). To cheer the child, the father urges him to sing a hymn that ends with the lines

> Let me not know the change
> O'er nature thrown by guilt! — the boding sky,
> The hollow leaf-sounds ominous and strange,
> The weight wherewith the dark tree shadows lie!
> Father! oh! keep my footsteps pure and free,
> To walk the woods with thee! (ll.158-63)

Clearly there are echoes of "Nutting" here, especially in lines 159-61 with their references to the changes that guilt engenders in nature. Near the end of Wordsworth's poem, the narrator notes

> unless I now
> Confound my present feelings with the past;
> Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
> Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
> I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
> The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky. (ll.48-53)

Both poems concern the illumination afforded by a walk in the woods, though Wordsworth presents a lone and erring man-child, while Hemans shows us a man guiding his child away from error. Just as she takes up the narrative elements of walking in the forest, and of committing errors tantamount to sin, so Hemans takes up the theme of guilt that Wordsworth introduces, but in a manner entirely unanticipated by "Nutting": instead of leaving her subject with an unformed and perpetual guilt, she offers the countermeasure of instruction as a means of avoiding error. Thus, through both the guilt theme and the narrative device of a walk in the forest, Hemans's "Wood Walk and Hymn" expands upon *and* departs from the Wordsworthian pre-text of "Nutting."

The moral of "Wood Walk and Hymn" similarly resists Bloom's precepts, being neither as closely veiled as that of the "good" poem "Nutting," nor as blatantly stated as in the "bad" poem "On Seeing a Needlecase...." Instead, the interplay between father and son slowly reveals a message of tolerant faith, reaffirmed in the final hymn. This gradual process of revelation piques readerly interest not with deliberate ambiguity, but by sympathy with the father's task of providing for his son the proper information at the appropriate time, in order to ensure that the son remains guiltless and pure. However, the faith elucidated in the hymn cuts through potential obfuscations the way Alexander's sword cut the Gordian knot. Thus an innovative form serves a conceptual purpose, allowing Hemans to present the sort of moral ambiguity and complexity that earmarks "Nutting," while also proposing resolution to that ambiguity.

The father's musings over what and when to teach his child suggests that proper nurturance is not an easy task (a theme with which Hemans would have been familiar from examples such as Wordsworth's 1800 pastoral "Michael"). After telling his son

the story of the aspen's trembling leaves, the father confesses that, though he doesn't subscribe to that story

> But yet, even now,
> With something of a lingering love, I read
> The characters, by that mysterious hour,
> Stamp'd on the reverential soul of man
> In visionary days; and thence thrown back
> On the fair forms of nature. Many a sign
> Of the great sacrifice which won us heaven,
> The woodman and the mountaineer can trace
> On rock, on herb, and flower. And be it so!
> They do not wisely that, with hurried hand,
> Would pluck these salutary fancies forth
> From their strong soil within the peasant's breast,
> And scatter them — far, far too fast! — away
> As worthless weeds: — Oh! little do we know
> When they have soothed, when saved!
> But come, dear boy!
> My words grow tinged with thought too deep for thee.
> (ll.20-35)

The above passage demonstrates more than Hemans's predictably classist tendencies: it condones tolerance in interpretation, if not of the Holy Word then of the Holy Works of nature. The exclamation of lines 33-4 "Oh! little do we know / When they [rustic's tales] have soothed, when saved!" affirms the need for the instructor to allow for the imagination and education of the student. In this, the father can be read as a personification of the church in its role of parent guiding a soul/son to salvation through instruction in tolerance, not just through Biblical exegesis, but through whatever intuitive or mythological means get you to the pearly gates. Further, the rhetorical deferral of instruction in lines 34-35, repeated later in lines 70-71, demonstrates the paternalistic attitude that children and the ignorant can't learn everything all at once, and must be guided away from error in increments appropriate to their maturity. Once again, Hemans has found a way to present both the father's

desire to instruct his child despite his own fallibility as a dilemma ambiguous in its complexity, and the child's hymn as the straightforward solution to that dilemma.

Just as the moral message of "Wood Walk and Hymn" is both more complex than that of "On Seeing a Needlecase..." and more resolved than that of "Nutting," so the spirit in Hemans's poem has changed, being neither an insultingly childish fantasy, nor uneluctable. The spirit in Hemans's wood is not a spirit of the wood, but Christian spirituality, revealed through nature (ll.21-25) — or, more accurately, revealed by a person's reaction to nature. Thus the father chastises the son for his needless fear at the heart of the forest (ll.101-102): a guiltless soul like that of the child should find not oppression but love in the work of God which is nature. Hemans removes the possibility of nature as some kind of external, weddable other and transforms it into a field for the projection of human conceptual constructs. Consequently, "Wood Walk and Hymn" accords with Bloom's Nature — dependent upon human interpretation — even as it denies Nature its traditional status as a character, replacing the potentially pagan spirit of the woods with the conventions of Christian spirituality.

"Wood Walk and Hymn," does not personify nature, let alone gender it female. This textual strategy is uncommon for Romantic poetry, but necessary for a female poet: the conventional assumption of nature as the bride of the literary groom requires of women writers a level of mental gender gymnastics unparalleled in male writing.[55]

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[55] Mellor discusses two responses to the gendering of Nature — and its attendent marriage trope — by women prose writers. In the first, gothic writers "accept... the identification of the sublime [landscape] with the experience of masculine empowerment. But they explicitly equate this masculine sublime with patriarchal tyranny" (*Romanticism and Gender* 90). In the second, writers who grew up with sublime, mountainous landscapes,

> represent it as a flowing out, an ecstatic experience of co-participation in a nature they explicitly gender as female. For them, this female nature is not an overwhelming power, not even an all-bountiful mother. Instead, nature is a *female friend*, a sister, with whom they share their most intimate experiences

By presenting a de-gendered nature, "Wood Walk and Hymn" effaces the marriage trope crucial to much Romantic poetry.

In fact, all female characters have been eliminated from Hemans's poem, beginning with Wordsworth's healing maiden from "Nutting": Hemans chooses to start the epigraph at the point just after Wordsworth's sole mention of the maiden. This frees Hemans to change the characters drastically. Rather than a lone young man on a predatory quest, the principal actor in "Wood Walk and Hymn" is a nurturing father. Rather than a lone maiden whose movement through the woods provides much-needed healing, the more passive human character in Hemans's poem is a male child. These changes appear to move "Wood Walk and Hymn" closer to "On Seeing a Needlecase..." than "Nutting" — just as "On Seeing a Needlecase..." had no male characters, so the female characters appear to be eliminated from "Wood Walk and Hymn."

However, that similarity is superficial: the father's solicitude for his child borders on the feminine, and provides a nurturing model for the male parent which suggests a metaphor for the church. Hemans has thus "metaphorized" the metaphor, presenting a father who symbolizes the caring church, and then using that attribute of caring and nurturance to imbue the father with a surprising amount of personal attention to his son.[56] Thus the care which the narrator of "Nutting" belatedly entrusts to the maiden

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and with whom they cooperate in the daily business of life, to the mutual advantage of each. (97, emphasis in original).

In "Wood Walk and Hymn" Hemans has evaded the problem of a woman relating to female nature by refusing to gender nature at all. Instead she presents a very nurturing, feminized father figure.

[56] Later in *Scenes and Hymns of Life* the poem "The Day of Flowers — A Mother's Walk with Her Child" presents virtually the same situation, but with the gender of the parent changed, and without the "Nutting" epigraph to provide an overt connection with Wordsworth. "The Day of Flowers" is not one of the seven pieces that make up the series which includes "Wood Walk and Hymn."

imbues "Wood Walk and Hymn." In its distribution of gender roles, "Wood Walk and Hymn" initially seems to be as monotonous as "On Seeing a Needlecase...," though careful reading demonstrates that, once again, Hemans's poem partakes of the complexity of "Nutting".

All this comparison of "Wood Walk and Hymn" with the two Wordsworth poems through the analytical foci suggested by Bloom's reading of "Nutting" in *The Visionary Company* demonstrates that Hemans's poem neither/both achieves nor/and fails at being a good Romantic poem according to the precepts which inform Bloom's criticism. To recap, Hemans's poem presents its moral ambiguously in the body of the text, but offers a resolution of faith in the hymn. The narrative transforms the solitary walker's belated guilt toward Nature in "Nutting" into the father's instruction of his child in order to pre-empt behaviour that will provoke guilt. By its identification with Christianity, the spirit of Hemans's poem becomes both more easily identified and ambiguous: it becomes overdetermined rather than underdetermined since it represents centuries of religious debate and exegesis. Thus "Wood Walk and Hymn" engages many of Bloom's precepts, though not in the manner which his analysis of "Nutting" would lead us to expect. Something else acts in Hemans's poem.

Wordsworth slightingly described that "something else" as mere development of the thoughts of others. That Wordsworth considered Hemans's work as expansion upon his own (Wordsworth *Letters* VI.491) suggests she was an extremely perceptive and subtle textual analyst herself: if one considers "Wood Walk and Hymn" a treatment of "Nutting," one can see that it diverges significantly from the original by depicting critically unprecedented variations on conventional ideas and situations. Rather than recognizing as evidence of her creativity Hemans's capacity to produce

such a profound conceptual mimesis that the source of inspiration — arguably the pre-eminent male poet of his era — accepts her creations as expansions upon his own, Wordsworth denigrates the effort. Since Wordsworth's poetry has provided a large part of the backbone of the Romantic canon, alternative poetical precepts such as those of Hemans have received short shrift from critics and scholars. And there was always her gender to excuse the putative flaws in her poetry.

Hemans was fully aware of the cultural inclination to discount her work for no reason other than gender. Yet, as one of the foremost poets of her time, she was as much a force for forming that cultural inclination as she was its casualty. Consequently, her work often marks the struggle to reconcile this situation. For example, in the 1829 poem "Woman and Fame" she repudiates the very fame which marks her success. The poem is comprised of five six-line stanzas, the first three of which begin by praising Fame's attractions, then end demonstrating how those attractions are less appropriate for women than simple domestic pleasures:

> Thou hast a charmed cup, O Fame!
> A draught that mantles high,
> And seems to lift this earthly frame
> Above mortality.
> Away! to me — a woman — bring
> Sweet waters from affection's spring.
>
> Thou hast green laurel leaves, that twine
> Into so proud a wreath;
> For that resplendent gift of thine,
> Heroes have smiled in death:
> Give me from some kind hand a flower,
> The record of one happy hour!
>
> Thou hast a voice, whose thrilling tone
> Can bid each life-pulse beat
> As when a trumpet's note hath blown,
> Calling the brave to meet:
> But mine, let mine — a woman's breast,
> By words of home-born love be bless'd.
>
> ("Woman and Fame" ll.1-18)

The final two stanzas denounce fame as a false friend, ending with the unanswered plea "Where must the lone one turn or flee? — / Not unto thee — oh! not to thee!" (ll.29-30). "Woman and Fame" is thus a poem written by a famous woman poet in order to repudiate fame for women.

Hemans directly engages one problem common to women poets in "To the Mountain Winds" (1830), which begins with a quotation from Wordsworth's "Excursion" (Book IV.513-21), where the narrator rhapsodizes on man's divine liberty to appreciate nature.[57] Hemans's poem presents a narrator who wants to appreciate the wilderness as Wordsworth suggests, but who is socially constrained from acting on her desire. Thus the narrator refers to herself as a "divided being" ("To the Mountain Winds" l.5), and finally implores the winds to

> Hush, proud voices! gentle be your falling!
> Woman's lot thus chainless may not be;
> Hush! the heart your trumpet sounds are calling,
> Darkly still may grow — but never free! (ll.37-40)

According to her biographer Chorley, Hemans often expressed the desire "to be transported to some scene where I might see what nature was, when utterly untamed, with her hair *uncurled*, and in all her original wildness" (qtd. in Chorley I.71, emphasis in original). The first nine stanzas of "To the Mountain Winds" eloquently express that desire, though the lines 37 and 38 bitterly remark on the impossibility of acting to fulfill it. However, lines 39 and 40 suggest that despite its lack of freedom,

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[57] Had Hemans chosen to begin with an epigraph from P.B. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" — which seems ostensibly as appropriate as Wordsworth's "Excursion" — "To the Mountain Winds" would invite a far more revolutionary interpretation than Hemans would approve. Hemans offers no real hope for change in "To the Mountain Winds," which is, in the end, merely a complaint.

the heart will still grow because it must, and because that growth is both inevitable and proscribed, it is necessarily transgressive.[58] If not allowed expression by untrammeled rambles through the mountains, the heart will find another means of expression, such as writing.

This, then, is the crumb Hemans throws the reader: both genders feel the desire to roam the wilderness equally, even though convention forces women to find alternative means of expression. Similarly, "Woman and Fame" asserts that, though fame is allowed men and considered inappropriate for women, it does not satisfy the desire for intimacy and communion of either gender. In these two poems, as in "Wood Walk and Hymn," Hemans inverts the cultural paradigm: instead of implying that women's desires are different from those of men, these poems posit the universality of human desire.

However, even as Hemans's poems suggest that some desires transcend difference, their forms demonstrate that creative writing about those universal desires need not be conveyed through similar means. Hemans's writing eludes criticism based on the aesthetic promulgated by the young Wordsworth. The following examination of Hemans's elegy to Mary Tighe and elegies to Hemans by other poets demonstrates that Barthes' textual web responds more inclusively to analysis determined to discern pattern than to exegesis based on hierarchical values.

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When Arachne was driven to suicide by a goddess jealous of her creative weaving, more than a creatrix was lost. In her 1984 article "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours,"

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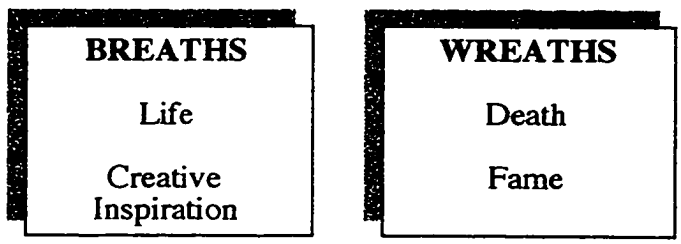
[58] Implicit in this poem is a criticism of the sentiments expressed by Wordsworth in the epigraph, which claims the freedom of the hills for "mortal man" (Excursion IV.514), without examining exclusions from that freedom. This criticism is a departure from Hemans's earlier hero-worship of the older poet.

Patricia Klindienst Joplin notes that, at the height of Arachne's renown, a community of women grew up around her:

> [u]nsurpassed in her art, Arachne was so graceful that women everywhere came to watch her card, spin, thread her loom, and weave. Gathered around her are other women watching, talking, resting. Here the loom represents the occasion for *communitas*, or peace, a context in which it is possible for pleasure to be nonappropriative and nonviolent. (48)

With Arachne's transformation, that community lost its focal centre, and its members were reintegrated into the patriarchal *status quo*. But physical location is not necessary for communities based on common skills: they arise even in the cloistered culture of private domesticity.

A virtual version of such a community among nineteenth-century women poets began with the deaths of members. The elegies written by and for Mary Tighe, Felicia Hemans, Lætitia Landon and Elizabeth Barrett survive as a web of texts which both mourn and celebrate each other's lives and works.[59] The images employed in memorializing are always shaped by cultural pressures: in these cases, they evidence the tension between their commemorative function, and the necessary denigration of fame. This tension arises through singular use of images common to elegies: wreaths and breaths. Breath — the lack of it in the late lamented, or raised in song by mourners either lamenting or celebrating — is one meaning of "inspiration," that difficult-to-isolate, multiply-constructable



[59] See Appendix 6 for the text of the elegies by Wordsworth, Hemans, Landon and Barrett discussed here.

impulse to create.[60] Wreaths denote either fame — for women writers, an equivocal result of successful creative inspiration — or the inevitable result of breathlessness. In terms of process, wreathing falls between spinning and weaving, the main difference being that the material wreathed — laurels, ivies, bays — stay green for a long time after being picked. They retain the semblance of life but actually are dead, an ominous portent for anyone who aspires to fame.

As this chapter has previously established, the problem with awarding a wreath to a female poet in the nineteenth century is that the best way to be considered a good woman was to be a private person: no matter how well someone like Hemans wrote or how badly she needed the income, public recognition includes denigration for a woman. Nowhere is that more clear than in a December 15, 1837 letter from William Wordsworth (who was by then that avatar of literary success, the Poet-Laureate of England) to Elizabeth Fisher. In answer to a question about her daughter's literary efforts he advises "copies of Emmie's verses, *in my opinion*, ought not to be widely spread; her mind ought to grow up quietly and silently; and her extraordinary powers should be left to develop themselves *naturally*, with as little observation as possible" (*Letters* VI.490). He goes on to refer to Hemans:

> [t]hese observations lead me to speak with regret that Mrs. Hemans's Poems have been put in her way at so early an age; towards the close of my 6th Vol. will be found a poem occasioned by the death of the Ettrick Shepherd, which shews that I think highly of that Lady's genius — but her friends, and I had

[60] "To the Mountain Winds" approaches the use of breath to memorialize, by stating that, since the "Voice of kindness in familiar tone" (l.12) is never heard among the "Wild and mighty and mysterious singers" (l.25) of the mountain winds, if one were to break from the "chains of care" enthralling them to "lower earth" (l.3) one would not regret the loss of loved ones. Hemans concludes, though, that such a break is not possible. In this case, Hemans counters breaths drawn in freedom with those of domestic imprisonment, where in the elegies, the comparison is not between two types of breath, but inspiration (breath) and fame (wreaths).

> the honour of being one of them — must acknowledge with regret, that the circumstance, tho' honourable to herself, put her upon writing too often and too much — she is consequently diffuse; and felt herself under the necessity of *expanding* the thoughts of others, and of hovering over their feelings, which has prevented her own genius doing justice to itself, and diminished the value of her productions accordingly. (VI.491, emphasis in original)

In the passage above, Wordsworth segues from discussing the need for Emmie to remain a private person — which he terms the "natural" course — to censoring her reading by excluding Hemans (heaven forbid Emmie should have a famous female role model), to using Hemans's "diffuse" style to exemplify the pitfalls awaiting a woman who dares attempt a public career.

Let us turn again to Wordsworth's poem to the Ettrick Shepherd, "Extempore Effusion on the Death of James Hogg," with its couplet comparing the recognition of achievement for poets with a crown of smog: "our haughty life is crowned with darkness, / Like London with its own black wreath" (ll.29-30), a couplet which inspired Bloom to assert that Wordsworth " had done more than any man to find a natural wreath for his generation" (*Visionary Company* 198). The poem's four line stanza dedicated to Hemans initially read

> She, too, a Muse whose holy spirit
> Was sweet as Spring, as Ocean deep,
> She, e'er her Summer yet was faded,
> Has sunk into a breathless Sleep. (*Letters* III.139)

The published version begins by admonishing readers to "Mourn rather for that holy Spirit" (l.37). By removing "Muse" but retaining "holy" Wordsworth prompts us to remember Hemans for religious rather than poetic virtue, thus reinforcing her reputation as a good woman at the expense of her reputation as a good poet. In the end, there are no wreaths for Hemans from Wordsworth, nor any indication that he valued Hemans's poetic ability. As well, out of the seemingly infinite number of

metaphors for death, Wordsworth chose to describe Hemans's demise as a "breathless sleep," an equivocal memorial for a poet, implying as it does a lack of both inspiration and voice.[61] This, then, indicates the cultural "party line" toward female poets in the first half of the nineteenth century — no matter how inspired, laurels need not be awarded: a woman's innate modesty precludes the desire for fame.

Not surprisingly, given the cultural taboo against public female success, Hemans avoids overt mentions of wreaths in her memorial to Mary Tighe, "The Grave of a Poetess." Here the trope has gone subliminal, requiring the kind of over-reading Miller asserts necessary "to put one's finger — figuratively — on the place of production that marks the spinner's attachment to her web" (288). The initial allusion to a laudatory wreath is easily missed: the third stanza begins "Fresh leaves were on the ivy bough / That fringed the ruin near" (ll.9-10). Given that Hemans wrote this before actually visiting Tighe's grave, it seems safe to assume that wreath implied by "ivy" and "fringed" is deliberate. Those lines are followed by "Young voices were abroad but thou / Their sweetness could not hear" (ll.11-12), with its dual connotation

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[61] Wordsworth may have taken this approach because he once witnessed her breathless: during her visit in 1830, she was not well enough to walk, so she rode a pony which he sometimes led (Chorley II. 95-96). At one point the pony got away from both of them. On July 30 1830, she wrote to a friend:

> "I was nearly thrown from a spirited horse I was riding the other evening, and have been as tremulous as an aspen leaf ever since. Mr. Wordsworth, I think, was more alarmed than myself, for by the time he came up to me, though I had with some difficulty kept my seat, my voice was completely gone, and I was unable to speak for many minutes." (qtd. in Chorley II.100-01)

Hemans was not the only one susceptible to horse-borne problems. In a letter to George Ticknor of Mar 17 1829, Robert Southey wrote: "Wordsworth has had a most dangerous fall, headlong, from his own mount, but providentially received no serious injury. He is looking old, but vigorous as ever in both mind and body" (40). Age robbed Hemans of her beauty (Chorley I.10), a horse briefly robbed her of her voice: Wordworth suffered the same depredations, and still merited the descriptor "vigorous."

of children playing nearby, and herself and others as poetic descendents of Tighe — a matrilineage. Hemans celebrates this connection overtly in lines 31-32: "Th' immortal spirit woke and wrought / Within my thrilling frame." The word "wrought" brings with it artisanal implications, as if Tighe were still wreathing words by inspiring her literary descendents.

"The Grave of a Poetess" goes on to state:

> Thou hast left sorrow in thy song
> A voice not loud but deep!
> The glorious bowers of earth among —
> How often didst thou weep? (ll.45-48)

What a difference from Wordsworth's rhyme of "deep" and "breathless sleep"! Hemans's poem allows that as long as Tighe is read, her voice cannot be lost. As well, in comparison with the stifling bower of the maid in "On Seeing a Needlecase...," Hemans's bower is one big, laudatory wreath. Tighe embowered is thereby wreath-crowned, but in a way entirely appropriate for a woman.

The epigraph to Lætitia Landon's "Stanzas on the Death of Felicia Hemans" comes from Hemans's "Lays of Many Lands": "The Rose ... the glorious rose is gone." Landon goes on to incite the reader to "Bring flowers" four times in as many lines, finishing the stanza with the rhetorical question "And shall they not be brought / To her who linked the offering / With feeling and with thought?" (ll.6-8). Anne Mellor notes that such blooms have added significance to women writers:

> [i]n the domesticated, feminine sublime, the meanest flower that blows is significant, not because it arouses a consciousness of our complicity in the eternal cycles of life and death, but because it can provide us with both the literal occasion and the figural sign for friendship, a demonstration of the enduring ties that bind human beings to nature, and one person to another *within* time. (*Romanticism and Gender* 106)

The flowers which Landon would heap before Hemans are not just funereal wreaths, but laurels awarded among peers. By saying Hemans "linked the offering," Landon implies that Hemans wrought word-wreaths. Hemans, too, linked flowers and voice in a way that celebrates the coterie of women poets: in death, Tighe is "Parted from all the song and bloom" (Hemans, "The Grave of a Poetess" ll.21). Wreaths are made of flowers, and so commemorate friendship among women. But they also commemorate fame, and so are a burden. At best, their bestowal indicates a mixed blessing.

Hemans actually gets to wear an uncharacteristically sterile wreath in Landon's "Stanzas on the Death...,":

> The meteor-wreath the poet wears
> Must make a lonely lot;
> It dazzles, only to divide
> From those who wear it not. (ll.69-72)

Landon casts Hemans as a martyr to the public adulation which accompanied her talent, and furthers Hemans's virtue by suggesting that she worked not for her own satisfaction but to serve others:

> Let others thank thee — 'twas for them
> Thy soft leaves thou didst wreathe;
> The red rose wastes itself in sighs
> Whose sweetness others breathe! (ll.81-84)

Another poem by Landon, simply entitled "Felicia Hemans," reiterates the theme that fame cost too dearly for Hemans: though "Many a stranger and far flower was blended / In the soft wreath that glory bound for thee" (ll.27-28), " never / Can fame atone for all that fame hath cost" (ll.33-34). Referring to this passage, Kennedy observes that "Landon is obviously not speaking only about Hemans, but about herself and every other female poet who has to deal with public prejudice against

'literary ladies'" (278). Furthermore, like Hemans' paean to Tighe, Landon's poem celebrates Hemans's voice, saying "Thy song around our daily path / Flung beauty born of dreams" ("Stanzas on the Death..." ll.17-18), and " thou from common thoughts and things / Didst call a charmed song" (ll.29-39), both sentiments which celebrate the quotidian in Hemans's writing. In Hemans' elegy to Tighe, and both of Landon's elegies to Hemans, the ability to wreathe words is troped as a private, domestic delight (inspiration) as well as a public burden (aspiration), with the burden always ultimately overwhelming the delight.

According to Hemans and Landon, fame requires of the female poet the same duty towards the public that she affords her loved ones in private: this compassion drains and eventually kills the poet, for whom death is a relief. Landon calls Hemans "weary One" ("Stanzas on the Death..." l.105), and writes "Better the weary dove should close its pinions, / Fold up its golden wings and be at peace" ("Felicia Hemans" ll.63-64), while Hemans regrets that Tighe gave "a vain love to passing flowers" ("The Grave of a Poetess" l.41). Elizabeth Barrett asserts such resignation is neither necessary nor virtuous. In another poem simply entitled "Felicia Hemans," written in response to Landon's "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans," Barrett chastises Landon's morbidity, opening with the line, "Thou bay crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned Dead art bowing" (l.1). Barrett goes on to reiterate Landon's exhortation that we "bring flowers" to Hemans's grave, not to waste energy in mourning Hemans's death but to celebrate her life's writing:

> And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where thou treadest:
> No flowers for her! no need of flowers, albeit "bring flowers," thou saidest.
>
> Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute," since both may come to breaking,
> Or flowers, to greet the "bride" — the heart's own beating works its aching;
> Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight, from earth's free bosom gathered,
> Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it withered:

> But bring not near the solemn corse a type of human seeming,
> Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming...
> (Barrett, "Felicia Hemans" ll.7-14)

Barrett inscribes Hemans as someone who followed the muse, no matter what the cost: "Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand her brow was wreathing, / But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed in all her breathing" (ll.21-22) In retrospect, we know Barrett's construction of Hemans partakes liberally of artistic license: after all, according to Feldman, Hemans's "success owed much to her shrewd business acumen and her ability to use her poetic talents to create an appealing product for the marketplace" (176). It was Hemans who jokingly wrote to her publisher John Murray in November 1817: "'The sum you have given [for Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto III, 600 pounds] really seems immense — I observe you have his Lordship upon your seal, I really think he ought to wear you on his'" (qtd. in Feldman 155). However, Hemans's practicality in business matters has no place in an elegy designed to laud her as a sensitive poet: instead, Hemans's gets Barrett's wreath because she found a way to be true to both faith and poetic voice. Barrett admonishes Landon to "Take music from the silent Dead" (l.5), and ends her poem with the unattributed quote, "'Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing, / The footfall of her parting soul is softer than her singing'" (ll.31-32), which places Hemans's poetic legacy as more important than either her death or her fame.

Barrett reiterates that precedence in her elegy to Landon, "L.E.L.'s Last Question," which states "She asked not, 'Do you praise me, oh my land?' / But 'Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?'" (ll.27-28). The virtue in Landon's question rests in its intimacy, aimed at her friends rather than her public. According to the poem, her friends *did* think of her, "crowned by new bays? Not so; / None smile, and

none are crowned where lyeth she" (ll.45-46), dishonored and in a distant grave. Barrett's poem redeems Landon's reputation by suggesting that her question is nothing less than the question asked by Christ:

> But while on mortal lips I shape anew
> A sigh to mortal issues, verily
> Above th' unshaken stars that see us die,
> A vocal pathos rolls — and He who drew
> All life from dust, and *for* all tasted death,
> By death, and life, and love appealing, saith,
> 'Do you think of me as I think of you?'
> ("L.E.L.'s Last Question" ll.57-64)

Mellor suggests that Romantic writers stole from women their cultural inheritance "as the experts in delicate, tender feelings and, by extension, moral purity and goodness" (*Romanticism and Gender* 23): here Barrett uses the authority of that most romantic avatar of Christian patriarchy, wearer of the crown of thorns, to get Landon's inheritance back. The narrator's breath, the poet's breath, and the saviour's breath, all ask a personal question, and in so doing reinscribe the private sphere as the purview not just of visionaries and poets, but of women, too.

A continuum runs from Hemans's oh-so subtle and proper bower-wreath to Tighe, through Landon's unbearable meteor wreath to Hemans, to Barrett's up-front claim of wreaths all round for those who live up to the responsibility of their inspiration. Throughout, fame is considered bad, not because it renders the poet unfeeling, but because it requires a woman to spread her caring too thinly among the public rather than lavishing it solely on family. In all of these elegies, as well as the complaints "To the Mountain Winds" and "Woman and Fame," the wreaths bestowed on women poets are troped as regrettable by-products of genuine inspiration, not the result of deliberate aspiration.

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In examining Hemans's life and works, this chapter has shown how one woman's textuality, transgressing as it does the traditions of gender, puts a disproportionate stress upon the author who risks being reviled by the culture which formerly adulated her — as happened to both the mythical Arachne and the very real Lætitia Landon. Hemans recognized that risk and minimized it, by reinscribing in her writing the archetype of the good, private woman even as she transgressed it in her life as a published poet. This strategy was not without its own problems — most notably the tendency to gain momentum after her death, leading to her long critical neglect — and tensions, which led her to pen lyrics like "Woman and Fame" and "To the Mountain Winds," regretting the demands of fame though not those of writing.[62] But Hemans's success also put her in the company of writers like her foremother Mary Tighe, her contemporary Lætitia Landon, and her inheritor Elizabeth Barrett, a community of women writers that never could have met (and indeed, it is questionable whether or not Hemans would have accepted Landon's somewhat risky company: after all, the savvy Hemans destroyed all evidence of an early correspondence with Percy Bysshe Shelley which might have reflected badly on her reputation [Chorley I.45]). The inter-referential elegies themselves comprise a Barthesian hyphology indifferent to the nadir of critical neglect toward Hemans which lasted for most of the twentieth century.

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[62] Kennedy makes this point when she states that Hemans "never complains about being a writer, only about the accompanying fame" (276). Kennedy also provides provocative readings of Hemans's poems about creative foremothers, "The Death of Sappho" and "Properzia Rossi." I did not use these two poems in my analysis, choosing instead the memorial to Tighe whom Hemans elegized rather than dramatized as she did Sappho and Rossi. It was very tempting to include "Properzia Rossi" because of the allusion to Ariadne, a mythical textile reference not treated elsewhere in this dissertation. However, as Nancy Miller observes "the critical difference that separates, finally, Arachne from Ariadne [is] the making of a text" (286): the textile myths which interest me involve textile production, with the potential for creativity and even narrative.

The existence and undervaluation of the elegiac poems exemplify two of "the patterns of history shared by women everywhere" which Adrienne Rich urges us to search out ("Resisting Amnesia" 154). The web of poems provides cause to celebrate and search among texts not just for reified examples of "good" writing — which historically has been defined by properties foreign to writing by women — but for other lost webs and relationships. The historical pattern of critical apotheosis followed by disdainful neglect rests on unrealistic perceptions of both women and poets, who are neither deities nor arachnids, but creative human beings often "ringed with ordeals" which threaten to master them. It is no surprise that Hemans chose mastery over being mastered by her ordeals: what is thrilling is the canny way she effected that choice in her writing.

Chapter Four

SHAPING THE UNKNOWABLE:
Veil Tropes in
Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Lift not the painted veil..."
And Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein*

...how I would like finally to touch "veil," the word and the thing thus named, the thing itself and the vocable!

Derrida, "A Silkworm of One's Own" 5

In its most essential form, a veil trope, like a veil, functions in a breathtakingly simple and simplifying manner: it either re-inscribes or creates a boundary — "that" is separated from "this." However, the place between that and this consistently eludes analytical focus, and evokes unexpectedly vehement language from even the most dispassionate observer. In reference to fractals, James Gleick (*Chaos: Making a New Science*, 1987) observes:

> [a] boundary between two colors never quite forms. On even closer inspection, the line between a green blotch and the blue valley proved to have patches of red. And so on ...: *no* point serves as a boundary between just two colours. Wherever two colors try to come together, the third always inserts itself, with a series of new, self-similar intrusions. (219, emphasis in original)

Always already deferred, the "place between" seems so uncanny that Gleick feels justified in calling the graphic depiction of a set of equations "monstrous" (219). A veil metaphor provides one of the most common literary methods to describe this uncanny place between.

Though veil tropes seem simple, on close examination they don't stay that way, as Jacques Derrida observes: "to touch 'that' which one calls 'veil' is to touch everything. You'll leave nothing intact, safe and sound, neither in your culture, nor in your memory, nor in your language, as soon as you take on the word 'veil'" (5). Veils in literature are pandemic because they delineate questions of separation, which inevitably bring with them questions of difference. In turn, difference carries in its train issues of both perception and point of view, and so the simple function of separation comes to embroil all that Derrida suggests.

Perception fascinated eighteenth-century philosophers like Locke, Hume, and Berkeley, whose thought formed much of the conceptual underpinnings of literary Romanticism in Britain. For example, Percy Bysshe Shelley felt compelled to subscribe to Berkeleyian immaterialism (Ingpen 360; Rogers 122), and grudgingly admitted that logic "strips, as it were, the painted curtain from this scene of things. I confess that I am one of those who am unable to refuse my assent to the conclusions of those philosophers who assert that nothing exists but as it is perceived" (Shelley, "On Life" 194). According to this, Shelley accepts the primacy of perceived rather than pre-existent reality. Abrams suggests in *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971) that such a Romantic preoccupation with perception results in a literary emphasis on sense receptors:

> [w]hether a man shall live his old life or a new one, in a universe of death or of life, cut off and alien or affiliated and at home, in a state of servitude or of genuine freedom — to the Romantic poet, all depends on his mind as it

> engages with the world in the act of perceiving. Hence the extraordinary emphasis throughout this era on the eye and the object and the relation between them. (375)

If reality exists in perception rather than some form of pre-existing materiality, then the senses which convey those perceptions become the foci of scrutiny.

In his 1996 essay "A Silkworm of One's Own," Derrida (among many other things) uses the healing of Hélène Cixous's near-blindness to demonstrate some of the complexities inherent in the veil trope — a trope which she herself introduces in her poem *Savoir:* "[f]or the operation has less restored her sight than it has deprived her, whence the mourning, of this 'malediction,' of this 'myopia which chose her and set her apart...,' of the 'veil she had cursed so much'" (Derrida 24: internal quotes paraphrased from *Savoir*). In a rhetorical gesture reminiscent of the tradition that children born with a caul of flesh over their eyes will be gifted with extrasensory perception or "second sight,"[63] Derrida characterizes the veil of myopia which hampered Cixous's physical sight as a boon which caused her to develop her poetic vision, to the extent that he feels justified in calling her "the most far-seeing among the poets, the one in whom I read fore-seeing thought, prophesy in language" (14). This part of Derrida's article does not focus on the thing veiled — Cixous's sight, restored through laser surgery. No, it is the effect of her blindness, the veil itself,

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[63] For example, in 1895 Harriet Beecher Stowe published "The Sullivan Looking-Glass" which capitalizes on this tradition:

> [t]here's those as is wal known as hes the gift o' seein' what others can't see: they can see through walls and houses; they can see people's hearts; they can see what's to come. They don't know nothin' how 'tis, but this 'ere knowledge comes to 'em: it's a gret gift; and that sort's born with the veil over their faces. (42)

I have not been able to determine the antecedents of this belief, though I can attest that it was still current where I grew up in rural Ontario.

which engages him: "instead of having long ago to lose her sight, which basically never happened to her, she had just today, at the moment of the laser, and for the first time, suddenly *lost the unseen*" (23, emphasis added). Derrida's insistence on Cixous's lack of sight typifies veil tropes: writers gesture toward the desire to look behind the veil, but end up discussing the nature of the veil itself, a predictable phenomenon if one subscribes to the idea that nothing exists but as it is perceived. After all, since one cannot perceive the veiled, from a Berkeleyian standpoint it is unknowable.

Consequently, we can add a corollary to Abrams's premise that the primacy of perception in the Romantic period ended in "the extraordinary emphasis throughout this era on the eye and the object and the relation between them" (375), to the effect that, when a veil intervenes between the eye and the object, then the veil itself becomes the object of perception. Furthermore, that which exists behind the veil becomes imperceptible, a phenomenon which both reiterates the veil as the focus of interest — it, at least, is perceptible — and ensures that the thing or things veiled are repressed. Even as it demarks the thing veiled as imperceptible and therefore unknowable, the very presence of the veil confirms the existence of the unknowable. In typical use, a veil draws attention to itself and away from that which it hides which then becomes doubly repressed and interesting. Thus veiling serves to mystify rather than clarify.

For example, the original example in Western culture of the pattern of focus shift from thing veiled to veil comes in the writings of the pre-Socratic philosopher Pherekydes (sixth century BC). He relates a cosmogonic myth involving the nuptials between the sky-father Zas and the earth mother Chthonie. According to Hermann Schibli in *Pherekydes of Syros* (1990), Zas makes a betrothal gift for Chthonie, a

woven and embroidered cloak which greatly becomes her ... or rather, she becomes it (4). Zas spreads the cloak over an oak tree, and that is the Earth who was Chthonie.

> the bestowal of the robe upon Chthonie signifies not only a bridal gift but also an official act of investiture by which she becomes Ge. At the same time as this gift of honour transforms Chthonie into Ge, it marks the newly created earth as Ge's official sphere of influence. (51-52)

The cloak moves from being *for* Chthonie to *being* Chthonie, whose name changes by this assumption of her married aspect, to become Ge. Schibli explains:

> [t]he case of Chthonie is special inasmuch as Pherekydes, right at the outset of his book, explicitly explains her change of name to Ge. His singling-out of Chthonie in this manner could lead one to think that she alone among the three pre-existent gods will receive a new name in the subsequent story. Yet it can also be argued that the emphasis placed upon Chthonie is due to the radical nature of her transformation: the result of her investiture with the robe will be an entirely new appellation, not simply a variation of her original name, and consequently deserves an explanation.... The roles of Zas and Chronos, on the other hand, appear to change gradually and less dramatically. (135)

The sky father's handiwork adorns and defines Chthonie such that her identity changes. Furthermore, "Chthonie/Ge and the oak-tree of Pherekydes' creation story may partially be equated because both are invested with the mantle of Earth and Ogenos (partially, because the Earth forms only part of the tree)" (75).[64] But whither Chthonie? Ge is no longer Chthonie. Nor is Chthonie a locatable aspect of Ge, inside Ge's cloak which is the earth — there we find the trunk of an oak, not the chosen of Zas. Her transformation exemplifies the uncanniness of veiling: something inside a veil cannot be revealed, even after the removal of the veil. Thus a veil trope used to

[64] In 71n54, Schibli notes that another critic, Kirk, felt the identification was total.

delineate the separation of "that" from "this" tends also to reify, even create, a disproportionate mystification of "that."[65]

If reality lies in perception, then point of view — the place (physical and/or metaphorical) from which a writer observes the subjects described — becomes central, since perception is in a large part a function of point of view. In "A Calculus for Self-Reference" (1975), mathematician Francisco Varela sides with the psychoanalysts when he suggests that an individual's viewpoint demonstrates "the act of indication. In this primordial act we separate forms which appear to us as the world itself. From this starting point, we thus assert the primacy of the role of the observer who draws distinctions wherever he pleases" (22). According to Varela, the observer's differentiation of self from not-self reveals more about the observer than the observed, a phenomenon reminiscent of the veil trope's function to describe the veil rather than the thing veiled.

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[65] Harold Bloom's use of the "Covering Cherub" in *Anxiety of Influence* evokes the veil trope, including the elision of interest from "thing covered" to "thing covering." Bloom takes the image from Ezekiel 28.14: "Thou *art* the annointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so*," and extrapolates it to fit his literary-critical purposes: "the Covering Cherub is the power that blocks realization" (Bloom, *Anxiety* 24). However, before long the desire of the writer changes from divesting the precursors of the Covering Cherub to uncovering the Cherub itself,

> The Sphinx riddles and strangles and is self-shattered at last, but the Cherub only covers, he only appears to block the way, he cannot do more than conceal.... They push aside the Sphinx (else they could not be poets, not for more than one volume), but they cannot uncover the Cherub. (36, parentheses in original)

Bloom does not allow the trope to rest in this uncertain place, however: he glosses over the shift from veiled to veil by shifting back to the initial situation and answering his own riddles. "The answer to what the Cherub covered is therefore: in Blake, everything that nature itself covers; in Ezekiel, the richness of the earth, but by the Blakean paradox of *appearing to be those riches;* in Genesis, the eastern gate, the Way to the Tree of Life" (38). Just as Ge/Chthonie's cloak covers the Oak and metonymizes her earthly sphere of influence, so the Covering Cherub both covers and is the way to the tree of life.

One of the more notorious psychoanalytical observations ever made is Freud's examination of the "Fort/Da" incident, in which he describes a child at play:[66]

> [t]he child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive "o-o-o-o." He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and haled its reappearance with a joyful "*da*" ("there"). This then was the complete game — disappearance and return. ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 15)

Freud goes on to interpret the child's game as follows:

> [i]t was related to the child's great cultural achievement — the ... renunciation of instinctual satisfaction ... which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting. He compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach.
>
> (15)

This child progressed beyond discerning self from not-self, and achieved an understanding that not-self can be further subdivided between the present and the absent. He had no concept of the errands which would take his mother from him, or the world which operated outside of his limited sphere. And so the child turned the perceptible into the imperceptible by hiding it behind a curtain — by veiling it, in order that it could be unveiled again. In this instance, the thing veiled returned virtually unchanged. However, as a metaphor for the mother's disappearance the game could not be adequate, since the reel was thrown into the child's cot, possibly

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[66] My interest in the Fort/Da incident in the context of this paper is parallel to that of Freud — the child's observation and manipulation of the toy reel. However, your understanding (dear reader) of that incident is mediated by at least three layers of observers: you observe my observations of Freud's observations of the child's observations and actions. In Varela's paradigm, you are learning as much about me as I learned about Freud, who learned about the child. But for the current analysis, I have flattened the layers between you and the child, ostensibly presenting the incident from Freud's point of view, with only a few observations about Freud's objectives.

the safest, most bounded and best known part of the world to that child, whereas the mother went out to and returned from places utterly beyond the child's experience. Consequently, although the initial purpose of the Fort/Da game was to reveal the thing concealed, the game itself became a kind of veil. Freud tells us that the child's faith in Fort/Da was so complete that "he never cried when his mother left him for a few hours" (14). This faith, however, took on a sinister cast three years later when the mother died: Freud observed that "[n]ow that she was really 'gone' ..., the little boy showed no signs of grief" (16n1).[67] It appears that while the thing veiled — his mother — was rendered truly unveilable by death, the veil — the game the child had constructed — had become a sufficient replacement.

From the child's point of view, the cot and the outside world were similar in that things disappeared into them. He capitalized on that perception to metonymize the mother's disappearance through the Fort/Da game, throwing the reel into a not-seen place that he knew, and thereby favouring the possibility that the unknown place where his mother went was equally safe. But when the reel disappeared behind the curtains of that cot, it was separated from the perceptible and became potentially as unknowable as the outside world. Nor was the cot an utterly secure location, since he slept there, and, presumably, dreamed uncontrollable dreams. Hence the child's delight when the reel returned unchanged even from such a predictable location as his

[67] Freud mitigates the child's emotional lack by telling us that "a second child had been born and had roused him to violent jealousy"(16n1), and by explaining that his initial observation of the child was not as a doctor observing a patient, but because he lived "under the same roof as the child and his parents for some weeks" (14): this implies that he was not there because the child was considered in need of Freud's professional skills. However, Freud does not explain whether or not his contact with the family after the mother's death are for personal or professional reasons, nor any other details of the four years between the initial observations and the later ones. In these omissions we learn about him as an observer: Freud draws our attention away from the child's emotional context to isolate his point about the disappearance and reappearance of the mother.

cot. As the place of separation, the curtain supplies the locus of anxiety over the difference between the perceptible and the uncertain.

Zas's cloak provides a similar locus. The earth goddess's investure with the product of the sky father's artifice marks her transformation from the virgin Chthonie to the fecund Ge: once thus veiled, unveiling will not reveal her. Veiling renders Chthonie an imperceptible aspect of Ge, and as such unpredictable, mysterious, perhaps even (comforting thought) non-existent, or at least non-functioning ... though perhaps not. In that uncertainty lies the source of the unease about the place between, often described with a veil trope, which leads rationalists like Gleick to words like "monstrous."

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The Fort/Da child's tendency to replace a complex and unpredictable reality with a constructed game earns an apparent poetic support in the untitled 1818 sonnet by Percy Bysshe Shelley beginning "Lift not the painted veil...."[68] In the first four lines, the narrator admonishes readers to content themselves with the veil "those who live / Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there, / And it but mimic all we would believe /With colours idly spread" (ll.1-4). Thus, according to the sonnet the constructed veil is life (ll.1-2), an inversion of the literary convention which places death as the veil between life and its aftermath. By replacing death with life and then using a veil metaphor that implies life is an illusion, Shelley calls into question the nature of mortality itself.

To begin to comprehend Shelley's stance on mortality, it helps to explore his characteristic depiction of the relationship between life and language. In *Prometheus Unbound,* Earth tells Prometheus "Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known /Only

[68] See Appendix 7 for the text of "Lift not ...."

to those who die" (I.i.150-51), which characterizes that language as an aspect of the illusory veil of mortality. The etymology of "text" supports this connection, since it draws a parallel between language and cloth: both "text" and "textile" find their roots in "the Latin *texere* [which] meant 'weave'.... Its past participle *textus* was used as a noun meaning 'woven material,' and hence metaphorically 'literary composition'" (Ayto 526). Texts are metaphorical textiles, veils that conceal their immortal nature from "the unheeding many" ("Lift not..." l.9). This helps explain Shelley's consignment of language to the mortal side of the mortal/immortal binary, even as it adds an element of self-reference: after all, the conceptual whole comes to our attention through the use of the very language that inheres in illusion. However, just as Cixous's blindness gave her access to an unseen which Derrida felt rendered her the most fore-sighted of poets, so language mitigates mortality, according to Shelley. The challenge for readers, then, is to retain the language of mortality while relearning the truth of immortality, just as the challenge for Cixous is to retain her inner vision while regaining clearer physical sight.[69]

Prometheus Unbound's Earth later reiterates and expands upon her earlier sentiment in response to Asia:

> *Asia.* Oh mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
> Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
> Who die?
> *The Earth.* It would avail not to reply:
> Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
> But to the uncommunicating dead.
> Death is the veil which those who live call life....
> (III.iii.108-113)

[69] I use the term "relearning" the truth of immortality advisedly, given the sentiment common in the Romantic era that before birth humans knew a glorified reality, and as William Wordsworth wrote in his "Immortality Ode," "trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home" (ll.63-64).

Here, the dead know language, where in the earlier quote it was to "those who die," that is to say, mortals. Further, substituting the word "death" for the phrase "Lift not" changes the admonition which opens the 1818 sonnet into a statement. The Spirit of the Hour's reprises this statement in *Prometheus Unbound:*

> The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
> Which mimicked, as with colours idle spread,
> All men believe or hope, is torn aside;
> The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed...
>
> (III.iv.190-94)

These refinements confirm that, from the point of view of immortality, there is no difference between life and death, a sentiment that William Keach approaches in his article "Reflexive Imagery in Shelley" (1975): "[w]hat those who live call 'death,' Shelley suggests in the above passage, is the idea of physical nonexistence, the 'shadow' of the idea of physical existence" (66). Although Keach went on to write on *The Triumph of Life*, the following observation applies equally to "Lift not...": "Shelley's narrator sees what the mourners [the 'unheeding many'] do not — that what they call death is only the shadow cast by their mortal mode of existence, by their bodies" (67). According to Shelley, life, death and language are integral parts of the illusion of mortality, itself an enticing, distracting, and ultimately misleading veil over the mystery of immortality.

Neville Rogers concurs that Shelley equated life and death when seen in relation to immortality, though he does not treat the language issue: "[w]hat the Veil comes to signify here [in 'Lift not...'] and throughout Shelley's mature work is the illusory world of impermanence that hides or half hides the ideal world of reality" (123). Rogers then takes the analysis one step further, assuming that Shelley's ultimate preoccupations were not with mortality and immortality, but good and evil:

> [t]he Veil, now, has become a "loathsome mask," identifiable with Evil itself, the notion being that Evil is merely something unreal and impermanent, a mask to hide the Good, and that when it has been torn aside Good will stand revealed. Such a notion is of a piece with Shelley's doctrine of love for in the ideal world love reigns supreme and Evil cannot exist with it: Evil is mutable but love immutable because it takes on immortality from its own aspirations after the immortal.... (125)

By omitting language from his analysis, Rogers veils Shelley's thought in a straightforward, if misguided, binary: evil mortality (with its inherent mutability) *versus* good, immutable, immortal love.

The problem rests in the contradiction between Shelley's statement in "On Life," "that nothing exists but as it is perceived" (194), and his use of a veil metaphor to describe illusion in "Lift not...." As we have previously shown, a veil renders that which it veils imperceptible. It appears as if we have run into a paradox here: if reality exists solely in the perceptible, then Shelley should be taking the veil at "face" value and ignoring what it veils. Instead "Lift not..." designates the veil as an illusion over truth, an illusion which renders truth imperceptible. Thus the veil is both the only reality, and illusion, an antinomian paradox of a type which Klaus Krippendorff, in his 1984 paper "Paradox and Information," defines as follows:

> [u]nlike contradictions which simply exclude all interpretations, antinomies allow one to select one interpretation; but as soon as one has made this choice, one is forced to abandon it in favour of its complement, and a soon as one has examined the latter one finds one's self back to the former, *ad infinitum* — hence the viciousness of the cycle. (49)

Reality is imperceptible behind the veil, the perceptible veil is the only reality, and all critics are liars.

Such moments of apparent conceptual paradox have long preoccupied Shelley's critical readers. For example, in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1984) William Empson

interprets the self-reflexivity which intrigues Keach as an ambiguity resulting from Shelley's inability to "perceive... profitable relations between two things, he was too helplessly excited by one thing at a time, and that one thing was often a mere notion not conceived in action or in an environment" (Empson 161), though he does go on to ameliorate his criticism with the observation that "even with so limited an instrument as the short-circuited comparison, he [Shelley] could do great things" (161). In his 1991 paper "Outwitting Self-consciousness: Self-reference and Paradox in Three Romantic Poems," Peter Hühn further delineates the specific paradox of "Lift not..." as follows:

> [i]f the reader understands the warning he can no longer follow it, as he then has already fallen victim to exactly the knowledge against which he is warned; but if he does not understand it, he cannot make use of it and, in fact, does not need it — nor should he attempt to understand it since in that way he would only acquire the dangerous knowledge in the first place. (241)

According to Hühn's reading, in lines one to four the narrator tells us not to look, while lines four to six tell us what we'll see if we look. Finally, if the first six lines weren't enough discouragement, lines seven to fourteen tell a cautionary tale of "one" who lost his heart through looking — not the romantic "lost heart" of lovers' tryst, but the lost heart of depression and discouragement.[70] "Lift not..." apparently contravenes itself twice, first saying "don't look," then "see," then "don't look" again.

The paradox presented in Shelley's poem — that the perceptible is both real and illusion — is necessarily a construction of language, and as such falls into the

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[70] Hühn assumes that the "one" who lost his heart is P.B. Shelley himself, an interpretation upheld by Shelley's use of the same veil metaphor as in "Lift not..." to illustrate his statement in "On Life" that reality is in perception: "[Logic] strips, as it were, the painted curtain from this scene of things. I confess that I am one of those who am unable to refuse my assent to the conclusions of those philosophers who assert that nothing exists but as it is perceived" (194).

mutable mortal side of the mortal/immortal binary. Furthermore, paradoxes are inherently mutable in themselves according to Krippendorff. Paradox fulfills a crucial role for individuals and cultures, since it "has important morphogenetic dimensions and might be a stimulus, if not the stimulus, for human cognitive growth and for social-organizational development, including the destruction of the orthodox" (46).[71] Krippendorff observes that changing the conceptual framework of a paradox supplies a method for "solving" it. The veil metaphor in "Lift not..." affords this opportunity to the reader.

Consequently, we should not be discouraged by evidence of paradox, nor use it to demonstrate Shelley's fallibility as a poet. The analyses of Empson, Keach, Hühn and Rogers all stop short of examining the complicating factor of language in Shelley's use of the veil trope. Rogers even suggests that Shelley "was attracted by Berkeley's attempt to brush aside words and abstractions in order to penetrate beyond the veil of language to the world of ideas" (122). I'd amend that to suggest that Shelley does not want to *penetrate* the linguistic veil, so much as *apply* it more closely to the world it veils until it becomes so close to that reality there is no difference between them. Thus when Earth asks Heaven (or Ge asks Zas, to use Pherekydes's nomenclature) "hast thou secrets? Man unveils me: I have none" (*Prometheus Unbound*, IV.i.423), the unveiling neither removes nor penetrates the veil, but rather synthesizes it, through accurate linguistic description by "those who die." Here we find Chthonie at

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[71] Mind you, Krippendorff does not suggest that such growth is an automatic occurence: "paradoxes paralyze an observer and may lead either to a collapse of the construction of his or her world, or to a growth in complexity of his or her representation of this world" (52). Krippendorf demonstrates that the self-referencing that so preoccupies Keach and Hühn is a "vicious" (47) part of the paralysis which can result from paradox. However such an ourobouros effect is not inevitable: the way to grow from paradox is through change, and language, in P.B. Shelley's digesis, is part of what makes mortality mutable.

last: the aspect of Earth that the immortal sky-father's artifice cloaked, mortal human language reveals, not by unveiling, but by describing so accurately that the veil cannot be differentiated from the thing veiled.

Language mars the binary between evil/mortality (life and death, change) versus love/immortality (immutability), in that it is the mitigating factor which enriches immortality if transferred there from mortality. (Remember Derrida's hope that Cixous can bring the insight of her blind years into her sighted life.) When one reads "Lift not..." in light of the later permutations in *Prometheus Unbound*, one realizes that in Shelley's estimation, life, death *and* language make up the veil over reality, and that language, for all its roots in the conceptual world of "those who die" is an aspect of the veil transferable from illusion to reality: after all the "one" that lifted the veil told the tale afterwards ("Lift not..." l.7). If he was imperfectly understood by Shelley's narrator, that is not his fault.

Tellingly, "Lift not..." is not narrated from the point of view of the enlightened "one" of line seven, but a narrator who has not yet perceived, let alone solved, the paradox. His imperfect understanding explains the negative depiction of the reality behind the veil as "gloomy" and "sightless and drear," which contradicts the later glorification of the one who had lifted it with adjectives like "tender," "splendour," and "bright." Furthermore, in the last lines of the sonnet the narrator baldly states that the "one" of the poem "strove / for truth and like the Preacher, found it not" (ll.13-14). Hühn persuasively argues that the truth-seeking preacher is the writer of *Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher* (240n22): what Hühn does not note is that the Preacher actually succeeded in finding the truth he sought — "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which was* written *was* upright, *even* words of truth"

(Ecclesiastes, 12.10).[72] That the narrator errs in such a simple statement indicates his assertions should be regarded with suspicion. Thus, his statement that the "one" lifted the veil reflects more upon the narrator's limited understanding than the enlightenment of the "one": the narrator does not entertain any manner of revelation involving a veil other than lifting it, and so he frames the "one's" enlightenment in his own inadequate terms.

This is not to say that the narrator cannot be inadvertently correct upon occasion. His opening admonition to "Lift not..." is not as misguided as his closing assertion that the Preacher "found it not."[73] However, *lifting* the veil threatens to become an infinite regress, like a Dance of the Seven Veils in which, no matter how many veils fall, one always remains between the viewer and the object of his gaze. In the case of the sonnet "Lift not..." this iteration is metonymized in multiple levels of distraction: the painted pattern on the perceptible veil hides the veil itself, which hides fear and hope weaving their shadows, which produce their woven shadows, under which, posits the narrator, lurks a "chasm, sightless and drear" ("Lift not..." l.6). No, lifting the veil produces depression, not understanding.

However, once the unreliability of the narrator has been discovered, the poem's direction becomes clearer: if the usual function of a veil trope is considered — to shift

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[72] In the process of achieving his understanding, the Preacher came to realize that "of making many books *there is* no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh" (Ecclesiastes, 12.12). Coincidentally, Derrida says virtually the same thing of veils: "You must understand me, you see, and know what it is to be weary, in this case, to be weary of a figure and its truth, of a strophe, a trope and the folds of the said truth when it plays itself out with so many veils" ("Silkworm" 16).

[73] This is a inadvertant paraphrase of Andrew J.Welburn, who says in *Power and Self-Consciousness in the Poetry of Shelley* (1986) that "Lift not..." "begins and ends in negation. But between the warning and the actuality of failure, between 'lift not' and 'find not,' Shelley admits the grandeur and the importance of the quest" (7).

focus from the thing veiled to the veil itself, and thus simplify a complex situation — "Lift not..." actually asserts that the reality shrouded by the veil is not utterly imperceptible. In this case, the painted veil has the same relationship to existence behind it as the curtains of the Fort/Da child's sleeping cot had to the adult world into which his mother disappeared. The child may not have had the capacity to understand that world, but he had the potential to learn, and achieve some understanding. Instead, however, the child supplanted that difficult task with the far easier, constructed game of Fort/Da. Similarly, the narrator of "Lift not..." urges readers to avoid confronting the void and choose, as he did, preoccupation with the lesser, comprehensible veil. However, the "one" who occupies the narrator's attention for the final eight lines of the poem chose otherwise: what he found was not comprehensible by the narrator, but that does not preclude the possibility of eventual understanding. Thus, according to Shelley, though mortals may not be able to comprehend immediately the mystery of Chthonie's identity, we have in our language the potential to learn, just as a child can learn of the outside world: a paradigm shift is required, a movement beyond the comfortingly codified illusion of understanding based on a focus on the veil itself, toward attempts to describe accurately those elusive shapes and shadows perceptible through the veil. We are not to lift the veil, but *see* it, not just for its surface but for what it shows us about that which it veils as well. And since the veil is language, the more accurately we describe the thing veiled, the more closely the veil will come to resemble it.

As a variation on the sonnet form, "Lift not..." provides an example of paradigm shift away from the traditional and moribund ways of thought epitomized by the child's focus on the sleeping cot rather than the world. Hühn points out:

> [t]he experiences narrated in the second part (lines 7-14) form the prerequisite and basis for the conclusion and warning formulated in the first part (lines 1-6), thus reversing the normal order of experience and reflection on experience. At the same time, however, the sequence can also be read as a consecutive process, from lifting the veil to feeling the consequences. (241)

Thus Shelley's variation on the sonnet serves its own, internal sense in a way impossible in the traditional paradigm. In a note to the above, Hühn shows how Shelley supported this conceptual variation on the traditional sonnet through formal variations:

> [o]n the formal and metrical level, by the way, this reversal is mirrored in the reversal of the conventional structure of the sonnet — the traditional sequence and rhyming schemes of octave and sestet (with the distinct pause between them) are turned around here, in direct correspondence with the thematic level. (241n24)

Consequently, though "Lift not..." still looks like a sonnet, its formal variations challenge tradition, just as Shelley challenges the conventional end of the veil trope as unveiling, and implies that to perceive something behind the linguistic veil one need only apply the veil to it — that is to say, describe it, accurately and assiduously, until it is understood. Shelley's changes to the sonnet form and the veil trope are not complete departures from tradition, but variations on it. They thus encourage readers to question the authority of textual precedents which have become simplified habits, the usefulness of which is as limited as the Fort/Da child's cot in comparison with his mother's world: these habits may be comfortably comprehensible, but constrict the possibility of a deeper perception of what lies under the veil. It may take no more than a small change in habits of thought to produce radically unexpected understanding.

• • •

As already discussed in this chapter, veil tropes often serve to describe an uncanny "place between," like the moment of death as the veil between life and afterlife, or — as in Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Lift not the painted veil..." — life as that which veils immortality from mortals. It follows that veils provide some common tropes crucial to the uncanny concerns of gothic horror texts written on the cusp of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein*.[74] Like P.B. Shelley's sonnet, *Frankenstein* chronicles the experience of one who quests for an understanding of what lies beyond the perceived limits of mortality. However, Victor Frankenstein operates solely according to the strictures of an arcane scientific logic without considering the emotional or spiritual repercussions of his actions beyond the most shallow desire for fame: he says of his project "'[a] new species would bless me as its creator and source.... No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs'" (55). In this, Victor is very like the undiscerning narrator of "Lift not..." would be, were he gifted with ambition and technical facility.

Rather than instigating the apotheosis of either Victor Frankenstein or himself, the creature's unnatural genesis renders him intolerably uncanny. Life usually begets life and ends in death, but in *Frankenstein*, Victor worked "for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body" (58). Consequently, although Victor chose the facial characteristics for their beauty (58), the creature suffers under a disproportionate aversion felt by all who look upon him. An ineluctable aura of the

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[74] The *Frankenstein* text cited in this chapter is the 1831 publication revised by the author from the 1818 original.

unnatural clings to him because he crossed border between life and death in the wrong direction. Victor's experimental success results in a being who personifies the uncanny border between life and death: the creature is the veil trope incarnate.

The creature's uncomfortable position as avatar of the eerie manifests itself in the textile imagery related to him throughout the novel, examples of which begin to occur immediately after his animation. Victor's repulsion by the creature's abnormality drives the scientist all the way back to his bedchamber where he eventually falls into a disturbed sleep, punctuated by the following nightmare:

> I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I *thought* that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the graveworms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (58, emphasis added)

The phrase "I thought" suggests some uncertainty as to the identity of the dream body. Here, the shroud quite directly equates with a veil separating the living from the dead, beyond which the living can only speculate, without hope of confirmation. This deliberate obscurity on the afterlife remains consistent throughout the novel: nowhere does M.W. Shelley's *Frankenstein* offer the possibility of an exalted spiritual understanding similar to that of the protagonist of P.B. Shelley's "Lift not...."

The graveworms crawling through the folds of the nightmare shroud are significant in terms of the creature's role as personification of the veil trope. As the worms cross from the inside of the death shroud to its outside where the living Victor sees them, so the creature crossed from life to death. Such crossings render the shroud unstable. Similarly, Victor's success at animating dead matter destabilizes the hitherto impregnable border between life and death, and therefore has profound implications for the human race. What if taxes are the only certainty?

Just after the nightmare awakens him, Victor observes:

> I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch — the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. (58)

At that time, the creature itself did not know the meaning of terror, let alone how to evoke it. Victor reacts to the creature's uncanniness on a purely visceral level, allowing his overwrought emotional perception of the creature — exacerbated by nervous exhaustion and the unnerving nightmare — to rule his actions, a reaction that Mary Wollstonecraft anticipates in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* which M.W. Shelley was reading as she wrote *Frankenstein* (*Journals* 97). Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* observes that "Men, in general, seem to employ their reason to justify prejudices, which they have imbibed, they can scarcely trace how, rather than to root them out" (12). Rather than employing his "coolness of judgment" (*Frankenstein* 175) to his own emotional response, Victor leaves that response unexamined and instead brings his considerable faculties to the task of justifying his mistaken gut reaction.

By promoting the creature's abnormality as innate evil, Victor abdicates responsibility for educating his creation into human society: all the subsequent horrors result from that initial irresponsibility. Victor's failure to consider the repercussions of his actions render him like the narrator of "Lift not...," while the creature's accelerated learning, evident in his increasingly effective reactions to rejection, suggests that he could have become an enlightened "one," had he been integrated into society, rather than continually repulsed. The way he describes himself strengthens the connection between the creature and the enlightened "one." Where the

narrator of the "Lift not..." sonnet describes the enlightened one as "a bright blot"(l.12) for whom there was naught "the world contains the which he could approve" (l.10), the creature worries that he is a "blot upon this earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned" (*Frankenstein* 106). The creature's potential for enlightenment inverts through his lack of positive connections to human society, such that he becomes a criminal rather than law-abiding citizen.

The moment of the bed curtains' raising evokes Freud's observations of the Fort/Da child, a correlation which furthers our understanding of the complex relationship between the creature and his creator, Victor. Though he should fulfill the role of a mother with agency outside the child's ken and compassion in her treatment of the child, Victor's failure to anticipate that his creature will have needs independent from those of his creator renders the scientist more like the egocentric Fort/Da child than the mother. Victor's success has far more mundane repercussions than he wants to know: rather than earning scientific fame and undying gratitude, his project dumps him in the commonplace yet demanding position of parent — granted, of an unnatural child, but a child nonetheless. Not having worked parenthood into his calculations, the day after successfully animating the creature Victor tells his friend Clerval

> "I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation, that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest, as you see; but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are at an end, and that I am at length free."
>
> I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, and far less to allude to, the occurrences of the preceding night. (60)

Victor lapses into denial, just as the Fort/Da child denied the importance of his mother's death through the comfort derived from the Fort/Da game.

This paradigm places the creature as the reel, a role which appears appropriate at the outset: indeed, he had been an object only a short time before, and has very little more understanding or volition than an object when he raises the bed curtain. However, the creature learns quickly. He describes leaving Victor's building as a change from circumscribed to free movement: "[b]efore, dark and opaque bodies had surrounded me, impervious to my touch or sight; but I now found that I could wander on at liberty, with no obstacles I could not surmount or avoid.... This was the forest near Ingolstadt" (92). The developing creature has been thrust directly from cradle to outer world without the benefit of an intervening nursery. He learns to survive while Victor "rests," confined for several months due to a nervous fever (61). Thus, Victor remains infantile while the creature takes on an agency which aligns him more with the mother. Certainly, he comes to have the almost God-like control over Victor's later life which characterizes a parent/toddler relationship. Just like a parent, the creature sets out to teach Victor all that he knows: unfortunately, he has learned best how to exact revenge through murder.[75]

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[75] The creature makes Victor over in his own image, as Gerhard Joseph intimates in "Virginal Sex, Vaginal Text: The 'Folds' of Frankenstein" (1993): "Victor is woken from his dream by the monster who, entering his room and holding up the bed curtain, fixes his eyes on his creator. Thus ... he who has created or 'seen' the other as monstrous is, in the ultimate metonymic displacement of this our dream of life, seen as monstrous by it" (32). This seems to me to be a misleading overreading: the creature does not see Victor as monstrous in that moment. It is not until much later in the narrative that the creature manages to instill in Victor a disrespect for life which renders him at least as monstrous as his creation. Victor would undoubtedly defend himself with the argument that the creature is neither human nor a member of society, therefore killing him transgresses no laws.

If the creature is not protected by the rule of law, neither is he subject to it. Never having learned that human life should be preserved, the creature has no compunction about ending lives solely to hurt Victor, a factor that works on the conceptual level as well as the narrative. In the hopes of bringing his mother back from death, Victor creates an animate manifestation of the veil between life and death. This unconsidered scientific hubris results in the animation of an uncanny creature who expedites the crossing from this world to the next for the rest of Victor's intimates.

Victor's agency diminishes in proportion with the creature's growing powers. Having learned the lessons set out by his creation, Victor sets out to destroy the creature. However, in a twisted reinscription of that clichéd parental desire — to be surpassed by their children — Victor fails because the capacities of the creature have surpassed those of his creator. In the end, Victor becomes like a toy on a string:

> I pursued him; and for many months this has been my task....
> Sometimes the peasants, scared by this horrid apparition, informed me of his path; sometimes he himself, who feared that if I lost all trace of him, I should despair and die, left some mark to guide me. (169)

Imagery used to describe the night the creature came into being anticipates Victor's depiction of himself impelled by another's will. After animating the horrific creature, Victor rushes to his room and in a movement very like the tirelessly thrown and retrieved reel, "continued a long time traversing my bedchamber" (58). Later, after the nightmare and the creature's lifting the bed curtain, Victor "took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited; where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation" (58-59), a repetitive motion like that of the Fort/Da reel. While the creature grows from inanimate object to an individual with independent agency, Victor devolves from child to toy.

One of the first incidents of the creature's life supports Victor's interpretation of the creature as other-than-natural: the creature tells Victor that while he was wandering in a sensory daze in the forest of Ingolstadt just after his animation, "under one of the trees I found a huge cloak, with which I covered myself" (93). This simple utterance has profound implications for the veil tropes in *Frankenstein*. First of all, the huge cloak echoes the Chthonie/Ge myth, adding to the impression of the creature as supernatural, as well as lending a mythic element to the tale. Furthermore, the cloak identifies the creature with women as the recipient of a traditional betrothal

"gift" (Schibli 65-66), especially since he found the cloak beneath a tree, which evokes Ge in her incarnation as the cloak spread over an oak tree.

These details supplement Joyce Zonana's exploration in her 1991 article "'They Will Prove the Truth of My Tale': Safie's Letters as the Feminist Core of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" of commonalities between the creature and Felix De Lacey's bride-to-be — the Turkish maid Safie. Zonana attributes their identification to their mutual lack of standing in the eyes of the law. She derives this argument from Mary Wollstonecraft's use of the Turkish harem woman trope in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Zonana connects the creature and women — "[b]ecause he is regarded as pure flesh, the monster's fate is comparable to that of women in patriarchal society" (176) — *and* M.W. Shelley and her mother's work: "in making *Frankenstein*'s central (though unrecorded) narrator a 'lovely Arabian' who escapes the harem, Mary Shelley firmly binds her novel, philosophically and textually, to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" (173). Wollstonecraft consistently uses images of Turkish women to decry the chauvinistic laws and attitudes of England where, she says, "in the true style of Mahometanism they [women] are treated as a kind of subordinate beings, and not as a part of the human species" (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 8). Thus the cloaked creature is identified with the veiled Safie, in that both are treated as soulless creatures of flesh without legal or spiritual standing.

M.W. Shelley's depiction of Safie raises some of the most complex issues involving veil tropes, in that current textual criticism seems to be caught in a bind between chauvinism and orientalism. Once again, Zonana succinctly elucidates the problem:

> [t]he irony of Mary Wollstonecraft's and Mary Shelley's use of the Oriental woman is of course the fact that, in asserting the subjectivity and spirituality of one group ("women"), they appropriate and deny the subjectivity of another group ("Orientals," and even more particularly, oriental men). Still, the figure of the rebellious Oriental woman must be read as it was intended — as a powerful commentary on the patriarchal construction of women as "flesh." (183n15)

However, even if Zonana is correct in her attribution of Wollstonecraft and M.W. Shelley's intentions, a danger in accepting the argument that the veiled or cloaked creature is only flesh, not person, remains: that argument originates in a very specific, politically motivated understanding of the Islamic tradition of veiling.

In *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (1992) Leila Ahmed expands on the tendency of Western criticism to reify a specific place and time in Islamic culture and then use that reification as the yardstick to measure the treatment of women:

> [b]y the eighteenth century the Western narrative of women in Islam ... incorporated elements that certainly bore a resemblance to the bold external features of the Islamic patterns of male dominance, but at the same time it (1) often garbled and misconstrued the specific content and meaning of customs described and (2) assumed and represented the Islam practiced in Muslim societies in the periods in which the Europeans encountered and then in some degree or other dominated those societies to be the only possible interpretation of the religion. (149)

One need only to look at Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's appreciation of the use of the veil in Turkish culture to recognize that Mary Wollstonecraft's depiction of the zenana may well be a blatant misappropriation in the service of her arguments. In 1717, Wortley Montagu wrote "Now I am a little acquainted with their [Turkish women's] ways, I cannot forbear admiring either the exemplary discretion or extreme Stupidity of all the writers that have given accounts of 'em. Tis very easy to see they have more Liberty than we have" (327-28), and that "Upon the Whole, I look upon

the Turkish Women as the only free people in the Empire" (329). Wortley Montagu attributes this liberty specifically to their veiled dress and their lack of personhood under their religious law. After describing in detail the Turkish lady's manner of public dress, she observes:

> [y]ou may guess how effectually this disguises them, that there is no distinguishing the great Lady from her Slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous Husband to know his Wife when he meets her, and no Man dare either touch or follow a Woman in the Street.
>
> This perpetual Masquerade gives them entire Liberty of following their Inclinations without danger of Discovery....
>
> ....
>
> The Great Ladys seldom let their Gallants know who they are, and 'tis so difficult to find it out that they can very seldom guess at her name they have corresponded with above halfe a year together. You may imagine the number of faithfull Wives very small in a country where they have nothing to fear from their Lovers' Indiscretion, since we see so many that have the courrage to expose them selves to that in this World and all the threaten'd Punishment of the next, which is never preach'd to the Turkish Damsels. (328-29)

Despite Wortley Montagu's observations, lack of legal status, and veiled dress are, respectively, the crucial aspect and attribute of Wollstonecraft's oppressed zenana inhabitants.

Consequently, questions arise when the creature describes Safie as a lady "dressed in a dark suit, and covered with a thick black veil," especially since one of the first things she does is raise that veil to reveal herself to Felix (*Frankenstein* 103). Why did she wear a veil, if she intends to remove it in the presence of one who arguably represents a serious risk to her virtue? The question becomes even more intriguing when the creature relates that Safie's Christian mother

> taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect, and an independence of spirit, forbidden to the female followers of Mahomet. This lady died; but her lessons were indelibly impressed on the mind of Safie, who sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia, and being immured within the walls of a Haram, allowed only to occupy herself with infantile amusements, ill suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble emulation

> for virtue. The possibility of marrying a Christian, and remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society, was enchanting to her. (108-09)

The above passage further raises the question of why Safie continues to wear a veil in Germany, in apparent defiance of the emancipation which attracts her.

One explanation for Safie's insistence on her veil lies in contemporary accounts of Islamic women's experiences in Western cultures. In her 1994 article "Women and the veil: Personal responses to global process," Helen Watson interviews Islamic women who choose to continue wearing the veil in France. Their replies are remarkably consistent: "'I would feel completely exposed without my veil. It is liberating to have the freedom of movement and to be able to communicate with people without being on show'" (148); "'The experience of being in a foreign place is unpleasant and difficult, and wearing the veil eases some of the problems. It is not so frightening to walk through the streets for one thing'" (148); and "'I can understand that girls are worried about facing the dangers of city streets without covering themselves as much as possible'" (150). Ahmed, too, includes testimony, in her case from Nassef, an Islamic feminist who lived from 1886 to 1918:

> "[h]ow can you men of letters ... command us to unveil when any one of us is subjected to foul language if she walks in the street, this one throwing adulterous glances at her and that one bespattering her with his despicableness so that the sweat of shame pours from her brow. Given a collection of men such as we have at present, whose abuse and shamelessness a woman should not be exposed to, and a collection of women such as we have at present, whose understanding is that of babes, for women to unveil and mix with men would be an innovation that would lead to evil." (qtd. in Ahmed 180)

According to Nassef, though the veil may supply an overt symbol of gender inequality, its removal by no means ensures that that balance has been redressed.

Ahmed also observed that "As an item of clothing ... the veil itself and whether it is worn are about as relevant to substantive matters of women's rights as the social prescription of one or another item of clothing is to Western women's struggles over substantive issues" (166).[76] As far as these Islamic testimonies are concerned, one cannot equate unveiling with emancipation, even on a symbolic level. Thus, troping the Islamic veil as symbolic of the legalized oppression of women — a view which Wollstonecraft promulgated and M.W. Shelley reinscribed — serves Western colonialism as much as feminism, Western or otherwise.

A crucial characteristic of veils as clothing (as opposed to curtains) is that they enclose the wearer. On one hand, Western writers like Wollstonecraft and M.W. Shelley who have no experience wearing the veil automatically position themselves on the outside looking at the veiled figure. On the other hand, as a matter of course Nassef and the three women quoted in Watson speak from a point of view inside the veil. Of the Westerners, only Wortley Montagu — whose letters from Turkey record the numerous excursions she made incognito under the veil — depicts the veil as a

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[76] Ahmed goes on to note one telling difference between Western and Islamic feminism:

> [w]hen items of clothing — be it bloomers or bras — have briefly figured as focuses of contention and symbols of feminist struggle in Western societies, it was at least Western feminist women who were responsible for identifying the item in question as significant and defining it as a site of struggle and not, as has sadly been the case with respect to the veil for Muslim women, colonial and patriarchal men ... who declared it important to feminist struggle. (166-67)

Historically, veiling provided an overt differentiation between the colonials and the colonized in Islamic cultures, and was therefore denigrated by the patriarchal powers-that-be, not for the sake of the emancipation of women, but in order to construct the culture as exotic and thereby render it appropriate for colonization. As Ahmed observes: "[t]he peculiar practices of Islam with respect to women had always formed part of the Western narrative of the quintessential otherness and inferiority of Islam" (149).

liberating device. Where Wortley Montagu finds liberation and the Islamic women derive a sense of protection, Wollstonecraft finds an irreducible signifier of women's cultural alienation.

This alienation aligns Safie and the creature, neither of whom exists as a person in the eyes of the law. Just as Safie can choose to put on or take off her veil (that is to say, can choose to take advantage of, or be oppressed by, her lack of status), the creature can either bemoan his lonely liberty or ignore laws which don't apply to him. That he chose the latter strategy in order to destroy his maker demonstrates Western culture's longstanding tradition of depicting as dangerous the unknown agency of those who are cloaked. In his 1596 dialogue "A View of the Present State of Ireland," Edmund Spenser rails against the dangers of cloak-wearing Irishmen, despite the appropriateness of that mode of dress in the Irish climate:

> *Eudox:* Since then the necessitie thearof is so Commodious as ye alleadge that it is in stead of howsinge beddinge and Cloathinge what reason haue youe then to wishe so necessarye a thinge Caste of
> *Iren*: Because the Comoditye dothe not Countervaile The disco-moditie ffor the inconveniences which thearby do arise are muche more manye, for it is a fitt howsse for an outlawe a bete bedd for a Rebell and an Apte cloake for a thefe. (Spenser ll.1590-96)[77]

As fit housing for a criminal, the cloak which encloses *Frankenstein*'s creature's body presages his future. Just as Chthonie's potential to become Ge activates when she receives a cloak, so the creature's potential evil begins to crystallize when he first takes the cloak. Though he does not realize it at the time, appropriating the cloak represents the creature's first legal transgression... or it would, were he subject to the law.

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[77] See Appendix 8 for Spenser's complete discussion of cloaks.

In Western traditions, which insist on perceiving the veil from the outside, the creature is as much enclosed by the cloak as he wears it. The criminal's cloak contains the creature just as the curtain wall of the Bastille contained the Marquis de Sade, for example. In *Literature and Evil* (1990) Georges Bataille characterizes Sade in terms which apply equally to the *Frankenstein's* creature: "[h]e was one of the most rebellious and furious men ever to have talked of rebellion and fury; he was, in a word, a monster, obsessed by the idea of an *impossible* liberty" (107, emphasis in original). For both Sade and the creature, integration into human society is impossible. Just as "the Bastille, where Sade did his writing, was the crucible in which the conscious limitations of being were slowly destroyed by the fire of a passion prolonged by powerlessness" (Bataille 125), so the creature's social ostracization intensifies his dark passion. Sade's imprisonment *within* a concrete veil and the creature's ostracization *without* the walls of Ingolstadt are extreme examples of the repressive narratives which veils evoke in Western literature.[78]

Spenser goes on to note that male outlaws are not the only Irish who take advantage of the disguising properties of their cloaks to mingle with law-abiding citizens. Irish women also wear them to facilitate illicit sexual freedoms:

> and surelye for a bad huswif it is no lesse Conveniente for
> some of them that bee these wanderinge weomen Called of them *monashul*

[78] Another longstanding paranoia involving veiled figures concerns the unknowable direction of their gazes. In an era characterized by an "extraordinary emphasis ... on the eye and the object and the relation between them" (Abrams 375), it follows that there is a huge anxiety about the visual agency of the veiled being, be it woman or creature. Throughout Western culture, in such disparate texts as *The Bible* and *The Story of O*, a good woman keeps her eyes averted. Yet the most comprehensive veils hide the gaze, so that one who is outside does not know if he is observed from within the veil. In terms of *Frankenstein*, one of the most unnerving things to Victor during the bed-curtain scene is what he describes as the creature's "speculative" gaze (58), even though the creature's later narration shows that his gaze was largely unformed and undirected at the time (92).

> It is haulfe a wardrope for in sommer ye shall finde her arrayed Comonlye but in her smocke and mantle to be more readye for her light services In winter and in her travell it is her Cloake and safegarde and allsoe a Coverlett for her Lewed exercises. And when she hathe filled her vessell vnder it she may hide bothe her burden and her blame. (ll.1631-37)

For a culture in which wealth and status depend upon patrilineage, such sexual freedom is bound to cause overreactions against the article of clothing in question, whether it be in Ireland or the "Orient." Certainly the eighteenth-century habit of masquing was a contested practice, because it allowed women to attend and even participate in entertainments which might otherwise be closed to them as hazardous to their reputations. Though there was clearly a sub-culture which allowed masks as a liberating influence, the Western patriarchal party line generally denounced them as dangerous to social stability.

There were times, however, when a mask serves the law, the most infamous of which is surely the anonymous prisoner in the Bastille. A huge myth has been built on the most minimal historical datum, as David Coward shows:

> [t]he brief entries in the unofficial register kept by the Deputy Governor of Bastille, Étienne du Junca, tell as much of the tale as is certain.
>
> On 18 September 1698, M. de Saint-Mars ... arrived in Paris to take command of the Bastille. He brought with him, "in his litter," a long-term prisoner "whom he kept masked at all times and whose name was not spoken." On 19 November 1703, the unknown prisoner, after a short illness, "still masked with a mask of black velvet ... died this day at half past ten of the evening...; he that had been so long a captive, was buried on Tuesday, at four of the afternoon, 20th November, in the cemetery of Saint Paul in this parish. In the register of deaths was entered a name, also unknown." A marginal note in du Junca's hand adds "I have since learnt that he was named in the Register as M. de Marchiel and that 40 livres were paid for his funeral." the entry in the burial register for 19 November records the death of "Marchioly, aged forty-five years, or thereabouts, [who] departed this life in the Bastille." (xvii)

From this slight record, great fictions have arisen: for example, "[t]he mask, made of cloth, seems to have turned into a mask of *vair* — the same fur of which Cinderella's

slipper was made before it was turned into *verre* (glass) by printer's error — and thence became horrifying *fer* (iron)" (xix), about which Coward reiterates, evoking the later infamous Bastille inhabitant, de Sade: "the sadistic idea of enclosing a prisoner within a claustrophobic iron mask starts a *frisson* of horror" (Coward xxii). Some of the most popular theories of the identity of the masked prisoner suspect him of being a threat to the social fabric — such as the king's twin — who had to be isolated from the human community. His mask was placed by the order of law, to both delineate and disguise a threat to that order. Over the centuries, what began as a velvet veil evolved into the repressive iron mask, suggesting that, in the paranoid narrative that Western culture tells of itself, even the flimsiest veil can become an inflexible, alienating prison.[79]

Frankenstein's creature's potential for good is held captive in the uncanniness of his physical body, apprehended as a thing of horror by all who observe him visually. Only the senior De Lacey sees beyond the creature's body, because he sees it not at all. It takes a blind man to show the tyranny of the eye, which often determines a person's course of action on the most ephemeral criteria. For example, Felix De Lacey's extreme and opposed reactions to the revelations of Safie and of the creature demonstrates the error of automatically privileging visually-inspired prejudices. On one hand, Felix — who epitomizes the archetypal honourable citizen — reacted to Safie's unveiling with joy at his hope's fulfillment: he "seemed ravished with delight when he saw her, every trait of sorrow vanished from his face, and it instantly expressed a degree of ecstatic joy, of which I could hardly have believed it capable" (*Frankenstein* 103). On the other hand, he responds to the creature's presence with

[79] It is precisely this tendency to turn veils into indiscriminate prisons which P.B. Shelley hopes to counter in his sonnet "Lift not...," which advocates instead the thinning of veils to the point of insubstantiality.

violent revulsion (117). Both reactions are predicated on scopic privilege. But the elder, blind De Lacey reacts with the same kindness to both Safie and the creature (103 and 116-17), indicating that visual stimuli do not provide accurate measures of character.[80]

Victor automatically privileges what he sees, and his judgment is thereby impaired. As Southey's "Cottonian library" showed us in chapter three, such privilege may well be misplaced: the women re-covering Southey's books sometimes committed "a sly piece of satire at the contents of some well-known author by their choice of its covering.... The book became as well known by its dress as by its contents, and much more easily found. (vi.17). A virtuosic speaker, Frankenstein's creature uses words to prove his worth. Unfortunately, his project is doomed to be judged by the sighted who will spurn him for no reason other than his uncanny "cover." *Frankenstein* demonstrates that the most pernicious veils are not real cloths worn by populations thus "othered," but the conceptual veils which obscure the vision of hegemonic *ur*-cultures. The creature can remove his stolen cloak: despite his persuasive eloquence, he cannot remove the veil of scopic prejudice from the eyes of all who see him.

• • •

[80] Extra-visual perception like that demonstrated by the elder De Lacey is highly valued, even pedestalized in Western literature. Derrida points how many of Western culture's most prized literary figures were virtually blind: "Homer, Milton, Nietzsche, Joyce, Borges" (24), a list to which he adds Cixous. However, an opposing tension reigns in less rarefied circles, where the prejudices inspired by looks dominate. *Frankenstein* thoroughly explores this dichotomy between visceral, visually-inspired impressions and understanding nurtured by thought, a dichotomy which characterizes the difference between Victor and his creature at the deepest level, elucidated as the difference between abstract thought expressed in language and physical sensory impressions, or between words and veils.

Though Percy Bysshe Shelley offered the idea of thinning the veil in order to perceive that which it hides, the problem of how exactly to achieve such a thinning remains. One answer concerns the ways we think about narrative, and especially the narrative structure of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Gothic opus, *Frankenstein.* Words with the root "fold" occur throughout the novel:[81] "fold" derives from the Latin *plicare*, the source of explicate (also ply, plait, explicit and complicated) (Ayto 213, 232). The "fold" words act as unobtrusive markers for a concept of story as something unfolded in the process of reading, or of making the narrative explicit.

The concept of unfolding proposed here provides an alternative to the critically prevalent frame model for *Frankenstein*'s structure. In his 1992 book *Reading for Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Peter Brooks says

> a classic framed tale would present a set of nested boxes, a set of brackets within brackets: an instance would be Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where Walton's narrative encloses Frankenstein's narrative which encloses the Monster's narrative.... (351n8)

This reiterates Beth Newman's assertion in her 1986 article "Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative: The Frame Structure of *Frankenstein*," that "each frame that we pass through as we read makes the matter at the center seem more highly charged, more significant, more invested with power" (159). Newman thus frames the frame metaphor in terms of the male sex drive, a paradigm also used Victor Frankenstein's professor M. Waldman, who states that the researches of ancient philosophers "penetrate into the recesses of nature" (51). M.W. Shelley has

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[81] See Appendix 9 for a complete list of the occurrences of "fold" in *Frankenstein.*

Waldman describe nature as a feminized, passive mystery which male scientists fathom through the exertion of rigorous logical method.[82]

Framing, like the perpetual unveiling of the "Lift not..." sonnet, does not lead anywhere. Zonana points out how, like the chasm of P.B. Shelley's sonnet, the narrative centre of M.W. Shelley's novel is absent:

> Safie never directly tells her tale within the text of the novel. She inscribes it in a set of letters whose "substance" the monster reports to Victor Frankenstein. Frankenstein tells *his* tale to Captain Walton, who enfolds all the previous tales into his written narrative to his sister. (171, emphasis in original)

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[82] Gerhard Joseph offers what should be an alternative interpretation in his 1993 article "Virginal Sex, Vaginal Text: The 'Folds' of *Frankenstein*." However, his "enfolding" analysis simply inverts the androcentric sexual paradigm:

> [t]he verbal "folds" of the mother ... have their extension in and are the semantic correlative of what one might call the tale's larger vaginalized narrative structure.... For the deeply nested center, the ultimate "source" of meaning, seems ever to recede before the reader as he (or should I say merely "I"?) gazes ever inward, following Mary Shelley's introduction concerning the ghost-story competition, as it enfolds Walton's letters to his sister, as they enfold Frankenstein's narrative, as it enfolds the monster's narrative, as it enfolds the tale of Safie and her father .... Such Chinese-box scopic regressivity serves to implicate the reader, whom I would of course gender male or androcentric, and seems ever to "draw us on," as Goethe mystifies the eternal feminine of heterosexual desire. (30-1)

Joseph's psychoanalytic model, with its emphasis on "the deeply nested centre" and "the ever inwards moving gaze" does not substantially change the penetrative metaphor of frame theory.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick's psychoanalytic look at veils in her 1981 paper "The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel" takes her argument in a direction which has more in common with Joseph than with my own:

> [t]he veil itself, however is also suffused with sexuality. This is true partly because of the other, apparently opposite set of meanings it hides: the veil that conceals and inhibits sexuality comes by the same gesture to represent it, both as a metonym of the thing covered and as a metaphor for the system of prohibitions by which sexual desire is enhanced and specified. (256)

Sedgewick's analysis concurs with mine in that she recognizes the way a veil functions to replace the thing it veils.

The centre towards which all this penetrating yearns is as absent as the emptiness which characterizes the chasm of P.B. Shelley's "Lift not..." sonnet.

A model based on the idea of unfolding is not as reductive as the frame model. Both are spatial, but rather than evoking an increasingly claustrophobic progression, unfolding invites readers to consider the process of revelation in *Frankenstein* as an opening up of the text, like unfolding a cloth. Closed, it remains as enigmatic as the front and back of a book, with only hints of the potential pattern and colour — narrative and style — that make up the text/ile. Readers unfold the first layer, analogous to opening the book to Mary Shelley's 1831 Introduction. The next layer of narrative unfolded reveals the Preface, and already our understanding of the text/ile has become four times as large as the original "folded" text. Again, the surface of the text/ile doubles as we open it, encountering the opening letters from Walton to his sister about the stranger aboard his ship, and so on through Victor Frankenstein's narrative to Walton, to the creature's narrative to Victor. As the narrative approaches closure, readers refold it, leaving the creature's tale folded into that of Victor, which folds into Walton's final letters back to "the warm domestic circle of Margaret Saville's home in England" (Zonana 170). The folded narrative does not end up as tightly closed as it was before we began "reading": no Afterward balances the Introduction and Preface, a circumstance which provides a neat parallel to readers' memories of the story. It takes up more mental room than it did before being read.

Unfolding counters the penetrative metaphor of frame theory. If the text is analogous to a folded cloth, and the reading experience parallels the act of unfolding that cloth, then the movement from one narrative level to the next enlarges the text/ile, so that readers' understanding increases exponentially with each movement

between levels. Far from penetrating into or withdrawing from the text, the unfolding metaphor removes the implication of masculine sexual construction from the reading experience, replacing it with an exponentially enlarged comprehension reminiscent of Luce Irigaray's speculations on the form of the female imaginary in her 1980 article "This Sex Which is not One." She states that, given the opportunity, a female imaginary will "unfold" (104), just as *Frankenstein* does. If you prefer a cultural feminist approach to Irigaray's biology-based arguments, Marcia Landy's 1977 article "The Silent Woman: Towards a Feminist Critique" elucidates the need for the development of feminist literary criticisms that "examine attitudes which we have regarded as essentially extrinsic or irrelevant to our traditional areas of [literary] competence, the most striking being the relationship between day-to-day existence in the society and the role of the artist, the work of art, and the interpreters of that art" (Landy 16). With this statement, Landy calls for a recognition of the conceptual possibilities of domestic tasks such as folding — an activity as quietly, unobtrusively ubiquitous in domestic life as terms with the root "fold" are quietly, unobtrusively present in *Frankenstein.*

Unfolding supplants the frame's quest for an absent narrative centre with an increasing understanding of the narrative field: it does not simply replace penetration with withdrawal. Instead, expectations engendered by the previous level continue or transform according to that which is revealed. Rather than being displaced, the reader is *em*placed, increasingly informed of the textual situation. In the discussion of "Lift not...," P. B. Shelley advocated the use of language to thin the veil between mortality and immortality. In the case of *Frankenstein*, M.W. Shelley thins the veil by unfolding it.

The graveworms which traverse the shroud in Victor's fever-dream lend themselves to interpretations other than Joseph's psychoanalytic attribution as "phallic" (Joseph 30), and my earlier explanation as symbolic of the creature, in that they destabilize the veil between death and life. Wormholes in a folded cloth are often very far apart when the cloth unfolds. Similarly, the same event worms through a folded narrative, showing up in several places. For example, according to M.W. Shelley's Introduction — in which she delineates the challenge to create a ghost story, and her subsequent writer's block — she was inspired to begin *Frankenstein* by the moment when Victor wakes to see the newly-animated creature raise the curtain and gaze down at him (58). One night, while M.W. Shelley's imagination wandered on the border between waking and sleeping, she pictured the scientist in the moment he animates dead matter.

> His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handiwork, horror-stricken. He ... might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench for ever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.
> I opened mine in terror. (23)

When the creature narrates his life story to Victor, one might expect a third telling of this incident; however his senses are so unformed at that early point in his development that he barely knows the difference between sight and touch, between solid and air, and so his point of view does not arise in the narrative (92). In this folded narrative, multiple characters retell the same incident, each with their own perceptions and points of view.

M.W. Shelley transforms P.B. Shelley's debates about Berkeleyian philosophy that privileged perception over a pre-existent reality. *Frankenstein* emphasizes

perception less than intent, which turns the perception/pre-existent discussion into a debate over nature versus nurture. For example, Victor tells his version of the story in order to persuade Walton to take up his quest — hence the scientist's insistence on the creature's innate evil. The creature reiterates many of the same narrative events, but he intends to persuade Victor that his badness is learned and could be reversed through integration into some kind of social fabric — if not that of human, than a new one comprised of creatures like himself.

In the nature/nurture debate, M. W. Shelley comes down on the side of learning, an educational philosophy promoted by Wollstonecraft:

> [t]he stamen of immortality, if I may be allowed the phrase, is the perfectibility of human reason; for were man created perfect, or did a flood of knowledge break in upon him, when he arrived at maturity, that precluded error, I should doubt whether his existence would be continued after the dissolution of the body. But, in the present state of things, every difficulty in morals that escapes from human discussion, and equally baffles the investigation of profound thinking, and the lightning glance of genius, is an argument on which I build my belief of the immortality of the soul. Reason is, consequentially, the simple power of improvement, or more properly speaking, of discerning truth. (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 52-53)

The creature's omission of the moment which inspired M.W. Shelley and terrified Victor supports interpretations of *Frankenstein* as a text which advocates understanding as learned rather than innate, since at that point in his life, he has no understanding because he has neither experience nor learning.[83]

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[83] Though he starts with huge disadvantages, the creature learns quickly. Unfortunately, his is the "school of hard knocks," and what he learns is brutality. The creature blames his destructive passion on Victor: "you do not reflect that *you* are the cause of its excess. If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them an hundred and an hundred fold; for that one creature's sake, I would make peace with the whole kind!" (125). He later reiterates this sentiment to Walton: "Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding" (183). The implication is that much subsequent grief might have been avoided, had Victor shouldered his responsibility as progenitor to the creature from the outset, and helped

A clear progression manifests in the creature's responses to the negative reactions his presence evokes. I have already cited Victor's moment of terror, to which the creature has no memorable reaction since he is not yet sufficiently aware of the world around him. The young De Laceys' panic reprises Victor's post-nightmare moment of revulsion:

> [w]ho can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted; and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung: in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground, and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sunk within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained. (M.W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 117)

It takes only one more meeting for the creature to learn to become the terror he inspires rather than seeking to ameliorate it. When he meets William Frankenstein, he first thinks not of murder, but companionship:

> [s]uddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me, that this little creature was unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him, and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth.
>
> Urged by this impulse, I seized on the boy as he passed, and drew him towards me. As soon as he beheld my form, he placed his hands before his eyes, and uttered a shrill scream. (122-23)

This time, instead of incomprehension or sorrowful inaction, the creature decides to react with vengeance, murdering the boy to spite his neglectful maker: "I exclaimed, 'I, too, can create desolation; my enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him'" (123).

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educate him into a gentler temper. Victor perceived only the fear that lurked behind the veil, and not the hope which the "Lift not..." sonnet assures us is there as well.

The creature's vengeful reaction was a learned one: it was not his first inclination on being repulsed by humans.

The next stage in the progression of encounters which began at his maker's bedside and continued through the De Lacey's cottage and the murder of William Frankenstein, comes in the creature's meeting with the sleeping Justine. In another example of a moment reiterated through the folded structure of *Frankenstein*, this encounter reprises three times. Initially, Victor tells Walton

> one of the servants, happening to examine the apparel she [Justine] had worn on the night of the murder, had discovered in her pocket the picture of my mother, which had been judged to be the temptation of the murderer. The servant instantly showed it to one of the others, who, without saying a word to any of the family, went to a magistrate; and, upon their deposition, Justine was apprehended. On being charged with the fact, the poor girl confirmed the suspicion in a great measure by her extreme confusion of manner. (M.W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 75)

Justine's version — or, rather, lack of version — follows: because she was asleep at the time, she is as ignorant of the incident as the newly-animated creature was of the bed curtain scene. Victor records her virtually incoherent report:

> [c]oncerning the picture she could give no account.
> "I know," continued the unhappy victim, "how heavily and fatally this one circumstance weighs against me, but I have no power of explaining it; and when I have expressed my utter ignorance, I am only left to conjecture concerning the probabilities by which it might have been placed in my pocket. But here also I am checked." (78)

There is only one eye-witness report — that of the perpetrating creature. He justifies his actions to Victor as follows:

> I entered a barn which appeared to me to be empty. A woman was sleeping on some straw; she was young: not indeed so beautiful as her whose portrait I held; but of an agreeable aspect, and blooming in the loveliness of youth and health. Here, I thought, is one of those whose joy-imparting smiles are bestowed on all but me. And then I bent over her, and whispered, "Awake,

> fairest, thy lover is near — he who would give his life but to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes: my beloved, awake!"
>
> The sleeper stirred; a thrill of terror ran through me. Should she indeed awake, and see me, and curse me, and denounce the murderer? Thus would she assuredly act, if her darkened eyes opened, and she beheld me. The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me — not I but she shall suffer; the murder I have committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime had its source in her; be hers the punishment! Thanks to the lessons of Felix and the sanguinary laws of man, I had learned now to work mischief. I bent over her, and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress. (123-24)[84]

The reasoning creature clearly states that his actions are not innate but learned, and that the results are deliberate, not accidental. In this instance, he doesn't wait for the anticipated response but exacts a preemptive revenge, not only from Justine but from humanity, which has shut him out. By concealing the miniature in Justine's gown, the creature not only causes her death: he also subverts the legal system which underlies human society. In terms of the social fabric, this consequence is as much worse than the murder of one little boy as that murder was from inadvertently terrifying the De

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[84] The creature refers to the learning he received by surreptitiously following Felix De Lacey's lessons to Safie.

> The wonderful narrations inspired me with strange feelings. was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of evil principle, and at another, as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike. To be a great and virtuous man appeared the highest honour that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than that of the blind mole or harmless worm. For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased, and I turned away with disgust and loathing. (M.W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 105)

The text which taught this fatal lesson to the creature was Volney's *Ruins of Empire* (105).

Lacey family.[85] With each unfolding, the creature's malevolent cunning increased exponentially, from the neutrality of the bed-curtain incident, to refraining from hurting Felix, to the deliberate murder of William, culminating in the manipulation of the legal system such that duped humans commit his murder for him, and in so doing, demonstrate their own venal gullibility.

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Veils in literature commonly describe the border between a known and an unknown. Ostensibly, they describe the locus of the unknown, though the trope inevitably shifts readerly attention away from the thing veiled to the veil itself. The image of the veil can be used to suggest an unfolding insubstantiality as gauzy as that of P.B. Shelley's

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[85] The repetition implicit in a folded narrative is not limited to narrative events: allusions and images also repeat. Joseph succinctly points out how the creature's meeting with Justine echoes Victor's earlier dream:

> [t]he troped folds of the dream appear a second time in the novel to reinforce their significance. When the monster kills Frankenstein's younger brother, William, he buries a locket with a miniature of the mother that William had borrowed from Elizabeth within the "folds" of the dress of the servant girl Justine, still another protegée and double of the mother. That semantic echo of "folds," I would suggest, weaves together Justine's outer garment with the mother's flannel shroud through which the phallic graveworms had earlier crawled. In the monster's ambiguous act that thus replicates Victor's earlier dream, we can see Frankenstein in the guise of his double shrinking from the spectre of female mystery, attacking in the abstract what the male imagination has mythologized as woman's "folded" lack. (30)

Once again the beloved Elizabeth is associated with the dead mother, Caroline, a juxtaposition that supports Mellor's interpretation, in her 1988 article "Possessing Nature: The Female in Frankenstein," that "Terrified of female sexuality and the power of human reproduction it enables, both he [Victor] and the patriarchal society he represents use the technologies of science and the laws of the polis to manipulate, control and repress women" (226). Like that of Joseph, Mellor's reading accepts the psychoanalytic critical precept that the creature is a "split" of Victor, and so the legal eradication of Justine is willed by Victor. Such an abstract interpretation is secondary to the plot, however. The ironically-named Justine arrives in the narrative just in time to be condemned by the justice system, not to demonstrate how Victor despises and fears the reproductive power of women, but in order to provide an opportunity to complete the creature's moral corruption.

"Lift not..." sonnet where, in order to achieve enlightenment, the protagonist describes the veil until there is no distinction between it and the unknown, from his point of view. (The narrator has not the protagonist's clarity of vision.) Or a veil image can be something as solid and unyielding as a city wall, which tropes the visual prejudices against which *Frankenstein*'s creature pits his language, and loses. *Frankenstein* thoroughly explores the dichotomy between visceral, visually-inspired impressions and understanding nurtured by thought, a dichotomy characteristic of the deepest difference between Victor and his creature, and which reifies the difference between abstract thought expressed in language and physical sensory impressions, or between words and veils, texts and textiles.

When language *becomes* a veil, as advocated in "Lift not...," it provides a path to enlightenment. When language *opposes* a veil, as in the discrepancy between the creature's fair words and foul appearance, it fails and horrific destruction results. In both cases, the troped veil prevails. Thus veils are used in literature to indicate patterns of cultural predilection. For example, people writing from a hegemonic position — Spenser on the Irish, or Wollstonecraft and M.W. Shelley on Islam — perceive themselves on the outside of a veil, and inscribe it as a dangerous disguise. On the other hand, writers working from the point of view of an oppressed population — like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, or the Islamic women quoted by Watson and Ahmed, all of whom wore the veil to avoid scopic chauvinism — position themselves on its inside, and describe it as a protective border. Thus, since veil tropes can be employed to tell virtually any story, the ones they tell are important. Veils reveal us to ourselves by figuring those things we choose to screen.

Chapter Five

RUDE MECHANICALS AND MECHANICAL LOOMS

in and around William Blake's *Jerusalem*

I am perfectly sensible that it belongs not to a feeble and feminine hand to draw the bow of Odysseus.

Charlotte Smith, Introduction to "The Emigrants" 88

In the introduction to this dissertation, I state the goal of discerning patterns by comparing to complement, rather than following the usual critical practice of comparing more to emphasize contrast. In *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804-15), William Blake advocates a similar process. When Jerusalem asks "'Why should Punishment Weave the Veil with Iron Wheels of War / When Forgiveness might Weave with Wings of Cherubim?'" (22: 33-35), she grieves that dissension tends to foment more dissension, rather than ferment constructive change. Blake's term for the process in which difference leads to destruction is "separation." In *Jerusalem*, separation acts on four social levels simultaneously — empire, local city-state, family, and individual. Unfortunately, as the product of a culture long accustomed to patriarchal hegemony, Blake's ideal vision was hierarchical, with the female valued positively only when subject to the male. Written during a period of

industrial expansion and attendant social upheaval, *Jerusalem* also depicts a negative attitude toward technological innovation. Thus, two powerful, connected anxieties provide covert conflicts that drive overt antagonisms among the principals of Blake's last prophetic book.

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Since women have traditionally been associated with textile production, and many of the industries developing in the early nineteenth century were based on textile processes, Blake chose the same trope to describe both anxieties: the weaving loom. Despite the rise of male-dominated craft guilds in Medieval Europe — which resulted, for example, in male weavers supported by other family members as spinners and carders, *etcetera* — industrial revolution narratives tend to hark back to the women weavers of classical antiquity, with Penelope from Homer's *Odyssey* providing one prominent example of a good weaving woman. Inspired by Odysseus's patron goddess, Pallas Athena (variously Arachne's nemesis, Hemans's archetype, and the goddess of wisdom, war and weaving examined in chapter three under her Roman name Minerva), Penelope uses her weaving skills to fend off the suitors who harass her in her husband's prolonged absence. In one passage, she explains her responsibility to finish weaving a shroud for Odysseus's father:

> I waste my heart away in longing for Odysseus; so they speed on my marriage and I weave a web of wiles. First some god put it into my heart to set up a great web in the halls, and thereat to weave a robe fine of woof and very wide; and anon I spake among them, saying: "Ye princely youths, my wooers, now that goodly Odysseus is dead, do ye abide patiently, how eager soever to speed on this marriage of mine, till I finish the robe. I would not that the threads perish to no avail, even this shroud for the hero Laertes, against the day when the ruinous doom shall bring him low, of death that lays men at their length. So shall none of the Achaean women in the land count it blame in me, as well might be, were he to lie without a winding sheet, a man that had gotten great possessions."
>
> So spake I, and their high hearts consented thereto. So then in the daytime I would weave the mighty web, and in the night unravel the same, when I had

> let place the torches by me. Thus for the space of three years I hid the thing by craft and beguiled the minds of the Achaeans. (Homer, *Odyssey* bk21, p296-97)[86]

By fending off the suitors with her wily ploy, Penelope demonstrates unwavering loyalty to her husband despite his long absence, thereby supporting the existing social organization. This fidelity does not arise entirely due to love: if Odysseus were to return to find Penelope remarried, she would be in a position not unlike that of the inconstant Helen, whose infidelity led to war.

When compared with Penelope and her virtuous weaving, Helen demonstrates how a good weaver can be a bad woman. The subject of Helen's tapestry is the war begun by her beauty: Iris finds "Helen weaving a great purple web of double fold, and embroidering thereon many battles of horse-taming Trojans and mail-clad Achaians, that they had endured for her sake at the hands of Ares" (Homer, *Iliad* 3, 48). Helen's weaving indicates both an unfeminine interest in battle,[87] and a prominent sense of self-importance rather than the proper womanly self-effacement exhibited by Penelope. This difference leads Joplin to observe

> Greek culture often presents us as two models of the woman weaver...: virtuous Penelope, continually weaving and unraveling a shroud, and vicious Helen, weaving a tapestry depicting the heroics of the men engaged in the war they claim to fight over her body. (47)

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[86] The prose translations by Lang *et alia* of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in this chapter do not give line numbers, so they are cited first by book and then by page.

[87] Hector's speech to his wife Andromache in the *Iliad* provides a clear example of the traditional delineation of men's and women's roles according classical antiquity: "But go to thine house and see to thine own tasks, the loom and distaff, and bid thine handmaidens ply their work; but for war shall men provide and I chief of all men that dwell in Ilios" (6, 114).

Where Penelope undertook Laertes' winding sheet in order to bring honour to her family, Helen wove to glorify herself and her situation.

Penelope wove and unraveled both to demonstrate her fidelity to her husband's family and to defer the social changes inevitably following nuptials. Thus, fidelity and support for the social *status quo* were considered womanly virtues. Further, Penelope's weaving deception ensured that she remained properly retired from masculine company — a retirement enforced by her son Telemachus in Odysseus's absence. Before the archery contest to determine who will win Penelope's hand, Telemachus berates his mother: "[b]ut do thou go to thine own chamber and mind thine own housewiferies, the loom and distaff, and bid thine handmaids ply their tasks. But the bow shall be for men, for all, but for me in chief, for mine is the lordship in the house" (Homer, *Odyssey* 21, 334). In designating textile production to women and archery to men, Telemachus's speech opens up the possibility of comparisons not just between weavers, but between skills such as archery and weaving — comparisons that further uncover cultural assumptions based on gender roles and sexual identity.

Penelope's daily weaving and unweaving confirms observations of social feminist theorists such as Gerda Lerner that women's work is inherently repetitious (130), a point discussed in the chapter on Charles and Mary Lamb. More significantly for the current analysis, it also falls in line with the much vaunted sexual/textual multiplicity espoused by French feminist theorists who base their analyses on physical difference. In "This Sex Which is Not One" (1977) Luce Irigaray describes female desire as "multiple" (104), while Julia Kristeva in "Revolution in Poetic Language" (1986) describes the feminine chora as "rhythmic," "irreducible to ... verbal translation," and

"musical" (97), an apt description of the process of weaving.[88] In contrast, Odysseus's restringing of the bow he unstrung on his departure over twenty years earlier metonymizes masculinity in both its singular monumentality, and in the violent results of that action (*Odyssey* 21: 537-50). Odysseus defends his honour by slaughtering his wife's suitors with the bow they were too weak to string: his strength confirms his right to determine their fates. Since such strength was a virtue specific to men, Penelope had no such recourse. Instead she adopted a scheme of perpetual deferral.

Odysseus brought about change through one decisive action, Penelope staved off change with repeated, equivocal passivity. Penelope's incremental weaving/unravelling takes place between the time that Odysseus unstrung his bow and left for Troy, and when he returned and restrung it. Finally, though Penelope's

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[88] Kristeva describes what she calls the chora as "Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgement, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax" (97). In terms of weaving, the guarantee is not syntax, but warp tension provided by the loom, the technology mediating Penelope's expressivity. Furthermore, textile production on a loom is "rhythmic" in the motions with which it is accompished. Weaving's "irreducibility to ... verbal translation" provides a mode of story-telling without masculine texts. Finally the sound produced can be compared to percussive music.

Homer uses harp and swallow-song metaphors to describe the act of stringing the bow:

> Odysseus of many counsels had lifted the great bow and viewed it on every side, and even as when a man that is skilled in the lyre and in minstrelsy, easily stretches a cord about a new peg, after tying at either end the twisted sheep-gut, even so Odysseus straightway bent the great bow, all without effort, and took it in his right hand and proved the bow-string, which rang sweetly at the touch, in tone like a swallow. (*Odyssey* 21, 336)

By using a metaphor of harp-strings not to describe the sound of Penelope's weaving but the stringing of Odysseus's bow, Homer's text implies that the association of music with femininity (as opposed to words associated with masculinity) proposed by Kristeva may not be a consistently gendered trope. Certainly, music is often used to describe any taut strings, whether they are bowstrings or the warp threads on a loom.

strategy for dealing with the suitors required acute mental craftiness where that of Odysseus required brute strength, we celebrate Odysseus for wiliness, where Penelope is remembered more for her fidelity and faith.[89] This implies that excessive wisdom in a woman was not a matter for celebration, whereas fidelity, social conservatism, and contained retirement were.

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Charlotte Smith writes "I am perfectly sensible that it belongs not to a feeble and feminine hand to draw the bow of Odysseus" (88): her statement, taken from the Introduction of her poem "The Emigrants" (1793), indicates that these gender stereotypes throve into the early nineteenth-century. Of course, she immediately goes on to "draw the bow" in writing a long poem about the politics and plight of French emigrants to England after the revolution in France. The contrast between Smith's opening statement and the subject matter of her poem demonstrates both the limits proper feminine passivity placed upon women writers in the Romantic period, and the common ruse of self-effacement employed to counter those limits. Propriety demanded that women needed to efface themselves with such gestures of humility if their situations drew public attention.

No one was more familiar with the demands of propriety than writer and evangelical Anglican proselytizer Hannah More, who faced much opposition to a plan that she and her sisters espoused around 1785, to open schools for the working poor in and around Bristol. The two main objections to the endeavour are significant for

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[89] This is not to suggest that Odysseus was stupid: throughout the *Odyssey*, there are references to his craftiness. Even Pallas Athena calls him "subtle of wit, of guile insatiate," and says he is "of all men far the first in counsel and in discourse" (13, 204). However, it is Penelope — albeit inspired by Athena — who carries out the weaving deception in her husband's absence, and Penelope who suggests the archery contest to the suitors.

the current analysis. First, it was generally felt that as women they had no place effecting any social change at all: their place was to shore up the cultural *status quo*. Second, More's detractors feared that education would ruin workers by giving them ideas beyond their station. According to her critical biographer Charles Howard Ford, More dealt with both obstacles similarly, by "introducing unconventional actions and ideas in conventional packages" (Ford xii). For example, her stance on the education of women was similar to that of Mary Lamb, in that "like Mary Wollstonecraft, she advocated a more rigorous and extensive education for women, but, unlike Wollstonecraft, she believed that women should use this education only in traditional roles" (More, "Biographical Note" 471). According to this argument, unconventional education for women will lead them to acquiesce to existing gender conventions as the best way of maintaining a peaceful, productive society. More's argument for educating the lower classes followed the same line of reasoning as her argument for educating women:

> [a]lthough there was much resistance among the moneyed classes to the idea of educating the poor, More managed to win widespread approval and support, largely because she advocated education as a way of instilling values that would support the *status quo* — piety, frugality, and acceptance by the laboring class of their lower station in life. (470)

This argument promotes more than humility and fidelity to one's family: by assuming that education will lead the ignorant to prefer being unfortunate in the British Isles than wealthy anywhere else, education promotes patriotism — fidelity to a political entity.

More's 1816 poem "Turn The Carpet: or, The Two Weavers. (In a Dialogue between Dick and John)" provides a working model of her educational philosophy.[90]

[90] The passages from "Turn The Carpet" quoted here are taken from volume one, pages 281-84 of the *The Works of Hannah More in Eighteen Volumes* (London: T.

In the poem, good weaver John, like Penelope, demonstrates undeviating faith. His companion Dick is like Helen in his inconstancy. The first five stanzas relate Dick's wavering faith: he begrudges the rich their good fortune while he and his family struggle to survive. John suggests that mere mortals should not presume to perceive all of God's plans, drawing a parallel between the complexity of life and Dick's weaving:

> 'See'st thou that carpet, not half done,
> 'Which thou, dear Dick, hast well begun?
> 'Behold the wild confusion there,
> 'So rude the mass it makes one stare!
>
> 'A stranger, ign'rant of the trade,
> 'Wou'd say, no meaning's there convey'd:
> 'For where's the middle, where's the border!
> 'Thy carpet now is all disorder.'
>
> Quoth Dick 'My work is yet in bits,
> 'But still in ev'ry part it fits;
> 'Besides, you reason like a lout,
> 'Why, man, that *carpet's inside out.*'
>
> Says John, 'Thou say'st the thing I mean,
> 'And now I hope to cure thy spleen;
> 'This world, which clouds thy soul with doubt,
> '*Is but a carpet inside out.* (ll.25-40, emphases in original)

John goes on to state that after we die and go to heaven "then the *carpet shall be turn'd*" (56). This morality poem is tailor-made to promote More's argument for the education of the poor: if they cannot read, they cannot read "The Two Weavers," which will teach them to be content with an unhappy lot in life in anticipation of a

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Cadell and W. Davies): though the 18 volumes are dated 1818, volume one's title page carries the date 1816.

Most readers will probably first encounter the poem slightly bowdlerized, in the 1981 facsimile edition of the 1859 *Female Poets of Great Britain.* The changes are slight but telling: for example, line five of the 1859 version reads "What with my *babes* and my sickly Wife," whereas in 1816 it read "What with my *brats* and my sickly Wife" (emphases added).

better reward after death. Rather than inciting desire for change, More's concept of education purported to reinscribe the existing system. More had the wiliness of both Odysseus and Penelope, and like Penelope, she had faith, sincerely claiming to be divinely directed. However, the fact that More presented even such a conservative argument publicly contravened appropriate social behaviour for a woman: she, too, dared string the bow of Odysseus.

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A major difference between the classical weavers of Homer and those of More's Romantic era is that the former are women while the latter are men, indicating that significant social changes had taken place in the intervening centuries. One such change came with the professionalization of textile production by medieval craft guilds, which gradually lead to gender role diversification in weaving: after all, using traditional hand methods, it takes five or six spinners to supply one weaver (T.S. Ashton 42). Weaving was thus the more exclusive activity, reserved for a high status family member, or even accorded to itinerant professionals who inspired the character of Silas Marner, the eponymous protagonist of George Eliot's 1861 book. However, the changes in textile production that took place between classical antiquity and the mid-eighteenth-century were themselves transformed more than once during William Blake's 1757 to 1827 life, a span which almost exactly coincides with Ashton's 1760-1830 dates for the industrial revolution.

Since, as David Punter suggests in the introduction to *New Casebooks: William Blake*, Blake was "as uninterested in what was going on around him in literary circles as he was embroiled in the social and political life of his day" (2), coming to an understanding of the socio-political configuration of Britain in the early nineteenth century is crucial to fathoming Blake's writing. According to T.S. Ashton in *The*

Industrial Revolution 1760-1830, seminal factors leading to social transformation during Blake's lifetime were technological changes in metallurgy and textile production; a rapidly increasing population; and land use changes due to the enclosure of commons and the development of river and canal systems.[91] Blake's text deals with all of these elements, vindicating in an unexpected manner Stuart Curran's observation that, despite Punter's suggestion that Blake was uninterested in literary formalities, Blake's "machinery bears a striking resemblance to what is conventional in his time" (178). Curran refers to Blake's *poetic* machinery; the balance of this chapter analyzes Blake's deployment of *industrial* machinery as tropes in *Jerusalem.*

Canals are built to enable commercial transportation. However, they also sever the local landscape such that physically proximate places are suddenly inaccessible to each other. T.S. Ashton's categories of enclosure and canal systems are jointly represented in Blake's systems of fibres which rapidly expand to embroil and immobilize vast tracts of geography. For example, the fibres of the Covering Cherub

[91] Though dated, and since refuted in some of its specific data, T.S. Ashton's *The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830* isolates with perspicacity the technological and social issues central to that era of radical social change. In the preface to the 1997 reprint, Pat Hudson writes "[a]ny reader steeped in the recent literature will certainly find parts of Ashton's analysis which are now outdated and even misleading" (v), but claims that the problems are in details. Hudson goes on to show that Ashton's designation of important aspects of the industrial revolution has not been challenged, and that readers of *The Industrial Revolution* will "benefit from a succinct analysis of major causal factors and social and cultural elements" (v).

For the sake of argumentative clarity, the analysis offered here depends on T.S. Ashton's construction. *Jerusalem* also deals with at least two social factors beyond Ashton's scope: religious upheaval, and wars in France which provide the pattern for the association of malicious religion and war in *Jerusalem.* For further information on the industrial revolution, I found several of the essays in *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (1993, edited by Patrick O'Brien and Roland Quinalt) provided a late twentieth-century recap of the period, while Cobbett's *Rural rides in the counties of Surrey, Kent, Sussex ... during the years 1821 to 1832 with economical and political observations* is fascinating contemporary account of social changes in the British countryside.

outweave "from Thames & Tweed & Severn, awful streams" (*Jerusalem* 89:20), suggesting that the fibres also serve as a canal-like anti-circulatory system for Britain. Blake's insistent itemization of the counties of the British Isles, and the countries of the British Empire (71:10-53, 58:33-47, etc.) also represents enclosure, as explored in George Mills Harper's 1969 article "The Divine Tetrad in Blake's *Jerusalem*."[92]

Exponentially increasing population appears in *Jerusalem* in the separation of spectre, emanation and shadow from each character and the subsequent separation of each separated being. In chapter three of *Jerusalem*, Vala has become her two daughters Rahab and Tirzah who incorporate the twelve Daughters of Albion (67:2) in order to separate themselves even further: "They divided into many lovely Daughters to be counterparts / To those they Wove: for when they Wove a Male, they divided / Into a Female to the Woven Male" (67:8-10). The resulting mutability of identity provides one explanation for the fact that the characters in *Jerusalem* sometimes seem as confusing as those of a Russian novel. *Jerusalem* becomes somewhat less difficult to follow when readers realize that, though the numbers and names may change, inherent characteristics remain constant: the jealous search for vengeance of Vala persists into the Daughters of Albion and their progeny, whatever their number.

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[92] Harper provides a fascinating analysis of the significance behind Blake's enumeration of the counties and countries of the British Empire

> beginning with the four continents (Asia, Africa, America, and Europe) representing the four directions and the four Zoas, he next charted the four kingdoms of the British Isles (Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland), the four kingdoms of Ireland (Munster, Ulster, 'Connaut,' and Leinster), and finally the four cities ("Verulam," London, York and Edinburgh). He envisioned numerological significance in the political divisions of Great Britain (forty counties of England, twelve counties of Wales, thirty-six counties of Scotland, and thirty-two counties of Ireland), breaking them up into groups and assigning them to the Sons of Israel. (245)

Most important for the current analysis is Blake's allegorical reinscription of gender roles by designating Los as an iron worker, and especially Vala as a weaver. As Bloom notes in *The Visionary Company*: "[w]hen Blake was eight years old, the steam engine was perfected, and what were to be the images of prophetic labour in Blake's poetry, the hammer and the forge [and the loom], had their antagonist images prepared from them in the furnaces and mills of another England" (xiv-xv). *Jerusalem* extends the roles of weaver and iron worker beyond specific characters when it states, for example, "Scotland pours out his Sons to labour at the Furnaces; / Wales gives his Daughters to the Looms" (16:22-23). In their Index to *The Prophetic Writings of William Blake* (1964), D.J. Sloss and J.P.R. Wallis associate the Furnace with Los as the means by which he uses spiritual power to master the "Spectre" (197), while they accord the loom a separate entry since "[t]he content of the symbolic labour of weaving varies according to the agent to whom it is attributed: there are Looms of Death and Looms of Love" (252). However, when the two symbols are conjoined as in the repeated assertion that "The Male is a Furnace of beryll; the Female is a golden Loom" (*Jerusalem* 5: 34, 90: 27), Sloss and Wallis admit that "[i]t has not been found possible to explain these terms" (5:34n). Fortunately, Ashton provides an insight into Blake's association of metallurgy and weaving when he notes that industrialization became revolutionary because of "the way in which discoveries in different fields were linked together. Sometimes it was a simple case of imitation, as when the principle of attenuating material by passing it through rollers was transferred from the iron to the textile industry" (T.S. Ashton 72). Blake wrote out of the social world which surrounded him: one technological change which had huge social ramifications during his lifetime was the development of extrusion technologies, applied first to metallurgy before being transferred to textiles.

The sequence of introduction of extrusion technologies accords primacy to the male "furnace of Beryll" and subsequency to the female "golden Loom." This reinscribes the social hierarchy already in place when Homer positioned Penelope's incremental textile work between Odysseus's monumental unstringing and stringing of his bow, a gendered hierarchy Cixous fathoms in her statement that " woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sound" (257). With the transfer of iron industry technology to textile production, this feminized industry loses its specific technology, in accordance with Cixous's observation. *Jerusalem* subscribes to the classic social model wherein things female are always subsequent and subject to things masculine.

The difference between traditional and industrial methods of production in almost any industry flourishing during the early nineteenth century — metal, textile, power, *etc.* — lies in the application of complex systems of wheels or rollers. Blake exploits this technological development in *Jerusalem*'s imagery:

> And all the Arts of Life they chang'd into the Arts of Death in Albion.
> The hour-glass contemn'd because its simple workmanship
> Was like the workmanship of the plowman & the water wheel
> That raises water into cisterns broken & burn'd with fire,
> Because its workmanship was like the workmanship of the shepherd:
> And in their stead intricate wheels invented, wheel without wheel
> To perplex youth in their outgoings, & to bind to labours in Albion
> Of day & night the myriads of eternity that they may grind
> And polish brass & iron hour after hour... (65:16-24)

The "flip-side" of Blake's advocacy for a simpler, hands-on way of life is contempt for industry's complexities. The rollers of extrusion technology are therefore revealed as a source for the recurrent appearance of destructive "wheels without wheels" in *Jerusalem*. For example, one passage early in the first chapter describes how, " as his

[Los's] Emanation divided, his Spectre also divided / In terror of those starry wheels" (6: 3-4). If the "starry wheels" referred solely to the night sky, as is both poetically and ptolemaically conventional,[93] the Spectre's fear would be inordinate. However, adding the idea of extrusion rollers to the meaning of "starry wheels" justifies the spectre's terror. Using rollers to conceptualize division, or separation — whereby emanation, spectre and shadow are divided from their original — transforms the process into a painful extrusion of four times as much person from one individual, just as extrusion through rollers increased the amount of thread that could be made from a batch of fibre. Thus extrusion through rollers provides a model for the process of separation in Jerusalem.

The industrial production of cloth in cruel mills provides a vehicle for one of Blake's favourite complaints — the regimentation of thought and unleavened reason promoted by universities. Throughout *Jerusalem*, Blake's insistently invokes Locke, the skeptical author of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* which rigorously reasons that human knowledge is limited to that which we can empirically perceive:

> I turn my eyes to the Schools & Universities of Europe,
> And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages dire,
> Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
> In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation: cruel Works
> Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic
> Moving by compulsion each other; not as those in Eden, which
> Wheel within Wheel in freedom revolve in harmony & peace.
> (15:11-20, see also 15:12, 34:40, 54:17, 66:14, 70:15)

Bacon, Newton, Rousseau and Voltaire also receive harsh treatment by Blake: in "True, Right, and Good: Blake's Arguments for Vision in *Jerusalem*" (1993), Alice den Otter suggests that they are derided because they establish "a code of perfection

[93] In the ptolemaic model of the universe, ascendant before Galileo's 1610 revelation that the earth travelled around the sun, the earth occupies the centre of the universe, around which celestial bodies circle in metaphoric "starry wheels."

that is impossible for humans to maintain" (87). Certainly, the congruency between Locke's stringent analytical method and the fettering implied by his name results in its use as the end word for passages deriding the unimaginative application of empirical reason. Scholars suffer imaginative Locke-jaw, we learn to march in Locke-step.

In the passage cited above, the narrator differentiates between "wheels without wheels" and "wheels within wheels." The latter are part of a mutually beneficial community. "Wheels without wheels" are tyrannic mavericks outside of system and therefore lacking regard for coherency and belonging. Worse than being uncontained and unconstrained, "wheels without wheels" may not be wheels at all: the word "without" implies that though their form may be that of a wheel, their function is not wheelish. They are non-wheel wheels. Just as there are "Looms of Death and Looms of Love," so too is it possible that the "wheels within wheels" of original thought provide an alternative to the crushing automatism fostered by those big "wheels without wheels," institutes of higher education.

The pressure applied by rollers on the material they extrude has no historical parallel: industrialization stretches a material's limits in a virtually torturous manner when compared with the care for materials necessitated by traditional methods. Blake, a consummate craftsman of printing techniques, perceived cruelty in industry not just in terms of the treatment of workers but also in disrespect towards materials. The attenuating pressure of extrusion rollers on metal or fibre is analogous to the strain exerted by these new technologies on the social fabric of Britain. This phenomenon translates into allegory through the depiction of characters from *Jerusalem*, sometimes as oppressed craftspeople, at other times as oppressed crafts material. Los is more than the straw boss whose "tears fall / Incessant before the

Furnaces" (5: 66-67), forced by circumstances and his sense of honour to compell others into "obeying his frowns" (9: 33). He is also progenitor of the fibres which his emanation Enitharmon weaves in her brief rebellion against his authority. When Los describes how his "wild fibres shoot into veins / Of blood thro' all my nervous limbs: soon overgrown in roots / I shall be closèd from thy sight" (87: 5-7), and tells Enitharmon how to weave his fibres into their children, she responds "I will seize thy Fibres & weave /Them not as thou wilt but as I will" (87: 3-4), refusing his "Fibres of dominion" (88: 13). This personification of materials ameliorates distinctions between the social folds of *Jerusalem*: Los's incarnations as worker, boss and material facilitate his allegoric depiction as individual, family patriarch, and geo-political body.

By allowing each character attributes of material, producer and product, Blake's text abrogates simple cause-and-effect narrative development: instead of a story line, readers encounter a story net. In his 1982 article "A Tour of *Jerusalem*," James Bogan suggests that

> [r]eading *Jerusalem* can be a bewildering undertaking, because Blake has conveyed his own experience of "Past, Present, & Future existing all at once" (15). That information — "all at once" — bursts the conventional epic modes of story. *Jerusalem* cannot be read as an adventure, like *The Odyssey*, for example. The reader finds himself overwhelmed at first, and necessarily so. (350)

Bogan emphasizes the text's non-linearity in terms of the condensation of orderly time. My analysis, interested as it is in textile technology, reaches a similar appreciation of non-linearity by emphasizing the intertwined complexity of character, which at any given time can be described as material, process or product. This is not to deny the existence of any narrative, however. *Jerusalem* prophesies destruction of Britain's social fabric due to multiple, incremental destructive choices made by

characters like regretful Albion, jealous Vala, and even mild (ineffectual) Jerusalem, choices outnumbering the few constructive decisions of characters like the loyal Los. The intersection of complex subject positions, the multiple textual event/choices, and the tendency of characters to separate into many while retaining their essential natures, ensures a narrative density which defies linear exegesis.

Despite the complexity of *Jerusalem*'s narrative, the stimulus behind all textual events is isolable — it is the exponential disintegration of separation, a concept inspired by industrial extrusion, troped with wheel imagery, and productive of attenuated characters. When a character splits, the resulting shadow, spectre or emanation will also split, instigating a distinctly non-linear proliferation of characters who interact with each other in chaotic fecundity, as opposed to a more typical narrative progression of either/or possibilities. In *William Blake: His Life*, James King analyzes Blake's reluctance to depict dissent reduced to such binaries:

> Blake had become certain that the ills of earthly existence were compounded by the fact that, in an extremely Manichean way, reason had become associated with moral goodness, and, in the process, passion — and all the energy associated with it — was regarded as evil. (83)

Other critics take James King's analysis one step further by suggesting that the intent of *Jerusalem* lies in motivating readers to find the will to hinder, halt, and eventually transform the tendency of Manichean dissent to lead to schism. Bogan suggests "[t]he reconciliation of ... polarities is the urge underlying the course of the poem" (356). Similarly, den Otter states that "mutual existence — incorporating, rather than quelling opposition — forms the basis of the inspired cause — the vision of imaginative forgiveness and love — which Blake seeks to promote" (80). The industrial technology of extrusion introduced during Blake's lifetime existed to split fibres into finer and finer threads, a process of disintegration described in

overwhelmingly negative terms in *Jerusalem*. When these threads are woven together into one fabric they provide a model for the unity-in-difference that critics like den Otter isolate as the point of Blake's last large prophetic book.

In his 1996 article "Babylon Revisited, or the Story of Luvah and Vala," Jean Hagstrum suggests that separation was not meant to be taken literally:

> [t]he separation of Luvah and Vala need not mean anything so outlandish as that we were once literally androgynous and that in falling we became men and women. It means, more simply and relevantly, that passion is separated from tenderness, desire from affection, a disaster not unlike the one Freud described in 'Degradation in Erotic Life.' The effect of separation is to leave tenderness a victim and passion a raw aggressor, both in the female and the male. (38-39)

Hagstrum relates the process of separation to Freud's notion that "[t]o ensure a fully normal attitude in love, two currents of feeling have to unite — we may describe them as the tender, affectionate feelings and the sensual feelings" (Freud, "Contributions to the Psychology of Love" 204). According to this argument, in *Jerusalem* normal love cleaves into a binary which continues to split in a fractal progression from original to fourfold separation, to the exponential creation of daughters and sons of Albion. However, there are problems with Hagstrum's reading. First, it implies that Blake advocates the very abstraction which the text of *Jerusalem* holds to be one source of cultural destruction:

> ... an Abstract, which is a Negation
> Not only of the Substance from which it is derived,
> A murderer of its own Body, but also a murderer
> Of every Divine Member: it is the Reasoning Power,
> An Abstract objecting power that Negatives every thing. (10:10-14)

Second, the illustration to plate 35 shows an emanation emerging from her original's chest (probably Enitharmon from Los): the plate does not depict a misunderstanding

between individuals, but the concrete separation of one being into two. This evidence suggests that separation in *Jerusalem* is not meant to be interpreted metaphorically, despite Hagstrum's opinion. As was his wont, Blake used a phenomenon increasingly common in the society within which he passed his life — industrial extrusion processes — as the model for the literal separation of his mythographic characters, which in turn models both the growing attenuation of human resources, and the division that British empire, island, and families underwent, especially during the first years of the nineteenth century while *Jerusalem* was written. Separation is extrusion applied to threads of social fabric.

The personification of a technology to describe the human condition raises the question of the exact nature of the "Human Form Divine," lamented in the poem introducing chapter two of *Jerusalem*:

> He [Satan] wither'd up the Human Form
> By laws of sacrifice for sin,
> Till it became a Mortal Worm,
> But O! translucent all within.
> The Divine Vision still was seen,
> Still was the Human Form Divine;
> Weeping in weak & mortal clay,
> O Jesus, still the Form was thine!
> And thine the Human Face, & thine
> The Human Hands & Feet & Breath,
> Entering thro' the Gates of Birth,
> And passing thro' the Gates of Death. (27:53-64).

While the "Human Form Divine" is held to be the pinnacle conformation for a whole (that is to say, unseparated) man, the shape of that form is never specified, because it cannot be perceived in the fallen world which is all our senses allow us. Instead, what we perceive only clothes or veils the translucent essence of immortal humanity (a position similar to that of Percy Bysshe Shelley in his sonnet "Lift not the painted veil," examined in the previous chapter). James King suggests that Blake encountered

the idea that "the appearance of ordinary objects was a veil behind which their true essences were concealed" in the Swedish mystic Swedenborg's doctrine (58): when he broke with Swedenborg, Blake took that aspect of the faith with him. Consequently, each separated "Human form / You call Divine" (*Jerusalem* 33:5-6) is clothed in a body:

> The Feminine separates from the Masculine & both from Man,
> Ceasing to be His Emanations, Life to Themselves assuming:
> And while they circumscribe his Brain, & while they circumscribe
> His Heart, & while they circumscribe his Loins, a Veil & net
> Of Veins of red Blood grows around them like a scarlet robe. (90:1-5)

The body of a separated being has the same relation to its divinity as a woven veil has to the body it covers, hence the adoption of weaving imagery to describe the creation of physical bodies. Just as Hannah More's weavers in "The Two Weavers" create their carpets, mistakes and all, as best they can, so Albion's actions cause mortal bodies to be produced as perfectly as possible in an imperfect world.

The text of *Jerusalem* warns readers about the profound effect the machinery of the clothing-over-divinity metaphor has in determining how we understand our spirituality. Blake's visionary figures are misled by the weaving processes into accepting a debased conception of their essential natures:

> Let Cambel and her Sisters sit within the Mundane Shell,
> Forming the fluctuating Globe according to their will.
> According as they weave the little embryon nerves & veins,
> The Eye, the little Nostrils & the delicate Tongue & Ears
> Of labyrinthine intricacy, so shall they fold the World;
> That whatever is seen upon the Mundane Shell, the same
> Be seen upon the Fluctuating Earth woven by the Sisters. (83: 35-39)

In *Jerusalem*, mortal existence profanes our divine forms, which are further attenuated by separation.

According to Bogan, "[t]he shape that inhabits *almost every picture* in all of Blake's works is the 'Human Form Divine'" (352, emphasis in original): the veils of Vala "obscure the human form and are therefore suspect" (352). Bogan's explanation is useful as far as it goes, but it glosses over an important aspect of Blakean awareness: the classical human bodies filling his illustrations are not divine in themselves, but merely as close to divinity as his separated eye can perceive and his mortal hand can render. In Blakean reality, artifacts of imagination — texts and/or drawings — are always necessarily fallen, no matter how glorified the ideas behind their production. As Nelson Hilton points out in "Blake in the Chains of Being" (1996), in order to transform this fallen world of painful separations and imprisonments, we must strive to understand a textual world without them, no matter how unachievable that world:

> Blake's treatment of chains directs itself toward an apocalyptic uncovering of language, an unchaining of thought and association: phonetic, semantic, and historical associations are stressed past their breaking points (the unchaining text bursts its semes). From being what we behold — a link in the chain of being or discourse — we must become what we now behold: polysemous consciousness (fourfold perhaps) creating and created in, going forth and returning to language. (88)

In the perceptual reality of *Jerusalem*, chains and fetters are at the opposite end of separation on one destructive spectrum. Part of the process of unfettering our imaginations entails accepting that there are vast discrepancies between perception and imagination, and accepting both as equally valid. For example, Bogan draws our attention to the disparity between the scale of Blake's myth, and the actual size of *Jerusalem:* "[t]he illustrations measure six by nine inches — the size of the book — tiny for the monumental figures contained" (349). Perhaps their ostensible hugeness is a result of the poem's ambitious scope: in *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*

(1986), Stuart Curran interprets *Jerusalem* as no less than "truly *the* British national epic — of this period, perhaps of all periods — a poem that mythologizes Britain's past, but so as to demand renewal and transformation, to create its future" (178, emphasis in original). However, statements like "For every-one of the Four Regions of Human Majesty, / There is an Outside spread Without & an Outside spread Within" (*Jerusalem* 18:1-2, see also 5:16-19) encourage readers to recognize that physical size is an aspect of Vala's perfidious veil. As much as the ambitious scope of *Jerusalem*, individual readers's imaginations lend Albion his giant stature.

The text of *Jerusalem* carefully nurtures an imaginative approach to scale in both narrative and materiality: as Paul Yoder notes in "Self Similarity in Blake's *Jerusalem*" (2000), "[t]he continuity across scale of signification reaching from the serifs [of the letter "g"] to the entirety of the book and beyond is the same continuity as that between a grain of sand and the world it both contains and is contained by" (3). There is a sense of progression to most aspects of *Jerusalem* that implies an infinity of textual and visual levels, limited only by readers' conceptual stamina. When the narrator states that Vala stands "upon the mountains / Howling in pain, ... above the head of Los" (5:48-50), or that " the Spectre stood over Los / Howling in pain, a black'ning Shadow, black'ning dark & opake" (6:4-5), or that "panting like a frighted wolf and howling / He [the shadow] stood over the Immortal [Los] in the solitude and darkness" (7:1-2), the reader visualizes the figures standing over others as somehow gigantically out of scale, visionary forms which loom larger than life. This, despite Blake's omission of "loom" in the sense of a "vague and often magnified or threatening shape" (OED), a meaning which originated in the sixteenth century as a nautical term for "the glow of light visible over the horizon before the source of the light can be seen" (Dean King 275; see Appendix 10 for the

appearances of "loom" in *Jerusalem*). Despite Blake's virtuosic use of words and the plethora of characters which loom darkly or starkly over the imaginative picture field, in *Jerusalem* "loom" is limited to the noun referring to a weaving machine, further evidence that Blake considered the creative potential of weaving utterly thwarted in an industrial age. According to *Jerusalem*, where textuality is an aspect of transformative male imagination, textiles are an aspect of fallen, female automatism.

Just as characters' identities commingle throughout *Jerusalem* — sometimes solidified into one avatar, sometimes attenuated among a host — so conceptual identities mutate between the thing produced, the process by which it is produced, and the tool with which it is produced: the loom, weaving, and tabernacle or veil are all symbols for the female. Consequently, Jean Hagstrum's observations on the meaning of the female tabernacle provide a useful explanation of one aspect of the female loom:

> [b]oth the sex act and the religious rite are done in secret, dark, covert places, incensed and perfumed; and the conjugal bed, with its hangings, counterpanes, and curtains, is like the altar, with its rich cloths, its protecting covers, and its vestmented priests. The tabernacle, the place of the sacred elements, is one of Blake's images for the enclosing of the male organ by the female. ("Babylon Revisited" 46)

There is certainly evidence in the text to support such an interpretation: for example, " the Female lets down her beautiful Tabernacle, / Which the Male enters, magnificent, between her Cherubim, / And becomes One with her, mingling, condensing in Self-love" (30:34-36). Harold Bloom notes in *The Visionary Company* (1971),

> [t]he startling association between the high priest entering the innermost recess of the temple and the act of fallen heterosexuality accounts for the ambiguity of the symbol of the veil in Blake. It is the golden net of the harlot

> Vala, the ultimate Belle Dame of Blake's system. But it is also the little curtain of flesh on the bed of our infinite desire. (27)

Equating the deepest mystery of religion with female genitalia not only profanes the tabernacle of the "natural religion" which Blake spurned as stifling imagination: it also implies a deleterious mystification of female sexuality.

With mystery comes anxiety and repression, which goes a long way toward explaining *Jerusalem*'s insistence on female submission to the male. This insistence leads feminist scholars like Brenda S. Webster to suggest in her 1996 article "Blake, Women and Sexuality":

> [t]he only positive images of women are totally weak females sequestered in a separate realm called Beulah. Finally, in his late Christian prophecies, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, he suggests that the female should cease even to exist independently and become reabsorbed into the body of man where she belongs. (194)

The sequestration of weak females in Beulah — a realm between perceptual reality and eternal paradise (Sloss and Wallis, *Index* 135) — does a narrative 'end-run' around the problematic issue of female will. In her 1978 article "Blake and Iconography: Analogues of Urizen and Vala," Judith Wardle observes that "[t]he concept of Female Will first appeared during Blake's writing in his Notebook of poems for *Songs of Experience*. In these some women are jealous and prudish, and some, because of these attitudes, impose crippling restrictions upon the lives of children" (155). In *Jerusalem* "bad women" are those with independent wills, who act in the public sphere, and who are motivated by jealousy, unlike "good women" who, like Penelope and Jerusalem, live retired lives and, as Webster observes, have "no independent existence except as gratifier" of "male genius" (204). In *Jerusalem*, female will and female sexuality are sources of profound anxiety, and good women

support the dominant culture by acquiescing to segregation — be it behind sacred curtains or in separate "folds" of reality — for the preservation of the social *status quo*.

Vala is an archetypal "bad woman," imposing her will on men through sexual manipulation. Hagstrum suggests: "If men reason from the loins, they do so because of the dazzling beauty of the fallen Vala, because of the dominance of what Blake feared as an anti-human blasphemy, the dominance of the Female Will, made possible by sexual power. Vala is the agent provocateur of sex in the head" ("Babylon Revisited" 44-45). Consequently, as Bogan notes, Vala's veils, "obscure the human form and are therefore suspect" (352), or, in Wardle's words, "for Blake veils are delusive and restrictive" (158). But, as we have already seen, what we perceive as bodies are delusive veils when corrupted by female ascendency, despite their potential to be "the human form divine."

The multiple nature of the trope — as veil, loom, and process of weaving or spinning — accords this emblem of womanhood untraditionally active as well as passive modes: Vala does not just *have* a veil, she also *weaves* it; instead of quiescently guarding, she dynamically creates her net.[94] Wardle and Webster's appreciation of Blake's prophecy contravenes Judith Lee's earlier stance on the

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[94] Vala's veil and net are the same thing: any textile woven loosely enough to be a veil will, on magnification, look like a net. Such conceptual changes of focus cannot have been difficult for a poet who famously saw "the world in a grain of sand."

However, where "net" has been chosen over "veil," there is an implication of snaring. For example, Los mourns that "the soft smile of friendship & the open dawn of benevolence / Become a net & a trap" (43: 25-26). Furthermore, nets are used to draw in souls, evoking a debased version of Christ as the fisher of men:

> Wherefore then do you realize these nets of beauty & delusion
> In open day to draw the souls of the Dead into the light,
> Till Albion is shut out from every Nation under heaven,
> Encompass'd by the frozen Net and by the rooted Tree! (79:78-80, 80:1)

subject: in her 1983 article "Ways of their Own: The Emanations of Blake's *Vala, or the Four Zoas*" Lee suggests that "[f]undamentally, the Blakean myth assumes that women are not mere witnesses but active participants in the cosmic revolution" (150). Female subjection would be meaningless without the potential for rebellion against the patriarchal *status quo*. Consequently when Jerusalem's shadow Vala/Babylon splits from her original, she assumes all of the rebellious potential, rendering herself inappropriately dominant and leaving Jerusalem ineffectual in her extreme mildness.

The interaction between Albion, his emanation Jerusalem, and her shadow Vala demonstrates the female agency Lee anticipates. Jerusalem remonstrates with Vala how

> Albion beheld thy beauty,
> Beautiful thro' our Love's comeliness, beautiful thro' pity.
> Thy Veil shone with thy brightness in the eyes of Albion,
> Because it inclose'd pity & love, because we lov'd one-another.
> Albion lov'd thee: he rent thy Veil: he embrac'd thee: he lov'd thee.
> (20:32-36)

On the most mundane level, Albion's rending of Vala's veil is a rape, in which veil is Vala's hymen, analogous to the canopy of leaves which Wordsworth's protagonist destroys in "Nutting." Albion's subsequent remorse, and inclination to blame his victim, upholds the rending/rape interpretation:

> All is Eternal Death unless you can weave a chaste
> Body over an unchaste Mind! Vala! O that thou wert pure,
> That the deep wound of Sin might be clos'd up with the Needle
> And with the Loom... (21:11-14)

In a mental complexity typical of Blake, Albion's paroxysms of shame seem both to blame and absolve Vala — the shadow of his soul-mate — for being inherently irresistible to him, and for being impure because of his action. Jerusalem, on the other

hand, characterizes Vala's rape as a seduction of Albion: "Albion rent thy beautiful net of gold and silver twine — / Thou hadst woven it with art: thou hadst caught me in the bands / Of love: thou refusedst to let me go" (20:30-32).[95] All three characters are splits from Albion, which both explains the term "self love" used in reference to Albion's attraction to Vala (30:36), and suggests that divided beings are fatally susceptible to the desire for passionate reunion.

Vala's veil stands for more than hymen, as Albion's anguished question of Jerusalem demonstrates: "Hast thou again knitted the Veil of Vala which I for thee / Pitying rent in ancient times? I see it whole and more / Perfect and shining with beauty!" (23:5-7). Vala renews her veil not with forgiveness for Albion's actions, but with desire for revenge: it therefore becomes the "Veil of Moral Virtue, woven for Cruel Laws" (23:22), "for a Law, a Terror & a Curse!" (23:32). In the world of *Jerusalem*, the ultimate sin is not Albion's rape of Vala, since her identification with Albion is so attractive to him that he couldn't help helping himself to himself. No, the sin lies in Vala's refusal to forgive that rape. Consequently, in the balance of the narrative, veils, nets, looms, and weaving — splits of Vala's veil — become forces of jealous destruction, employed for the sake of punishment rather than forgiveness.

In chapter four's scene of strife between Los and his rebellious emanation Enitharmon, her weaving takes on a meaning similar to the dire veil of Vala: "[a] triple Female Tabernacle for Moral Law I weave / That he who loves Jesus may

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[95] Further to the previous footnote on nets, in rending of Vala's net, Albion achieves exactly that which Agamemenon (like Odysseus, a hero of the Trojan war) fails to do. Upon his return home, his wife Clytemnestra takes him into a back room, where "[r]ound him, like as to catch a haul of fish, I cast a net impassable — a fatal wealth of robe — so that he should neither escape nor ward off doom. Twice I smote him" (Aeschylus 123). The nets of both Vala and Clytemnestra are encumbrances which masquerade as boons, though that of Vala is more symbolically sexual, and of Clytemnestra more symbolic of the "ever ready" domestic "snare" (Moore 271).

loathe terrified Female love, / Till God himself become a Male subservient to the Female" (88:19-22). With this statement, Enitharmon aligns punitive law with a misguided, destructive Christianity based on the Holy Trinity. According to George Mills Harper in "The Divine Tetrad in Blake's *Jerusalem*" (1969), "Blake was a metaphysical Unitarian and strongly opposed to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and, by extension perhaps, to threeness in general" (239-40), which he associated with females and looms, in contrast with masculine tetrads and furnaces (242). When strong-willed women are motivated by jealousy, they dare to weave a social fabric unchecked by male genius, creating religious and civil laws so misguided that war results. William Blake would have had no patience with Charlotte Smith or Hannah More: in the textual universe of his last great prophecy, only disaster can result from any female attempt to "string the bow of Odysseus."

Because looms are inherently feminine, generative, vegetative, and either passive or evil, and because Vala weaves revenge rather than forgiveness, examples of "Looms of Death" far outnumber "Looms of Love" in *Jerusalem*. Jerusalem's plaintive question "Why should Punishment Weave the Veil with Iron Wheels of War. / When Forgiveness might Weave with Wings of Cherubim?" (22:33-35) is one of the few places where the potential for good weaving appears. But after over ninety plates worth of disasters instigated by Vala's unwillingness to forgive her rapist, the best that a debased, industrialized textile production can achieve is Enitharmon's recognition of her error in defying Los, and her capitulation to the traditional limits of her female and fictive being in the face of Albion's return:

> The Poet's Song draws to its period & Enitharmon is no more.
> For if he be that Albion I can never weave him in my Looms;
> But when he touches the first fibrous thread, like filmy dew
> My Looms will be no more & I anihilate vanish for ever. (92:6-11)

For Enitharmon, the revival of Albion that heralds the end of the poem means not only the end of her weaving but her utter annihilation as well, a situation parallel to that of Penelope and Helen in Homer's epics according to Joplin: "the woman's weaving serves as sign for the male poet's prestigious activity of spinning his yarns, of weaving the text of the Trojan War. For their weaving to end, Homer's text/song must end" (47). In all three cases the female textile is contained within the male-penned text: when text ends, the contained textiles end as well. Having no tangible existence outside of readers' imaginations, these textual textiles and their makers are, as Enitharmon bemoans, annihilated.

Enitharmon's despair is balanced by the triumphal return of Albion, whose first act on returning to life is very like that of Odysseus on returning to his hall in Ithaca: "He takes his Bow, then chooses out his arrows of flaming gold" (*Jerusalem* 95:13). The second narration of Albion's archery indicates that he has returned united and fourfold:

> Then Albion stretch'd his hand into Infinitude,
> And took his Bow. Fourfold the Vision: for bright beaming Urizen
> Lay'd his hand on the South & took a breathing Bow of carvèd Gold;
> Luvah his hand stretch'd to the East & bore a Silver Bow bright shining;
> Tharmas Westward a Bow of Brass pure flaming, richly wrought;
> Urthona Northward in thick storms a Bow of iron, terrible thundering.
> And the Bow is Male & Female, & the Quiver of the Arrows of Love
> Are the Children of his Bow; a Bow of Mercy & Loving kindness, laying
> Open the hidden Heart in Wars of mutual Benevolence, Wars of Love.
> And the Hand of Man grasps firm between the Male & Female Loves:
> And he Clothèd himself in Bow & Arrows in awful state, Fourfold
>
> (97: 6-16)

On page 945 of his "Commentary" to Erdman's *Works of William Blake*, Harold Bloom associates Albion's bow with the famous opening stanzas of *Milton*, which reads:

And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire! (*Milton*, 1:7-12)

It is tempting to read this passage sexually, interpreting the golden bow as an evolution of the feminine golden loom/vagina and the Arrows and spear as phallic symbols. To do so is to underread grossly. The text of *Jerusalem* makes clear that "the Bow is Male & Female": furthermore it is fourfold — not just gold, but silver, brass and iron as well. Bloom proposes that the bow, both in *Jerusalem* and *Milton* represents not sexuality but "a fully realized poetic art" ("Commentary" 945). In his letter to Thomas Butts on November 22 1802, Blake explains fourfold vision as encompassing sexuality but not limited to it: the "supreme delight" (Blake, *Works* 722) of fourfold existence revels in the arrows of creative desire, which are not merely sexual/sensual but spiritual and intellectual as well, including those pinnacles of artistic expression, the poetic and visual arts. Once you understand this, you — as either individual or culture — can get into your "Chariot of fire" and really go somewhere. Albion's resurrection is thus metaphorical of Klaus Krippendorff's thesis that the solution to a paradox rests in re-visioning the problems which look paradoxical and therefore "might be a stimulus, if not the stimulus, for human cognitive growth and for social-organizational development" (46). Consequently, achieving creative redemption is possible in the most fallen circumstances, even where "dark Satanic mills" of industry or education abound.

Fourfold, reunited with emanation, spectre and shadow, Albion no longer toys with furnace or loom, emblems of a divided, fallen sexuality, and destructive strife. Instead he takes up the bow, an image Homer accords to the dominant masculine

sphere.[96] The statement that the bow promotes instructive, creative dissension — "Wars of mutual Benevolence, Wars of Love" (97:14) — indicates that Albion, avatar of Britain, has achieved a fourfold consciousness of eternal paradise within the fallen perceptual world.

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In the almost two hundred years since Blake began *Jerusalem*, progress has been made in understanding it: characterized in 1811 by Crabb Robinson as "a perfectly mad poem" (338), *Jerusalem* now merits Stuart Curran's 1986 descriptor of "a fearsomely difficult poem" (178). The difficulty results from numerous sources, not the least of which is the tendency of critical readers to accord insufficient importance to the fact that Blake lived through and with the social impact of the industrial revolution's technical developments, which then show up in his complex system of textual tropes. For example, the use of rollers in extrusion technology transferred from metallurgy to weaving illuminates Blake's diabolical descriptions of complex wheels and the torturous attenuation of the separation process, as well as upholding a classically conservative gender hierarchy. Homer's weavers — Penelope and Helen — provide archetypes for those of Blake — Jerusalem and Vala — all of whom are good weavers, though only two are good women. Another source of difficulty lies in the shifting identities of characters and the shifting significances of tropes in *Jerusalem*. Some alliances remain constant nonetheless, specifically the relationship between females, things textile, and trinities, all of which are subordinate

[96] Blake may well have questioned that attribution simply for its source, since in his essay "On Homer's Poetry" he wrote "The Classics! it is the Classics, & not Goths nor Monks, that Desolate Europe with Wars" (qtd. in Sloss and Wallis 1.640). On the other hand, *Jerusalem* advocates the domination of femaleness within the complete, divine "man," so that the masculine aggression of archery would not preclude its use as the an icon for wholeness.

(when not in destructive opposition) to males, furnaces and tetrads. Just as a weaver's shuttle doubles back to move forward, so Blake's narrative winds around tropes, events, and characters in an apparently non-linear fashion. Authorial intent provides yet another source of adversity in reading *Jerusalem.* Where a poet like Hannah More depicts good and bad weavers in order to discourage mental initiative — an educational strategy that led Blake to revile universities as promoting the kind of limited education that More advocated — *Jerusalem* seeks to encourage imagination. However, *Jerusalem's* encouragement remains within a very conservative gender and technological hierarchy, championing women's subordination to men, and the abandonment of industrial technologies in favour of the traditional techniques incrementally cast aside throughout Blake's lifetime. All of these complicating factors ensure that *Jerusalem* is very like Dick's carpet in that, without painstaking reading,

> No plan, no pattern, can we trace,
> All wants proportion, truth and grace;
> The motley mixture we deride,
> Nor see the beauteous upper side.
>
> (More, "Two Weavers" 45-48)

Conclusion
VOICING A SIGNIFICANT SILENCE

I am everything that has been, that is, and that ever shall be:
no human mortal has discovered me behind my veil.
Inscription on the temple of Isis
at Sais; qtd. in Bull 256

No one pretends to know everything important going on in literary circles now, let alone what mattered in the infinite "nows" of the past. Why, then, do intelligent, highly-lauded thinkers presume that the literary history they espouse encompasses every important textual trope that was? Because such presumptions necessarily structure our concepts of history: unable to comprehend Isis in her totality, we are reduced to telling ourselves stories about why particular aspects of her are important. Even the venerable Sir James George Frazer admits

> [t]he original meaning of the goddess Isis is still more difficult to determine than that of her brother and husband Osiris. Her attributes and epithets were so numerous that in the hieroglyphics she is called "the many-named," "the thousand-named," and in Greek inscriptions "the myriad-named." (382)

Following the typical critical process, Frazer goes on to renumerate aspects of Isis's story that best fit with the concept of human spirituality he develops in *The Golden*

Bough (382-84). On the whole, the habit of selecting for utility and discarding all else is not a terrible system, just hidebound: such analytical conventions tend to reify their tenets at the expense of other aspects of their subjects, until it requires social or critical upheaval to upset the conventional apple cart.

For example, the advent of Deconstruction, Feminism and New Historicism dealt a triple blow to literary criticism in the 1970s. By that point, the Romantic period had come to be generally conceptualized as a pattern of monolithic pedestals — one each for Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, PB Shelley and Keats — made up of critically accepted traditions such as allusions to classical and contemporary literature, interesting use of colloquial language, reification of Nature and Woman, *etcetera*. However, such a pedagogically convenient paradigm depends upon the muting of whatever exists between the pedestals.

Since the 1970s literary criticism has opened up in both methodology and subject matter, with the result that studies such as this thesis have discovered "new" patterns within existing texts. Specifically, chapter one demonstrates how the tenets of Chaos Theory allow for criticism that unearths patterns in the complexities of the quotidian, rather than in the isolation demanded by precepts of a reified canon. Chapter two explores the constructed mythology behind the putatively "innate" alignment of women and textile production (opposed to men and textual production) by comparing complementary essays by Charles and Mary Lamb. Chapter three explores the work of Felicia Hemans by situating her writing within a web of texts by several other writers, adding the issues of private domesticity *versus* publicity to the binaries of the textile myth. Chapter four builds on the larger myth construction discussed in chapters two and three in order to show both how veil tropes tend to become the focus of attention — thus doubly repressing the thing veiled — and how any text amenable

to analysis as a frame narrative is also open to interpretation using a folding paradigm. Chapter five then demonstrates how Blake's *Jerusalem* welcomes a critical method that looks at both textual and technological changes, especially the evolution of textile production. Finally, this conclusion will disclose a number of the Romantic-era textile tropes in a distilled form in both the myth of Philomel, and in George Eliot's 1859 story "The Lifted Veil." All this results from contravening critical traditions of silence on the subject of textile tropes, despite their ubiquity in both literature and criticism.

• • •

Perhaps the most famous textile-related silence is that of Philomel, Pandion's daughter, kidnapped and raped by her brother-in-law Tereus. When Philomel passionately claims "My self, abandon'd, and devoid of shame, / Thro' the wide world your actions will proclaim" (Ovid, "Philomela" 190), Tereus silences her by cutting out her tongue, and imprisons her to await his pleasure. Though violently muted, Philomel still finds a way to get her story out:

> But all our wants by wit may be supply'd,
> And art makes up, what fortune has deny'd:
> With skill exact a *Phrygian* web she strung,
> Fix'd to a loom that in her chamher [sic] hung,
> Where in-wrought letters, upon white display'd,
> In purple notes, her wretched case betray'd.
> (191, emphasis in original)

Philomel arranges for her weaving to be given to her sister Procne:

> when the cyphers, figur'd in each fold
> Her sister's melancholy story told
> (Strange that she could!) with silence she survey'd
> The tragick piece, and without weeping read:
> In such tumultuous haste her passions sprung,
> They choak'd her voice, and quite disarm'd her tongue. (192)

Thus silence expressed begets itself, briefly. The tale continues on a tragic trajectory: Procne rescues Philomel, and butchers Itys (her son with Tereus). In a perverted family dinner, the sisters cook and serve Itys to Tereus. When Tereus discovers the full extent of their and his crimes, he chases them with murderous intent, at which point, according to Ovid, they all metamorphose into different birds: Philomel a nightingale, Procne a swallow, and Tereus a crow or vulture.

Finally, we have found in Philomel a story that manifests the common etymological root of text and textile — *texere* — and collapses the difference between writing and weaving. Instead of insisting on Lady Needle's dilatoriness in comparison with Captains Sword and Penn (*Athenaeum*, p149: see epigraph to chapter two), this myth accords the craft process the same cultural hegemony enjoyed by writing. As Joplin observed "Philomela's weaving is the new, third term in what Greek culture often presents us as two models of the woman weaver, the false twins: virtuous Penelope... and vicious Helen" (47). The typical degradation of textile production as less expressive than writing or painting does not play any part in Philomel's story. Of course, this is merely one textile-informed classic tale among many, all of which align women with textiles, and it serves to compound tragedy upon tragedy. However, none of those limitations alters the fact that the transformational moment depends upon a textual textile's text, a phenomenon Sophocles called "the voice of the shuttle" (Aristotle 46). The phrase has come to signify any art which transforms pain into powerful communication. Philomel, shut in to a prison, shut up through the mutilation of her tongue, and shut out from her expected social role, speaks with the voice of the shuttle.

Geoffrey Hartman devotes much of his essay "The Voice of the Shuttle: Language from the Point of View of Literature" (1969), to explaining poetics as a function of *tmesis*, "[f]rom the Greek 'to divide'" in which "[t]wo words conventionally joined, are disjoined to accommodate an intruded middle," which has the effect of "interjection, of bursting in," thereby stressing the two end terms which are "crowded away from each other" (344).[97] Philomel surely personifies an "intruded middle," adding unbearable stress between the conventionally joined husband Tereus and wife Procne, a situation which Philomel herself acknowledges, fearing that she is "guilty of a crime that stain'd her sister's bed" (Ovid, "Philomela" 193). As a personification of the aesthetics-enhancing space between two related signifiers, Philomel's unexpected eloquence ("Strange that she could!") provides the sole moment of creative transformation in an otherwise brutal story of rape, imprisonment, mutilation, murder and cannibalism.

In his discussion of the language of poetics, Hartman suggests that the "power of the phrase [voice of the shuttle] lies in its elision of middle terms and overspecification of end terms" ("Voice of the Shuttle" 338), until "[w]e find ourselves in the presence of an antinomy" (338). By invoking antinomian paradox, Hartman raises the spectre of Klaus Krippendorff's "Paradox and Information" which explains that

> [u]nlike contradictions which simply exclude all interpretations, antinomies allow one to select one interpretation; but as soon as one has made this choice, one is forced to abandon it in favour of its complement, and as soon as one has examined the latter one finds one's self back to the former, *ad infinitum* — hence the viciousness of the cycle. (49)

[97] "Voice of the Shuttle" is not itself one of the phrases that Hartman uses to explain *tmesis*: Gerard Manley Hopkins's "Brim, in a flash, full" provides Hartman's very clear example in which the effect of "Brimfull" is both delayed and heightened by the interloping phrase "in a flash" (344).

He had earlier noted "[t]he underlying structure of these vicious cycles is self-reference. The law of excluded middle is a proposition and refers to a proposition. Its truth is embedded in this circular form" (47), which suggests that, when the middle terms of "voice of the shuttle" are dropped out, the remaining words — "voice" and "shuttle" — refer only to each other, a circularity that leads Hartman to suggest that "[t]here is something cross-eyed about the figure and something cross-eyed about every explanatory poetics" (338). Being irremediably cross-eyed myself, I take comfort in paradoxical conundra, since, as Krippendorff persuasively argues, paradox provides an important stimulus for individual and societal growth (Krippendorff 46). The antinomy related to Philomel's shut and open voice indicates that in her tale lies an opportunity for growth, most probably through an increased understanding of textile tropes.

Though Hartman forwards a compelling classical argument, argued with persuasive erudition and elegance, what he presents in his 1969 essay distinctly pre-dates feminist criticism. Even as he celebrates the voice of the shuttle as "archetypal" ("Voice of the Shuttle" 337) of the creative process, he uses language in a way that not only sexualizes that process — "words are erectile" (343) — but also characterizes it specifically as an act of masculine procreation — "the artist, like God, broods on the deep noun and makes it pregnant" (347). Furthermore, Hartman equates both the mild virgin Philomel with that terrifying mythical figure, Fate, and her lost power of speech with her weaving:

> [b]ehind Philomela — the weaver — looms, like an oracular or archetypal shadow, the figure of fate. Fate too spins. On her shuttle she divides and spins the thread of human existence. But also, perhaps, a sound: is not Sophocles's "the voice of the shuttle" a symbol for oracular utterance? Fate alone could

> tell all, and Philomela, when her voice is restored through art, participates for a moment in divinity. (351)

Like Hemans's identification with Minerva, alignment with the Fates lends Philomela uncanniness rather than desperation. These three aspects of Hartman's article — the underlying procreative metaphor; the "fating" of Philomel; and the equation of simple speech with an act of creation whose genesis rests in torture — suggest that his analysis is more preoccupied with reinforcing an obsolete critical paradigm than with continuing the social transformation begun by Philomel's weaving. Instead of listening for voices usually silenced, Hartman appropriates their potential to be heard, a tragic act all too familiar in critical practice.

Joplin pinpoints some of these problems in her 1984 response to Hartman, "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours," before offering a feminist interpretation of both the myth of Philomel and that of Arachne through an understanding of classical women's social role within the private sphere. Joplin points out that Hartman's equation of Philomel and Fate has specific ramifications for victims:

> [h]ow curiously the critic remains unconscious of the implications of his own movement away from Philomela, the virgin raped, mutilated and imprisoned by Tereus, and toward the mythical figure of Fate, the dangerous, mysterious, and enormously powerful "woman." (27)

She then suggests that Freudian psychoanalysis reinforces the mystification of violence, rather than explaining it by "revers[ing] the direction of violence" (51), blaming victims for psychic violence wreaked upon the figures responsible for physical violence. Hartman's use of language combined with his implied acquiescence to the tenets of classic psychoanalysis indicates a critical tendency to derogate women at the time that he published "The Voice of the Shuttle" in 1969.

Furthermore, by universalizing weaving and then masculinizing creativity, Hartman "celebrates Language and not the violated woman's emergence from silence" (Joplin 26). Instead of equating Philomel's trebly "damped" power of speech — unheard because women's speech is generally disregarded, because she is mutilated, and because as rape victim she has been thrust beyond the social pale — with her newly discovered capacity for woven utterance, Joplin recognizes the difference between the efficacious public communication of a transgressed woman, and the powerless private speech of a woman exchanged between the men who control her.[98] Joplin notes that "For Philomela, ordinary private speech is powerless. No matter how many times she says 'No,' Tereus will not listen" (28). According to this argument, the powerful, public voice of the shuttle replacing powerless, private speech is nothing less than the sound of women claiming equality in a culture characterized by "the incomplete plot of male dominance which fails no matter how extreme it becomes" (31). This plot is doomed to fail because of

> the paradoxical nature of domination: authority founded upon the suppression of knowledge and free speech relegates both the silenced people and the unsayable things to the interstices of culture. It is only a matter of time before all that has been driven from the center to the margins takes on a force of its own. (42)

Joplin here exposes her own prejudice: though power tends to retrench itself at the expense of the disempowered, I find it hard to believe in a purposive "plot of male dominance," no matter how eternally delayed its failure. She also seems to consider paradox to be an inevitable ending, where Krippendorff demonstrates that paradoxes

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[98] This paradigm situates both Procne and Philomel as coins passed from their father to Tereus, one traded legally, and the other stolen (Joplin 41), rather than the idea that I extrapolated from Hartman, of Philomel as the intruded middle between Procne and Tereus.

indicate opportunities to grow through changing extant paradigms. Instead of seeking to transcend paradox, an agonism imbues Joplin's arguments. Thus while she opens up problematic aspects of Hartman's text, Joplin reinscribes them from a point of view which has its own problems.

The differing readings of Philomel offered by Hartman and Joplin describe a strand of enquiry engaged by this dissertation from the very beginning. On one hand, Geoffrey Hartman interprets creative women as imitation men, appropriating Philomel's weaving as a universal archetype for the process of creating art from overwhelming adversity (337), but using language that describes creativity as insemination. On the other hand, in accepting that what "feels archetypal for the feminist" in the voice of the shuttle is the "image of the woman artist as weaver" (Joplin 31), feminist critics like Joplin continue to define women by the precepts laid out in an irremediably patriarchal system. Despite Freud's assertion that "perhaps after all [women] did discover one technical process, that of plaiting and weaving" (*New Introductory Lectures* 181) there is nothing innately female about textiles,[99] and yet without the generally accepted assumption that textiles are aligned with women, Charles Lamb's essay "On the Melancholy of Tailors" would not be funny; William Wordsworth would have been less likely the derogate Edith May Southey's needlecase; Mary Shelley's veiled Safie might have been a young man; William Blake's Vala would have required a whole new symbolism, and so on.

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[99] That is, there is nothing innately female about textiles unless you accept the mythological and psychoanalytical narrative associating the hymen with the veil, an argument I consider ultimately spurious, though longstanding. (See, for example, Joplin, who equates the hymen with the walls of a city/state, and then argues "The virgin's hymen must not be ruptured except in some manner that reflects and ensures the health of the existing political hierarchy" [38]). After all, surely the foreskin of a penis is as much a veil as a hymen, and its perforation is at least equally, if not more highly, ritualized and mythologized.

• • •

The patterns created by socio-cultural assumptions — particularly the ways in which they entrench the *status quo* — provide a large part of the thinking underlying George Eliot's 1859 short story "The Lifted Veil," a piece as emblematic of the interrelations between textile tropes, gender roles and the creative writer in post-industrial revolution Britain as William Collins's "Ode on the Poetical Character" was of pre-industrial revolution Britain.[100]

In terms of gender, Jan Wood notes in "Scientific Rationality and Fanciful Fiction: Gendered Discourse in 'The Lifted Veil'" (1996):

> [d]rawing on contemporary medical theories and ideas of masculinity, this bizarre account of unmanly affliction and supernatural perception calls attention to the cultural constructedness of the rational, objective, "masculine" and the irrational, subjective, "feminine" views of the world. (165)

Just as Philomel's weaving collapses the difference between text and textile, so Eliot's 1859 story "The Lifted Veil" explores the constructedness of the split between feminine private, and masculine public spheres, a split which Eliot herself embodied

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[100] In "Power and Knowledge in 'The Lifted Veil'" (1983), Terry Eagleton summarizes "The Lifted Veil" thus:

> Latimer, its protagonist, begins the story by informing us of his impending death, and then reviews his life history as the timid, sensitive son of a domineering banker and a tender mother who died when he was a child. As a young man, Latimer discovers that he has the powers of prevision, able both to foresee the future and read others' thoughts, and feels oppressed by this burden of excessive consciousness. He meets, and instantly dislikes, his elder brother Alfred's fiancée Bertha Grant, and despite this dislike of her feels passionate attraction. Alfred is thrown from his horse and killed, and Latimer marries Bertha, though he is increasingly aware of what he sees as her contempt for his dreamy, supersensitive nature. The story ends with the deathbed revelation of Bertha's medically revived maid, Mrs. Archer, that her mistress intended to poison Latimer. Latimer separates from Bertha, and spends his time waiting for a death whose date he has precisely foreseen. (53n)

in her choice of a male pseudonym. Gilbert and Gubar note that she wrote the story "when she was about to lift one of her own veils, her pseudonym" (446), even though, as Gillian Beer perceptively asserts in "Myth and the Single Consciousness: *Middlemarch* and 'The Lifted Veil'" (1975), "[a]t the beginning of her career George Eliot was the 'hidden self' of Marian Evans" (97). At home, she was Marian Evans Lewes: in public, George Eliot.

The strategy of adopting a male persona for publication was common among women authors prior to the twentieth century. In Eliot's case the strategy was complicated by her unconventional domestic situation. Eliot wrote "The Lifted Veil" while both she and her publisher Blackwoods were under great pressure to identify the author of her hugely popular *Adam Bede*. However, Eliot particularly wanted to avoid public notice, because her acknowledged husband George Henry Lewes was still married to someone else.[101] Consequently, she was very shy of scrutiny.

Eliot's reticence evokes that of Felicia Hemans, who also had to deal with the appropriation of her authority. Paula Feldman notes that by January 1830, her slight anonymity imperilled, Hemans wrote to her publisher, Blackwood

> I should like to have my piece in Maga announced, for some time to come, with my name at full length in the table of contents, and without any signature. Some One, for whose perpetrations I am not at all desirous to be answerable, has adopted the signature of F.H., and I am rather perplexed as to the best means of proving my own Identity. — Even if I lay aside the use of the initials altogether, I fear I should not quite free myself from the

[101] In her common-law marriage, as in her pseudonym, Eliot both embodies and contravenes conventional paradigms — here, she calls into question cultural mores concerning women "given in marriage." Eliot was neither stolen like Philomela nor traded legally like Procne. Instead, she refused the position of silent object traded among male others and asserted her subjectivity by following her own inclination, resulting in a situation which the trade paradigm simply doesn't describe. This boldness cost her dearly: much of her erstwhile society — including her family — refused to have any contact with her for a long while after her elopement (see R. Ashton 118-123).

> imputations of Mr. F.H.'s poetry, which really is "so middling bad were better." (qtd. in Feldman 171)

Despite the need to put her name beside her poems, Hemans cannily wielded feminine self-effacement in order to "excuse" her participation in the public sphere of publishing, a strategy that worked well during her life but also continued after her death, contributing to her critical eclipse by the mid-twentieth-century (McConnell 101). Eliot's March 31, 1859 letter to her publisher indicates that she adopted a demeanor similar to that of Hemans. She writes of "The Lifted Veil":

> [b]ut I have a slight story of an outré kind — not a *jeu d'esprit,* but a *jeu de melancolie*, which I could send you in a few days for your acceptance or rejection, as a brief magazine story — of one number only. I think nothing of it, but my private critic [Lewes] says it is very striking and original, and on the strength of that opinion I mention it. (*George Eliot Letters* iii.41)

This particular letter led Knoepflmacher to suggest that "George Eliot's own reticence about 'The Lifted Veil' has unquestionably contributed to its neglect" (131).[102] Eliot's case differs from that of Hemans, though, in that Eliot's relationship with Lewes provided a provable grounds for public censure, where Hemans was consistently lauded for her reticence on the subject of her absent husband.

Eliot differs from Hemans in a matter more significant to their literature than marital status. Where Hemans equated authors' morality with the quality of their writing (Chorley II.217), Eliot distinguishes "the spiritual power of an author from his opinions and behaviour" (Witemeyer 122). According to Witemeyer in "George Eliot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (1979), "[t]his distinction between doctrine and affective power, between assent and uplift, was commonplace among Victorians" (Witemeyer

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[102] See Appendix 11 for a discussion of the critical reception of Eliot's story from its publication in 1859 to the late twentieth-century.

122). Despite the much-vaunted prudery of the Victorians, literary attitudes had changed from Hemans's equation of the morals of writers with those of their characters to Eliot's distinction between the two, which suggests one reason why Eliot was able to succeed as a published writer despite a domestic situation which would have scuppered her career twenty-five years earlier. However, she and Lewes were quite cautious, ensuring that while her early novel *Adam Bede* was accepted and reviewed she remained pseudonym *intacta*. Consequently, in the first few months of 1859 she was publicly silent on the subject of her authorial identity.

Into that silence stepped a man named Liggins, about whom Eliot writes in an April 10 1859 letter to Blackwood:

> [t]he other day I received a letter from an old friend in Warwickshire containing some striking information about the author of "Adam Bede." I extract the passage for your amusement.
>
> "I want to ask you if you have read 'Adam Bede' or the 'Scenes of Clerical Life,' and whether you know that the author is Mr. Liggins.... A deputation of dissenting parsons went over *to ask him to write for the Eclectic*, and they found him washing his slop-basin at a pump. He has no servant and does everything for himself.... You know he calls himself 'George Eliot.'... *They say he gets no profit out of 'Adam Bede,' and gives it freely to Blackwood, which is a shame....* We have not read him yet, but the extracts are irresistible."
>
> Conceive the real George Eliot's feelings, conscious of being a base worldling — not washing his own slop-basin, and *not* giving away his M.S.! Nor even intending to do so, in spite of the reverence such a course might inspire. I hope you and Major Blackwood will enjoy the myth.
>
> The story [The Lifted Veil] will be ready in a few days — would have been ready now, but for illness of my own and of others, sadly interrupting all work.
>
> (*George Eliot Letters* iii.44, emphases in original)

Far from dying out, the Liggins myth flourished. According to Rosemary Ashton in *George Eliot: A Life* (1997), Liggins "unaccountably ... allowed reports of his authorship to grow unchecked. By the summer of 1859 Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Dickens had entered the game of speculation about Liggins"

(185-86). The traditional privacy and silence dictated for women, exacerbated by Eliot's domestic "irregularities," led directly to the same situation Hemans encountered with the other "F.H.," in which her writing was temporarily appropriated. In order to maintain the rights to her own creativity in the face of a growing hue and cry that Liggins should be getting the profit from the sales of "his" works, Eliot decided to break her silence, as the following postscripts to a June 30, 1859 letter written jointly by Eliot and Lewes demonstrate:

> [s]ince the above was written we have come to the resolution of no longer concealing the authorship. It makes me angry to think that people should say that the secret has been kept because there was any *fear* of the effect of the author's name. You may tell it openly to all who care to hear it that the object of anonymity was to get the book judged on its own merits, and not prejudged as the work of a woman, or of a particular woman. It is quite clear that people would have sniffed at it if they had known the writer to be a woman but they can't now unsay their admiration....
>
> Ever yours faithfully,
> G.H.L.
>
> P.P.S. *Entre nous*. Please don't write or tell Marian anything *unpleasant* that you hear unless it is important for her to hear it. She is so very sensitive, and has such a tendency to dwell on and believe in unpleasant ideas that I always keep them from her. What other people would disregard or despise sinks her mind. She knows nothing of this second postscript, of course.
>
> (*George Eliot Letters* iii.106, emphases in original)[103]

The conventional choice of a male pseudonym becomes for Eliot a dilemma over authorial identity, played out in a public forum: she could not keep separate her private and public identities.

While Eliot was being forced into admitting her masculine public persona, she was creating Latimer, the feminized narrator and protagonist of "The Lifted Veil," who asks his readers: "[a]re you unable to imagine this double consciousness at work

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[103] Note that in the second postscript, the typical gendered pattern of silence is inverted, with the husband admitting complicity in his own silencing.

within me, flowing on like two parallel streams which never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue?" ("The Lifted Veil" 153). Although ostensibly speaking of his contradictory passion and distaste for Bertha, this oft-cited passage also epitomizes the double role which Latimer fulfills as the male avatar of "essentially feminine qualities — his sensitivity, his physical weakness, his secondary status in the family, his dispossession, his passivity, and his intense need to be loved" (Gilbert and Gubar 450). That feminization is troped as someone wearing a veil: his psychic abilities ensure that Latimer sees others in a way that he never allows them to see him. Latimer habitually draws "the shroud of concealment more closely" around his soul (Eliot, "The Lifted Veil" 165), admitting that, other than in this post-humously read narrative, "I have never fully unbosomed myself to any human being" (139). He maintains this veiling even in his relationship with his wife, Bertha, to whom he was a cipher: "I lived under influences utterly invisible to her" (161). Thus Eliot feminizes Latimer by veiling him in the reserve engendered by his powers, a veil transparent on the side of the seer, and opaque to the seen.

A pattern common to most of the texts examined in this dissertation concerns social conditioning of gender roles, particularly women's alignment with textile tropes. Jan Wood encourages understanding the effect of similar alignments on men, noting that in the Victorian era "[s]tereotypes of masculinity were no less powerful and pervasive than the female counterpart, the 'angel in the house,' and equally painful for those men who were unable or unwilling to partake of, even less compete in, the dominant cult of masculinity" (166). Latimer's position particularly engages her, since

> in both medical and literary representation, doctor/patient roles conformed to a model whereby the rational male was authorized to read, reveal, explain, or readjust the disordered female.... By making Latimer both empowered to

> "read" and subjected to be read, Eliot unsettles the hierarchies which sustain belief in the objective authority of masculinist science over the subjective outpourings of the unregulated nature. (Wood 167)

Wood has isolated here the crux of Eliot's achievement in "The Lifted Veil": herself hypersensitive to the limitations of arbitrarily drawn gender roles, the de-feminized Eliot creates the effeminate Latimer who both delineates the hierarchy of gendered creativity and demonstrates that hierarchy's biases.

Eliot's seer never attempts to change the future. Despite a horrific prevision of their marriage, he continues to pursue the young Bertha, whom he perceives as a kind of veil over her older self:

> [b]ehind the slim girl Bertha, whose words and looks I watched for, whose touch was bliss, there stood continually that Bertha with the fuller form, the harder eyes, the more rigid mouth — with the barren selfish soul laid bare; no longer a fascinating secret, but a measured fact, urging itself perpetually on my unwilling sight. (Eliot, "The Lifted Veil" 153)

Eliot's well documented interest in seeking sincere "*relations*, ways beyond the single consciousness" (Beer 94, emphasis in original; see also Knoepflmacher 150, Viera 753), leads her to depict an anti-ideal in Latimer — a protagonist who feels forced by a visionary gift to seek the blindness lent by veils of self-delusion and solipsism.

In "The Lifted Veil," veils function in several ways: we have already seen how they characterize the variously murky motivations of characters.[104] In another use, the title textile depicts the normal opacity between minds as a mutable, removable barrier. For example, Latimer's observation that on the evening of his father's death

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[104] In her 1991 article "'Vague Capricious Memories': The Lifted Veil's Challenge to Wordsworthian Poetics,"Anne Wallace analyses the veil trope with different criteria than I and determines the following categories: "[t]here are at least three veils (not unrelated to each other) which would, under normal circumstances, both isolate Latimer and shield him from the terrific and deadening vision that afflicts him: the veil of individuality, the veil of sexuality, and the veil of temporality" (35).

"the veil which had shrouded Bertha's soul from me ... was first withdrawn" (160) figures clairvoyance as the removal of a veil. Similarly, his pre-visions come when the "curtain of the future" (140) is drawn up "as the sun lifts up the veil of the morning mist" (144). In yet another use of the veil trope, Latimer describes the passing of the vitriolic Mrs. Archer by stating "the dark veil had completely fallen" (167), a use reminiscent of P.B. Shelley's sonnet "Lift not the painted veil...."

A number of Eliot scholars allude to P.B. Shelley's sonnet (i.e. Kidd 40, Flint 456, Gilbert and Gubar 470, Knoepflmacher 128 and 153), though the comparison is more obvious than exact.[105] Beer best describes what Eliot's story and Shelley's sonnet have in common by pointing out that "[d]espite the lurid atmosphere of "The Lifted Veil" the horror at the centre of the story is the horror of littleness, of the estranged self pressed upon and violated by 'the trivial experience of indifferent people'" (97) — whom P.B. Shelley called "the unheeding many" ("Lift not..." 11). "The Lifted Veil" also connects with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Some of the more gothic aspects of Eliot's story — especially the revivification of Mrs. Archer — are so reminiscent of *Frankenstein* that many of the analyses I've read seem compelled to mention it (i.e. Knoepflmacher 139, R. Ashton 219, Wilt 185).[106] *Frankenstein* and "The Lifted Veil" have more in common than their pseudo-scientific scenes: both are deeply concerned with exploring the power and responsibility incumbent in exclusive knowledge. Thus Eliot's story acts as an unexpected child of the texts by Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley examined in chapter four.

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[105] Appendix 11 includes arguments against P.B. Shelley's "Lift not..." sonnet as a source for Eliot's story, and raises some more probable sources.

[106] See Appendix 11 for a discussion of the many antecedents claimed for "The Lifted Veil" by contemporary literary critics.

In a gesture proving Anne Mellor's premise that "canonized Romantic poets had stolen [women's] emotions, their intuition, their capacity for imagination and fancy, their romances, and their affinity with nature" (*Romanticism and Gender* 29), Latimer rationalizes his feminine subjugation and passivity through a self-image as poet. For example, after fearing reprisal for speaking sharply to his brother, Latimer realizes "I magnified, as usual, the impression any word or deed of mine could produce on others; for no one gave any sign of having noticed my interruption as more than a rudeness, to be forgiven me on the score of my feeble nervous condition" (151). Furthermore, though he has literary pretensions and sensitivities, Latimer has no literary *output* other than "The Lifted Veil," a situation which he himself bemoans: "I went dumbly through that stage of the poet's suffering, in which he feels the delicious pang of utterance, and makes an image of his sorrows" (155). Anne Wallace suggests that "Latimer's hyper-senstivity, his intense emotional reliance on nature, and ... his deliberate attempts to become a poet by the specific mechanism of recollection mark him not just as a poet, as he calls himself, but as a Wordsworthian poet" (37-38). Despite poetic ambition, Latimer "is imprisoned within a world in which no creative action is possible because everything is foreseen and nothing can be altered" (Beer 92). Latimer's feminine attributes mark him as a Romantic poet and his lack of output renders him perpetually manqué.

When added to his psychic tribulations, Latimer's lack of artistic fulfillment ensures that he remains as melancholy as one of Charles Lamb's tailors, a comparison which draws out the intricacies associating Eliot's protagonist and textile imagery. As you recall, one of the conclusions of the section on C. Lamb's essay "On the Melancholy of Tailors" (chapter two) was that tailors are sad because they are feminized men. Latimer, too, is ostracized from the patriarchal society of his father

and brother by "this dumb passion [that] brings with it a fatal solitude of soul in the society of one's fellow men" (Eliot "The Lifted Veil" 142). Not only do figurative veils describe Latimer's solipsism and resignation towards the future he foresees: textile imagery also describes his poetic sensibility. He states that the true meanings of words are "printed in the subtle fibres of our nerves" (162). Unlike Philomel who successfully conflates weaving and writing, Latimer aspires to text but is bound by textiles.

Yet another layer obscures this veiled dance. The textiles that bind Latimer are the textual constructions of George Eliot. In *George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning*, Sally Shuttleworth notes that "'The Lifted Veil' is a text aware of its own fictionality. The life of Latimer, its narrator, is synonymous with that of the narrative.... 'The Lifted Veil' ... commenc[es] with a vision of the end of time which the end of the narrative fulfills" (78-9). Where William Blake's Enitharmon rails against the inevitable annihilation of her weaving when the text of *Jerusalem* ends (92: 6-11),[107] Eliot's Latimer resigns himself to the inevitability of his textual end, which happens just as he finishes writing the sad narrative of his life, which is, of course, the very moment that Eliot finishes writing the sad narrative of his life. Eliot's self-reflexivity invokes Blake's idea of perceptions as limitations, a congruency apparent in Viera's observation that Eliot speculates on how the mind "has the capacity to shape outward reality. Inward vision modulates the perceptions of the physical eye, thus modifying the objective world"

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107 The Poet's Song draws to its period & Enitharmon is no more.
For if he be that Albion I can never weave him in my Looms;
But when he touches the first fibrous thread, like filmy dew
My Looms will be no more & I annihilate vanish for ever.
(*Jerusalem* 92:6-11)

(756).[108] With the double death of Latimer — killed by his own perceptual passivity, and by Eliot's *coup-de-narratif* — we face an antinomian paradox: in acquiescing to the future that he perceived (however paranormally) Latimer died at his own hand at the hand of Eliot.[109] Like Enitharmon, Latimer was bound to the length of his text. Their fates are determined by their authors.

Philomel, too was so bound, but she got a message out through producing a textual textile, a rope of words cast beyond her textual cell. Though her woven words are not recorded, their effect is. Unlike Latimer's biography and Enitharmon's woven fibres, which remain contained within their narratives, Philomel's words function metonymically in the myth and beyond, to prove Barthes's premise that texts are parts of an inter-referential net, a textile of texts. Herein lies the solution to the paradox that Philomel can only speak when silenced: her textile acts within the story, as well as reverberating through Aristotle's reference to Sophocles' lost play, to all the retellings by Ovid and countless subsequent translators and storytellers through the centuries. Seen in relation to Philomel's intertextual textile, Latimer's creative morbidity, like that of Enitharmon, seems far less determined, available as both are for retelling. Furthermore, P.B. Shelley's expression of concern with the veil between life and immortality in "Lift not the painted veil" and *Prometheus Unbound* is proven to be far from esoteric: if the veil is a Barthesian textual web, then immortality does not come to any specific, reified identity — be they characters or authors or texts — but through a generalized provenance and remembrance.

• • •

[108] There is one difference between Romantic Blake and Victorian Eliot: where Blake would have the objective world *created* by perception, according to Viera, Eliot concedes only its modification.

[109] Despite Mrs. Archer's pointing finger, Latimer did not die at Bertha's hand.

However, following the path pointed out by P.B. Shelley eventually leads critical readers to discover some unnecessary limits inherent in Barthes's concept of the textual web: what we remember depends on who tells the story. True, over time themes recur: Hartman's appreciation of how Aristotle's *Poetics* "brings together the smallest literary patterns with the largest" ("Voice of the Shuttle" 339), is remarkably like Hayles's evaluation of how chaos theory examines "recursive symmetries between different levels of the system" (*Chaos Bound* 169-70). Similarly, in examining George Eliot and her short story "The Lifted Veil," this concluding chapter demonstrated how a number of textual patterns indicated by the literary use of textile tropes during the industrial revolution in Britain come together deep in the Victorian period. When read in conjunction with the myth of Philomel and the voice of the shuttle — a distillation of text and textile — "The Lifted Veil" represents the final piece in the web of eighteenth and nineteenth century texts examined in this thesis. Eliot herself provides the gendered pair of authors which make up the subjects for study in most previous chapters: her masculine pseudonym and feminized protagonist condense the binaries I used to show the constructedness of gender delineation which attributes textiles and their production to the feminine. That construction underpins Eliot's critique of creativity in "The Lifted Veil": Latimer's writing is stayed by his entanglement in various conceptual veils. Thus, in the Victorian text of "The Lifted Veil," patterns of textile metaphors and imagery have become concentrated versions of their early nineteenth-century antecedents.[110]

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[110] This thesis isolates one section of a temporal continuum begun in antiquity and continuing today. For example Athena's three areas of expertise — wisdom, weaving, and war — carry into the twenty-first-century in a changed form: my own critical readings explore the interelationships between textual weavers and writers and women. Furthermore, a third trio of "w"s — the world wide web — cannot help but arrest the attention of a textile-sensitised reader.

Contiguous with the traditional association of textiles and women is the alignment between the feminine and the physical, attributes devalued in comparison with "masculine" spiritual, literary realms. I have argued that such an alignment is not innate but rather a cultural tradition — albeit of almost unimaginable longstanding. This argument puts me in opposition to such palpable names as Homer, Plato, Ovid, Freud and the OED, who, inadvertently or otherwise, reinscribe traditions isolating women in private, domestic spheres. One result of this tradition is the overvaluation of anonymity among creatrixes, whether they produce texts or textiles. For example, when they are remembered, Felicia Hemans's most famous poems — "Casabianca" ("The boy stood on the burning deck..."), "The Graves of a Household," "The Homes of England" — tend to be recalled more like anonymous stitched homilies than as the work of one particular author. Thus, parts of the web of texts woven by Hemans and other neglected writers (of any gender) outlasted their ordeal-ringed fame.

Cut off from authorial context, the web of texts by the less frequently read Romantics has been treated as a critically-impermeable veil derided for ubiquity, for lack of provenance, for not engaging fashionable tropes (tropes which, tautologically, criticism had deemed fashionable), in short, for being "stuff." If it achieved any notice at all, the veil of stuff — rendered practically anonymous by cultural embarrassment (oh, those female pens!) if not by actual anonymity — tended to become the focus of scrutiny itself, thereby reinscribing authorial repression. But that which has been repressed comes back to haunt in strange and unexpected forms, like the aspects of *Frankenstein* and "Lift not the painted veil" which reappear in George Eliot's short story "The Lifted Veil." Slowly, contemporary critical practices transform the Barthesian hyphology of anonymous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts into a Millerian arachnology, over-read for signature. The analysis

provided in this thesis contributes to the process by examining patterns, and departures from patterns, in the use of textile tropes among writers both well-known and otherwise. In its entirety, the textual web — initially perceived as a veil that threatens to obscure "important" texts — proves to be made from piecework, each piece of which has characteristic elements that signify like signatures. A critical practice of comparing to complement results in such a close examination of the textual veil that critical readers can glean a clear sense of that which is veiled, just as P.B. Shelley's "Lift not..." sonnet suggests will happen. What appeared to be impenetrable textual armour has proven to be translucent gauze.

• end •

Appendix 1
TABLE OF MAIN CHAPTER ELEMENTS

Chapter	Etymology	Classic	Theory	Foil Text	Central Text
Introduction	text/textile	*The Bible*, Plato: *Timeaus*	Ainsworth: *Poor Collins*	Collins: "Ode on the Poetical Character"	Overview
1. Statistics	card, weave	Plato: "The Statesman"	N. Catherine Hayles: *The Cosmic Web* *Chaos Bound* Krippendorf "Paradox and Information."	Statistics	Pattern Theory
2. Charles & Mary Lamb	fabric, material	Frazer: *Golden Bough* (Juno Lucina, Alcmena)	Barthes: "Myth Today"	Charles Lamb: "On the Melancholy of Tailors"	Mary Lamb: "On Needlework"
3. Hemans, Wordsworth *et alia*	spin	Plato: "Myth of Er" Ovid: "Arachne"	Barthes: "Theory of the Text" Miller: "Arachnologies"	Wiliam Wordsworth Mary Tighe, Laetitia Landon, EBB	Felicia Hemans: misc.
4. Percy & Mary Shelley	fold	Pherekydes: "Marriage of Zas and Cthonie"	Derrida: "Silkworm of my Own"	PB Shelley: "Lift not the painted veil..."	Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein*
5. More & Blake	loom	Homer: *Odyssey* *Iliad*	T.S. Ashton: *The Industrial Revolution*	Hannah More: "The Two Weavers"	William Blake: *Jerusalem*
Conclusion	text/textile revisited	Ovid: "Philomel"	Hartman: "Voice of Shuttle" Joplin: "VoS is Ours"	George Eliot: "The Lifted Veil"	Conclusion

Appendix 2

TEXTILE VOCABULARY

The following is a list of all the words (and some of the variations) which were searched for in the *œurves* of Collins, Hemans and Wordsworth. It was put together *ad hoc*, based on prior textile research.

adorn (adorn'd, adorned, adorning, adornment, unadorn'd)
apparel (apparelling)
Arachne
Ariadne
armour (armor; not arm, arms)
arras
array
attire
baldric
banner (banners)

basket (baskets)
belt (belted, belting)
blanket
boddice
braid (braided)

cable
canopy (canopied, canopies)
canvas
cap
cape

carding
carpet (carpet's, carpets)
cassock
chain (chained, chain'd, chains, chainless)
chaplet (chaplets)
cincture (cinctur'd)
clad
cloak
cloth (sackcloth. clothes cloathed, cloathing)

cotton
cobweb (cobwebs)
cope
cord (cords, cordage)

covering (cov'ring, covered, cover'd)

coverlet (coverlid)
cowl (cowls, cowl'd, cowled, caul)
curtain (curtain'd, curtaining, curtains, uncurtained)
cushion (cushions, cushion'd, cushioned)
damask (damasked)
distaff
drapery (draperies)
dress (dress'd, undrest, undressed)
dye (dyed, dyes, dyeing not dies, died, dying)

elastic

embroider (broider, broideries, broidery, embroider'd, embroidered)
fabric
Fates (Norns, Fate [name], Norn, Atropos, Clotho, Lachesis; not Muses, Graces)
fetter
fibre

flax
fleece
fold (folding foldings, folds, unfold, unfoldings, unfolded, unfolds: not manifold, sheep-fold, two-fold, etc)
fray (fray'd frayed, frays; not as in fight)
frill
fringe (fring'd, fringed, fringes)
gag (gagged, gagg'd)
garb
garland
garment

gauze (gauzy, gauzes)
girdle (girth, girt, begirt)
gordian (gordian'd)
gossamer

gown

guise (disguise)
habit (habited)
hat (hats, hatted)
hem (hemmed, hemm'd, hems)
hood (hooded, hoods; not hoodwinked)

jesses (jessied)
kirtle (kirtled, kyrtled)
knit (interknit)
knot (love-knot, knot grass, etc)

lace (lac'd, laced, lacey, interlace, unlace) **linen** (linsey-wolsey)
loom
loop (looped)

loose (loosed, loos'd, loosened, unloose) **mail** (mailed, mail'd; not as in post) **manacle** (manacles, manacl'd, manacled, manacling)**mantle** (mantled, mantling, mantua) **mat** (matting, matted, mats)
material
meridian
mesh (meshes, enmesh)
milliner (milliners)
motley

needle
Nemisis
net
noose
pall

panoply
Penelope
petticoat (petticoats)
Philomel
plait (plaited, plaiting)
pleat (pleatings, pleated)
rag (ragged)
ravel (unravel)
rend (rending, rent, reeves)
ribbon (ribband)
robe (enrobe)
rug
sampler
sash (not window-sash)
scarf (scarves)

seam (unseam, unseams)
sever (disever)
sew (sewing)
sheet (winding; not paper, sheet lightning)
shirt (shirt'd, shirted, shirting)
shroud (shroude, shrouded, shrouds)
shuttle (shuttling)
silk (silken, silkiness, silks)
skein
skirt (skirts)

snare (snared, snar'd, ensnare)
sock
spider
spin (spun, fine-spun, homespun)
spindle

stitch
stocking (stockings)
strand (not as in beach)
string (strung, unstring, unstrung)
strip (strips, stripping)

suit (suits, suiting)
sumptuary (sumptuous)
tailor (taylor)
tangle (tangled, entangle, entanglement, disentangle, disentangling)
tapestry (tapestries, tapestried)

tassel (tassel'd, tasselled, tassels)
tatter (tatter'd, tattered)
tear (tears, tore, torn, untorn; not tear as in crying)
tether (tethered)
textile

thatch
thread (thrid, unthread)
threadbare
tie (ties, tied)
trousers (trowsers)

turban
twill (not "it will")
twine (intertwine, entwine, intwine, twined, twining, overtwined)
twist (twisted)
veil (veil'd, veil'st, veiled, veiling, veils, unveil, unveil'd; not vail, vale)

velvet
vest (vesture, vestment)
warp
wear (wore, worn wears, wear'st)
weave (weaving, wove, woven, interwove, interwoven, overwove, unweave)

web (webster, not web-footed)
weeds (not plants)
wind (winding, windingly, windings, unwind, unwound; not as in breeze)
woof (woofed)
wool (woollen, wooly)
workbox
wrap (wrapped, wrapp'd, wrappit, wraps, wrapt, enwrap)
wreath (wreath'd, wreathed, wreaths, wreather, wreathing, enwreathed, interwreath'd interwreathed)
yarn

zone

Appendix 3

TEXTS AND WORDS NOT SEARCHED

Texts

plays, translations, alternative and out-take stanzas, epigraphs, 'minor' unfinished pieces, pieces of dubious authenticity (exception: some of Dorothy Wordsworth's poems were included in her brother's 1888 *Complete Works*, the source for the Chadwyck Healy database).

Words

Most of the omitted words were left out because they were broadly interperable (ie. arm, moss), too specific and tangental (ie. beadbag), or unanticipated dialect words (i.e. heckled). Some of the stranger ones are footnoted to examples showing their use in specific lines of poetry.

arm
aumere
bag
(beadbag)
bead (beaded
beads)
beam
beard
bier
bind (binds
bound
boundary
bond)[1]
blindfold
bobbin
bondage
bonnet
breeches
bridle
brush
button
cest[2]
chappeaus
coil
colours
comb
corslet
cravats
crest
crown
curl
deck
Dedalus
(dedalian)
draw (drawn)
envelope
fashion
felt
film[3]
flag
fleece
frame
fret (fretwork)
fur
furl
fustian
gear
glove (armlace
ungloving
gauntlet gage)
guerdon
hair
hang (hung)
hangings
harp
heckled
helm (helmet)
hitch
hose
Hymen
(hymenal)
immaterial
industry
invest
kite
knapsack
labyrinth
lattice
laundry
laurel
lawn
leaf
leaves
line
lineal
link
loop
lures
lute
lyre
mask (masquer-
ade)
material
maze
mend
mitten
moss
mow (mown)
nerves
nest
nose-ring
outspread
overhanging
overspread
padded
paramente
pelt
pennant
pennon
pillow
plaids
plume
points
pomp
prints
quill
raimente
rattan
ray
reel
reft
rein (reins)
rope
ruffle (ruffles
ruffled
unruffled)
sail
sails
screen[3]
shaggy
shears
sheath
(unsheath)
sheaves
shed
sheep
shoe

shoon
shed (sheds)
shorn
shred
(shreds)
sleeves
slipper
snood
sofa
spangle
spectacle
spread[3]
standard
stain
stays
stole
strand
suit
swathe
sweep
tarpauling
tease
tent
thimble
thong
tiara
tight
tinct
tongue
trappings
tress
tricked-out
(trickynge)
trim
unbind
unclasp
unclose
unfurl
upbraid
upwind
wainscotting
waist
washing
wheel
whip
wimple
(iwimpled)
wires[4]
worsted
wrinkle
wring (wrung)
writhe
wrought
yard
yoke

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[1] "Is it to show how slight / The bound that severs festivals and tombs"
- Hemans, *The Antique Sepulchre*, 6.167.21-2

[2] "The Cest of amplest Pow'r is giv'n" -Collins, *Ode on the Poetical Character*, 19

[3] "... yet by some filmy screen / Shut from us for ever?"
- Hemans, *A Spirit's Return*, 6.3.48-9

[4] "Wake answers from thy wire" -Hemans, Is There Some Spirit Sighing, 16

Appendix 4

CALCULATIONS THE PERCENTAGE OF TEXTILE WORDS IN THE *ŒUVRES* OF COLLINS, HEMANS AND WORDSWORTH

The following 34 words were not used by Collins, Hemans, or Wordsworth: baldric, boddice, cassock, coverlet, damask, distaff, fray, frill, gag, gordian, jesses, kirtle, linen, mesh, milliner, Nemisis, Penelope, plait , pleat, rug, sampler, sash, seam, sew, shuttle, skein, stitch, texture, threadbare, trousers, twill, warp, workbox, and yarn.

	Collins	Hemans	Wwrth	Total
12 Words Used Once				
Arachne	0	0	1	1
Ariadne	0	1	0	1
cable	0	1	0	1
cotton	0	0	1	1
flax	0	0	1	1
gauze	0	0	1	1
manacle	0	0	1	1
meridian	0	1	0	1
noose	0	0	1	1
petticoat	0	0	1	1
sock	1	0	0	1
woof	1	0	0	1
9 Words Used Twice				
arras	0	0	2	2
cape	0	2	0	2
cope	0	0	2	2
cushion	0	0	2	2
spider	0	1	1	2
stocking	0	0	2	2
strand	0	0	2	2
tailor	0	0	2	2
thatch	0	0	2	2

	Collins	Hemans	Wwrth	Total
12 Words Used Three Times				
blanket	0	0	3	3
card	0	0	3	3
carpet	0	0	3	3
cincture	0	2	1	3
cobweb	0	0	3	3
lace	0	0	3	3
Philomel	0	0	2	3
ravel	0	1	2	3
sheet	0	0	3	3
tassel	0	1	2	3
twist	0	0	3	3
velvet	0	0	3	3
7 Words Used Four Times				
cowl	0	0	4	4
elastic	0	2	2	4
hem	0	2	2	4
ribbon	0	0	4	4
scarf	0	3	1	4
shirt	0	0	4	4
turban	0	2	2	4

	Collins	Hemans	Wwrth	Total
5 Words Used 5 Times				
apparel	0	0	5	5
tapestry	0	5	0	5
tatter	0	0	5	5
tether	0	0	5	5
web	0	1	4	5
3 Words Used 6 Times				
drapery	0	4	2	6
gossamer	0	3	3	6
loom	0	1	5	6
4 Words Used 7 Times				
belt	0	0	7	7
habit	0	0	7	7
panoply	0	4	3	7
spindle	0	0	7	7
5 Words Used 8 Times				
cap	0	0	8	8
Fates	0	2	6	8
mat	0	0	8	8
needle	0	0	8	8
1 Word Used 9 Times				
weeds	3	1	5	9
3 Words Used 10 Times				
canvas	0	4	6	10
hat	0	0	10	10
hood	0	0	10	10

	Collins	Hemans	Wwrth	Total
31 words used between 11 and 30 times				
attire	0	1	28	29
basket	0	0	11	11
braid	3	14	7	24
canopy	0	13	13	26
chaplet	1	5	5	11
cloak	0	2	15	17
cord	0	8	10	18
curtain	3	9	13	25
embroider	1	6	5	12
fabric	1	11	15	27
fibre	0	1	10	11
fleece	0	0	16	16
fringe	0	17	7	24
garment	1	2	13	16
gown	0	0	11	11
knit	0	0	11	11
knot	0	3	19	22
mail	0	12	12	24
motley	11	0	6	17
net	0	0	11	11
pall	1	9	2	12
rag	0	0	16	16
silk	1	4	24	29
skirt	2	1	12	15
snare	0	4	18	22
spin	0	1	27	28
strip	0	1	23	24
sumptuous	0	0	11	11
tangle	2	2	16	20
wool	0	0	14	14
zone	2	13	10	25

33 words used between 30 and 100 times

The number listed at the left of the word is the difference for that word. For an explanation of difference, see footnote 18 in chapter one.

	Collins	Hemans	Wwrth	Total
45.7 **garb**	0	11	22	33
74.3 **thread**	0	1	32	33
52.6 **guise**	0	7	27	34
51.2 **adorn**	2	11	34	37
53.1 **tear**	2	22	15	39
35.2 **fetter**	0	28	19	47
84.1 **cover**	0	5	46	51
57.4 **rend**	2	41	8	51
43.2 **sever**	0	28	24	52
57.1 **dye**	0	42	11	53
33.5 **weave**	2	28	24	54
34.3 **vest**	3	13	29	55
34.9 **wrap**	3	33	20	56
62.9 **dress**	13	19	29	61
64.1 **loose**	0	12	51	63
30.6 **garland**	1	33	30	64
23.7 **shroud**	1	35	28	64
45.8 **string**	7	42	23	72
47.3 **cloth**	0	24	48	72
44.9 **clad**	1	32	42	75
61.8 **armour**	0	20	55	75
52.1 **gird**	3	57	17	77
13.4 **tie**	0	33	44	77
24.3 **twine**	0	44	37	81
32.1 **robe**	8	54	26	88
60.6 **wind**	1	20	78	99
56.5 **fold**	3	86	23	112
31.2 **array**	3	94	61	158
38.2 **wreath**	10	96	53	159
33.3 **veil**	6	108	58	172
73.1 **banner**	0	156	43	199
51.7 **chain**	0	165	76	241
23.2 **wear**	3	127	148	278

TTL Textile Wds	98	1710	1840	*5325*
TTLWds in Poetry Oerve	10793	250390	343268	*604451*
% of Textile Wds in Poetry Oerve	(0.908) **0.9%**	(0.683) **0.7%**	(0.536) **0.5%**	*(0.687)* ***0.7%***

Conclusion: The percentage of occurrences of textile terms is fairly consistent among these three writers, always falling between 0.5% and 0.9%.

Appendix 5
CHANGES IN HEMANS'S USE OF TEXTILE VOCABULARY FROM 1816 TO 1834

Changes in Hemans's use of textile vocabulary over the course of her writing career corroborate Eubanks's premise that as her career continued, her writing became more domesti-centric, as indicated by an increased use of textile words. This conclusion was reached by the following method:

1. A set of poems which represented 15% of the total number of words in her oeurve was determined. The choice of poems is not entirely arbitrary, though they represent works spread over Hemans's mature career (juvenilia are excepted): they either (a) have Wordsworth connections (are dedicated to him, or have epigraphs taken from his work), (b) were mentioned in articles on Hemans by Eubanks, Harding, Lootens, Wolfson, Sweet, and Kennedy or (c) are analysed in chapter three.

2. The statistic utility of the focus poems was determined by calculating the number of textile words in them, by searching these poems for the use of 160 words related to textiles and comparing the percentage of textile words in this sample set. In the sample, there are 264 textile words out of 36,590 total words, or 0.7%, which is the same percentage as in her entire ouerve — 1710 textile words out of 250,390 total words, or also 0.7%. 48 of the 160 words searched appeared in the focus set.

3. The poems in the statistical focus set were then arranged set chronologically, and divided into three parts, according to the total number of words used.[1] (See following table)

[1] I tried several ways of dividing up Hemans's oeuvre — by date in halves and thirds, and by word use in halves and thirds. All methods showed that she increased her use of textile terms as her career progressed, however, dividing by thirds according to word usage show the changes most dramatically.

PATTERNS OF WORD USE
in the set of Hemans focus poems,
divided into thirds according to total number of words

Words used 1-4 times

	Total	1/3	2/3	3/3
adorn	1	x		
Ariadne	1			x
armour	1			x
attire	1		x	
5 braided	1			x
canvass	1			x
Cinctured	1	x		
curtain'd	1			x
gossamer	1			x
10 knots	1			x
mail	1			x
pall	1	x		
panoply	1	x		
stoles	1			x
15 torn	1		x	
woof	1			x
guise	2	0	2	0
weave	2	0	0	2
wind	2	0	1	1
20 zone	2	0	1	1
chaplet	3	0	0	3
clothe	3	2	0	1
drapery	3	1	0	2
garland	3	1	0	2
25 sever	3	0	1	2
vest	3	2	1	0
canopy	4	1	1	2
fabrics	4	2	2	0
string	4	1		3
30 tie	4	0	2	2
fetter	5	0	4	1
gird	5	2	1	2
wrap	5	1	0	4
Total words used 5x or less	**74**	**17**	**18**	**39**

Words used 6 times or more

	Total	1/3	2/3	3/3
dress	6	3	1	2
35 shroud	6	1	1	4
rend	6	2	2	2
clad	7	3	3	1
twine	9	1	1	7
array	11	4	4	3
40 dye	11	4	4	3
wreath	12	2	2	8
fold	13	3	3	7
wear	15	14	8	4
banner	15	3	4	8
45 mantle	15	3	3	9
robe	15	4	3	8
veil	21	17	5	9
48 chain	28	10	9	9
TTl words used more than 5x	**190**	**54**	**52**	**84**
+ TTL used 5x or less	**74**	**17**	**18**	**39**
TOTAL	**264**	**71**	**70**	**123**

NOTES To the Previous Table

(a) Total number of occurances for each term include variations on individual words (i.e. chain, chain'd, chained, chainless, etc)

(b) Sections are as close as possible to the correct division, while still remaining within the year where the division falls. The one-third mark is 12,197 words, and the closest possible divisor is at 13,053, after 1817 (difference of +856, or 2.3%) The two-thirds mark is 24,393 words and the closest possible divisor is at 23,345, after 1826 (difference of -1048 or 2.9%).

There is a clear two-thirds/one-third pattern of change in Hemans's use of textile terminology over eighteen years of her career. As time passed Hemans increased the number of different textile words used in her poems. This is demonstrated by (a) the ten single-use terms used in the final third (Ariadne, armour, braided, canvass, curtain'd, gossamer, knots, mail, stoles and woof), opposed to only six terms used in the first two-thirds, and (b) the frequent appearance in the final third, of words which appeared five times or less (18 in the first third, 18 in the second third, and 39 in the final third). As well, textile terms which appeared throughout her career were used more frequently in the final third, a phenomenon shown by the pattern of use of the 15 words that appeared more than five times: (a) nearly half are used similarly for the first two thirds of the period, then markedly increased in usage in the final third (shroud, twine, wreathe, fold, banner, mantle and robe), (b) five stay relatively constant (rend, array, dye, veil, and chain), and (c) only three textile words appear more in the first two thirds than the final third, one used more in the first than final two parts (dress), one used more in the second part than the first or last (wear), and one counted only once in the final third (clad).

(It is tempting to attempt to find evidence of Hemans's increasing feminization in the way that these words are used, rather than just in their frequency of appearance. Not only would that further subdivide an already small sample, but the results would be rendered ambiguous by the indeterminacy of the very terms themselves. For example, an examininination of words involved with textile processes in comparison with those which denote textile artifacts is foiled by the fact that many of the words fall into both categories [i.e. twine, shroud, veil, robe, mantle etc.].

There is the further problem of deciding which terms are feminine, and which are masculine. On one hand, textile production is usually culturally attributed to women, whatever the reality may be. On the other hand, so too is adornment and covering, the main attribute of textile artifacts. Nor would any the pattern of usage of textile words which seem more martially related [i.e. array, banner, chain, etc.] be helpful in terms of gender delineation. Sweet demonstrates Hemans's preoccupation with processionals, which ameliorates the use of these putatively "masculine" terms: "... Hemans consistently embraces the processional as an emblem of temporality. Its sign is the varicoloured banner..." [174]. Because of these mitigating factors, the table above does not lead to any sweeping conclusions about the gendered use of words.)

Appendix 6
ELEGIES BY, TO, AND AFTER FELICIA HEMANS

Including
William Wordsworth: **Extempore Effusion Upon the Death of James Hogg**
Felicia Dorothea Hemans: **The Grave of A Poetess**
Laetitia Landon: **Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans**
Laetitia Landon: **Felicia Hemans**
Elizabeth Barrett: **Felicia Hemans**
Elizabeth Barrett: **L.E.L.'s Last Question**

William Wordsworth
Extempore Effusion Upon the Death of James Hogg
Nov. 1835.

From: *The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth.* Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1932. 736-37.

Excerpt from the Preface
Mrs. Hemans was unfortunate as a poetess in being obliged to write for money, and that so frequently and so much, that she was compelled to look out for subjects wherever she could find them, and to write as expeditiously as possible. As a woman, she was to a considerable degree a spoilt child of the world. She had been early in life distinguished for talent, and poems of hers were published while she was a girl. She had also been handsome in / her youth, but her education had been most unfortunate. She was totally ignorant of housewifery, and could as easily have managed the spear of Minerva as her needle. It was from observing these deficiencies, that, one day while she was under my roof I *purposely* directed her attention to household economy, and told her I had purchased *Scales,* which I intended to present to a young lady as a wedding present; point out their utility (for her especial benefit), and said that no *ménage* ought to be without them. Mrs. Hemans, not in the least suspecting my drift, reported this saying, in a letter to a friend at the time, as a proof of my simplicity. Being disposed to make large allowances for the faults of her education and the circumstances in which she was placed, I felt most kindly disposed towards her, and took her part upon all occasions, and I was not a little affected by learning that after she withdrew to Ireland, a long and severe sickness raised her spirit as it depressed her body. This I heard from her most intimate friends, and there is striking

evidence of it in a poem written and published not long before her death. These notices of Mrs. Hemans would be very unsatisfactory to her intimate friends, as indeed they are to myself, not so much for what is said as for what for brevity's sake is left unsaid. Let it suffice to add, there was much sympathy between us, and, if opportunity had been allowed me to see more of her, I should have loved and valued her accordingly; as it is, I remember her with true affection for her amiable qualities and, above all, for her delicate and irreproachable conduct during her long separation from an unfeeling husband, whom she had been led to marry from the romantic notions of inexperienced youth. Upon this husband I never heard her cast the least reproach, nor did I ever hear her even name him, though she did not wholly forbear to touch upon her domestic position; but never so as that any fault could be found with her manner of adverting to it. (736-7)

1 When first, descending from the moorlands,
2 I saw the Stream of Yarrow glide
3 Along a bare and open valley,
4 The Ettrick Shepherd was my guide.

5 When last along its banks I wandered,
6 Through groves that had begun to shed
7 Their golden leaves upon the pathways,
8 My steps the Border-minstrel led.

9 The mighty Minstrel breathes no longer,
10 Mid mouldering ruins low he lies;
11 And death upon the braes of Yarrow,
12 Has closed the Shepherd-poet's eyes:

13 Nor has the rolling year twice measured,
14 From sign to sign, its stedfast course,
15 Since every mortal power of Coleridge
16 Was frozen at its marvellous source;

17 The rapt One, of the godlike forehead,
18 The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth:
19 And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
20 Has vanished from his lonely hearth.

21 Like clouds that rake the mountain-summits,
22 Or waves that own no curbing hand,
23 How fast has brother followed brother,
24 From sunshine to the sunless land!

25 Yet I, whose lids from infant slumber
26 Were earlier raised, remain to hear
27 A timid voice, that asks in whispers,
28 "Who next will drop and disappear?"
29 Our haughty life is crowned with darkness,
30 Like London with its own black wreath,
31 On which with thee, O Crabbe! forth-looking,
32 I gazed from Hampstead's breezy heath.

33 As if but yesterday departed,
34 Thou too art gone before; but why,
35 O'er ripe fruit, seasonably gathered,
36 Should frail survivors heave a sigh?

37 Mourn rather for that holy Spirit,
38 Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep;
39 For Her who, ere her summer faded,
40 Has sunk into a breathless sleep.

41 No more of old romantic sorrows,
42 For slaughtered Youth or love-lorn Maid!
43 With sharper grief is Yarrow smitten,
44 And Ettrick mourns with her their Poet dead

*unpublished version of lines 37-40:

She, too, a Muse whose holy spirit
Was sweet as Spring as Ocean deep,
She, e'er her Summer yet was faded,
Has sunk into a breathless Sleep.

Felicia Hemans
The Grave of A Poetess
1828

From *The works of Mrs. Hemans; With a memoir of her life, by her sister. In seven volumes* . Edinburgh: William Blackwood, London: Thomas Cadell 1839

"Ne me plaignez pas---si vous saviez
Combien de peines ce tombeau m'a epargnées!"

I stood beside thy lowly grave;
Spring odours breathed around,
And music, in the river wave,
Pass'd with a lulling sound.

All happy things that love the sun,
In the bright air glanced by,
And a glad murmur seem'd to run
Through the soft azure sky.

Fresh leaves were on the ivy bough
That fringed the ruins near;
Young voices were abroad, but thou
Their sweetness couldst not hear.

And mournful grew my heart for thee,
Thou in whose woman's mind
The ray that brightens earth and sea,
The light of song was shrined.

Mournful, that thou wert slumbering low,
With a dread curtain drawn
Between thee and the golden glow
Of this world's vernal dawn.

Parted from all the song and bloom
Thou wouldst have loved so well,
To thee the sunshine round thy tomb
Was but a broken spell.

The bird, the insect on the wing,
In their bright reckless play,
Might feel the flush and life of spring---
And thou wert pass'd away.

But then, e'en then, a nobler thought
O'er my vain sadness came;
Th' immortal spirit woke, and wrought
Within my thrilling frame.

Surely on lovelier things, I said,
Thou must have look'd ere now,

Than all that round our pathway shed
Odours and hues below.

The shadows of the tomb are here,
Yet beautiful is earth!
What see'st thou then, where no dim fear,
No haunting dream hath birth?

Here a vain love to passing flowers
Thou gav'st---but where thou art,
The sway is not with changeful hours,
There love and death must part.

Thou hast left sorrow in thy song,
A voice not loud but deep!
The glorious bowers of earth among---
How often didst thou weep?

Where couldst thou fix on mortal ground
Thy tender thoughts and high?
Now peace the woman's heart hath found,
And joy the poet's eye.

Laetitia Landon

Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans

From *The Female Poets of Great Britain.* Facsimile of 1853 ed. Eds. F. Rowton (1853), Marilyn L. Williamson (1981). Detroit: Wayne State U.P, 1981. 442-45.

"The Rose -- the glorious rose is gone." -- *Lay of Many Lands*

Bring flowers to crown the cup and lute,-
    Bring flowers, -- the bride is near;
Bring flowers to soothe the captive's cell,
    Bring flowers to strew the bier!
Bring flowers! thus said the lovely song;
    And shall they not be brought
To her who linked the offering
8 With feeling and with thought?

Bring flowers, -- the perfumed and the pure, --
    Those with the morning dew,
A sigh in every fragrant leaf,
    A tear on every hue.
So pure, so sweet thy life has been,
    So filling earth and air
With odours and with loveliness,
16 Till common scenes grew fair

Thy song around our daily path
    Flung beauty born of dreams,
And scattered o'er the actual world
    The spirit's sunny gleams.
Mysterious influence, that to earth
    Brings down the heaven above,
And fills the universal heart
24 With universal love.

Such gifts were thine, -- as from the block
    The unformed and the cold,
The sculptor calls to breathing life
    Some shape of perfect mould,
So thou from common thoughts and things
    Didst call a charmed song,
Which on a sweet and swelling tide
32 Bore the full soul along.

And thou from far and foreign lands
    Didst bring back many a tone,
And giving such new music still,
    A music of thine own.
A lofty strain of generous thoughts,
    And yet subdued and sweet, --
An angel's song, who sings of earth,
40 Whose cares are at his feet.

And yet thy song is sorrowful,
    Its beauty is not bloom;
The hopes of which it breathes, are hopes
    That look beyond the tomb.
Thy song is sorrowful as winds
    That wander o'er the plain,
And ask for summer's vanish'd flowers,
48 And ask for them in vain.

Ah! dearly purchased is the gift,
    The gift of song like thine;
A fated doom is her's who stands
    The priestess of the shrine.
The crowd -- they only see the crown,
    They only hear the hymn;

They mark not that the cheek is pale,
And that the eye is dim.

Wound to a pitch too exquisite,
The soul's fine chords are wrung;
With misery and melody
They are too highly strung.
The heart is made too sensitive
Life's daily pain to bear;
It beats in music, but it beats
Beneath a deep despair.

It never meets the love it paints,
The love for which it pines;
Too much of heaven is in the faith
That such a heart enshrines.
The meteor-wreath the poet wears
Must make a lonely lot;
It dazzles, only to divide
From those who wear it not.

Didst thou not tremble at thy fame,
And loathe its bitter prize,
while what to others triumpth seemed,
To thee was sacrifice?
Oh, Flower brought from Paradise,
To this cold world of ours,
Shadows of beauty such as thine
Recall they native bowers.

Let others thank thee -- 't was for them
Thy soft leaves thou didst wreathe;
The red rose wastes itself in sights
Whose sweetness others breathe!
And they have thanked thee -- many a lip
Has asked of thine for words,
When thoughts, life's finer thoughts, have touched
The spirit's inmost chords.

How many loved and honoured thee
Who only knew they name;
Which o'er the weary working world
Like starry music came!
With what still hours of calm delight
Thy songs and image blend;
I cannot choose but think thou wert
An old familiar friend.

The charm that dwelt in songs of thine
My inmost spirit moved;
And yet I feel as thou hadst been
Not half enough beloved.
They say that thou wert faint, and worn
With suffering and with care;
What music must have filled the soul
That had so much to spare!

Oh, weary One! since thou art laid
Within thy mother's breast -
The green, the quiet mother-earth --
Thrice blessed be thy rest!
Thy heart is left within our hearts,
Although life's pang is o'er;
But the quick tears are in my eyes,
And I can write no more.

Laetitia Landon
Felicia Hemans
1838

From *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book*, 1838: reprinted inWu, Duncan, ed. *Romantic Women Poets: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. 604-06.

No more, no more, oh never more returning
Will thy beloved presence gladden earth;
No more wilt thou with sad, yet anxious, yearning
Cling to those hopes which have no mortal birth.
Thou art gone from us, and with thee departed
How many lovely things have vanished too;
Deep thoughts that at thy will to being started, -
And feelings, teaching us our own were true.
Thou hast been round us like a viewless spirit
Known only by the music on the air;
The leaf or Bowers which thou hast named inherit
A beauty known but from thy breathing there,
For thou didst on them fling thy strong emotion,
The likeness from itself the fond heart gave,
As planets from afar look down on ocean
And give their own sweet image to the wave.
And thou didst bring from foreign lands their treasures,
As floats thy various melody along;
We know the softness of Italian measures,
And the grave cadence of Castilian song.
A general bond of union is the poet,
By its immortal verse is language known,
And for the sake of song do others know it -
One glorious poet makes the world his own.
And thou, how far thy gentle sway extended -
The heart's sweet empire over land and sea;
Many a stranger and far flower was blended
In the soft wreath that glory bound for thee.
The echoes of the Susquehanna's waters
Paused in the pine-woods, words of thine to hear,'
And to the wide Atlantic's younger daughters'
Thy name was lovely and thy song was dear.

Was not this purchased all too dearly? - never
Can fame atone for all that fame hath cost.

We see the goal but know not the endeavour,

Nor what fond hopes have on the way been lost.
What do we know of the unquiet pillow
By the worn cheek and tearful eyelid pressed,
When thoughts chase thoughts like the tumultuous billow
Whose very light and foam reveals unrest?
We say the song is sorrowful, but know not
What may have left that sorrow on the song;
However mournful words may be, they show not
The whole extent of wretchedness and wrong.
They cannot paint the long sad hours passed only
In vain regrets o er what we feel we are.
Alas, the kingdom of the lute is lonely -
Cold is the worship coming from afar.
Yet what is mind in woman but revealing
In sweet clear light the hidden world below,
By quicker fancies and a keener feeling
Than those around, the cold and careless, know?
What is to feed such feeling, but to culture
A soil whence pain will never more depart?
The fable of Prometheus and the vulture
Reveals the poet s and the woman s heart.
Unkindly are they judged, unkindly treated
By careless tongues and by ungenerous words,
While cruel sneer and hard reproach repeated
Jar the fine music of the spirit's chords.
Wert thou not weary, thou whose soothing numbers
Gave other lips the joy thine own had not?
Didst thou not welcome thankfully the slumbers
Which closed around thy mourning human lot?

What on this earth could answer thy requiring,
For earnest faith - for love, the deep and true,
The beautiful, which was thy soul's desiring,
But only from thyself its being drew!
How is the warm and loving heart requited
In this harsh world, where it awhile must dwell;
Its best affections wronged, betrayed and slighted -
Such is the doom of those who love too well.
Better the weary dove should close its pinion,
Fold up its golden wings and be at peace;
Enter, oh ladye, that serene dominion
Where earthly cares and earthly sorrows cease.

Fame's troubled hour has cleared, and now replying,
A thousand hearts their music ask of thine;
Sleep with a light, the lovely and undying,
Around thy grave - a grave which is a shrine.

Elizabeth Barrett
Felicia Hemans

From *A Selection from the Poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. NY: MacMillan and Co., 1884. 87-89.

To L.E.L., referring to her monody on the poetess.

Thou bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned Dead art bowing,
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow throwing,
And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music wedding,
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes the tears not of their shedding!-- 4

Take music from the silent Dead whose meaning is completer,
Reserve thy tears for living brows where all such tears are meeter,
And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where thou treadest:
No flowers for her! no need of flowers, albeit "bring flowers," thou saidest. 8

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute," since both may come to breaking,
Or flowers, to greet the "bride" -- the heart's own beating works its aching;
Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight, from earth's free bosom gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it withered: 12

But bring not near the solemn corse a type of human seeming,
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming;
And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,
Her spherëd soul shall look on *them* with eyes more bright and holy. 16

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was mourning:
Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the burning?
The minstrel harp for the strained string? the tripod for the afflated
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone dilated? 20

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand her brow was wreathing,
But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed in all her breathing,
Which drew from rocky earth and man, abstractions high and moving,
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving. 24

Such visionings have paled in sight; the Savior she descrieth,
And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His bosom lieth:

The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments flowing,
There learneth she the sweet 'new song' she will not mourn in knowing.

Be happy, crowned and living One! and as thy dust decayeth
May thine own England say for thee what now for Her it sayth--
"Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,
The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her singing."

Elizabeth Barrett
L.E.L.'s Last Question
1819

From *The Athenaeum*, no. 587 (26 January 1819) 69

'Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?" She said it from the sea,
The english minstrel in her minstrelsy,
While under brighter skies than erst she knew
Her heart grew dark, and groped as the blind,
To touch, across the waves, friends left behind -
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

It seemed not much to ask - 'as I of you?'
We all do ask the same - no eyelids cover
Within the meekest eyes that question over;
And little in this world the loving do
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
The echo of their own love evermore;
Do you think of me as I think of you?

Love-learned, she had sung of only love,
And as a child asleep (with weary head
Dropped on the fairy book he lately read),
Whatever household noises round him move,
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence -
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,
When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries
Were broken in her visionary eyes
By tears, the solemn seas attested true -
Forgeting that sweet lute beside her hand
She asked not, 'Do you praise me, oh my land?'
But 'Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?'

True heart to love, that poured many a year
Love's oracles for England, smooth and well
Would God thou hadst an inward oracle

In that lone moment, to confirm thee dear!
For when thy questioned friends in agony
Made passionate response,'We think of thee,'
Thy place was in the dust - toodeep to hear!

Could she not wait to catch the answering breath?
Was she content with that drear ocean's sound,
Dashing his mocking infinite around
The craver of a little love, beneath
Those stars, content - where last her song had gone?
They, mute and cold in radiant life, as soon
Their singer was to be, in darksome death!

Bring your vain answers, cry, 'We think of thee!'
'How think ye of her? In the long ago
Delights, or crowned by new bays? Not so;
None smile, and none are crowned where lyeth she,
With all her visions unfulfilled - save one,
Her childhood's, of the palm-trees in the sun:
And lo, their shadow on her sepulchre!

Do you think of me as I think of you?
Oh friends, oh kindred, oh dear brotherhood
Of the whole world, what are we that we should
For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other, when the touch
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much,
This 'Think upon me as I think of you.'

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues, verily
Above tht unshaken stars that see us die,
A vocal pathos rolls - and He who drew
All life from death and for all tasted death,
By death, and life, and love appealing, saith,
'Do you think of my as I think of you?'

Appendix 7

SONNET

Percy Bysshe Shelley
Lift not the painted veil...
1818

From *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley in Verse and Prose.* Vol. III. Ed. Harry Buxton Forman. London: Reeve and Turner, 1880.

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread. — behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin destinies; who ever weave
Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
I knew one who had lifted it — he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love
But found them not, alas! Nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

Appendix 8

Edmund Spenser

On Cloaks

From "A View of the Present State of Ireland." 1596. In *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, vol. 10. Ed. Edwin Greenlaw et alia. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1949. 39-231.

Iren: They haue another Custome from the *Scythians* that is the wearinge of mantells and longe glibbes which is a thicke Curle bushe of haire hanginge downe over theire eyes and monstrouslye disguisinge them which are bothe very bad and hurtefull

Eudox: Doe ye thinke that the mantle cometh from the *Scythians* I would surelye thinke otherwise, ffor by that which I haue red it appeareth that moste nacons in the worlde antientlye vsed the mantle ffor the Iewes vused it as yee maye read of *Elyas* mantle of . The Chaldees allso vsed it as ye maie reade in *Diadorus* The Egyptians likewise vsed it as ye maye reade in *Herodotus* and maye be gathered by the discripcion of *Berenice* in the greke Comentaries vppon *Callymachus* The Greekes allso vsed it auciently as appeares by venus mantle lyned with Starrs, thoughe afterwardes they Chaunged the forme thereof into theire Clokes called *Pallia* as some of the Irishe allso vuse and the Ancient Latine and Romaines vsed it as yee maye Reade in Virgill whoe was a verye greate *Antiguary* that *Evander* when *Aeneas* Came unto him at his feaste did entertaine and feaste him sittinge one the grounde and lyinge one mantles In soe muche as he vsethe the verie word *mantile* for a mantle *mantilia sternunt* soe that it semethe that the mantle was a generall habit to moste nacions and not proper to the Scithians as ye suppose

Iren: I Cannot denye but Anciently it was Comon to maste and yeat sithence disvsed and laied awaie But in this Latter age of the worlde since

the decaie of the Romaine Empire it was renewed and broughte in againe by those Northern nacions, when breakinge out of theire Cold Caves and frozen habitacion into the swete soil of *Eurpoe* they broughte with them theire vsuall weekes fitt to shilde the Coulde and that Continvall froste to which they had been at home envred The which yeat they lefte not of by reason that they weare in perpetuall warrs with the nacions whom they had invaded but still removinge from place to place Carried allwaies with them that weede as theire house theire bed and theire garment, and Comminge Lastelye into Ireland they founde theare more speciall vse thereof by reasone of the rawe Colde climate from whom it is now growen into that generall vse in which that people now haue it. Afterwarde the Africanes succedinge yeat findinge the like necessitye of that garment Continved the like vse thereof

Eudox: Since then the necessitie thearof is so Commodious as ye alleadge that it is in stead of howsinge beddinge and Cloathinge what reason haue youe then to wishe so necessarye a thinge Caste of

Iren: Because the Comoditye dothe not Countervaile The discomoditie ffor the inconveniences which thearby do arise are muche more manye, for it is a fitt howsse for an outlawe a bete bedd for a Rebell and an Apte cloake for a thefe, ffirste the Outlawe beinge fir his manye Crymes and villanies banished from the Townes and howses of honeste men and wanderinge in waste places far from daunger of lawe maketh his mantle his howsse and vnder it Couerethe him self from the wrathe of heaven from the offence of the earthe and from the sighte of men. when it raynethe it is his pentise, when it blowethe it is his Tent, when it frezethe it is his Tabernacle. In sommer he cane weare it Lose, in winter he Cane wrapp it Close. at all times he Cane vse it, never heavye neuer Cumbersome. Likewise for a Rebell it is as serviceable, ffor in his warr that he makethe (yf at leaste it deserve the name of warr, when he still flyethe from his foe and lurketh in the thicke woods and straighte passages, waythinge for Advantages) it is his bedd yea and allmoste all his houseboulde stuffe, for the wood is his house againste all weathers and his mantle is his Cave to slepe in Thearein he wrappeth hinself round and

ensconceth himselfe strongelye againste the gnattes which in that Contry doe more Annoye the naked rebells whileste they kepe the woodes and doe more sharpelye wounde them then all theire enemyes swordes or speares which cane seldome Come nighe them, yea and often times theire mantle servethe them when they are neare driven beinge wrapped aboute theire left arme in steade of a Targett for it is hard to Cutt thorought it with a sword besides it is lighte to beare, lighte to throwe awaie, and beinge as they then Comonlye are naked it is to them all in all. Lastlie for a Thefe it is so hansome as it may seme it was firste invented for him, ffor vnder it he Cane Clenlye Connvaye anye fitt pillage that Comethe handesomelye in his wai, and when he goeth abroade in the nighte on freebotinge it is his beste and sureste friende for lyinge as they often doe two or three nightes togeather abroade to watche for theire bootye with that they Cane pretelye shroude themseluves vunder a bushe or a banke side till they maye Conveniently doe theire errande, And when all is done he Cane in his mantle passe throughte anye Towne of Companye being Closse hooded ouer his heade as he vsethe from knowledge of anie to whom he is endangered. Besides all this he or anie man els that is disposed to mischief or villanye maye vnder his mantle goe privilye armed without suspicion of anye Carrye his heade pece his sheane or pistoll if he please to be allwaies in readines. Thus necessarie is and fittinge is a mantle for a badd man. and surelye for a bad huswif it is no lesse Conveniente for some of them that bee these wanderinge weomen Called of them *monashul* It is haulfe a wardrope for in sommer ye shall finde her arrayed Comonlye but in her smocke and mantle to be more readye for her light services In winter and in her travell it is her Cloake and safegarde and allsoe a Coverlett for her Lewed exercises. And when she hathe filled her vessell vnder it she may hide bothe her burden and her blame. yea and when her bastard is borne it serues in steade of all her swaddling cloutes, her mantells, her Crades, with which others are vainly Combred. And as for all other good weomen which love to doe but little work hoew hansome it is to lye in and slepe and to louse them selues in the sunshine they that haue bene but a while in Irelande Can well wittnese, Sure I ame that yee

will thinke it verye vnfitt for good huswiffe to stirre in to to busy herselfe aboute her huswifrye in sorte as they shoulde. These be some of Thabuses for which I woulde thinke it mete to forbidd all mantells. 1645

Appendix 9

APPEARANCES IN *FRANKENSTEIN* OF WORDS BASED ON "FOLD"

"...foldings of a vale..." (40)

"Curiousity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, as they were unfolded to me... "(42)

"...had she [Elizabeth] not unfolded to him [Clerval] the real loveliness of beneficence..." (43)

"...unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of nature" (51)

"...graveworms crawling in the folds of the flannel..." (58)

It [the history of the De Laceys] was one which could not fail to impress itself deeply on my mind, unfolding as it did a number of circumstances... (107)

"I bent over her and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress" (124)

"If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them an hundred and an hundred fold... "(125)

Victor's "...manifold miseries..." (130)

"...love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding..." (183).

Appendix 10

APPEARANCES IN *JERUSALEM* OF WORDS BASED ON "LOOM"

The Male is a Furnace of beryll; the Female is a golden Loom (5:34)

Prepare the furniture, O Lambeth, in thy pitying looms! (12:38)

... a moat of fire
Surrounds Luban, Los's Palace & the golden Looms of Cathedron. (13:24-25)

He [Los] views the City of Golgonooza & its smaller Cities;
The Looms & Mills & Prisons & Work-houses of Og & Anak (13:56-57)

I turn my eyes to the Schools & Universities of Europe,
And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages dire,
Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton... (15:11-13)

Scotland pours out his Sons to labour at the Furnaces;
Wales gives his Daughters to the Looms... (16:22-23)

But Los himself against Albion's Sons his fury bends, for he
Dare not approach the Daughters openly lest he be consumèd
In the fires of their beauty & perfection & be Vegetated beneath
Their Looms, in a Generation of death & ressurection to forgetfulness. (17:6-9)

Albion speaks to Vala and Jerusalem:
...Vala! O that thou wert pure,
That the deep wound of Sin might be clos'd up with the Needle
And with the Loom...(21:12-14)

Submitting to be call'd Enitharmon's daughters and be born
In vegetable mould, created by the Hammer and Loom (40:55-56)

Los speaks:
Entune, Daughters of Albion, your hymning Chorus mildly,
Cord of affection thrilling extatic on the iron Reel
To the golden Loom of Love, to the moth-labour'd Woof,
A Garment and Cradle weaving for the infantine terror (56:11-14)

And in the North Gate, in the West of the North, toward Beulah,
Catherdron's Looms are builded; (59:22-23)

And one daughter of Los sat at the fiery reel, & another
sat at the shining Loom, with her Sisters attending round:(59:26-27)

Terrible their distress, & their sorrow cannot be utter'd.
And another Duaghter of Los sat at the Spinning Wheel:
Endless their labour, with bitter food, void of sleep:
Tho' hungry, they labour: they rouse themselves, anxious,
Hour after hour labouring at the whirling wheel;
Many Wheels, & as many lovely Daughters sit weeping.
Yet the intoxicating delight that they take in their work
Obliterates every other evil: none pities their tears,
Yet they regard not pity & they expect no one to pity;
For they labour for life & love, regardless of any one
But the poor Spectres that they work for always, incessantly.
They are mock'd by every one that passes by: they regard not:
They labour, & when their Wheels are broken by scorn & malice
They mend them sorrowing with many tears & afflictions.

Other Daughters Weave on the Cushion & Pillow Network fine,
That Rahab & Tirzah may exist & live & breathe & love.
Ah, that it could be as the Daughters of Beulah wish!

Other Daughters of Los, labouring at Looms less fine,
Create the Silk-worm & the Spider & the Catterpiller
To assist in their most grievious work of pity & compassion. (59:35-37)

And she [Vala] put forth her hand upon the Looms in dreadful howlings,
Til she vegetated into a hungry Stomach & a devouring tongue. (64:7-8)

The stamping feet of Ragan upon the flaming treadles of her Loom,
That drop with crimson gore with the Loves of Albion & Canaan (64:36-37)

...for every Female is a Golden Loom (67:4)

The Rocks are opake hardnesses covering all Vegetated things.
And as they Wove & Cut from the Looms in various divisions (67:5-6)

The golden cords of the Looms animate beneath their touches soft
Along the Island white among the Druid Temples... (82:14-15)

Gwendolyn speaks:
And let the Looms of Enitharmon & the Furnaces of Los
Create Jerusalem & Babylon & Egypt & Moab & Amalek... (82:26-27)

The envy ran thro' Cathedron's Looms into the Heart
Of mild Jerusalem, to destroy the Lamb of God. (82:52-53)

The Sisters saw: trembling ran thro' their Looms, soften[in]g mild
Towards London (82:75-76)

Swift turn the silver spindles, & the golden weights play soft
And lulling harmonies beneath the Looms... (83:69-71)

...his [Los's] daughters at their looms sing woes.
His emanation separates in milky fibres agonizing
Among the golden Looms of Cathedron, sending fibres of love... (86:37-39)

Enitharmon who at her shining Looms sings lulling cadences (88:45)

Conwenna sat above: with solemn cadences she drew
Fibres of life out from the Bones into her golden Loom. (90:21-22)

For the male is a Furnace of beryll: the Female is a golden Loom. (90:27)

'This sinful Nation Created in our Furnaces & Looms is Albion.' (92:6)

The Poet's Song draws to its period & Enitharmon is no more.
For if he be that Albion I can never weave him in my Looms;
But when he touches the first fibrous thread, like filmy dew
My Looms will be no more & I anihilate vanish for ever. (92:8-11)

...in his burning hand
He [Albion] takes his Bow, then chooses out his arrows of flaming gold.
Murmuring the Bowstring breathes with arbor; clouds roll round the
Horns of the wide Bow; loud sounding winds sport on the mountain brows.
Compelling Urizen to his Furrow & Tharmas to his Sheepfold
And Luvah to his Loom... (95:12-17)

Appendix 11
CRITICAL RECEPTION AND SOURCES FOR "THE LIFTED VEIL"

Critical reception of "The Lifted Veil" has varied greatly since its publication in 1859. Although the story initially received an unremarkable amount of notice, including an April 1878 review by Henry James (Kidd 37n1), Knoepflmacher cites only one academic article — Elliot L. Rubinstein's 1962 "A Forgotten Tale By George Eliot" (Knoepflmacher 130n4) — prior to his 1969 publication of *George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism*. In the seventies, a scant few more articles arrived, notably Gillian Beer's "Myth and the Single Consciousness: *Middlemarch* and 'The Lifted Veil'" (1975), and Hugh Witemeyer's "George Eliot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (1979). However, also in 1979 Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar published their feminist tome *The Madwoman in the Attic*, which included a long section entitled "Made Keen By Loss: George Eliot's Veiled Vision." Their reading of "The Lifted Veil" is not without problems (for example, they equate narrator and author [448], and misread Latimer's horror over Mrs. Archer's posthumous revelation as due to its unexpectedness, rather than its inevitability [447]), but their notice raised the story from obscurity, and it has since been the subject of a number of critical studies, many cited in this chapter. Despite this slight rennaisance, the early critical paucity continues to haunt the story: as late as 1996, Jane Wood felt justified in stating "[f]ew Eliot scholars have paid more than cursory attention to this strange tale" (161).

Perhaps the former disregard contributes to an ongoing anxiety among academic critics who frequently seem almost to campaign to place "The Lifted Veil" in a

canonical context. The most frequently raised pre-text to "The Lifted Veil" is *Frankenstein*, about which Knoepflmacher intones

> Like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which had been composed during its author's sojourn in Switzerland in 1816, 'The Lifted Veil' is a fantasy which partly stems from a highly imaginative Englishwoman's metamorphosis of an alien European environment. (139)

Eliot biographer Rosemary Ashton states that Eliot's story comes almost exactly between "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886)" (219). Like R. Ashton, Judith Wilt situates "The Lifted Veil" between texts, characterizing the revivification scene as an "echo of *Frankenstein*, shadow of *Dracula*" (185).

Wilt goes on to cite Maturin's gothic novel "Melmoth" as a source for "The Lifted Veil" (185). She is not alone in placing "The Lifted Veil" among Gothic writers, including Poe (Gilbert and Gubar 470, Gray 408) and Hawthorne (Gilbert and Gubar 470, Witemeyer 127, Beer 93), or even Dickens, as Gray notes:

> ..."The Lifted Veil" seems to arouse embarrassment rather than interest, as if there were a general wish either that it had not been written at all or that it had been written by someone more appropriate — Poe, perhaps, with whose "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" it has a superficial affinity, or Dickens, whose reputation could easily accommodate the climactic scene.... (Gray 408, see also Gilbert and Gubar 470)

At the time of "The Lifted Veil," Eliot had written only one of the novels which made her career. Gray includes Dickens not because of the Victorian author's gothicism but because his further-developed career could encompass something as uncharacteristic as psychic phenomena and revivification from a pen reputed for realism.

Yet another ancestral line suggested for Eliot's "strange tale" (Wood 161) passes through the Romantics, though it begins much earlier. Latimer "himself cites Tasso,

Swift, Novalis, each of whom he resembles in certain respects. Furthermore, the central issue of the story — the moral liabilities of a hyperactive artistic imagination — postdates Rousseau" (Witemeyer 127). Gilbert and Gubar list writers Eliot "repeatedly quotes — Blake, Byron, Goethe, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats" (452), suggesting them as patterns for Latimer, while Anne Wallace argues very persuasively that "'The Lifted Veil' ... confronts Wordsworth, Eliot's own master voice..." (43), an argument with which James Decker agrees in "Interpreting Latimer: Wordsworthian martyr or Textual Alchemist?" (1992).

The Romantic poem most frequently cited by contemporary critics is P.B. Shelley's sonnet "Lift not the painted veil." However, there are significant differences in the ways Eliot and P.B. Shelley use their 'veil' tropes with regards to death. Unlike the sonnet, the veils in Eliot's story never mark the difference between mortals and immortals: the closest it gets is the "dark veil" (Eliot, "The Lifted Veil" 167) describing Mrs. Archer's death, a defining *mortal* phenomenon. Despite the lack of evidence that Eliot used "Lift not..." as a direct source for "The Lifted Veil," literary analysts fequently refer to the sonnet. There is at least as much proof — that is to say, none — that Eliot was thinking of Blake's archers (cf. the disussion in chapter five) when she named Mrs. Archer, who is, more directly, the deliverer of barbed accusations aimed at Latimer's heart ... poison-tipped barbs at that.

A more probable source for Eliot's use of veils as a central symbol in "The Lifted Veil" is William Gregory's "Letters to a Candid Inquirer on Animal Magnetism" (1851), with which Eliot was almost certainly familiar (Bull 246). Gregory describes the experience of being mesmerized or hypnotized as "a veil, as it were, drawn before the eyes, concealing the operator's face and other objects"' (Gregory 78). In "'The Lifted Veil' and George Eliot's Early Aesthetic" (1984) Carroll Viera also notes Eliot's

familiarity with Goethe's writing, and suggests that his "use of the veil and its relationship to poetic fulfilment, clarity and truth perhaps suggested to George Eliot the configuration of associations which provide the central imagery for developing Latimer" (Viera 760). Gregory and Goethe, then, are more likely ancestors of Eliot's use of veils than P.B. Shelley's sonnet "Lift not the painted veil...."

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