Mary Shelly, Emily Bronte, and Christina Rossetti: The literature of disability

Georgia E Standish

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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MARY SHELLEY, EMILY BRONTË, AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI:
THE LITERATURE OF DISABILITY

by

Georgia E. Standish
Bachelor of Arts
University of British Columbia
1984

Master of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1990

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree in English
Department of English
College of Liberal Arts

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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Georgia E. Standish

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Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

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ABSTRACT

Mary Shelley, Emily Brontë, and Christina Rossetti: The Literature of Disability

by

Georgia E. Standish

Dr. Beth Rosenberg, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of English
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Many scholarly studies have examined illness, sickness, and invalidism in British nineteenth-century fiction. Few have explored these concepts in both fiction and poetry as "disabilities." This study traces the origins of the concept of disability in the poetic and fictional representations in three nineteenth-century key women authors: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights and her poetry, and Christina Rossetti's "Monna Innominata: A Sonnet of Sonnets" and "Goblin Market." Significant to the early development of the concept of disability is the emergence of the related concept of normalcy in the nineteenth-century. Along with the concept of normalcy are also the related concepts of nature and the feminine that represent the unstable material (the body) that is the root of all disability. The literature of these women, on the one hand, moves to "frame" and "contain" the unstable and worldly material, but, on the other hand, their representations show that the material body is irrepressible and control is impossible; representations of the material body insist on visibility. I suggest that this concept and its polar concept, abnormal, underpin the representations of disability and...
that the writers' connotative representations manifest the struggle between these polarities. Through textual readings, this dissertation suggests that Shelley, Brontë, and Rossetti, writing within British nineteenth-century culture that was, perhaps, progressively more concerned with social norms, struggled with ways in which to regard the body and its disabilities.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Imperfection is . . . the sign of life in a mortal body . . . of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent.

— John Ruskin, Stones of Venice (1851)

This dissertation explores the British nineteenth-century fictional and poetic representations of disability in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights and her poetry, and Christina Rossetti's poetry. Although their literature treats the issue of disability in very different ways, all are writing during the period in which the concept of normalcy was emerging (Shelley) or flourishing (Brontë and Rossetti). I suggest that this concept is operative in the authors' works. This dissertation is not a history of disability, nor does it dispute relevant nineteenth-century terms such as "invalidism." Employing the methods of contemporary disability studies and that of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic, I treat the literature of these writers as nineteenth-century documents that suggest insight into the early development of the concept of disability. Through these readings, I also suggest that these women writers struggle with disability in a nineteenth-century milieu that was increasingly insistent on segregating those who differed from proscribed physical, emotional, and intellectual norms. The reader will gain insight into how nineteenth-century women represent bodily differences in themselves and in others.
Shelley's *Frankenstein* manifests the construction of disability as monstrous and presages Victorian eugenics; Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* illustrates the Victorian impulse to privilege normalcy by repressing and controlling nature and materiality and simultaneously highlights nature's insistent presence. Brontë's poetry exhibits contradiction: in its use of Romantic theme and convention, it embodies normalcy, maintaining an abled world of stability. In effect, it frames and erases the difference of the "disabled body," attaching pejorative connotations to disability. Despite its norming impulses, however, Brontë's poetry also markedly privileges the unstable, feminine and material body. Written in the latter half of the century, Rossetti's poetry, as a harbinger of modern poetry that I implicitly associate with a poetics of feminine visibility also exhibits a similar contradictory tension. Yet Rossetti's sonnet sequence, "Monna Innominata," and her narrative poem, "Goblin Market," advance with an unprecedented intensity well beyond the boundaries of normalcy, allowing instability unprecedented play.

Although disabilities pervade our culture and our bodies, they have been largely unrecognized in literary studies until recently. In the early 1920s Virginia Woolf comments in her essay, "On Being Ill," that "the daily drama of the body"-- illness and physical pain-- is unrecorded (10). She notes how common illness is and how powerful its influence on body and soul: she is baffled by its silence in literature (mainly fiction), which does its best to "maintain that its concern is with the mind" (9). Indeed, bodily imperfection is seen as a province of the deviant, and critics seem to ignore it. Interestingly, Virginia Woolf suffered the debilitating disease of lupus. Few know this, and still fewer write about it. And yet, human physical and mental impairments--
disabilities—are, as Woolf points out, ubiquitous. Disability studies advocate and scholar, Lennard Davis in his book, *Enforcing Normalcy*, offers some startling facts about the simultaneous pervasiveness and invisibility of the disabled. Worldwide, one person in ten is disabled, in the United States, one in seven. These figures do not include the indigent (one in ten), those with breast cancer (one in eight) and other debilitating diseases, the most recent and powerful being AIDS (7). Moreover, scores of well-known writers, artists and politicians are (or were) disabled: Alexander Pope (hunchbacked, dwarfed); John Keats (chronic eye problems, tuberculosis); George Gordon Byron (clubfoot); Harriet Martineau (deaf); Beethoven (deaf); John Milton, James Joyce, Jose Luis Borges, and James Thurber (blind); Toulouse-Lautrec (spinal deformity); Frida Kahlo (osteomyelitis) (Davis *Enforcing 6; Disability Studies Reader 4*). Franklin Roosevelt's legs were paralyzed from polio, and Fyodor Dostoevsky, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Truman Capote, Vincent VanGogh, Peter Tchaikovsky, Georg Friedrich Handel were all epileptic.¹ Lewis Carroll, Somerset Maugham, Margaret Drabble, John Updike, Charles Darwin, Winston Churchill and Elizabeth Bowen are, or were, all stutterers.²

Further, current criticism of the works that I have selected is, for the most part, uninformed by the perspectives disability studies have to offer. Neither the prose nor the poetry of Shelley, Brontë, and Rossetti, are deeply discussed in light of their own disabilities or those with disabilities that directly affected them. And yet, the effect of disability on literary production is potentially significant. Much recent feminist work on Victorian women poets focuses steadily on gender and poetic form but not on disability.³ In addition, many scholars have considered health and illness in literature, seeing the
body in relation to language and power, influenced by Michel Foucault's critiques of institutional and cultural discursive control and power. And many, as Davis points out, have been interested in the body as sick, freakish, or diseased: Sander Gilman on disease and culture in *Picturing Health and Illness: Images of Identity and Difference*, Erving Goffman on the stigma of disease in *Stigma*, and Susan Sontag in *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and its Metaphors* (*Disability Studies Reader* 4).

There is also much recent work that addresses women, fiction, and illness in the nineteenth century. This criticism mainly interrogates the body in terms of "illness," and "sickness," and particularly, "invalidism." Athena Vrettos, in *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture*, examines narratives in Britain and America to see how culture constructs and interprets women somatically in order to understand the building blocks of behavior and gender identity. Vrettos suggests that we seek to understand illness not as a feature of the physical body but rather as a social construct. Illness and the physical body, from this theoretical viewpoint, are produced and experienced through cultural discourses that shape the way we imagine our bodies and our illnesses. Without rejecting the biological and medical reality of illness, Vrettos examines how the nineteenth century perceives and conceives illness. Diane Price Herndl, in *Invalid Women*, analyzes the cultural context in which various disparaging and invalidating representations of women appeared. Using fiction as her medium, Price Herndl looks at how American culture views women's sicknesses, turning up a "discourse of illness" that interprets and represents and "in-validates" women who are ill. Additionally, Marla H. Frawley, in *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, considers invalidism as a nineteenth-century culture. Frawley's work examines
the meaning of invalidism and identity in nineteenth-century Britain and how that "culture of invalidism tells us about a particular moment in literary, medical, and social history" (12).

By focusing only on terms historically relevant to the period of the nineteenth century, the work of these scholars, however, in part, perpetuates attitudes toward the physically impaired as an isolated and subordinated few. For instance, Price Herndl seems to prefer the term "invalid" to "sick woman" because "invalid" captures the ill woman’s relation to her culture, which regards her not only as diseased but also as powerless or "not-valid" (1), but Price Herndl likewise has a tendency to isolate the ill woman by defining her in contrast to the "healthy" woman, whom she describes as "well enough to make decisions about [her] own [body] " (xii). By isolating illness as solely pathological, Price Herndl segregates and marginalizes the ill. She describes illness and invalidism as a "health problem" (xii), and she seems to see that "problem" through ableist eyes. Price Herndl overlooks the arbitrariness of the opposite label, "unhealthy," and in so doing avers that anyone whom we might label "unhealthy" is not well enough to make decisions about her body. She further separates the ill from the well body when she says:

Illness has been and, one hopes, will continue to be an issue that affects only a few at any given time. The well always out number the sick, and the sick have too much to worry about to make illness a political issue. Illness isolates; it separates us from one another. Our experience of illness is individual; our experience of pain is solitary. (xiii)
This description seems to see illness as it has always been seen, from a narrow medically delineated perspective. Women (and men) who are "ill" or "invalid" or "sick" are regarded as in some way separate from the "average" or "normal." Indeed, as Longmore and Umansky point out, the bio-medical model of disability (if the ill can be seen as the disabled) "defines disability as caused primarily by any series of pathologies located in the bodies or minds of individuals"(7) who cannot perform or function "normally." This model, or the "deficit paradigm," as Simi Linton calls it, keeps "the focus . . . on the individual as deviant subject, rather than on the social structures that label difference as deviance and pathology" (qtd. in Longmore and Umansky 7). So, although Price Herndl says explicitly that she is not studying women's health (xiii), and although she pursues an analysis of the "figure" of the ill subject within a historical and textual context, her terms inadvertently secure the ill subject in an anomalous category, within the more dominant category of gender. Illness remains an adjective in relation to its host, the noun, "gender"; it is not a host-term itself. Thus, the ill or disabled subject (what Price Herndl's examples of representation represent) remains both conceptually and literally marginalized. However, perhaps one way to desegregate is to recognize illness, sickness, mental disease, and impairment, as disabilities, belonging within the definition and category of disability studies, which is a broader, more inclusive category. Whereas "illness" or "sickness" excludes disability, "disability" includes the "ill" and the "sick"—effectively erasing boundaries. The question becomes: Why are we reluctant to visualize disability as ordinary and incorporate it into our critical lives? What makes us think that the writing of women (and men) is not profoundly affected by their bodies and by cultural attitudes toward those bodies?
In part, the answer lies in our traditional understanding of disability. The disabled are objectified and isolated. Objectification paradoxically erases them as an equal and viable body. To mainstream society, it seems obvious who the disabled are: they cannot do what the average person can do, or, they do something exceptionally, almost freakishly well. Different bodies are showcased in "freak" shows, in the extraordinary bodies of supermodels and heavyweight champions or in sympathetic portrayals of the maimed (Christopher Reeves) or the "unfortunate." As Davis points out, Milton's, Beethoven's and Stevie Wonder's disabilities are amplified to glorify male creativity. Helen Keller is identified solely by her multiple disabilities (Enforcing 6-7).

Most importantly, as previously mentioned, disability is defined as pathology. Author Kleinman, in The Illness Narratives, indicts the medical community's objectification of illness as a major contributor to the alienation of sick people (therefore impeding healing) from their caregivers. The meaning of illness "has atrophied in biomedical training" (xiv). Biomedical definitions contain illness (and disability) in personal, biological, and physiological terms, disempowering the ill and disabled by separating them from the mainstream population. Defined by these terms, the disabled person is seen as having particular limitations that preclude "normal" daily functioning. As Longmore and Umansky observe, such medical "objectivity" "personalizes disability, casting it as a deficit located within individuals that require rehabilitation to correct the physiological defect or to amend the social deficiency" (7). This view reckons the individual as culpable; the disabled person is regarded as less than human, justifiably, although tastefully, shunned. Certainly physical impairments are a biological fact--but they are facts that most of us will encounter in a meaningful way, either in ourselves or in those
with whom we live and work. Imagining the disabled as only a few who are burdened with biological misfortune isolates and marginalizes them. The "problem" of the disabled dwells not in the biology of the person but in our conceptions of disability.

Pioneering scholars in the field of disability studies explore our compulsion to avoid disability. Lennard Davis has written passionately on disability perspectives. The humanities, he says, lack an official "disability" category, largely because of discriminatory practices of an abelist culture that, until recently, marginalized differences of race, class, and gender: "If," Davis says, "one had tried to find the category 'composers female' in music history thirty years ago, there would have been no such category. Nor would one have found the category of 'African-American Literature.' Also, disability is subsumed within these now "stronger categories" (Disability Studies Reader 4). Further, Davis indicts the left's "fashionable discourse theory." Contemporary theory, says Davis, challenges the "dominant culture[s] rigid power-laden vision of the body," but in so doing limits itself to the (Kristevan) body as a "site of jouissance, a native ground of pleasure." The "nightmare of the body," the "deformed, maimed, mutilated, broken, [and] diseased [body]" is denied by modern theory (Enforcing 5).

Also hoping to increase awareness and further study of disability, Mitchell and Snyder attribute the avoidance of disability perspectives to two causes. First, people with disabilities are discounted rhetorically. As an audience with supposedly "special" needs and life experiences, they are set apart from mainstream readership. Secondly, just as women and minorities were once academically marginalized, so is there now a noticeable dearth of disabled academics and critics (2).
One important way that we perpetuate pejorative associations with disability, as Davis observes, is our process of self-definition and identity. He compares our impulse to segregate by skin color to our impulse to separate the disabled body from the normal social body: "Able-bodied . . . people safely wall-off the severely disabled so that they cannot be seen as part of a continuum of physical differences, just as white culture isolates blackness as skin color so as not to account for degrees of melanin production [to which we are potentially subject]." says Davis (Enforcing 7). Our perception of "whiteness" is critical to the maintenance of an absolute, stable sense of self. Further, Longmore and Umansky argue that disability in others creates an "existential anxiety" (6). The disabled body triggers repulsion installed by our social and cultural values and training—to be "normal," to be a "fit" American, is to be in control of one's body and one's destiny.5

Social stigma also plays a part in defining and marginalizing the disabled. A stigmatized person is defined as one who is "not quite human" by those whom Goffman calls "normals," those who do not apparently depart from "our normal expectations of what a human should be" (205). Thus, stigma has nothing inherently to do with the disabled or ill person's physicality. It is a social construction based on expectations, and the disabled as a result of stigma, are isolated. We shun the disabled out of fear that the stigmatized will, in turn, socially contaminate us. Kleinman, in The Illness Narratives, describes the isolation undergone by a woman inflicted with syphilis: "[S]he gave me a poignant sense of what it was like to bear the stigma of syphilis; she showed me how it affected her relations with her family and the men she met, leaving her shunned and isolated" (xii). It is reasonable to cite fear of instability, change, and difference as

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overarching motivations for the marginalization of disabled people. Fear generates our need to segregate those whom we define as different from ourselves from those whom we perceive as "normal."

Calling for a reconsideration of our understanding of disability, disability scholars argue for a broadening of traditional conceptions. Disability can be explored as a historical and discursive construction. As a "set of social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulate and control the way we think about and think through the body" (Davis Enforcing 2), disability should be understood as a "relation between the body and power" (Davis Disability Studies Reader 4). In a radical rearrangement of how we think of disability, we can consider the body (disabled or not) as much more than an object or physical fact:

[The body] is in fact a way of organizing through the realm of the senses the variations and modalities of physical existence as they are embodied into being through a larger social/political matrix. (Davis, Enforcing 14)

Conceptualizing disability as relative, historical, and discursive opens up the possibility of investigating the linguistic binaries that underpin its constructions: one is either disabled or not (Davis Enforcing 8). Polar categories that preclude an expansive understanding of disability, restricting us to common conceptions of the body and its identity as static, demand interrogation. Binaries such as male/female, straight/gay, for example, have been challenged, but assumptions about disabled/abled remain largely unexplored. Fostering exclusivity and separatism, binaries preclude the more accurate concept of the body as existing on a continuum (Davis Enforcing 11). Seeing the body as existing on a continuum, rather than as a transcendent, static, ahistorical or atemporal
object helps us to unfix disability from its frame. To do this, it is useful to consider
disability as a "moment" in time. As Davis notes, for example, "all readers are deaf" in
the moment of reading "because they are defined by a process that does not require
hearing or speaking." When we read, we are in a "moment of disability" (Enforcing 4).
Significantly, this moment is familiar to us all. Other familiar "moments of disability"
are the moments of blindness, deafness, and dumbness when we sleep or moments of
psychosis under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Seen in this way, traditional notions
and attitudes toward disability and the disabled are expanded.

My focus on disability also includes a consideration of gender. Nineteenth-
century women, as Gilbert and Gubar have shown, comprise a community or a "literary
sub-culture" (xii) that can be seen to address, in their representations, the concept of
normalcy and by extension, disability. Indeed, their textual representations of disability
are partly a response to dominant masculine culture's language and poetics. As Gilbert
and Gubar note, women writers were both socially and artistically "constrained." They
were "enclosed in the architecture of an overwhelmingly male-dominated society [and]
trapped in . . . literary constructs" (xi). This confinement alone suggests a literature of
disability.

In order to gain a greater understanding of the period and the influences on these
writers, it will be useful to trace both nineteenth-century attitudes toward disability at the
time of the emergence of the concept of normality and also the history of women as
deviant. Disability critics have noted that in nineteenth-century literature "disabled
bodies began to appear--and to be constructed (often in opposition to "healthy" bodies)
with some regularity" (LaCom 190). Douglas Baynton notes that the "rhetoric of
monstrosity" of Burke and Paine which defined the "monstrous" undesired political body in relation to what each perceived as the "natural"--the right--political body was eventually abandoned and "displaced [in the nineteenth century] or subsumed by the concept of normality" (35).

The early-Victorian period developed a modern terminology for, and an attitude toward, disability, a development coincident with the emergence of the conceptualization of personal and social normalcy. The emergence of the concept of normalcy and its related forms of knowledge and practice--statistics and eugenics--has been shown to inform our ways of understanding fitness. This conceptual umbrella helps us to "know" ourselves socially. It provides us with a way to define, categorize, medicalize, label and rank individuals. Performance levels are measured and standardized by the "average," and those who do not reach those normal performance levels, the physically and mentally different, are segregated. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the following etymology of the term "normal" through the nineteenth century. Defined as "constituting, conforming to, not deviating or differing from, the common type or standard," the word "normal" surfaced around 1840. "Norm," defined as "A standard, model, pattern, type" entered the language in 1821, with S. T. Coleridge’s comment in Blackwood’s Magazine that "Each [is] after its own norm or model." Coleridge’s conflation of "norm" and "model" became common around 1855. "Normality," "the character or state of being normal," initially appeared in 1849. In the last decade of the century, "normal" became linked to health, describing, "that which, or a person who, is healthy and is not impaired in any way." Walter Bateson in his 1894 Study of Variation uses "normal" to refer to an unimpaired, healthy (and even superior) group when he says,
"the belief that such races are descended from the putative normal scarcely ever rests on proof." In 1901 The American Journal of Psychology draws a familiar distinction between "the blind"--the impaired--and the "normals": "The blind rats learned the original task as well as the normals." Clearly, the implication is that the "normal" rats are superior to the blind. As might be expected, the negative term, "abnormal," also surfaced around 1835, first in a medical dictionary in the form of "anormal." In the Dictionary of Geology and Minerals, Hamble defines "abnormal" as "Irregular, unwonted, unnatural." The connotations of abnormal are clearly disparaging, and so the implications of "abnormal" begin to take shape. Charles Darwin's Origin of Species in 1873 uses the term most familiarly: "The wing of the bat is a most abnormal structure." "Abnormal" in this context retains a scientific and "objective" aura, while at the same time implies that there is something "wrong" with a bat's wing.

Significantly, it was in the nineteenth century that "average" or "normal" first implied a desired social standard. Indeed, the concept of the Western "middle class" (the class in between "high" and "low," thus, average or middling) is informed and regulated by the hegemony of the normal. As Baynton says, "Since [the nineteenth century], normality has been deployed in all aspects of modern life as a means of measuring, categorizing, and managing populations"(35). Although the history of the emergence of the concept "middle" in middle class is lengthy and complex, it is reasonable to say that the nineteenth century saw the explosion of the "middle" class as the most desirable social group.

Davis observes that normality and its effects are directly related to statistical averaging and the ensuing practice of eugenics. Statistics originated in the late-
eighteenth century and exploded as a social science—a way of managing and arranging human characteristics—in the nineteenth; the term "eugenic," the practice of improving the human race through genetic manipulation, also emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Historically, both statistics and eugenics are closely related with the concept of normality in that their discovery and invention took place right around the time of the slow emergence of the "middle class" and the emergence of the common usage of "normal." Even more significantly, statistics and eugenics are related to each other and to the concept of normal in terms of function: neither the concept of normal nor the practice of eugenics would be possible without statistical averaging. Statistical science plays an important role in creating and perpetuating the idea of normalcy on which the concept of disability depends: the way we conceive of disability depends upon the existence of a desired statistical norm and on the belief that falling outside that norm means being socially unacceptable.

Adolph Quetelet (1796-1847) introduced the scientific usage of statistics into nineteenth-century social science, and this use of statistical measurement lead to the emergence of the "norm" as a socially desired status and, ultimately, to the development of eugenics. Applying a method called the "error law," Quetelet averaged human physical characteristics. His tabulations showed that the majority of people settled under the highest point of the now-familiar bell-shaped curve. That segment of the population is "normal," and of course, those at either end of the curve are "abnormal." Quetelet's implicit logic is persuasive: his application of the error law avers that differences in human traits are in "error"; those outside the "norm" are considered "wrong." As Porter puts it, "the error law finally found its place in 1844 as the formula
governing deviations from an idealized 'average man.' Quetelet interpreted the applicability of this law as confirmation that human variability was fundamentally error” (Porter 7).

Quetelet's concept of the "average man" contributed powerfully to the bourgeois paradigm of the "normal" and morally desirable lifestyle of the "middling" middle class. Through Quetelet's work, the "middle" became the European standard. Linking the statistically average man to the "moral idea of the juste milieu" (Porter 101), Quetelet gives the average moral and political significance. Quetelet's words illustrate this link: "an individual who epitomized in himself, at a given time, all the qualities of the average man, would represent at once all the greatness, beauty and goodness of that being" (qtd. in Porter 102). Also, variations from the mean could signify pathology: "Deviations more or less great from the mean have constituted . . . ugliness in body as well as vice in morals and a state of sickness with regard to the constitution" (qtd. in Porter 103).

Interestingly, the pervasiveness of concept of "normal" in the nineteenth century also impacted the structure of the educational system. In 1834, schools that prepared teachers to teach were called "Normal Schools." The social and psychological implications of an early modern educational institute flagged with the name "normal" are meaningful in relation to our topic of difference and disability; the state educational mandate that funnels children into public school for the purposes of democratic enlightenment encourage conformity to an enforced "norm." Our contemporary state schools rank and grade children almost solely in relation to a constructed average, determining a child's projected social and personal worth. The accuracy and value of this method of standardization and its predictive power are arguable at best.
It is easy to see how Victorian society, undergoing radical industrial changes, imperial expansion and colonization, would make the move to eugenics in the attempt to eradicate what were now defined as subnormal, undesirable, human defects. In 1883, Francis Galton founded eugenics, studying human heredity and statistics as a source for human betterment (Porter 267). Galton's 1883 definition of eugenics runs thus:

[Eugenics is] the science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognizance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had. (qtd. in MacKenzie Statistics 251)

It is a science of erasure.

Galton's theory of eugenics offers insight into the influences and the pieces of the scientific puzzle that are the foundation of our conceptions of disability. First, from Quetelet in the eighteenth century, Galton takes the statistical error law as it is applied to human beings (MacKenzie Statistics 57) and the social ideal of perfecting the human race. By definition, statistical averaging skewers populations into normal and not-normal, presenting human traits and characteristics in a binary framework. This lays the groundwork for social exclusion of the disabled. Additionally, Galton takes the influential theories of evolution and natural selection from Charles Darwin. In 1871, Darwin suggested that heredity determines human traits. Darwinian theories dominated the scientific world-view of Victorian times and paved the way for eugenic practice. "Survival of the fittest" is indeed the underpinning for eugenics and, significantly, "for
the idea of a perfectible body undergoing progressive improvement" (Davis "Constructing" 14). Quetelet's statistical science and the biology of Darwin laid the foundation of the idea that the disabled are inherently "less-than" the normal human and, at best, in need of perfecting and improvement. However, the cultural rejection of--the erasure of--the disabled body can also be seen entwined with the historical construction of the feminine.

The concept of disability as "wrong" is entangled with gender. Historically, feminine nature and the female body are regarded as atypical. Both can be seen as metaphors for disability, a concept that is itself shaped and defined by the concept of the "normal." The roots of the idea of the female body as deviant reach back into classical history. Aristotle, in Generation of Animals, a biological study classifying animals and their biological and reproductive differences, systematically and scientifically links deviance and the female body. His theory is premised on the idea that the more heat an organism generates, the more perfectly developed that organism will be; Aristotle observes that women were colder than men; therefore, women are less perfect. He deduces in Book II of Generation that, "Just as it sometimes happens that deformed offspring are produced by deformed parents, and sometimes not, so the offspring produced by a female are sometimes female, sometimes not, but male. The reason is that the female is as it were a deformed male" (175). Additionally, Aristotle implies that the female is morally sullied with the adjective "impure" when he states that her "menstrual discharge is semen, though in an impure condition." And, without the male, the female has no soul. It is the male that injects the body with soul: "[T]his principle [of "Soul"]
has to be supplied by the semen of the male, and it is when the female’s residue secures this principle that a fetus is formed" (Aristotle 175).

According to Nancy Tuana these Aristotelian theories of female bodily deviance persisted into the Renaissance, and until the late-nineteenth century, scientists and doctors continued to base medical decisions and classifications upon parts of his theory (24). Two early philosophers, the Greek physician Galen (c. 130-200) and the Italian theologian and philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274), were particularly influential in promoting the biological inferiority of women. Galen supplements Aristotle’s insights with a particular focus on female genitals— they were, according to Galen, deviant and the source of her imperfection. Basing his ideas on Aristotle’s heat theory, Galen posited that during fetal formation the female’s lack of heat prohibited her genitals from projecting outside of the body; female genitalia "were formed within her when she was still a fetus, but could not because of the defect in the heat emerge and project on the outside" (14.2.299). As Tuana notes, Galen’s amendment of Aristotle’s theories remains influential as late as the first part of the twentieth century, surfacing in Freud’s remark that "portions of the male sexual apparatus also appear in women’s bodies, though in an atrophied state" (qtd. in Tuana 25).

The Aristotelian taxonomic method and the search for scientific definition gripped the nineteenth century; discourse rendering the female body freakish proliferated. In the United States, the evolutionist Edward Drinker Cope (1840-1879) theorized that woman is an infantilized version of man and, therefore, an aberrant. Based on studies of Europeans (the "superior" physical race), Cope produced a list of comparative physical traits of men and women, concluding that women were in possession of five
"underdeveloped" characteristics: "shorter legs, smaller muscles, absence of beard, low
superciliary ridges, and larger eyes; men had only two: narrow hips and short hair" (qtd.
in Tuana 43). Contemporary scientific theory had it that women and "savages"
represented a more primitive level of evolutionary development; therefore, Cope could
conclude that women, closer to the "savage" than the evidently superior white man, were
deviant (Tuana 43). In the same century, Darwin's theories of evolution and natural
selection likewise averred the deviance of the female. Darwin wrote that women had
weaker psychological traits and their bodies were less perfect than men (Tuana 38);
moreover, like Cope, Darwin infantilizes woman: "The female . . . in the formation of
her skull is said to be intermediate between the child and the man" (Darwin 717).

Nineteenth-century scientists studied variances in size between the female and
male brain, the male providing the standard. The smaller size of the female brain
("twelve to fourteen percent difference" in women and men) provided scientists with
"proof" that the female is physically deviant and, therefore, intellectually deficient (Tuana
69). Furthermore, menstruation and its ostensible restrictions on women's physical and
intellectual competence was the subject of much nineteenth-century investigation.
Menstruation was considered a disease, and during her cycle, woman was considered an
invalid (Vertinsky 7). Nineteenth-century scientific and medical discourse consistently
envisions the masculine as normal and the feminine as aberrant and disabled "other."

Such negative conceptions of the feminine also inform the Romantic and
Victorian cultural responses to the radical social-political shifts of the French Revolution,
an event seen to signify the rise of natural feminine authority over traditional masculine
authority. This rise of feminine power created a backlash to control it. 21 This cultural
response is represented in Shelley's, Brontë's, and Rossetti's writing. Their writing can be seen to simultaneously normalize and deny the instability of natural feminine power, which by extension denies the disabled body and also highlights feminine instability, inviting the disabled body to be seen.

The concept of normalcy and the struggle between the denial and the visibility of feminine nature inform my analysis of the literature of Shelley, Brontë, and Rossetti. Davis avers that the novel is a public venue that enforces and patrols normalcy ("Constructing" 23), thus creating the disabled as outsiders. Davis theorizes,

If we accept that novels are a social practice that arose as part of the project of middle-class hegemony, then we can see that the plot and character development [among other structures] tend to pull toward the normative. . . . The novel's goal is to reproduce, on some level, the semiologically normative signs surrounding the reader, that paradoxically help the reader to read those signs in the world as well as the text. Thus the middleness of life, the middleness of the material world, the middleness of the normal body, the middleness of a sexually gendered, ethnically middle world is created in symbolic form and then reproduced symbolically. This normativity in narrative will by definition create the abnormal, the Other, the disabled, the native, the colonized subject. . . . (22)

For Davis, writers' references to disability serve to maintain stability and normalcy in the face of the instability of the disabled body. Davis further broadens the literary venues that patrol stability:

[A]lmost any literary work will have some reference to the abnormal, to disability. . . . I would explain this phenomenon as a result of the hegemony of
normalcy. This normalcy must constantly be enforced in public venues (like the novel), must always be creating and bolstering its image by processing, comparing, constructing, deconstructing images of normalcy and the abnormal.

Although I take the concept of normalcy—and its attendant impulse to control feminine nature—as underpinning many representations in nineteenth-century literature, I also attempt to extend this position. My analysis reveals how literary texts also critique the social impulse to maintain normalcy. Each of the writers in this study implies that the repression of instability is an impossible project. Shelley makes the creature and his unstable body the causal center of her narrative; in the end, both the creature and the social monstrosity that "creates" his monstrous behavior refuse to die. Wuthering Heights likewise undercuts the stabilizing framework imposed by Nelly. It blurs the lines between the living and the dead and the Heights and the Grange, and the end of the novel seems to favor the instability of nature. Even the title word, "wuthering," challenges the hegemony of the static binaries of normal/abnormal.

My analysis examines both novels and poetry. But can we extend the already arguable argument that the novel is a middle-class venue for patrolling normalcy to poetry? Historically, the poem, unlike the novel, does not take as its purpose the reproduction of middle-class reality. As Davis notes, early English poetry was produced and read by an "ideal" class—an aristocratic elite; it depicts ideals, beginning with Beowulf's adulation of the warrior-hero. The concept of the "ideal" predates that of the norm, and its associations are with god-like forms, unreachable by mortal humans. A culture that privileges an ideal, then, excludes everyone, as no one can attain the ideal
state of being or ideal body (Enforcing 10). Poetry in this way seems to sidestep the strictures of norming. However, poetry, just like the novel, also adheres to the conventions of the culturally dominant group. Therefore, I suggest that the poetry of Brontë and Rossetti can be considered in the context of nineteenth-century cultural norming impulses. The poetry of each manifests normalcy's pull. In part, I access the operation of normalcy on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the surfacing and manifestation of instability in their poetry, via the poetic theory articulated in Anthony Easthope's Poetry As Discourse, a study that considers the sweep and movement of poetry in light of bourgeois poetic ideology and the erosion of that ideology in modern poetry. The hegemony of masculine Romantic poetics was, for the nineteenth century, poetic normalcy. Romanticism set the standard by which poetry was judged. It was this formidable bulwark of bourgeois masculinity that Brontë's and Rossetti's poetry confronted. Brontë's poetry seems to reveal an even conflict between stability and instability, and in the end, instability finds a privileged position in Rossetti's poetry. Manifest in her images, forms, and prosody is the modernist break-up of rigid and normative structures.

In the following paragraphs I will outline the theory of poetry that underwrites my position. Moreover, Easthope's definition of poetic discourse is significant to the study of disability generally and Brontë's and Rossetti's poetry particularly because it elucidates the dominance of the ideology of bourgeois, masculine poetic discourse over other forms of poetics, other voices. This ideology has dominated English poetry since Wyatt, Surrey, and Shakespeare. The Augustan period strengthened it, and
Romanticism (ironically) "rejoins and sustains the inherited poetic discourse rather than challenging it" (Easthope 133).

Easthope argues that traditional English poetics has two key characteristics. One is the acceptance of a traditional theory of language as a transparent vehicle through which ideas are conveyed, a theory described by Roman Jakobson. This position gives precedence to the essence, the mind of the actual person behind the voice, and views language a "transparent" vehicle of expression. The alternative view, favored by Jacques Derrida, asserts "the materiality of all discourse." According to Derrida, language operates in obedience to the laws of its own material nature and not as a tool used by the speaker, passively conveying the essence of the speaker's mind. Derrida gives precedence not to "the spirit, to breath, to speech, and to the logos" (qtd. in Easthope 13) but to the written (the body), the body which operates without the actual person speaking or the person listening (the addressee).[^26]

Romantic expressivism—its voice found in Wordsworth and articulated in the "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads—is characterized by the traditional theory of language. Romanticism privileges the transcendent ego as a "cohesive identity" (76) and strives for the erasure of language as the material of poetry; it works to create the illusion of language as a transparent medium; it represents "experiences in which everyday consciousness gives way to a state where subject and object appear a unity" (125); enunciation is "effaced," and "poetry is to be so wholly transparent to experience that it is virtually identical to it" (125). Citing Wordsworth's "Preface," Easthope explains:

For the 'Preface' experience exists outside language and prior to signification. It follows that poetry is also transparent to experience—'poetry is the spontaneous

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overflow of powerful feelings. On this basis the 'Preface' is able to identify language in general with poetry: there is no 'essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.' So, at a stroke, all the specific forms of enunciation that make poetry poetry are rendered accidental to it. The essence that remains is the represented of actual speech translated directly across as the represented of poetry. (123)

In addition, Easthope highlights Wordworth's implicit linking of expressivism with poetic normalcy and masculinity when he notes that for Wordsworth, "Vocabulary and phrasing associated with poetic discourse are to be avoided in favour of one which imitates non-poetic discourse. For this a necessary condition is normal—that is non-poetic—word-order" (Easthope 130; italics mine). According to Wordsworth, the poetic language of his contemporaries is all "gaudiness and inane phraseology" ("Preface" [1802] 225) and it is "depraved" because clearly it is not "healthy" (224) it is disapproved of and abnormal. Moreover, Wordsworth is unequivocal throughout the "Preface" that his poetic language is not only normal but also masculine. He repeats that he uses "a selection of language really used by men" ([1802] 226; italics mine). He emphasizes that his language is a "natural or regular part" of "the very language of men" (232; italics mine). In addition, he uses "regular" and "natural" as synonyms. This move indicates Wordsworth's association of "natural" with "normal" (i.e., "regular"), therefore subordinating nature (feminine) to masculine authority. This happens because Wordsworth designates this "normal" language as the language of prose: "[T]he best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose" (233). It is important to note that even though Wordsworth asserts that this is the language of "rustics," I suggest that if
readers accept the novel as a middle-class genre, then by extension, prose can be seen as a middle-class (and therefore normal) language. Most importantly, Wordsworth usurps normal language—it becomes his language, and by extension, it becomes the language of men, not women. Further, Wordsworth reinforces his argument about the inherent normalcy of his language by deigning it a moral language: "The language, too, of these men [those of "elementary feelings" and of "rural occupations"] is adopted . . . because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived" (227). Thus Wordsworth aligns normality with prosaic language, with masculine, and with "good."

Normal (Romantic, bourgeois) poetic discourse erases its own materiality; working for transparency, it privileges a transcendent, centered, stable, and closed position for the subject of the enounced (the subjective "I" and the reader), denying the reader both the position of subject of enunciation and an active role in the process of meaning making. It is an exclusionary discourse. It defines itself linguistically by excluding other discourse in order to forward meaning. On a social level, other words that might be included but are excluded can be seen as other voices that are silenced—whether they are feminine, Anglo-African, Colonial or Hispanic or disabled; these voices are marginalized. In the nineteenth century, Romantic poetic discourse set the standard for poetry; by defining normal poetic parameters, poetic deviance was defined.

The poetry of Brontë and Rossetti, although still privileging normalcy through expressive Romantic poetics—erasing the body through "transcendence," "renunciation," and neutralization of instability—shows that they also seize the poetic space that allows them to feminize poetry, thereby altering the privileging structure of norms. I suggest
that poetry undergoes feminization and democratization. "Feminine" poetry employed revisions of the ballad form and the unseating of coherent subjectivity. Associations can move not only horizontally along a closed, authoritative chain of meaning but in all directions; subjectivity is dispersed to multiple voices in the poem and as such the reader is offered a position in which to assume an active role in the production of meaning in the poem. Modern poetics open up space for differences. Materiality is asserted, no longer denied. The body, the feminine, and disability are visible.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, two on the novel and two on poetry. They are designed to look at the ways in which both the novels and poetry of three key nineteenth-century British women represent and critique the concept of disability. In each chapter, I take on a broad scope of terms and categories. Since I suggest that the textual representations in the works of Shelley, Brontë, and Rossetti can be seen in relation to the concept of normalcy, the concepts of normal and abnormal operate as controlling categories. Shelley's novel introduces the "monster" metaphor to represent the "abnormal," disabled subject, and through this figure she reveals and interrogates the static and polar categories of normal/abnormal. The novel's characters and images represent stability and instability, masculine and feminine, science and nature. Ultimately, Frankenstein suggests that fears of nature are unfounded; instead, the real "monster" is the desire to control nature. Shelley suggests that efforts to stabilize and normalize are perhaps not only futile but also dangerous. Wuthering Heights troubles the distinctions between normal and abnormal through the images and associations of stability and instability. The house of Wuthering Heights and its inhabitants represents the disabled subject; normalcy and stability is represented in Thrushcross Grange and
Nelly. Although there seems to be clear distinctions between the two houses, and although Nelly appears to frame the narrative in normalcy, the constant migration of the characters between the houses, coupled with the unclear distinctions between the living and the dead, the masculine and the feminine and the natural and the unnatural, suggest that the lines between normal and abnormal and able and disabled are blurred. The poetry of Brontë and Rossetti suggests continued representation of disability through metaphors of stability and instability. The stability of normalcy is represented through devices of coherence and material transcendence and instability is represented through fragmentation and materiality. The poems of both these writers reveal contradiction and troubling of distinct lines of demarcation between normal and abnormal, stable and unstable, masculine and feminine, and spiritual and material.

Chapter One, "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: The Monster Constructed," regards Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a largely Romantic, transitional early-nineteenth-century text—it anticipates the way culture constructs disability, how it labels it, fears it, and pities it. The novel also anticipates culture's denial and control of nature through science by representing Victorian eugenic preoccupations. As *Frankenstein* shows, the fear of change and difference (embodied in the monster) is rooted in two places: one, in our reactions to physical appearance and two, in our fears of nature's inherent instability. Shelley's "monster" and his relations with the social world (the villagers, Victor's family, the De Lacey's, and Victor) illustrate these roots: Shelley shows us how we regard and treat those who are different and suggests how culture has thus conceived of the disabled. Lastly, the impulse to fear, to sympathize with, and ultimately to control and stabilize the unstable is presented in the creature's relations with the villagers and with Victor.
Shelley's treatment of nature shows how nature's instability (the source of disablement) is feared and controlled. My analysis of Frankenstein suggests that disability can be entwined with the instability of feminine nature and the yet-to-emerge concept of normalcy. In Frankenstein, feminine nature, whether imaged as domesticated and controlled or rageful and out of control, is linked and figured finally as monstrous. Thus, the meaning of disability is anticipated.

Since Shelley is largely considered a Romantic writer, it is useful to look at her treatment of nature in relation to Romantic conventions that inform her work. Although much has already been said on Rousseaeanean and Wordsworthian aspects of nature in Frankenstein, Romantic notions of nature and the feminine can be viewed afresh in relation to disability. Nature, synonymous with the feminine, in Rousseau and Wordsworth, is benign and optimistic. In Frankenstein, the young creature is linked with Romantic nature and is therefore pictured as feminine and powerless. Not only his fragmented body makes him representative of disability, so does his femininity. Victor, however, immediately perceives the creature as monstrous, and the creature destabilizes. He becomes monstrous—threatening and unstable—because of his unjust treatment. In the text, images of sublime nature work as metaphors for the monster's increasing instability, just as his instability is a metaphor for nature. As the creature is out of control so is nature. The "feminine" creature transforms into a monstrous femme fatale. The raging creature represents how feminine nature refuses containment. In addition, nature's power is linked with "badness," and so the narrative suggests how social fears of nature might be considered justified. The irony, of course, is that the threatening "monster" is the very product of the social world that denies it. The creature is a constructed monster.
Romantic images of isolation and entrapment act as metaphors of the monster's repressed inner state of loneliness and exile, as well as representing the outer physical material body that is subject to nature's changes. Again, this is the body that is implicitly denied in Rousseauian/Wordsworthian Romanticism and by the villagers and Victor. The physical body is further highlighted through Shelley's use of Gothic imagery.

Lastly, the impulse to normalize is presented in Victor, who, attempting to control nature by constructing a "perfect" man, represents the Victorian suspicion of nature and its obsession with controlling it through science. Although his project is meant to create a man superior to any, rather than a strictly average or "normal" man, Victor can be seen as a kind of proto-eugenicist. My analysis will show that Frankenstein captures the essence of how society defines disability and marginalizes the disabled, and how it uncannily presages the Victorian rise of normalcy and genetic control. In the end, Shelley closes the novel with the dark pessimism so indigenous to the Victorian period (the monster is "lost in darkness and distance" (192)). Although for the moment the "monster" is "lost," Shelley also seems to suggest the impossibility of denying all that the monster-creature represents: nature, the monstrous social body, and the monster that the social body constructs.

Chapter Two, "Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights: Stabilizing the Unstable Body," shows how the novel figures both the irrepressibility of unstable and material feminine nature and the normalizing of that instability. For, interestingly, it is the very irrepressibility of nature's instability that is the source of cultural fear, which, in turn, triggers the impulse to suppress it. Wuthering Heights, like Frankenstein, constructs feminine nature as monstrous, ugly and morally corrupt at worst and at best, appealing to
the reader as either extra-special or pathetic. *Frankenstein* is produced early in the century and uncannily foretells the Victorian story of the impulse to normalize; *Wuthering Heights* is produced in mid-century, just as the concept of normalcy enters mainstream discourse. In part, because of the novel's historical positioning, I argue that *Wuthering Heights* illustrates society's impulse to privilege normalcy—by framing and concealing feminine nature—although, as the novel suggests with its closing emphasis on nature and the material, that impulse is rarely (if ever) successful. The novel acts as a metaphor for the way that culture defines and treats disability. First, I examine how Brontë's contemporary and twentieth-century readers have reinforced the cultural imperative of norming, successfully marginalizing *Wuthering Heights* itself as monstrous. Then I demonstrate how, on the one hand, instability is manifest in the house of Wuthering Heights and its original inhabitants, Catherine, Heathcliff, and Hindley, and how, on the other hand, instability is contained via the Grange and the norms that it represents. Finally, framing all in a picture of normalcy, Nelly, in a role similar to Victor's, controls and effaces the ever-present threat of nature's instability.

In the third and fourth chapters, I turn to another venue of the literature of disability, the poetry of Brontë and Christina Rossetti. I examine how the poems operate to either foreground the stability of normalcy (coherence and transcendence) or the instability of difference (fragmentation and materiality) in terms of the prosody, images and themes. While the poems of Brontë and Rossetti embody traditional poetic conventions that deny materiality—Brontë's to Romantic conventions and Rossetti's to religious, medieval, and Romantic traditions—they also reject convention, anticipating modern poetry. Moves that seemingly suppress the material body, as I demonstrate,
produce the opposite effect of highlighting and foregrounding the body they are, 
ostensibly, supposed to conceal. And because these poems tend toward foregrounding 
(Brontë) or do foreground (Rossetti) instability, they can be seen as implicitly advancing 
a social critique of culture's obsession with controlling the material body.

In Chapter 3, "Emily Brontë's Poetry: Making the Body Visible," I demonstrate 
how feminine instability vies for a privileged position over the weight of tradition. While 
her poetry embodies normalcy by framing and erasing the difference of the "disabled 
body," it constructs no monsters. Instead, it evinces a struggle between the material and 
the immaterial with feminine instability (the material) surfacing. Brontë's poems 
highlight the feminine body through imagery, through casting back and revising the form 
of the medieval ballad, and through anticipating the fragmentation of multiple 
subjectivities of modern poetry. The chapter divides itself nicely into two sections. One 
section addresses the stabilizing tradition of Romanticism present in Brontë's work and 
the second section demonstrates the emerging prominence of instability. The instability 
of the body cuts the surface of Romantic traditions and normalcy, and it insists on 
visibility.

In Chapter 4, "Christina Rossetti's Poetry: Visible Goblins," I look at how 
Rossetti's sonnet sequence, "Monna Innominata: A Sonnet of Sonnets" and her famous 
narrative poem, "Goblin Market," continue the duel between stability and instability. In 
Rossetti's work, however, the material of the body insists on privilege. On the one hand, 
her poetry links the disabled body with the unfit and "wrong" because it works to conceal 
differences. By drawing on themes, form, and poetics from historically authoritative 
 sources, her poetry frames disability by affecting the "ruse of wholeness," making
acceptable for the abled community. Seeming to adhere entirely to tradition, it mutes and frames itself in service of Victorian society's demand for stability and control of nature. On the other hand, Rossetti's poetry is well known for its unrelenting contradiction: the unstable (the physical, the material) surfaces and breaks the smoothness of stability (the spiritual, the immaterial). Thus, Rossetti's is a poetry of (feminine, disabled) visibility, hailing modern poetry, destabilizing poetic traditions, and disrespecting the boundaries of normalcy. Initially, I look at how Rossetti's contemporary critics, like Brontë's, specialized in normalizing perceived deviances of her poetry. In the poetic texts of Brontë and Rossetti, the tension between the normal and the abnormal, the Romantic and the modern, the stable and the unstable ultimately give way to the surfacing privilege of the irregular body, undoing the carefully constructed framework around each.
Notes

1 FESPA: Florida Epilepsy Services Providers Association. www.floridaepilepsy.org


4 Not all disability scholars agree with this inclusive definition, however. Mitchell and Snyder distinguish between the ill and the disabled. The ill are excluded from the category of disability because "the ill or the aged participate in a natural cycle of biological processes,... but people with disabilities posses a biology that does not conform to even the most radical operations of normalization (4).

5 In addition, a disabled person destabilizes national identity. See Davis, The Disability Studies Reader, page 18, for a short discussion on the nineteenth century eugenicist idea that differences potentially corrupt a "fit" national identity.

6 Longmore and Umansky point out that a history of those with disabilities is needed, like those through the lens of race, class, gender, color, or sexuality (15), so we must now rewrite history through the lens of disability.

7 Both Susan Sontag, in The Metaphors of Illness and AIDS and its Metaphors, and Mark Jeffreys, in "The Visible Cripple: Scars and Other Disfiguring Displays Included" in Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities, urge acknowledgement of the biological aspect of disability. Jeffreys suggests that constructivist theories of disability must be combined with biological perspectives because there is a danger in the duality of "theory-matter dualism" of again (and ironically) erasing the body (39). Sontag opposes the misuse of disease and illness as metaphor. Lennard Davis, in Enforcing Normalcy, acknowledges the theory-matter problem but insists on the need for theory (xix).

8 Gilbert and Gubar cite the work of Ellen Moers and Elaine Showalter; Armstrong and Bristow are also relevant.

9 The following discussion on the emergence of normalcy, statistics, and eugenics and their influence on the way we understand disability is largely based on Lennard Davis' "Constructing Normalcy" (The Disability Studies Reader 9-28) and Enforcing Normalcy.
Although representations of the female as a deviation from the male standard, as I will show through my discussion of Aristotle and the early scientists of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, seem in retrospect to be defined by the concept of the normalcy, it did not emerge in its current and familiar sociological form until the nineteenth century. I will show that Aristotle was the first to systematize the idea of woman's body as deviant. What might seem an obvious connection to the reader is the easy substitution of the terms "female" for "deformed" for "disabled." But the way we conceive of the disabled is specifically bound up with the nineteenth-century concept of normality. Undeniably, from our critical position in the twenty-first century, intimations of "normal" versus "abnormal" are present in Aristotle. Yet, the idea of the "norm" or "average" as a desired bodily form and social class is not. Aristotle's work is a biological taxonomy of animals and the evolution and adaptation of their body parts. Nor does his use of the "mean" in his political/ethical works denote "norm" as we think of it today. When Aristotle explains moral virtue as the ability to choose a "mean" or a "middle" between, for example, self-deprivation and flagrant desire, he implies a kind of moral balance. He does not assume that the general population falls into a sort of sociological "mean" or "average." (See Davis, 27 "Constructing Normalcy," Note 2).

The following examples are all cited in the OED.

These ideas regarding Quetelet and the origins of the "middle" in middle class are from Davis, "Constructing Normalcy" 10-11.

Dror Wahrman's Imagining the Middle Class argues that the middle class was a constructed, imagined concept, created through the language of politics and its discourses; it was not a social reality that came to an expression of itself through language. The idea of the middle class, according to Wahrman, has become a myth, a social reality swallowed whole and reduced to an essence (18). There was no actual, verifiable "middle" class that arose in the late-eighteenth century. The term "middle class" was deployed variously in order to affect a particular political agenda. For example, Wahrman argues that the Reform Bill of 1832 "was the crucial factor in cementing the invention of the ever-rising 'middle class'"; it was not, as the typical story goes, a political act brought about by the will of the now-powerful middle class (18). I cite Wahrman to show the reader how the concept of the touted "middle" was not simply a reflection of actual social realities. It was, instead, a product of language and representation. Similarly, "disability," as it is defined against the "norm" or the "middle," is not an inherent social, mental, or physical fact; it is not a concept that sprang out of the fact that there are blind or deaf people in society who cannot do what seeing or hearing people can do (or, to press the point, that there are blind and deaf people in society who can do what seeing and hearing people cannot). Broadly speaking, Wahrman deals with the historical idea of the middle, and also with one of my important critical positions: that the language of power relations affects social realities.
Davis urges: "Remember that there is a real connection between figuring the statistical measure of humans and then hoping to improve humans so that deviations from the norm diminish. . . . Statistics is bound up with eugenics because the central insight of statistics is the idea that a population can be normed" ("Constructing" 14).

Davis points out the paradoxical nature of the relationship between statistics and eugenics. Since, in statistical analyses, populations will invariably conform to the Bell Curve, the norming of the abnormal is a circular, effectively impossible task ("Constructing" 14).

To mark the accurate location of a star, astronomers used the "error law." Error theory works as follows: scientists knew that exact measurement of anything was impossible, that error would always exist. But they also realized that if something is measured repeatedly, occurrence of error could be reduced. The importance of error theory highlights the value of the calculated mean or average; mathematically, the measurements fall into a distribution we call "normal" (MacKenzie Statistics 56).

Davis "Constructing" 11. Davis further explains that the juste milieu ("perfect middle") was a symbol of France's Louis Philippe's July monarchy in which the enmeshment of the bourgeois with the constitutional monarchy was evidence of a political balance between the traditional and the new, the divine monarchy and the peoples' democracy.

The name "Normal School" was replaced in the 1960s when teacher education melded with programs within liberal arts colleges. It is notable that this change took place in a decade that contended with, and attempted to redefine, the "norms" of society.

Davis states that the relationship between statistics and eugenics has been ignored ("Constructing" 27 Note 3). Certainly when studying the concept of "normality" and the construction of cultural attitudes toward disability, this relationship is remarkable. It is remarkable because the link between statistics and eugenics is evidence of culture's impulse toward objectivity and quantification which propelled it into the disaster that Shelley anticipates in Frankenstein: a sterile, unbalanced society, without compassion and feeling, obsessed with scientific and intellectual control of the uncontrolled. The wide-ranging social results are the marginalization of people on the basis of class, race, gender, and disability. A dramatic example of marginalization can be found in Hitler's Germany--a leader in eugenic science.

Lyndsay Farrall explains that Darwinism and eugenics are scarcely separable: "Eugenics was in reality applied biology based on the central biological theory of the day, namely the Darwinian theory of evolution" (qtd. in Davis "Constructing" 14-15).
In this passage, Aristotle does two things. First, he establishes the male and implicitly casts deviance from that standard as malformation by using the word "deformed" to describe atypical parents and offspring. (Other possible translations of the Greek are "imperfectly developed," "underdeveloped," "malformed," "mutilated," and "congenitally disabled" [174 Aristotle].) Second, Aristotle stylistically underscores his assertion: the parallel construction of his sentences ("deformed offspring are produced by deformed parents, and sometimes not" paralleled with "offspring produced by a female" are "sometimes female, sometimes not") underscores the idea that the "female is . . . a deformed male."

Tuana's thesis is based on the view that female was classified via the male paradigm. Both Thomas Laqueur, in Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud, and Tuana subscribe to the idea that until the nineteenth century, the "one-sex" theory held sway. The "one-sex" theory says that women are not a separate species with particular traits; they are, instead, a deviant, imperfectly developed form of the male (Laqueur 173; Tuana ix).

The rise of feminine/natural power over masculine/historical power in the Romantic period, and the Victorian response, is argued by Elliot Gilbert in "The Female King: Tennyson's Arthurian Apocalypse."

Easthope defines English poetic discourse in these three ways: First, "English poetic discourse is materially determined, having a certain consistent shaping of the signifier inscribed in it." This "shaping" is a relational consistency between "enunciation" and "enounced," linguistic terms of Benveniste that Easthope employs. Secondly, "By the same token it is ideologically determined, being a product of history, a relatively autonomous tradition, a bourgeois form of discourse. It is also subjectively determined and is a product of the reader, for whom it offers of position as transcendental ego" (47).

Easthope defines bourgeois poetic discourse as "individualist, elitist, privatized, offering the text as representation of a voice speaking," (77) therefore appropriating the production of meaning from the reader, applying all meaning to the "Presence" or the "Poet" that is not a transcendent "I" but really a discursive (material, ideological, and psychological) effect. For thorough comprehension of his theory, consult Poetry As Discourse. Because Easthope's theory of poetic discourse says that bourgeois poetic discourse robs the reader of production of meaning and intends to create a "presence" that would be seen as the authority and origin of an utterance (or in Easthope's linguistic language, "disavows" the reader of the "process of enunciation"), the theory must depend both on "the Lacanian conception of subjectivity and the structuring of the ego in relation to vision" and on the "account of subjectivity specifically in relation to linguistic discourse" (40). He derives an explanation of subjectivity from the linguistics of Benveniste, Todorov, and Roman Jakobson. According to Easthope, English poetic discourse exploits the relationship of the "I speaking and the I spoken about," which "can never be the same," (44) by denying the split between the "I" speaking and the "I"
spoken about, therefore creating the effect of the presence of a coherent, transcendental ego; the effect invites the reader to identify (or misidentify) with the speaker in the poem; "the subject is produced in discourse so as to deny that it is produced at all," to "see itself as a transcendental ego, an absolutely free agent, center and origin of action, unproduced, given once and for all" (28):

A discourse can seek to deny this disjunction [between the subject of the enounced (the "I" in the poem) and the subject of enunciation (the speaking "I")] entirely and to offer a position to the reader exclusively as a transcendental ego. The English bourgeois poetic tradition is just such a discourse. It can be defined precisely as a regime of representation aiming to disavow enunciation so as to promote only a position as subject of the enounced, especially when it creates the effect of an individual voice 'really' speaking by concealing the way it is produced as an effect. This invites misrecognition. ... Such a reading treats the poem as a manifestation of 'presence' even when it really knows it's only a poem. It is a perverse reading. (46)

In other words, bourgeois poetic discourse is engineered so that the speaker of the poem (subject of enunciation) and the speaker in the poem (subject of the enounced) are one and the same; therefore, the effect is created that the speaker in the poem becomes a disembodied voice or a transcendent, immaterial ego. The reader of a poem is lead to identify with the transcendental ego, to see through "his" or "her" eyes; "the reader is invited into simple identification with a represented speaker" (46). It is "perverse" because it "invites misrecognition" (of the self) and denies the material reality of enunciation (the reader's self's productive energies--"responsibility for the poem [is] attributed to 'The Poet'.") (46-47).

26 Literary studies today tend to authorize Derrida's thinking, disparaging the more traditional as a promotion of essence, which in effect ultimately promotes the politics of those in power (English speaking, white, male). Both perspectives have validity and should be taken into account in order to gain new insight into the literature of women and disability. But if we view writing not either as a transparent vehicle (giving precedence to the mind) or only in its machine-like materiality (giving precedence to matter), the we that the mind and body (voice and material of the author and of the words on the page) are inextricably connected, whatever the writer's or critic's intentions.

27 All quotations from Wordsworth's "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads are from the H. Littledale edition: "Wordsworth's Preface of 1800, With A Collation of the Enlarged Preface of 1802." Where indicated, quotations are from the "Enlarged Preface" of 1802.

28 Angela Leighton observes this tension, calling it "the priority of [Rossetti's] art over even her own punishing conscience" (140).
CHAPTER 2

MARY SHELLY'S FRANKENSTEIN: THE MONSTER CONSTRUCTED

In my analysis of Frankenstein in Chapter 1, I will explore Mary Shelley's conceptualization of the nineteenth-century's construction and definition of disability and the disabled.1 Frankenstein prefigures the marginalization of the disabled. Furthermore, Shelley foreshadows the rise of the modern meaning and usage of "normalcy" and the eugenic impulses that it precipitated. Shelley suggests that the "monster," however, cannot be denied. The real "monster" is the social body and its power to define.

The creature, Victor's creation, labeled "monster" by Walton, Victor and others with whom the creature comes in contact, embodies the incoherence and the fragmentation of the disabled body--the imperfection of a body, for example, that has lost a limb. He is constructed out of disparate, fragmented pieces collected by Victor. He is a composite of bones from "charnel-houses" that are "disturbed" with Victor's "profane fingers" and of "material" from "the dissecting room and the slaughter-house" (43). Importantly, Frankenstein further conceives of the disabled through how Victor's creature is defined by others. The villagers, the DeLaceys, Victor's family, and Victor all react to the creature's incoherent appearance with repulsion and cruelty.2 Moreover, not only does the monster learn to recognize his own "deformity," but Shelley also engages the reader in a relationship with the monster and the society he meets, by moving us into a position of sympathy for the monster and moral superiority to those with whom the monster comes in contact. On one hand, Shelley critiques traditional negative attitudes
toward those who appear different; on the other, she privileges the norm by inculcating a feeling of sympathy toward the creature, and thus we view him from a comfortingly powerful position. The sympathizer always occupies a comforting position. The sympathizer is morally elevated above those who treat others cruelly and, more importantly, above the persecuted. Those we pity are not our equals.

Many scenes in the novel depict characters' cruelty toward the creature. In one of the more heart-wrenching scenes, the monster, still "young" in terms of his social development, stumbles upon the huts of the villagers. Made hungry by the sight of the vegetables, milk, and cheese displayed in the windows, the monster enters a dwelling and meets with unexpected hostility and fear: "I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted" (91). He is attacked, bullied, and bruised by the villagers, and flees in pain to his hovel. Later, thoroughly entranced by the De Lacey family, he finally summons the courage to reveal himself to the old man. Yet when the rest of the family returns unexpectedly and sees his "unnatural hideousness" (114), they react with "horror and consternation" (116). The women faint and flee the cottage. These were the people whom the creature had ironically called his "protectors." "For so I loved," he tells us, "in an innocent, half painful self-deceit, to call them" (104). A revealing image illustrates the creature's inferior status and vulnerability: "Felix darted forward," says the creature, "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" (116; italics mine). In this scene, the creature in his vulnerable position—clinging to the old man's knees—is literally, physically, lower. The reader's perception of the creature's inequality is reinforced because in this scene we
experience the creature as actually visually lower than the De Laceys—and ourselves. We (and the De Laceys) are positioned above him, on high physical and moral ground (through our sympathy) looking down on him. Time and time again the creature's persecution triggers our pity. One of the most pathetic scenes is his rescue of a little girl from drowning. The creature relates his "reward" for his caring and valor to Victor: the girl's father, after frantically "tearing" the rescued child from the creature's arms, first runs from him, then he "aimed a gun . . . at my body and fired" (121). Unable to remove the bullet, the wounded creature languishes for weeks in the woods, alone and in pain. The creature is disempowered, and the reader, flooded with keen pity, becomes a hero, moved by the desire to save the creature from unjust cruelty. Also in this scene, the social demand for the suppression and denial of the disabled body is emphasized when the creature tells Victor that the father aimed the gun specifically at his "body." In addition, the killing would effectively erase the deformity confronting the father.

In another more fateful scene (because the creature murders the boy), the creature comes across William, imagining that the boy is "unprejudiced and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity." But at the sight of the creature, William reacts with that very horror when, as the creature relates, "he beheld my form." Unable to bear the sight, William covers his eyes and screams, "Monster! Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre" (122). Here, Shelley has the boy identify the creature with a demonic character in fairy tales. Through this allusion, Shelley suggests how cultural influences shape emotional reactions to the physically different and assumptions about their behavior. To William, the creature will inevitably be aggressively violent because fairy tales have taught him to see this as the behavior
natural to those who are physically distinct. Other's reactions to his body encourage the creature to see himself as a deformed aberration. He talks often of his own deformities and sees them as the cause of his wretchedness. He tells Victor, "I have never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed any intercourse with me" (104). "I was," he says, "endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome" (103).

But the most important conveyor of typical attitudes is Victor who is initially and continually repulsed by the creature's appearance. As Victor wakes from his "dream" and confronts the material reality of his construction, he is "Unable to endure the aspect of the being" (42). Victor immediately sees the creature as repulsive, describing the "demoniacal corpse" as having thin and "shriveled" "yellow skin" with "watery eyes" set in "dun-white sockets" and "black" lips:

His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath. His hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing. His teeth of a pearly whiteness. But these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips... Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. (48-49)

"A mummy" he exclaims, "again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished. He was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived" (49).

Interestingly, Shelley here again encourages readers to sympathize with the creature and to be repulsed by Victor's response to him by describing the creature as
child-like. The creature appears at Victor's bedside, innocently gesturing for help with his "hand outstretched." He then, Victor reports, "muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks" (49). This is an image of a naïve child unaware of adult brutality; the simple, unthreatening gesture with his hand, his inability to speak, and his child-like grin give him a vulnerability that, in the face of Victor's cold rejection, moves the reader to pity.

However, the creature, in reality, is neither disabled nor physically revolting. Although different from those around him, he is, in fact, quite physically abled. He survives on his own and can endure extreme temperatures and bare living conditions. The creature tells us, "I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs" (103). Victor also describes his superior physicality. Victor sees the creature at a distance, not recognizing him: "I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution. His stature, also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man." (84). If we refer back to Victor's description of the creature's physical appearance, moreover, we can see that the creature's "pearly" teeth and "lustrous black and flowing" hair are, as Davis observes, far from undesirable or revolting features (Enforcing Normalcy 145). Interestingly, Victor seems to find the creature physically repugnant only because of the contrast between these more beautiful features and the rest of his body: "These luxuriances," Victor says, "only formed a more horrid contrast with [other attributes]." Thus, repulsion for the creature's physical differences results in part from a comparative, binary system of definition: the creature can only be either revolting
or attractive, deformed or ideally formed. The creature describes himself similarly—applying the same "creature" rhetoric and comparing himself to others more beautiful: "I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions, but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool," the creature tells Victor. When he finally recognizes the face in the pool as his own, his response is shame and self-loathing: "When I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am," he continued, "I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification" (98).

Shelley further brings forth the creature's "monstrosity" by linking him metaphorically to the instability of nature and the feminine. Nature and the feminine are historically linked categories associated with the material world, and therefore, both are representative of the body's instability, its corruption and decay. While reinforcing the persistent link between the feminine and nature, *Frankenstein* figures Romanticism's pacifying and repressive treatment of feminine nature, nature's irrepressible instability, and the Victorian reaction to this instability.

First, nature and femininity are historically enmeshed in references such as mother nature and the mythological symbology of "woman" as representing both womb and tomb, the natural cycle of life, and a negative view of nature—its mystery and its power to destroy—pervades Western philosophy. Elliott Gilbert says pointedly: "Both in history and myth women have for the most part been associated with the irrational and destructive forces of nature that threaten orderly male culture" (871). Mary Poovey's groundbreaking work in history, literature and gender, *Uneven Developments*, underscores this association of the destructiveness of feminine nature. She explores
conflicting images of woman in the mid-nineteenth century and recognizes one of them as Eve, labeled, "Mother of our Miseries." "As late as the 1740s," says Poovey, "woman was consistently represented as the site of willful sexuality and bodily appetite...[;] women were associated with flesh, desire, and unsocialized, hence susceptible, impulses and passions" (9-10). Since the feminine and nature are consistently equated, controlling nature means controlling female power, and often female sexuality. As Gilbert notes, "the control of female sexuality is among the commonest metaphors in art for the control of nature (just as the control of nature is a metaphor for the control of women)" (871).

Scientific discourse also promoted the fear of feminine nature figured metaphorically in art. Francis Bacon, for example uses the pronoun "her" to refer to nature and describes science’s mission as an effort to subdue and "shake her to her foundations."

Romantic and Victorian treatments of nature differed. Seeming to depart from tradition, Romanticism rendered nature optimistically and benignly. These pacifying moves, however, might be seen as subjugation. Victorian writers, in contrast, influenced by Darwinism, overtly showed their suspicion of nature and their need to control "her." Tennyson, for instance, at the height of his grief in *In Memoriam* famously characterizes nature as a cruel female. A near representation of evil, female nature’s power is at odds with God: she is, says Tennyson, "so careless of the single life," shrill, secretive, and "red in tooth and claw" (v. 56). Matthew Arnold envisions nature similarly. In "In Harmony with Nature" Arnold represents nature as "cruel," "stubborn," "fickle," and "[un]forgiv[ing]." Along with the gender connotations of, for instance, the word "fickle," Arnold at the end of his poem dubs nature "her" and characterizes her as master to the groveling slave, man; to the preacher he says, "Fool if thou canst not pass her, rest her
slaves" (410). In addition to their umbrage with nature, the Victorians struggled with the rise and persistence of social feminine power, whether it was in the form of active social protest (the "Woman Question") or prostitution. A cultural fear-reaction to this overwhelming feminine power, then, is deeply rooted in Victorian culture's identity, and it is felt as profoundly visceral.

In part, Frankenstein fits right into this Victorian world-view, especially when Shelley renders the creature's rage in images of nature's extreme instability. Moreover, I urge the reader to keep in mind that the reason that the creature is considered monstrous is the prominence of his body. His deformed body is a representation of nature's instability that eventually destabilizes, corrupts, and destroys us. His body signifies the disabling, material world that the Victorians set about to control, normalize and eugenicize. First, however, Shelley figures the feminine passivity of controlled nature through Rousseau's natural man and Wordsworth's optimism.

Traditionally, the creature is seen as an example of Rousseau's natural man: in his unsocialized, natural state, man is moral; put him in contact with learning and society and his natural goodness gradually corrodes into mask of self-serving dissembling. In short, he becomes a monster. The creature's murderous behavior in Frankenstein certainly fits this idea. Although originally caring and compassionate, he grows cold-hearted and angry through social intercourse. Significantly, however, Rousseau's concept of the goodness of natural man (eventually corrupted) is underpinned by the ideology of sentimentality, which is identified with the feminine. 6

Rousseau's Romantic model of uncorrupt "man" in harmony with nature is found in the early characterizations of the creature. The creature settles silently into life next to
the De Laceys, imitating "the pleasant songs of the birds" (89) and their rustic, hence virtuous living conditions. He exists mainly on a vegetarian diet. It is not necessary for him to kill for his nuts, berries and roots. Like a bird, he builds a modest but natural home of earth and wood and carefully "arranged [his] dwelling and carpeted it with clean straw" (92). As a "gatherer," he fulfills the supposedly natural role of women. For months, he lives as one with nature; he moves unobtrusively to and fro, eats quietly, passively watching others in order to understand them, and, therefore, himself. (Ironically, he asserts himself only once and pays dearly for the gesture.) Motivated to passivity out of fear of the villagers who had attacked him, he decides to make himself invisible. He relates "that for the present I would remain quietly in my hovel, watching and endeavouring to discover the motives which influenced their actions" (95). Diminishing his own needs, he hides in a hovel whose very shape (an open hole, a womb) and condition (crevices which need covering up) carry feminine sexual connotations: "One part [of the hovel] was open, and by that I had crept in; but now I covered every crevice by which I might be perceived with stones and wood, yet in such a manner that I might move them on occasion to pass out. All the light I enjoyed came through the sty, and that was sufficient for me" (91). With a traditionally feminine attitude, he continually expects little or nothing for himself and is content living, for instance, next to a pigsty. For instance, he tells Victor that "[My hovel] was indeed a paradise compared to the bleak forest, my former residence, the rain-dropping branches, and dank earth" (92). Here he seems (ironically) grateful for a domestic yet "natural" hole in which he is stuffed--he can only sit, for it is too small to bear his large and "wretched" body. Thus,
he disparages and devalues himself and his needs by expressing gratitude for impoverished yet seemingly "good," natural conditions.

When he eventually narrates his life story to Victor, he expresses himself in a typically feminine way--from the heart. He tells Victor that he only "longed to join [the cottagers] but dared not" (95). His language of yearning-- "longed"-- and that of timidity--"dared not"--illustrates the sentiment and deference traditionally expected of women--this "delicacy" and his appreciation of others' is revealed in the way he describes the DeLacey cottagers:

A small room was visible, whitewashed and clean, but very bare of furniture. In one corner, near a small fire, sat an old man, leaning his head on his hands in a disconsolate attitude. The young girl was occupied in arranging the cottage but presently she took something out of a drawer, which employed her hands, and she sat down beside the old man, who, taking up an instrument, began to play, and to produce sounds sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale. It was a lovely sight, even to me, poor wretch! who had never beheld aught beautiful before. (92-93)

The creature appreciates the pristine quality of the room with its "whitewash," and he describes the girl in delicate terms: she is "young", a "fair creature" with "gentle manners" that "entice" her father's love. The creature's description of her activities is delicate and refined--she is not "cleaning up" but instead "occupied in arranging" things. She has her own sensibility, according the creature's perceptions; she has strong reactions to beauty and the feelings of others. When the old man plays music, tears come to her eyes, and she sobs, kneeling in submission to beauty and feeling at the old man's feet.
Words in this passage like "sweeter," "lovely," "beautiful," "disconsolate," "mournful air," are musical and lilting, indicating that the creature chooses words from a well of feeling and sensitivity.

The creature further tells us,

[after she knelt in front of her father, he] raised her, and smiled with such kindness and affection that I felt sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature. They were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or cold, warmth or food and I withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions. (93)

The creature's description is infused with sentimentality, illustrating his sympathy for others. In another passage, the creature illustrates his empathy with the cottagers.

What they feel, he feels, "The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me. When they were unhappy, I felt depressed. When they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys" (97). Here is a man who appreciates the delicate nuances of beauty--this is a man of sensibility. Also, the repetition of the previously used words, "gentle manners" and "beauty" work rhetorically to allow the reader to experience the cottagers in the same way that the sensitive creature did. Lastly, the highly emotional connotations of spirituality and ecstasy are easily detected in the religious language of "rejoiced" and "joy."

In addition to characterizing the creature as a sentimental "man of feeling," Shelley also renders him child-like. His biographical sketch is peppered with language that reflects his child-like and traditionally feminine wonderment. In the forest a "gentle" moon gives him peace as he "gazed [at it] with a kind of wonder" (88). His unfamiliarity...
with the world is illustrated when unexpected consequences unfold: with "deligh’t" and "joy" he "thrust [his] hand into the live embers [of a fire], but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain" (89). He ingenuously explores his surroundings, examining the shepherd’s huts with "great curiosity" (90) and wonders at his discovery of a "miraculous" village (91). By characterizing the creature as a child, Shelley emphasizes his natural, uncorrupted state and his feminine vulnerability.

Shelley also duplicates the optimism of the Wordsworthian/Keatsian view of nature as benevolent. The creature describes his natural surroundings with rapturous optimism. The passage below is a verbal echo of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" when the speaker says, "Ah, happy, happy bough! . . . more happy, happy love!"

The pleasant showers and genial warmth of spring greatly altered the aspect of the earth. . . . The birds sang in more cheerful notes, and the leaves began to bud forth on the trees. Happy, happy earth! Fit habituation for gods. . . . My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature. . . . The present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope and anticipations of joy. (99)

This passage resembles the typically optimistic Romantic rendering of nature in which transcendence of the material world is affected. The threat and instability of nature is repudiated as it now reflects the subjectivity, the mind and the emotions of the speaker. Here, nature is the creature's optimistic mood. The description, moreover, reflects the moral influence, the goodness, of nature (and the feminine). Therefore, nature is perceived as benevolent, passive, and kind.

Romantic benevolence and sentimentality, however, undergo a transmutation. The creature will not be pacified: he transforms from representing feminine passivity of
controlled nature to representing feminine enraged, uncontrolled nature. Once a sensible "man of feeling" under the tutelage of benevolent nature, the creature becomes a vessel of rage, a Burkean image of unstable and intractable feminine nature. As the creature tells Victor, his shift in feelings transformed him into the "monster" he finally became: "I shall relate events that impressed me with feelings which, from what I had been have made me what I am" (100). Following the family's intrusion into the creature's hopeful first contact with the blind De Lacey and their volatile rejection of him, the creature shifts abruptly from sensible to rageful:

I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils, destroying . . . objects . . . and ranging through the wood with a stag-like swiftness. . . . I . . . bore a hell within me and, . . . wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around me and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin. (117)

His rage deepens with "utter and stupid despair" when the De Laceys abandon the cottage and him forever: "My protectors had departed, and had broken the only link that held me to the world. For the first time the feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom, and I did not strive to control them; but, allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards injury and death" (119). Although he tells us that he was, as yet, "unable to injure anything human," his burning of the De Lacey's cottage illustrates the transformation of sensibility to unrestrained, "monstrous" passion:

As the night advanced, a fierce wind arose from the woods, and quickly dispersed the clouds that had loitered in the heavens. The blast tore along like a mighty
avalanche, and produced a kind of insanity in my spirits that burst all bounds of reason and reflection. I lighted the dry branch of a tree, and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon nearly touched. A part of its orb was at length hid, and I waved my brand. It sank, and, with a loud scream I fired the straw and heath and bushes which I had collected. The wind fanned ... the flames, which clung to it, and licked it with their forked and destroying tongues (119).

The "fury" and flames licking with "forked and destroying " tongues evoke devilish images from hell. Feminine "furies" are unleashed again as the creature bursts the containment of "reason and reflection," screaming and reveling in destruction. "Blast," "tore," "mighty," "burst all bounds," "loud scream," and fire used as a verb ("I fired the straw") is the diction of raw power. Moreover, creature/nature's power is envisioned as unlimited and god-like. He seemingly controls the moon with his fixed gaze; he has only to brandish his stick, and the moon seems to sink obediently below the horizon.

After the creature kills William and engineers the hanging of the innocent Justine, he confronts Victor as he wanders hopelessly on the giant ice floes of the mountain. He poses an ultimatum—terrifying and bloodthirsty—to Victor to create a mate for him: "If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave [your family and friends] and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends" (85). Eventually, Victor creates and then proceeds to destroy a female mate for the creature. Upon witnessing his mate's annihilation, the creature, like Medea, becomes an aberration of nature, vowing revenge. "You can blast my other
passions," cries the creature," but revenge remains—revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food!" (145).

The creature's sublime rage is a metaphor for the uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) power of nature. In addition, Shelley uses images of crumbling, decaying nature as a metaphor for both the physical destruction (disability) and moral decay, thus equating the two. For instance, Victor describes nature as he runs either from his grief for his murdered family or toward the creature. Following Justine's unjust punishment—her hanging—for a murder she did not commit, Victor describes the valley of Chamounix. Nature, crumbling, fragmented, and incoherent reflects the crumbling of moral justice. Thus, nature, the "mother" of physical decay, is rendered immoral. The "falling avalanche" emits "rumbling thunder," leaving the "smoke [of destruction] in its passage" (81).

Further images of splintering and fragmentation highlight material nature's instability and destructive power. Victor relates that there were "shattered pines" "scattered" about

and the solemn silence of this glorious presence-chamber of imperial Nature was broken only by the brawling waves, or the fall of some vast fragment, the thunder sound of the avalanche, or the cracking reverberated along the mountains of the accumulated ice, which, through the silent working of immutable laws, was ever and anon rent and torn, as if it had been but a plaything in their hands. (82)

The silence is "broken." Alliterative, consonant sounds of the "shatter[ing]" and "scatter[ing]" of the trees and the "brawling" (conflicted, angry, motion of the waves), affect fragmentation. The "cracking" ice is also moving sound as it "reverberated along
the mountains." Also, the ice is fragmented: "rent and torn." Later Victor tells Walton that nature broke apart his hope and his capturing of the creature: "In a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of ice, that was continually lessening, and thus preparing for me a hideous death" (179). The sea's (also a symbol for the feminine) movement, "tumultuous" and "roll[ing]," signifies a mass of change and instability. Its changing motion separates Victor and the creature as it came "between" them. Victor, like the ice on which he is standing, is fragmenting, changing, diminishing, destabilizing as he is "left drifting" like a "scattered piece" that is "continually lessening," sending him to his ultimate change, death.

In nineteenth-century writing, sublime images of isolation and exile and enclosed space are typically associated with the uniqueness, creativity, and alienation of the Romantic hero. In Frankenstein, these images illustrate the creature's psychic pain. But in relation to disability, such sensual nature metaphors bring forth not only emotional pain but also the bodily pain. For example, bodily vulnerability and decay--coldness and death--are called up as, in despair, the creature leaves the cottagers in the season of death--the fall. The death of nature (the body, material) is pictured: the trees are "bare," the stars "cold," and there is "universal stillness" (117). The creature relates, "Nature decayed around me." Further images of death's isolating effects and bodily chill prevail in the creature's descriptions: his body is engulfed in darkness and coldness when he tells Victor how he moved "only at night" and that he was surrounded by ice and dampness the "rain and snow poured around [him]. Mighty rivers were frozen" (120). The earth is
envisioned as a lifeless body: "The surface of the earth was hard and chill and bare" (120). When he completes his tale to Victor, the creature is "lost" in a "sea of ice" (128).

The creature's trapped body on one hand signifies the impulse to control and stabilize feminine nature's instability and, on the other, brings that body into painful relief. The images of the creature enclosed in darkness near frozen rivers envision control of feminine nature. Frozen rivers connote nature and the feminine trapped underground, hidden beneath a hardened surface. Also, the creature's living spaces are spaces of enclosure and entrapment. Like an animal, the creature, "hid[es] himself in caves" (144) as he follows Victor across the countryside. The creature relates that he "fearfully took refuge [from the cruelty of the villagers] in a low hovel, quite bare and making a wretched appearance after the palaces [he] beheld in the village" (91). He calls this home a "kennel" from which he must creep (91). The connotations of the word "refuge"—alienation—and "wretched" along with the sense of claustrophobic space of the empty, tiny, "hovel" highlight the impoverishment of the creature's body and renders him helpless, while at the same time denies him membership in the normal world of "palaces." Even Shelley's descriptive juxtapositions connote entrapment: the creature couches his description of his home in terms of safety and comfort: "It [was] an agreeable asylum from the snow and rain" (91), but "agreeable" and "asylum" are contradictory terms. An asylum indeed may be temporarily "agreeable" in that it offers sanctuary, but only one who is destitute, a criminal, or an exile seeks asylum. There is, of course, the added connotations of asylum for the mentally ill—the "lunatic"—the outcast and hidden.  

Shelley prefigures the Victorian impulse to physically and morally normalize the abnormal, an impulse that defines society's attitudes toward disability. This normalizing
impulse is manifest most clearly in the character of Victor Frankenstein, his suspicion of nature, and his obsession with stabilizing and controlling it. Victor's enchantment with the wonder and the improving force of modern science renders him representative of the nineteenth-century Victorian eugenic scientist. The nineteenth-century's statistical and biological science of Quetelet, Darwin, and Galton employed methodologies that resulted in agendas that amount to tools of social control and normalization. Victor's preoccupations bear a remarkable likeness to these sciences. Even though Shelley does not describe the calculations of Victor as he scours the charnel-houses and graves for useable body fragments, nor does Victor engage in any overt statistical analysis of what constitutes a "beautiful" man, it is probable that one of the seeds of his vision of an exceptional being derives from the attitudes and theories of Quetelet and others concerns with the desired "average man" incubating within Shelley’s cultural context. That Victor, as a scientist with "scientific" interests and not merely those of taste, gathers body parts which he regards as more perfect than others is an indication of a formal system of comparison. Indeed, as Victor and M. Waldman are parting, following Victor’s enthusiastic visit to the scientist, Waldman urges Victor to broaden his field of study to include what he calls a "branch of natural philosophy"—mathematics: "Chemistry is that branch of natural philosophy in which the greatest improvements have been and may be made . . . . If your wish is to become really a man of science, and not merely a petty experimentalist, I should advise you to apply to every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics" (40). Victor then narrates, "natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly my sole occupation" (42).
Furthermore, although Victor does not construct the creature genetically, his crude manipulation of collected body parts suggests a kind of physiological manipulation that forecasts future genetic tampering. Darwin’s theories, of course, are the basis of twentieth-century genetics; it is easy to imagine Victor in contemporary times controlling life through the science of biological cloning. But most importantly, he does indeed exemplify the Victorian scientist whose goal is progressive, bent upon the physical and perhaps intellectual normalizing and "improvement" of human beings. His original goal was to create a perfect specimen; he had "selected [the creature’s] feature’s as beautiful" (48). Victor’s prime motivation was not aesthetic but ultimately metaphysical—he wanted to confront and control the processes of material life—"the natural decay and corruption of the human body" (43)—that awaits, and in fact, disables us all. In the following passage Victor narrates his discovery of the way to create life:

My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted. I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life. I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me—a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised, that among so many men of genius who had directed their inquiries toward the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret. (43-4)
Victor studies the workings of life and death under the mask of the "objective" scientist: his eye "fixed upon every object," "examining . . . the minutiae of causation." Yet, the passion of his fixation, the "brilliant and wondrous" awakening to an "astonishing" "secret" of life, has the tone of a religious epiphany; this indicates that his motives were deeply personal: he could not bear the reality of his own eventual decay; he could not bear the onset of disability. Victor is Shelley's metaphor for our denial of the disabled body.

Victor's most powerful form of social control is his impulse to norm—efface—feminine sexuality. He accomplishes this control in a variety of ways. His first move is bold—in originally constructing the creature, he assumes the female procreative function. "After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue," he reports, "I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life. Nay, more. I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (44). His "labour and fatigue" is of course the labor of birth; effacing the female, Victor has usurped the female role of creator.

Victor's cruel treatment of the creature's female mate offers a clear example of his suspicion, dread, and ensuing effacement of feminine sexuality. Partway through the construction of the female creature, Victor begins to reconsider his promise to provide the creature with a mate. He reasons spuriously to himself: if I complete the female for the creature, "the creature who already lived [the creature] loathed his own deformity [itself feminine], and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form?" (italics mine). In other words, the creature might witness his own femininity (sexual "deformity") in the material form of the female creature, and he will despise it. Victor continues. The female creature might reveal her sexual fickleness;
she "might turn with disgust from [the creature] to the superior beauty of man; she might quit [the creature], and be again alone exasperated by the fresh provocation of being deserted by one of his own species." Thus, Victor's logic runs, the "deformed" complexity of feminine sexuality is potentially lethal. Victor arrives at a decision. Even if the female does remain loyal to the creature, he cannot allow the creature fulfillment of his sexual desire:

Even if they were to leave Europe and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the demon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. (143)

According to Victor, feminine sexuality is manifest evil and does nothing short of terrorizing and destroying "the very existence of the species of man." Finally, Victor acts out his fear: "I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged" (144). Notice that Victor's decision to destroy creature's mate is "scientifically" based upon keeping the "purity" of the species intact. The creature would potentially propagate a freak race, a "race of devils." Ostensibly, Victor acts as a protector of human goodness and betterment, but viewed in another way, his logic is blatantly eugenicist.

But Victor, a representative scientist of the Victorian period, does not "normalize" solely through "scientific" enterprises. Part of the way that nineteenth-century culture effaced female carnal power was to domesticate and purify the female. Elliot Gilbert describes the ideal woman as "safely denatured" and stripped of her "feminine
corrosiveness," (871). The sexually neutral woman represents the culture's ableist conception of what a woman should be; she is pure, and morally elevating to all within her domestic sphere.

In an attempt to fulfill culture's standard of normal, Victor, as we have seen, constructs an offspring by deploying "science" in place of sexual passion. In addition, Victor normalizes feminine passion by denying himself and his bride, Elizabeth, sexual union. On the eve of Victor's wedding, Elizabeth is drawn with powerfully erotic imagery; she is set up as strangely abnormal, illustrating her threat to Victor. Elizabeth's posture on her bridal/death bed alludes to Henry Fuseli's contemporary Gothic painting The Nightmare in which a woman is draped submissively across a bed, both arms thrown back behind her head, her hair cascading to the floor. Also in the picture are two animal figures. An incubus sits on top of her, and a stallion leers at her. When Victor returns to the bedroom and finds Elizabeth dead, he describes her as "thrown across the bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half-covered by her hair" (169). This description of Elizabeth with words matching Fuseli's image suggests that Victor can feel desire for his wife only when she is dead. Moreover, the "unnatural" animals that are sexually engaged with Fuseli's woman and the subtle suggestion that the creature's encounter with Elizabeth could have been in some way sexual, since the murder takes place "off-stage," link the female and her sex with perversion, underscoring Victor's need to neutralize this feminine impulse. Therefore, when Victor further describes the "lifeless and inanimate" corpse of his (perhaps) unfulfilled wife as "the purest creature on earth" (169), he has made Elizabeth normal, and he has also normalized himself by elevating himself out of the reach of feminine deviance. Victor
can safely desire the now-dead Elizabeth because she is sexually impaired. Divested of perverted energy, Victor is shame-free, and his wife is at last rendered a normal "angel" of the nineteenth-century social imagination.

Victor’s abandonment of Elizabeth on their wedding night is also evidence of Victor’s erasure of feminine sexuality. Assuming the socially acceptable role protector and avenger, he readies himself to confront the creature: "I resolved that I would sell my life dearly and not shrink from the [impending] conflict until my own life, or that of my adversary, was extinguished" (168). Fresh from the murders of Victor’s family and his closest friend, Clerval, the creature has delivered a clear and ominous warning when he tells Victor, "I shall be with you on your wedding night" (145). But Victor fails to interpret this obvious warning correctly, as a direct threat to the life of Elizabeth. He leaves Elizabeth alone and vulnerable while he awaits the creature outside. The creature, of course, murders Elizabeth. Victor’s rankly obtuse oversight suggests a hidden agenda, suggesting, as Robert Kiely observes, that perhaps Victor’s "adversary" was, after all, not the creature, but his wife’s sexuality and the sexuality she arouses within him. Perhaps his fighting impulse is that of control and maintenance of the stable norm. His "combat" is with dreadful feminine-nature. Avoiding engagement, Victor has the creature do the killing for him. Victor has in effect sterilized himself and eliminated the sexuality of his wife. He has successfully normalized the feminine.

Like Shelley in Frankenstein, the late-Victorian writers figure the materiality and instability of feminine nature. For example, in Brontë’s Wuthering Heights, nature--its instability, its body--is seen in both novels, on one hand, as irrepressible. But, interestingly, it is nature’s powerful intractability that is the source of cultural fear that, in
turn, triggers the impulse to suppress. For, *Wuthering Heights*, again like *Frankenstein*, brings forth the cultural view of feminine nature as monstrous and also provides—mainly through the voice of Nelly—a frame with which to suppress and nullify the differences, effects, and social discomfort of the unstable body. Chapter 2 we can view *Wuthering Heights* as a kind of metaphor for the way that society constructs disability; it enacts the late-nineteenth-century society's privileging of normalcy, although, as the novel suggests implicitly, that impulse remains unsuccessful.
Notes

1 Davis, Enforcing 142-45. Davis offers an insightful discussion of Frankenstein in terms of disability.

2 Davis, Enforcing 145. Fragmentation and wholeness are discussed in terms of disability. Davis points out that the creature's fragmentation is an uncomfortable reminder of the ailing body in pieces.


4 Davis, Enforcing 145.

5 Mellor 111. Mellor observes that Francis Bacon was one of the first scientists to use the image of nature as an uncontrollable female.

6 Sentimentality and its expression of pathos, an arm of the eighteenth-century's cult of sensibility, is modeled in Henry MacKenzie's enormously popular novel of 1771, The Man of Feeling, and its hero, Harley. Delicate and sympathetic feelings, childlike innocence, and gullibility are some of the traits possessed by Harley; these traits advance the typical theme of the novel of sensibility: innocence deceived and exploited by the corrupt world. Not only the heroes of works of sensibility must feel emotion, however, but also the reader. For, it was believed that through the awareness of one's own sorrows one becomes sensitized to another's suffering. Action in the form of good deeds is not enough to be morally good; feeling for others became the central criterion defining the morally refined individual. Therefore, the hero and the reader dually participate in the teary-eyed expression of virtue. The interesting aspect of sensibility in connection with disability, however, is that even as sensibility indicates a refined and moral individual, its qualities, while placing the sympathizer in a power position can simultaneously be seen as enfeebling the sympathizer. The correct amount of sentiment marked by the delicacy of emotions, for instance, demands the suppression of energy and power. Therefore, since delicately sympathetic emotions that preclude energy and action are the defining characteristics of sensibility, this so-called human capacity has long been identified as the feminine. For example, Angela Leighton's project in her book, Writing Against the Heart, is to disabuse the reader of the notion that women poets (descendents of feminine myth figures of sensibility, Corinne and Sappho) were capable only of writing from and with weak emotions. She demonstrates the conscious aesthetics of nineteenth-century women poets.

7 Shelley further evokes a psychological sense of entrapment and psychic pain through the use of imprisonment fantasies from the eighteenth-century Gothic fiction tradition. In Gothic narratives, and in Frankenstein, chains and graves are typically used to suppress the body, usually a female body. But such imagery tends also to have the reverse effect of featuring the very material that it wants to suppress by evoking bodily pain. The use
of Gothic imagery can be seen in the passage in which Victor languishes in prison, and in it, the body insists on its visibility. After finding the body of his friend, Clerval, Victor is led to a kind of court where witnesses accuse him of participating in the murder. Witness after witness testifies that a single man in a boat (allegedly Victor) was seen with the body. Finally, in order to resolve the issue, the judge leads Victor to view his friend’s dead body. Seeing the body (bodies are everywhere), Victor collapses. Unconscious, he is carried to a prison cell. Shortly he awakes as if "from a dream" and tells us "I... found myself... in a prison, stretched on a wretched bed, surrounded by jailers, turnkeys, bolts, and all the miserable apparatus of a dungeon"(161). Capturing the sublime atmosphere of the Gothic, Shelley conveys the entrapped body. Victor goes on to relate further claustrophobic images: how he languishes in prison and "a darkness pressed around [him]" (162). Later, following Elizabeth’s murder, Frankenstein’s father dies from "the horrors that were accumulated around him" (181). Again, Victor describes his perceptions in Gothic terms: "chains and darkness were the only objects that pressed upon me" (182).

8 Davis "Constructing Normalcy" 10-12. Concepts such as “beautiful” and “perfect” presuppose an ideal. In the nineteenth century the concept of the norm gradually replaced the concept of the "ideal" concepts in relation to human aspirations.

9 Mellor 225. Mellor first observed the connection between Henry Fuseli’s The Nightmare and Victor’s belated attraction to his wife.

10 Kiely 165-166.
CHAPTER 3

EMILY BRONTË’S WUTHERING HEIGHTS:
STABILIZING THE UNSTABLE BODY

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein illustrates the social construction of disability. In Frankenstein, disability is entwined with feminine nature (instability) and with the emerging concept of normalcy (stability). Frankenstein reveals culture's fear of and reaction to physical difference and nature's instability. The monster is a complex metaphor, representing the "monstrous" disabled body: the physically different body, the social body, and the power of that social body to construct and define.

Associated with Romantic conceptions of nature, the monster is feminized and at the same time, his (potential) power is neutralized. Moreover, Shelley also associates him with nature at its most unstable and irrepressible. Most importantly, the Victorian impulse to control and normalize the threat of feminine nature is anticipated by Shelley in the character of Victor who is a kind of proto-eugenicist. An analysis of Brontë's Wuthering Heights likewise will pursue the Victorian's constructions of disability. Like the scientist of the late-nineteenth century, Brontë's critics reveal the scope and power of the norming impulse and its monstrous implications.

Critics and reviewers of Wuthering Heights collude in and reinforce the cultural imperative of normalcy. Indeed, from the outset, Victorian critics attempted to neutralize and marginalize Wuthering Heights' material instabilities (effects) by characterizing its

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energy as outside mainstream society, monstrous even. A contemporary review in
*Britannia* (1848) exemplifies this tendency. First, the writer employs contrasting terms,
to create a binary framework within which to think about *Wuthering Heights*.

The uncultured freedom of native character presents more rugged aspects than we
meet with in educated society. Its manners are not only more rough, but its
passions are more violent. . . . It is more subject to brutal instinct than to divine
reason. (*Britannia* qtd. in Allott 41)

This binary framework leads the reader into a fallacious, either/or logic centered on the
contrast between "uncultured freedom" and "educated society," "manners" and
"passions," and "instinct" and "divine reason." Having tuned the reader's mind to binary
judgments, when the writer continues to state that Brontë's world is "strangely original"
and "irregular" like "those" German fairy tales in which the supernatural and evil are
given sway, the reader is ready to accept that the "uncultured freedom" and "wild state"
of *Wuthering Heights* is surely wrong. This kind of freedom is clearly not that of
cultured society. The writer then links the immoral attitudes with the misshapen material
world, associating the physically irregular with the immoral: the characters' moral
attitudes are described as "angular" and "mis-shapen." Finally, the writer contrasts
Brontë's "irregular" renderings to normative fictional forms: the supposed anomalies in
Brontë's work "form . . . a striking contrast to those regular forms we are to meet with in
English fiction. . . ." While not condemning Brontë's fiction outright, the author does
imply its differences make it "wrong" in some vague way: the "narrative," he says,
"leaves an unpleasant effect on the mind." Artless characters that spring from the
"limited" mind of Emily Brontë cause this "unpleasant effect": "[The characters] are so
new, so grotesque, so entirely without art, that they strike us as proceeding from a mind of limited experience"... (41).

The Britannia writer equates the "grotesque" characters in Wuthering Heights with the savage and stupid. They are unfit for normal society in that they are "uncivilized" and originate from a lesser (i.e. "limited") mind. Relevant to the privileging of normalcy, the disparaging sense of "grotesque" is not unfamiliar to this period. For example, the OED cites instances by Horace Walpole in 1762 and William Hazlitt in 1820. Moreover, an 1857 article in the North American Review equates the grotesque with the monstrous using both terms to jettison Brontë's novel from the mainstream. Commenting on the "fearful fascination" of Wuthering Heights, the reviewer says, "The creation [the novel] is as great as it is grotesque. ..." In the same breath, he deems the novel a "monstrosity" that is morally and practically useless, reminding us implicitly of Shelley's monster. Lastly the experience of reading the novel is analogous to a kind of "fit" or to "fancies which perplex a brain in a paroxysm of nightmare" (Allott 76). He also associates the monster-novel with "abnormal" psychological states and conditions found only in "nightmare."

The word "grotesque" brings to light a relationship between the reviewers of Wuthering Heights and another contemporary of Emily Brontë who also refers to the grotesque, John Ruskin. The OED cites Ruskin's Stones of Venice (1850) in its definition of "grotesque" as forms "Characterized by distortion or unnatural combinations; fantastically extravagant; bizarre, quaint." In his discussion of Gothic architecture, when he describes "The Northern love of what is called the Grotesque," Ruskin exchanges the adjective "grotesque" for "Gothic"; therefore, like the reviewers in
Britannia and the North American Review, he uses the term "grotesque" to mean savage and uncultured. As Ruskin says, "I am not sure when the word 'Gothic' was first generically applied to the architecture of the North; but I presume that, whatever the date of its original usage, it was intended to imply reproach, and express the barbaric character of the nations among whom that architecture arose" (155-56). Unlike the reviewers, however, Ruskin's larger purpose is to impugn nineteenth-century culture for its disparagement of the grotesque. It should be noted that consideration of Ruskin in relation to Brontë and her reviewers is important because the heart of Ruskin's message reflects and indeed underscores disability as culturally circumscribed by normalcy. Ruskin's critique boldly admonishes nineteenth-century society's insistence and approbation of all things normal, "perfect," and regular; he wants to convince his contemporaries of this folly of denigrating and excluding the grotesque and imperfect. In its folly, he says, Britain has mechanized (normalized) its workers, reducing them to slaves who cannot "endure the appearance of imperfection in anything" and who produce only that "which could be executed with absolute precision by line and rule. . ." (159). In the end, Ruskin makes an important and forward-looking point. He defends abnormality by pointing out that imperfection is—as disability is—a real, necessary, and inevitable part of being human: "Imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent" (172). The Britannia writer exemplifies Ruskin's target audience—those of his contemporaries who regarded normalcy as "right" and disability as "wrong."
Contemporary reviewers of *Wuthering Heights* participated in eugenicizing *Wuthering Heights*: in part, this can be attributed to polite society's condemnation of the irregular and abnormal on moral grounds. In an 1848 *American Review* review of *Wuthering Heights*, G.W. Peck clearly insists on its erasure when he entwines normal art with morality:

Setting aside the profanity, which if a writer introduces into a book, he offends against both politeness and good morals, there is such a general roughness and savageness in the soliloquies and dialogues here given as never should be found in a work of art. The whole tone and style of the book smacks of lowness. It would indicate that the writer was not accustomed to the society of gentlemen. . . . Nothing like it has ever been written before; it is to be hoped that in respect of its faults, for the sake of good manners, nothing will be hereafter. Let it stand by itself, a coarse, original powerful book. . . . It will live a short and brilliant life, and then die and be forgotten. . . . (Allot 50)

According to Peck, *Wuthering Heights* affronts the "politeness" and "good morals" found in "the society of gentlemen." Its "savageness" "should never be found" in art (italics mine). Further, Peck insists that this novel should "stand by itself"--parentless: "Nothing like it has ever been written before . . . nothing will be hereafter." In a sense, Peck’s metaphor of literary spawning and his fear of the reproductive powers of Brontë’s novel parallel Victor Frankenstein’s fear of the monster as procreator. According to Peck and others, *Wuthering Heights* defied moral and literary norms. Ironically, however, *Wuthering Heights*, aided by its reviewers, also *defined* the norms of Victorian society, enabling both book and reader to lay down the parameters of disability.
Indeed, many of Brontë's early reviews implicitly champion normalcy, labeling *Wuthering Heights* as "repulsive" and "repellant." Revulsion is, of course, often a "normal's" reaction to the disabled. The January, 1848 edition of the *New Monthly Magazine* says that *Wuthering Heights* is "associated with an equally fearful and repulsive spot. It should have been called *Withering* Heights, for any thing from which the mind and body would more instinctively shrink, than the mansion and its tenants, cannot be imagined" (qtd. in Allott 45; italics mine). Also in 1848, *Paterson's Magazine* directs us to cleanse ourselves of the repulsiveness of the novel by destroying it: "We rise from the perusal of *Wuthering Heights* as if we had come fresh from a pest-house . . . . [Burn] *Wuthering Heights*" (48 Allott; italics mine). The *Eclectic Review* in 1851 says that "*Wuthering Heights* . . . is one of the most repellent books we ever read" (Allott 66; italics mine), and in 1854, Dante Gabriel Rossetti in a letter to William Allingham employs the language of *Frankenstein*, "it is a fiend of a book--an incredible monster . . . ." He muses in surprise at how his fellow--normal--countrymen could be found in the "hell" of *Wuthering Heights*: "The action is laid in hell, --only it seems places and people have English names there. . . ." (67 Allott). *Wuthering Heights* was the disabled kid on the block, seemingly helpless, yet derided and shunned. As Vine puts it, the book undermined the "securities of the cultural world," "deranging the protocols or canons of middle-class literary taste"; "challenging, flouting, and disorganizing readerly expectations, it destabilized the constituted cultural horizons of its bourgeois readers" (83 Vine). In short, almost before it left the press, *Wuthering Heights* began its unwitting work of defining the disabled.
The most powerful contributor to the construction of *Wuthering Heights* as a monstrosity, unfit for a place beside normal fiction, is Charlotte Brontë’s "Editor’s Preface to the New Edition of *Wuthering Heights*" (1850). Charlotte’s "Preface" has forewarned generations of scholars and readers of *Wuthering Heights* of its deviance and influenced them to think the same (441-445). To be sure, the remarkable fact that Charlotte framed the "Preface" as an apology—an admission of wrongdoing—for Emily’s "rusticity" and "rudeness" alone testifies to her privileging of norms, moral and aesthetic. Expressing regret for the "rude" and "strange" "faults" of *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte, like G.W. Peck, characterizes its manners as "alien":

> The wild moors of the north of England can for [polite society] have no interest; the language, the manners, the very dwellings and household customs of the scattered inhabitants of those districts, must be to such readers in a great measure unintelligible, and --where intelligible--repulsive. (441)

The instability of the "scattered inhabitants" (recalling the "shattered" and "scattered" pine trees that littered Shelley’s landscape) that inhabit the wild moors are defined as "repulsive" next to those of stable, polite, normal society:

> Men and women who, perhaps, naturally very calm, and with feelings moderate in degree, and little marked in kind, have been trained from their cradle to observe the utmost evenness of manner and guardedness of language. (441)

Charlotte stabilizes the unstable, suppresses emotion, and guards against volatility. Furthermore, Charlotte contrasts the reader’s superior education and emotional control with the excessive emotion and ignorance that she imagines the reader will “suffer” in *Wuthering Heights*:
[The reader] will hardly know what to make of the rough, strong utterance, the harshly manifested passions, the unbridled aversions, and headlong partialities of unlettered moorland hinds and rugged moorland squires, who have grown up untaught and unchecked, except by mentors as harsh as themselves. (441)

Charlotte does not let up. She expresses regret for Emily's passionate characters--Heathcliff, Hindley, and Catherine. She lays blame for these "relentless," "implacable," and "lost and fallen" (443) souls on Emily's personal isolation and impoverished imagination. Emily, she says, neither communicated intimately with the "Peasantry" nor lived long enough for her imagination to mature through the "influence of other intellects" (443).

But, Charlotte's desperate attempt to control the volatility of Wuthering Heights is as complex as it is relentless. She oscillates between apology for its moral abnormalities and defense of its normative aesthetic features. By way of apology and compensation, Charlotte directs the reader to the characters of Nelly and Edgar: "For a specimen of true benevolence and homely fidelity, look at the character of Nelly Dean; for an example of constancy and tenderness, remark that of Edgar Linton" (443). She defends Wuthering Heights aesthetically on the grounds that it possesses the Romantic qualities of truth and originality. She speculates that those admirable qualities might have been mitigated if "Ellis Bell" had lived a culturally normal life as "a lady or a gentleman accustomed to what is called 'the world'" and if she had, therefore, produced a "wider" and "more comprehensive" work (442). On one hand, by locating Wuthering Heights within the male-dominated and male-inspired Romantic tradition of "original genius," Charlotte underscores its aesthetic normalcy. She casts Emily's artistic role in Romantic (then as
now, familiar and authoritative) terms that neutralize the emotive agency of the female artist: Emily is a kind of "cipher" through which the creative power flows. The artist, Charlotte writes, "owns something of which he is not always master—something that at times strangely wills and works for itself. . . . [The artist's] share in [the creative work] has been to work passively under dictates [that the artist] neither delivered nor could question—" (442; italics mine). On the other hand, however, by stressing Wuthering Heights' transcendence of the worldly (the unstable) and linking Emily with the immateriality of mysticism, Charlotte denies the novel's material instability and creates and reinforces its social differences.

The Victorian fear and suspicion of nature, and the impulse to stabilize it (through science, technology, imperial expansion, psychology, critical writing), reach into early, and influential, twentieth-century criticism. Indeed, both Victorian and early-twentieth-century culture took Catherine's passion and treated it as either immoral or, as in the following example of early-twentieth-century criticism, as a pure metaphysical, elemental force asunder from the world. "Metaphysics," much like Romantic transcendence, is a way of denying and erasing the feminine, sexual body. Two highly esteemed readings of Wuthering Heights capture the continuing Victorian line: Lord David Cecil's Early Victorian Novelists (1934) and Q.D. Leavis' sociological approach to Wuthering Heights in "A fresh approach to Wuthering Heights" (1969). Cecil's "metaphysical" views formed the bedrock of future critical thought; his chapter on Wuthering Heights canonized Brontë's work (35 Stoneman). Cecil forwards two claims: one, that the novel's concerns are with the immaterial; and two, that Catherine's passion is "sexless" and "devoid of sensuality" (157). Cecil's reading, representative of the ongoing
inscription of Victorian culture's conceptions of sexual normalcy, deepened the acceptance that "normal" sex (not Catherine's sex) is socially delineated sex. What bothered Victorians and later critics alike about Catherine's (and Heathcliff's) behavior was that their sexual energy did not match conceptions of normal, domesticated sex—it was willful, moving of its own accord; it was not sex as "sensual" or "social" in the normative sense. By excluding Catherine's passion for Heathcliff from the normal sexual arena, by making it "otherworldly," Cecil reflects the fear-based Victorian response to the power of feminine nature and the reaction to neutralize it.

Holding the line, Leavis' perspective in one stroke invalidates Catherine's body and neutralizes her sexual impulses, explaining that her love for Heathcliff is sisterly and unsexed (Heathcliff is Earnshaw's "illegitimate son and Catherine's half-brother" (238)), asserting, "Catherine's feelings about Heathcliff are never sexual" (232). Further, she conceals both Catherine and Heathcliff's animal energy under the cover of Romantic nature ideology (they "are idyllically and innocently happy . . . roaming the countryside as hardy, primitive, Wordsworthian children" (233)).

Critical writing on Wuthering Heights undertakes to neutralize its differences. Brontë, however, does indeed create monsters. Structurally and geographically, the novel's framework consists of the two opposing houses, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, standing alone and in opposition to one another. On the one hand, the Grange is the site of stability and middle-class norms, and the novel closes with all the characters either dead or contained within the Grange. Wuthering Heights, on the other hand, represents the instability of feminine nature (passion, sickness and disability).
Descriptions of the house emphasize its volatility and liken it to a disabled body. The adjective, "wuthering," Lockwood says, is "descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather." Lockwood says:

One may guess the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. (4-5)

Imagery and personification indicate a body disabled and under siege: the trees have "limbs" that are undernourished ("thorns" that "crave" and are "gaunt"); their physical growth has been curtailed ("stunted") and they have grown crooked and off center ("slant"). The windows of the house are like the eyes of a sick person, set deeply in their sockets ("narrow windows") and the house is outfitted in the ancient garb of war ("large jutting stones"). Moreover, Lockwood describes "a quantity of grotesque carving" over the front door that depicts "a wilderness of crumbing griffins and shameless little boys" (5). In one sense, "grotesque" is used to date the carving around "1500"; however, the context underscores the picture of the house as disfigured, corrupt, immoral, lonely and uncivilized.

When Lockwood first stays at the Heights, he describes its interior as "primitive" yet "nothing extraordinary" (6). But things change. Isabella, imprisoned in Wuthering Heights after marrying Heathcliff, writes to Nelly of the "unnatural dream" of her new home (166):

There was a carpet . . . but the pattern was obliterated by dust; a fire-place hung with cut paper, dropping to pieces . . . But [the curtains of "expensive material"] had evidently experienced rough usage; the valances hung in festoons,
wrenched from their rings, and the iron rod supporting them was bent in an arc on one side, causing the drapery to trail upon the floor. The chairs were also damaged, many of them severely; and deep indentations deformed the panels of the walls. (174)

The curtains and chairs operate as metaphors for corruption within. Along with the death imagery of the "patterns obliterated by dust" are the images of physical disablement of valances and rods like mangled limbs "wrenched" and "bent." Perhaps because we are so accustomed to thinking of the disabled as monstrous, when the adjectives "severely" "damaged" and "deformed" are applied to the wall, the pejorative connotations, the associations of the disabled with the ruined, pass unnoticed.

Not only is the house monstrous, however, so are its inhabitants. The dangerous mutability of feminine nature is captured in Catherine, Heathcliff, and Hindley. During his night's stay at the Heights, in a dream, Lockwood encounters Catherine's ghost scratching at the bedroom window. Nature outside the window is in motion, "gusty winds" and "driving snow." This image of the mutability of nature pales, however, compared to the transformation of the tree branch into flesh. "I heard, also," Lockwood reports, "the fir-bough repeat its teasing sound." The adjective "teasing" immediately feminizes the tree-branch. Annoyed at the persistent sound, Lockwood shatters the window with his fist and "stretch[es] an arm out to seize the importunate branch: instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!" (30). The sudden change unseats Lockwood as he cries out in language reminiscent of Victor Frankenstein's, "The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed--'Let me in--let me
in!" Lockwood has encountered the "nightmare" of the changing and potentially disabled flesh, a state that refuses suppression. Catherine, begging him to let her in, tells him that she is "come home," that she had "lost [her] way upon the moor!" Her loss is in part loss of her material body (with the exception of her hand). Also, Catherine's loss recalls Frankenstein's monster who is "lost in the darkness and distance" of disability and exile. All the way through the passage, Lockwood (a controller, like Victor) vows that he will exert his will over feminine nature; he will "stop it" and "silence it"; he struggles to "disengage" himself. Finally, as in Frankenstein, fear and frustration lead to violence:

Terror made me cruel; and finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off,

I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes: still it wailed, 'let me in!' and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear. (31)

These are images of sex: the reference to the bed, the motion of intercourse, and the feminine menstrual blood and/or the blood of violence are images that Victor might have imagined (and successfully avoided) on his wedding night. In this short passage, Brontë has established the link between the feminine-nature, and its inherent materiality, the disabled body, the repulsion and fear connected with them, and the impulse to control.

Catherine is irrevocably linked with nature's erratic force. She is fire: "Her whole complexion [could be set] in a blaze" (88), and she controls others through her "fiery temper" (110). Her volatility and sexuality are the weather that besieges the Heights. Keeping a vigil for Heathcliff in the yard, Catherine paces "to and fro . . . where . . . the growling thunder, and the great drops . . . began to plash around her, [and] she remained calling at intervals, and then listening, and then crying outright" (104). The storm and
Catherine's emotions peak: "About midnight . . . the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury"; trees "split" and boughs break (76). The storm's rage "proved the commencement of delirium" (78); as it destroyed the trees, it disables Catherine who is overcome by "uncontrollable grief" and its inarticulate muteness. Further, Catherine's energy for Heathcliff, displayed in their final meeting at the Grange, is a powerful array of animalistic, sexual energy. Hooked to Heathcliff's "every movement" (196), eagerness, anger, bitterness, regretfulness, sympathy, compassion, suspicion, earnestness, despair, and desperation characterize Catherine's emotional range and their exchange of abnormally uncivilized animal passions (194-200).

Heathcliff's monstrous figuration leads us directly back to Shelley's creature who embodies the Lacanian fragmented "originary" self. The monster's body is a mosaic of body pieces, his identity formed through his "mirrors" (the villagers, Victor). Likewise, Heathcliff is fragmented genealogically and historically. His physical difference is largely cast in pejorative racial allusions to his general "darkness": he is a "black villain" (137), "dirty, ragged, and black-haired" (44), and his eyes are "black fiends" (71).

Suddenly introduced to the Heights by Mr. Earnshaw, Heathcliff is genderless and orphaned, sharing the feminine traits—silence, illiteracy, no history—of Shelley's monster. "It," says Nelly was "starving, and houseless and as good as dumb in the streets of Liverpool . . . Not a soul knew to whom it belonged . . ." Heathcliff, "only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (45). He is given a single name by the Earnshaws, a fact that sets him apart publicly and socially. He is an "arid wilderness" (89) of empty space and instability. His unknown origins and his equally mysterious three-year hiatus are obvious gaps in his history that
engender mistrust. "Honest people don't hide their deeds," says Nelly. "How has he been living? how has he got rich? why is he staying at Wuthering Heights, the house of a man whom he abhors?" (127).

Cast also as an animal and a supernatural aberration, Heathcliff has a striking connection with monstrous nature. Nelly fears that she "had raised a goblin" (136). Heathcliff "growls," and Catherine calls him a "wolfish man" (126). Isabella wonders if he is really human: "Is Mr. Heathcliff man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?" (166). In language reminiscent of Victor Frankenstein's, Isabella wishes for the death of the freak of nature: "Monster! would that he could be blotted out of creation, and out of my memory." When Nelly patronizingly reminds Isabella that Heathcliff is, after all, "a human being," Isabella flatly responds, "he's not a human being" (211).

Hindley, the eldest male, inherits Wuthering Heights. And, like Victor Frankenstein, he corrupts the traditional masculine institution of primogeniture, thus making way for Heathcliff's usurpation of his property. Hindley embodies all the monstrosities associated with the abnormal, unstable, and disabled. Terrorizing the household with his raging unpredictability, he is a "rabid drunk." Removing the ammunition from his gun, which "he was fond of playing with in his insane excitement" (90), he returns home one evening,

... vociferating oaths dreadful to hear; and caught [Nelly] in the act of stowing his son away in the kitchen cupboard. Hareton was impressed with a wholesome terror of encountering either his wild beast's fondness or his madman's rage; for in one he ran a chance of being squeezed and kissed to death, and in the other of being flung into the fire, or dashed against the wall. . . . (91)
Hindley, a child predator, a killer, a wild animal, and a "madman," resembles Frankenstein's creature in full destructive mode. In addition, Heathcliff's descriptions of Hindley's death tie Hindley with the corruptible, material world. After "drinking himself to death deliberately," Heathcliff says, "the beast had changed into carrion: he was both dead and cold and stark" (229-230). The body in Brontë's world has gone from living monster to rotting prey.

The feminine monster pervades Brontë's text. Unstable, debilitating and debilitating, the monster must be contained and controlled. Stabilizing and neutralizing uncontrollable nature, Brontë's novel contains and frames disability. Opposite to Wuthering Heights is the Grange, representing the genteel, normal world to which some of the characters from Wuthering Heights aspire and within which they are contained. (Significantly, Brontë's characters' aspirations to normalcy concur with those of Charlotte Brontë's imagined readers). The Grange is a typical bourgeois world, circumscribed with material wealth (benign, stable) and in material terms: it is, as Heathcliff describes it, a "carpeted" and "crimson-covered" place with "pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the center, and shimmering with little soft tapers" (58). The inhabitants of the Grange make sure to distinguish themselves from those of Wuthering Heights. For instance, Mrs. Linton defines herself as a normal Christian alongside the pagan: Earnshaw, she frowns, "lets [Catherine] grow up in absolute heathenism." She further assures her membership in the bourgeois class through economic metaphors and racial slurs: Heathcliff is a "strange acquisition" and "a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway" (62). Moreover, Edgar is the picture of tireless middle-class devotion while tending Catherine. He signifies the movement of the
novel toward restoring health, balance and normalcy to intractable nature: "Hour after hour" he sat at her sickbed, "tracing the gradual return to bodily health [and hoping that] her mind would settle back to its right balance" (113; italics mine). The Grange is associated with benign, curative, Wordsworthian nature. Edgar describes the sounds, colors, and healthy smells to Catherine: "The sky is blue, and the larks are singing, and the becks and brooks are all brim full. . . . The air blows so sweetly, I feel that it would cure you" (164).

Brontë initially contains the intractable within middle-class accoutrements. For a time, the feminine energy of Catherine and Heathcliff is covered, dressed and ornamented in the currency of Victorian normalcy: their bodies are literally transformed by clothes and physical "bearing"; they both observe the social proprieties by marrying. Heathcliff's revenge transmutes into middle-class warfare: his verbal disabilities are covered by the language of the middle-class; the emotional volatility of both are quelled.

Catherine, returning to Wuthering Heights from her convalescence at the Grange is transformed, hidden beneath the whiteness and shine of "splendid garments": Now "dignified" her hair is nicely curled; she is wearing the "cover" of "a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit," and beneath that layer is "a grand plain silk frock, white trousers, and burnished shoes." The tenacious grip on Lockwood of the "cold" and gnarled fingers of the tree branch contrasts with Catherine's "Grange" fingers and the "wonderfully whitened "fingers of a proper "lady" (65-66). After her marriage to Edgar, her passions are pacified and neutralized; "in possession" of benign middle-class feelings, Catherine and Edgar "were really in possession of deep and growing happiness," and "the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand" (114).
Heathcliff is likewise transformed. After a three-year exile, he returns physically transformed and articulate (with "normal" language). He is now a "tall, athletic, well-formed man"; his "countenance" is "older in expression and decision . . . it look[s] intelligent . . . His manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness . . . ."

Emotionally domesticated, his "ferocity . . . [is] subdued" (84). His "savage" vengeance is transmuted into the civilized warfare of a bourgeois gentleman, the amassing of power through property and language. He claims a bourgeois wife, Isabella, and works to acquire both Wuthering Heights and the Grange by legal means. His machinations are wrapped in the limits and mainstream discourse of the law, itself based on an assessment and execution of middle-class values; he drapes his abuse of Isabella in legal clothing, "I keep strictly within the limits of the law (184)," he says. Silencing Isabella, he intimidates Nelly with legalese:

If you are called upon in a court of law, you'll remember her [Isabella's] language Nelly! And take a good look at that countenance—she's near the point which would suit me. No, you're not fit to be your own guardian, Isabella, now; and I being your legal protector, must retain you in my custody, however distasteful the obligation may be. (185)

Foreseeing possible litigation, Heathcliff shows an awareness of both law and language's subtlety and power. Marriage (the entrapment of Isabella) is now pragmatic and legal: "guardian," "legal protector," "custody," and "obligation" now cover his base intentions.

Brontë also uses conventional plot devices to contain and to impose closure. Erasing all the unwieldy characters, Brontë privileges normalcy, cleansing the moors of deviation. Hindley dies the pathetic death of a drunk; Catherine is killed off early in the
novel; Linton Heathcliff, disabled and beyond redemption, dies in bed, and Heathcliff, although the most tenacious, is finally eliminated, clearing the way for Hareton. Thus, the inhabitants of the disabled house of Wuthering Heights are neutralized and firmly contained. The circle is closed. Cathy corrects Hareton's muteness and the two become "sworn allies" (382). Cathy, Hareton, and Nelly depart for the Grange (just like the elder Catherine). Wuthering Heights "will be shut up" (413). Moreover, the joining of Hareton and Cathy circles back to re-manifest the name and body of Catherine Earnshaw. Nelly observes Catherine and Hareton's physical unity in their uncanny resemblance to Catherine; "their eyes are precisely similar, and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw" (392). "Catherine Earnshaw" is now a site of closure: the name is revisited, the body resurrected; she is corrected and normalized.

It is, however, the voice of Nelly that is the definitive framing device of disability in the novel. Although she is contained within Lockwood's narrative (this itself a normalizing feature—a female voice filtered through a male voice), her voice pervades the narrative. Her function for erasing disability should not be underestimated. Her perspective, social role, and language represent control and order. Sensible, pragmatic and dispassionate, she is indeed an icon of normalcy.

It is Nelly's role to "make... sense of... nonsense" (102) as she tells Catherine during their exchange of confidences. Her use of "sense" connotes "common sense," alluding to inherited eighteenth-century values represented by esteemed "men of common sense." Nelly values the "duties" of marriage far above the energy of feeling. For Nelly, "common humanity" and "a sense of duty" structures marriage (180). She repeatedly iterates her admiration for Edgar's devotion to Catherine, thus underwriting
her middle-class values, and she frames their relationship—due to his ministrations—as "sunshine" and "happiness."

Dampening fires with her dispassionate persona, Nelly minimizes and frames the violence of passion. After describing the rage and fire of Catherine and Heathcliff's exchange in Catherine's sickroom, Nelly sums up by reporting to Lockwood, "The two, to a cool spectator, make a strange and fearful picture" (195). The juxtaposition of their heat and her coolness and the dispassionate and static metaphor ("picture") minimizes and contains the violence while sharply defining normal. Nelly further minimizes when she dismisses Catherine's condition to Edgar. Nelly explains to the appalled Edgar, "[Catherine's] been fretting here . . . and eating scarcely anything, and never complaining; she would admit none of us till this evening, and so we couldn't inform you of her state, as we were not aware of it ourselves, but it is nothing" (155). The contrast between the severity and length of time of Catherine's starvation and Nelly's minimizing report that "it is nothing," tips the emotional scales back to center. The overall effect of her dispassion deflates the power of Catherine's behavior and emotions and serves to frame a world (for Nelly and for the reader) in which such frightful extremes do not really exist, or, if they do, they exist solely on the aberrant fringe.

Nelly is also operative in outfitting the abnormal in the garb of normalcy; she is the spokeswoman for British national pride and Christianity. Nelly hopes that Cathy and Hareton will formally marry: "The crown of all my wishes will be the union of those two; I shall envy no one on their wedding-day--there won't be a happier woman than myself in England!" (384). Nelly seems to subscribe to the idea that the abled body of the state depends upon the abled body of its citizens. Her monarchic ("crown") and
nationalistic ("union" and "England") references, coupled with the potential marriage of the two now-normal characters, underscores this eugenic impulse.

This sort of nationalist eugenicizing also comes through when Nelly comments on Heathcliff's recent physical improvement. Nelly assumes that Heathcliff's "upright carriage suggest[s] the idea of his having been in the army" (118). Linking Heathcliff's physical wellness with the military is a move that further neutralizes his differences, dresses him up, and bolsters England at the same time. He is patriotic and devoted to the well-being of the nation, and his apparent ablebodiedness reflects that of the state. Indeed, the military, more than any other institution, norms its members, eradicating differences in appearance, manner and thinking. In addition to making Heathcliff a patriot, she converts him to Christianity. Nelly notes that Heathcliff is now "offering the right hand of fellowship" to old enemies. "He is reformed in every respect" and "quite a Christian," she remarks proudly (122). Nelly, perhaps as a kind of baptism, at last confers upon him the gentleman's prefix of "Mr." His lone and orphaned name, "Heathcliff" is socialized and normalized.

Both Frankenstein and Wuthering Heights show society's impulse to privilege normalcy that denies the feminine body and its energy and moves to control the instability of nature. Monsters are created, dressed, enclosed, and destroyed. However, both novels, while illustrating the impulse to normalcy, also highlight the survival, indeed the inevitability of feminine nature and its instability. In Frankenstein, Victor, the precursor to the late-Victorian eugenicist, dies and the monster, the quintessence of feminine instability, although "lost," does not. In Wuthering Heights, although all the original inhabitants of Wuthering Heights die, the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff
(immaterial yet visible) live on. The final reference in the novel is to the earth—nature's material—and the "unquiet" that dwell there (414). Instability is irrepressible.

In Chapter 3, I turn to the poetry of Emily Brontë, exploring this instability in the construction of disability in the poetry of the nineteenth century. I look at how the poems evince both the stability of normalcy by foregrounding coherence and transcendence and the instability of difference by foregrounding fragmentation and materiality. While Brontë's poetry embodies Romantic poetic conventions that traditionally deny materiality, it also rejects convention. The poetic suppression of the material body produces the opposite effect: it serves to highlight and foreground the body that it ostensibly conceals. Brontë's poetry struggles to foreground instability and in so doing, implicitly critiques culture's obsession with controlling the material body.
Notes

1 The growth of the concept of normalcy shows its enculturation in links between many writers and philosophers in the nineteenth century. Ruskin is partly responding the propensities of capitalistic industrial society, and ironically, he can be seen as unwittingly responding to Karl Marx's notions of production and wealth. Davis posits that even Marx is a proponent of Quetelet's average man. Marx, says Davis, applies the concept of the average to the theory of the value of labor. I see Ruskin's mechanized "slave" as Marx's worker. Marx's worker is "constructed as an average worker" (Davis "Constructing" 12). Davis cites Marx: "Any average magnitude, however, is merely the average of a number of separate magnitudes all of one kind, but differing as to quantity. In every industry, each individual labourer, be he Peter or Paul, differs from the average labourer. These individual differences, or 'errors' as they are called in mathematics, compensate one another and vanish, whenever a certain minimum number of workmen are employed together" (Marx qtd. in Davis, "Constructing Normalcy" 12-13).

According to Davis, the grotesque predates the concept of normalcy. Associated with common life, the grotesque has been linked to a "life-affirming transgressive quality in its inversion of the political hierarchy," as shown by writers such as Bakhtin, Stallybrass, and Hayden White (Davis "Constructing" 10). Therefore, "The grotesque . . . signified common humanity, whereas the disabled body, a later concept, was formulated as by definition excluded from culture, society, the norm" (Davis "Constructing" 11). However, the usage of the term by the Britannia and NAR writers, along with Ruskin's reproach of Victorian attitudes toward Gothic architecture, suggests that culture did in fact exclude the grotesque. Moreover, these literary events were historically concurrent with the rise and construction of normalcy. Although the concepts of the disabled and the grotesque are perhaps not strictly analogous, "grotesque" was nevertheless used by many in the nineteenth century to define and classify that which is socially disapproved.

2 Steve Vine in *Emily Brontë* makes the case that *Wuthering Heights* offended because it was "unprecedented [and so] possesses the power to disturb and to antagonize the polite reader's constituted literary tastes, disrespecting his or her 'good manners'" (82).

Vine notes that such characterizations signify an urgency to "protect the integrity of bourgeois taste" (83).

5 Q.D. Leavis, writing in the mid-twentieth century, affirms Charlotte's influence. Leavis observes that Charlotte "rightly defended [Emily] against allegations of abnormality" by urging the reader to notice the normalcy of the "wholesome, maternal Nelly Dean [and] Edgar Linton's touching devotion and tenderness, and the 'grace and gaiety' of the younger Cathy . . . " (240).

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The thesis that critics and biographers of Emily Brontë form a family unit, like the Brontë family unit, that functions to maintain critical equilibrium deserves attention. Much in the way that Bloom uses the Oedipal model to see writers in relation to their
fathers, the object relations, family systems model can be used to see the body of critical writers around Brontë as a critical "family" that maintains a sense of equilibrium and normalcy within the profession and the canon it reads. Out of this need for normalcy, a Brontë myth has been created. The Brontë myth has many results. This myth has propitiously fed the production needs of publishers; fed British nationalism and British culture's self-image as survival against adversity: the Brontë family supplies the combination of talent and pathos that provides fruitful ground for the construction of this self-image. The Brontë family's, and especially Emily's, tendency to extremes, both in misfortune and in potentially "dangerous" feminism, however, has made it necessary for the critical family to maintain balance within the Brontë family. In part, reading Emily through the lens of normalcy fulfills this function.

Although characterizing the relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff as "transcendent" and so maintaining a subtle "metaphysical" denial of Catherine's sexuality, Terrence Eagleton rightly describes Catherine's passion as outside of the social norms of language: "[Catherine's and Heathcliff's] relationship articulates a depth inexpressible in routine social practice, transcendent of available social languages" (Eagleton 108). Her passion is not sexless; it is, however, a sex for which socially normal language is inadequate. Eagleton further underscores the "abnormality" of Catherine's sexuality by pointing out that Catherine and Heathcliff's love is the kind that rejects the norm: their love "is an intuitive intimacy raised to cosmic status, by-passing the mediation of the 'social';... Its non-sociality is... a revolutionary refusal of the given language of social roles and values..." (Eagleton 108). Thriving outside the social norm, Catherine's passionate behavior spurs critics like John Hagan as recently as 1967 to judge with Victorian standards: Catherine is "a histrionic, vindictive harridan--an egomaniac and a paranoiac on the verge of insanity" (qtd. in Stoneman 56).

Leavis interrogates the novel's plot structure in an attempt to show that it is not a formalist, "seamless 'work of art'" (Leavis 231).

Steve Vine's analysis of Wuthering Heights revolves around how the novel "wuthers" the "categories of the world that it enters--and disrupts symbolic quietude" (81). Instability is the characteristic of nature that informs disability and its metaphorical manifestations.

Mary Visick in her 1958 book, The Genesis of Wuthering Heights, uses the word "normal" in reference to Catherine. She says that "Catherine is seen as a strange girl, whose inner life is lived habitually on another plane than the 'normal'... " (Visick 49). An earlier and perhaps the most influential critical reference to the abnormality of Wuthering Heights is found in Charlotte Brontë's writings. In Charlotte's "Preface" of 1850, she asserts unequivocally the abnormality of Catherine's passion when she describes Catherine's redeeming qualities that survive "in the midst of perverted passion and passionate perversity" (443). I discuss the rendering of Wuthering Heights as an abnormal novel in more depth earlier in Chapter 2.
11 Davis applies Jacques Lacan's theories of subjectivity as a discursive process: I identify myself as me only when I enter the language system of signifiers that through their relation to each other, create the coherent subject, me. Lacan's mirror metaphor illustrates the following: we recognize our visual reflection in a mirror as ourselves, and this is a misrecognition of ourselves; we are not the image in the mirror and we are not the thing that sees the image: we are the "process or movement between the two" (Easthope 40); therefore, we are alienated from our identity. Constructed wholeness belongs in what Lacan calls the state of the "Imaginary." Davis, in turn, makes the case that the whole or unified body—the healthy, non-disabled body that we regard as wholesome and right—is a fantasy, a kind of psychological contrivance. "It is in tracing our tactical and self-constructing (deluding) journeys away from that originary self," says Davis, "that we come to conceive and construct [a] phantom . . . of wholeness, normalcy, and unity." The fragmented body, he continues, "is the body that precedes the ruse of identity and wholeness" (Davis Enforcing 141). Therefore, "The disabled body, far from being the body of some small group of 'victims,' is an entity from the earliest of childhood instincts, a body that is common to all humans . . . . The 'normal' body is actually the body we develop later. It is in effect a Gestalt . . . (Davis Enforcing 140-1).

12 Indeed, in comparing Heathcliff with Dostoevsky's Stavrogin and Shakespeare's Iago, Q.D. Leavis pertinently observes that Heathcliff is a "composite with empty places in his history" (235).

13 Charles Percy Sanger in "The Structure of Wuthering Heights" comments that "I have never come across a pedigree of such absolute symmetry . . . . It is a remarkable piece of symmetry in a tempestuous book" (qtd. in Winnifrith 134). Inga-Stina Ewbank, in Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early-Victorian Female Novelists points out that the balancing parallels and repetitions pervade the novel, and the circular connections in the relationships are balanced and inevitable; "What produces both these patterns is, of course, the curiously artificial symmetry of the pedigree . . . . The novel can be inspected like an equation where, all the other terms cancelled out, the second Catherine and Hareton must be united" (Ewbank 136).

14 John Mathison in "Nelly Dean and the Power of Wuthering Heights" recognizes that Nelly as neutralizer: she is a "representation of the normal at its best" (qtd. in Winnifrith 188) who is "admirable . . . good-natured, warmhearted, wholesome, practical, and physically healthy" (180). Mathison believes that the reader "is forced to feel the inadequacy of the normal, healthy, hearty, good-natured person's understanding of life and human nature"; therefore, we should jettison her views and become "active interpreter [s] of the meaning of the novel" (189). The reader, he says, "realiz[es] that the 'normal' person is often incapable of feeling for the tortured, emotionally distraught person, and that the latter's tortured failure to understand himself and the sources of his misery partly results from the failure of the imagination of the majority" (180).

15 The historical/cultural uses of "common sense" lend insight into Nelly's role as the quintessence of normalcy. First, the OED defines "common sense" as belonging to the
norm: "ordinary, normal or average understanding," an "endowment of natural intelligence possessed by rational beings." Robert Burton in 1621 offers a description of common sense in *Anatomy of Melancholy*: it is "the Judge or Moderator of the rest, by whom we discern all differences of objects" (OED). Significantly, Burton's description highlights common sense as a faculty used to perceive and discriminate differences. Nelly, therefore, applies her "sense" to distinguish herself as normal against others who are not.

16 Davis in "Constructing Normalcy," page 18, links the concept of the healthy body with the healthy state with disability.
CHAPTER 4

EMILY BRONTË’S POETRY: MAKING THE BODY VISIBLE

Brontë's Wuthering Heights, while illustrating the social force for concealment and the control of the feminine and the disabled, privileges normalcy and brings forth the materiality and instability of nature. The reader is left with a sense of nature's insistence. The Grange and Nelly and the norms they represent attempt to control, frame, and impose stability on the intractable instability manifest in the house and inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. In this way, the novel enacts the social definition and treatment of disability. Brontë's poetry, however, conceives of disability not through the enactment of its social construction, but by poetically manifesting the struggle between the stability of normalcy, coherence and transcendence, and the instability of difference, fragmentation and materiality. By using Romantic poetic traditions, on one hand, and yet by revising those traditions on the other, Brontë pushes instability and the feminine body to the foreground. Through an analysis of Brontë's versification, form, grammar, and imagery, I argue that Brontë's poetry shows a tendency toward the privileging of the unstable, the material, and the feminine body.

Brontë belonged also to a larger community of nineteenth-century female poets and a feminine tradition.¹ Of course, not all critics consider Brontë a representative member of that community. For example, Angela Leighton, in Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart (1992), ranges from Felicia Hemans to Charlotte Mew in an
attempt to balance the critical scales that she believes have weighed too heavily on the
side of the novel. Certainly Gilbert and Gubar's groundbreaking The Madwoman in the
Attic (1979) treated Wuthering Heights more thoroughly than Brontë's poetry. Leighton's
defining parameters are those women who wrote poetry only (1). However, Isobel
Armstrong and Joseph Bristow in Nineteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford
Anthology place Emily firmly in the nineteenth-century tradition of women's poetry.
Indeed, Armstrong and Bristow make the case that women poets engage in a revisionary
process with prevailing male forms, gradually abandoning the "language of the heart" for
lyrical compression and energy that foreshadows modernism. (Armstrong and Bristow
xxxvi).²

Fitting into this tradition, Brontë's poetry feminizes male mainstream poetics. At
the same time, however, the traditional structures of Romanticism persistently swallow
up the "other," thus engendering conflict in the poetry. Romantic poetics privilege
normalcy in the attempt to deny feminine energy by effacing the materiality of the poem
and affecting subjective closure and coherence. Romantic poetics dominate the poetic
theater in the nineteenth century and can thus be considered "normal" poetics. But, with
Brontë, the project of disavowing the material of the poem, privileging the normal by
erasing the monster of nature and materiality, does not prevail. Intimating a return to
community that was once implied in the ballad form, her poetry shows an emergence of
destabilizing subjective coherence and anticipates the multivalent and associative
meanings--the loosening of the syntagmatic chain. The feminization of poetry maintains
and advances itself eventually into the poetics of modernism.
A short poem, "I'm happiest when most away" (Hatfield: 63) provides a sample of Brontë's rendering of bourgeois poetics, especially the Romantic expressiveness that authorizes the central (male) speaker as the source and origin of the poem and that subsumes the materiality of the poem completely. I quote the poem in full:

I'm happiest when most away
I can bear my soul from its home of clay
On a windy night when the moon is bright
And the eye can wander through worlds of light—
When I am not and none beside--
Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky--
But only spirit wandering wide
Through infinite immensity.

It is easy to see the poem's Romantic roots. The poem features a single speaker—the central "I," the subject of the enounced—who reflects upon her "happiest" state as a pure, transcendental soul, free from its material "home of clay," "wandering wide," unencumbered by "earth," "sea [or] cloudless sky." In linguistic terms, the central subject of the enounced is presented for the reader to identify with: the linearity and closure in the syntagmatic chain excludes other possible choices of language and meaning. The poem, therefore, "disavows" its process of enunciation; language is treated as a vehicle through which the poet/speaker can straightforwardly express longing.

First, this effect of linearity and closure that create a coherent subject position can be seen in syntax, sentence structure, and run-on lines or enjambment. Rather than stacking or juxtaposing ideas or events paratactically, Brontë's poem largely employs
subordination, and subordination does just the opposite of parataxis—it closes out or excludes associative words, therefore exerting control and closure over meaning. This poem has three main subordinate clauses, modifying two main clauses. The subordinate clauses appear with their subordinate conjunctions, "When" in line 1, "I'm happiest WHEN most away," line 3, On a windy night WHEN the moon is bright" and line 5, "WHEN I am not and none beside--" the subordinating clause, "when the moon is bright" modifies the main clause "I can bear my soul from its home of clay." Significantly, each clause modifies the initial/final main clause, "I'm happiest" to promote the sense of the poem's meaning as: "when [I am] most away" and "when the moon is bright" and "When I am not and none beside" then "I'm happiest." If I paraphrase the poem, reordering the words, I can show how the subordinating clauses would typically begin each sentence; a paraphrase might look thus:

When I am away from the world then I am happiest.
When the moon is bright and the eye can wander on a windy night through worlds of light, then I can bear my soul from its home of clay.
When I am not and nothing is beside me (not earth or sea or cloudless sky)
and when I am only spirit wandering through infinite immensity,
then I am happiest.

But (referring back to the poem proper), the syntax in lines 1 and 3 are inverted, and the conjunction "when" takes a central position. This inversion aids closure along the syntagmatic chain, securing meaning and offering a coherent subject position for the reader: the dependence of the subject's happiness on the conditions of non-materiality ("When [I am] most away") is highlighted. Further, the subject's dependence is set up at
the outset of the stanza (so, therefore, is the reader's as subject of the enounced), affecting
anticipation for closure with the main clause ("I'm happiest"). Semantic closure in the
main clause is postponed until the poem's end, and the effect is to exacerbate the reader's
anticipation for closure; therefore, the meaning, when it comes, is final and authoritative. 5

A further containment of meaning (closure in the syntagmatic chain) is found in
the arrangement of the poem on the page (the words that begin and end the poem and the
space between them) and the syntax. These elements function together to create semantic
closure. The syntax and mechanics of the poem separate the main clause--the opening
line of the poem, "I'm happiest"--from its modifier ("When I am not . . . / earth . . .
sea . . . / cloudless sky-- / . . . [And when I am] only spirit wandering wide / . . . Through
infinite immensity" with a period after "Through infinite immensity" and with the spatial
separation between the close of the poem and its opening line. But the main clause is
connected semantically with the final line so that the poem reads: When I am "only spirit
wandering wide/Through infinite immensity/ [then] I'm happiest." The separation of the
main clause from the modifier acts to underscore this semantic connection and closure:
the speaker, although separated by "infinite immensity" (syntax, mechanics, space) from
her "happiest" state, is, on the other hand, connected in a firmly closed loop with that
"immensity."

The poem has only one full sentence (the first line), and that sentence is not
punctuated with a period. Enjambment governs the rest of the poem. And not only do
the lines end with a clear juncture, the effect of the subordinate conjunction "when" being
in the middle ensures that the sentences can be read as beginning in the middle of a line
(i.e., line 3: "when the moon is bright"); moreover, the sense of this line connects
semantically with the line before it: "when the moon is bright/ . . . I can bear my soul
from its home of clay," its main clause. The grammatical independence of the first line,
in contrast to the rest of the poem (a modifier) increases the centeredness of the speaker
and the coherent meaning of the poem—that the speaker is happiest without her material
form. Coherence, in this instance is disrupted, however; there is a paradox: the
( imaginary) independence and non-materiality of the speaker (the main clause, the
transcendental subject of the enounced) is dependent upon the rest of the poem (the
modifier, the material, the words of the poem). Yet, the subject of enunciation (the
process of speaking the words) is "disavowed"—through closure in the syntagmatic chain
(linear coherence) and ironically through the speaker's expression of the rejection of the
material world. The "soul" created through the linear coherence is paradoxically
dependent upon the materiality, the substance of the words in the poem: even though the
speaker says that she is "happiest" when she can rid herself of the "world"—it is, in fact,
the material that creates her subjectivity. Easthope refers to Lacan: "There is a strong
tradition which considers the ego to be transcendent. In contrast, the Lacanian
conception insists that subjectivity and discourse are integral to each other. Accordingly,
the ego cannot be transcendent, for it is brought about as a position in discourse" (39).
"She" exists only in the material in the poem.

The rhymes in the poem, although more Augustan than Romantic, also promote
the sense of linear coherence and closure. The first quatrain is composed of rhyming pairs
(couplets), and the second quatrain dissolves into an abab scheme. The couplets in the
first quatrain, are masculine, simple, and exact—conventionally speaking, they are "true"
rhymes; "light" and "bright" are spelled the same; all seem to foreground enunciation (the
materiality, the phonetic, the "play" of language). "Away," "clay," "bright," and "light" might be analyzed, in Wimsatt's terms, as "tame" rhymes. Easthope explains Wimsatt's view: tame rhymes are conventionally thought of as a "barbarous and Gothic" device (Easthope 118); that this rhyming foregrounds the signifier, pigeonholes it as "bad" rhyming. Meaning is brought into relief because it jars our expectations of similarity. Further linking (and subordinating) sound to meaning is the fact that "light" can also be read as an adjective (when the speaker is without body, she is lightweight); multiple meanings are in turn underscored by the internal rhyming and the antithesis of "night" with "bright" and "light." All of these rhetorical tools have the effect of separating form from content; subordinating the materiality of poetry—the sound—to the meaning, sound thus is rendered an ornament of content/meaning; it enhances meaning; it is subordinate to meaning.

Brontë's poem further abjures its own materiality because sound, for example, is made to resemble the thing portrayed. This effect, iconicity, occurs in the second quatrain, in rhyme, run-on lines, and alliterative sound effects. First, the second quatrain dissolves the couplet scheme into alternating rhymes. This dissolution affects an emotional release from the stricter form of the couplets in the first quatrain. The effect of this release is "iconic": as the represented speaker approaches freedom from her body into "infinite immensity," the reader (and the speaker) is invited into the speaker's experience of freedom. This invitation happens through the loosening of the rhyme scheme; as the rhyme scheme expands, the speaker's (and the reader's) "spirit expands," "wandering wide." The rhyming words are now the same parts of speech (which would perhaps render them "coincident"), but they are still ruled by meaning, partly because of
their iconicity and partly because of the repetition and continuation of those particular 
parts of speech: adjective, noun, adjective, noun.

Further producing the iconic effect are the sound effects linked to the run-on lines in this last quatrain.¹⁰ As the poem makes its way toward the eventual release of the speaker into her "happiest," non-material state, the lines open up: The quatrain is one long run-on sentence beginning with the subordinating clause, continuing with the parenthetical, "Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky" and the next subordinating clause (that begins with a co-ordinating conjunction, "But," yet still holds the sense of a subordinating conjunction, therefore adhering to meaning in multiple ways) that contains the full run-on sense between "wandering wide/Through infinite immensity." Along with the run-on lines, the repetitive "Nor" of the second line affects a rise of tension that is released in the last two lines; moreover, the alliterative "w" of "wandering" and "wide," and the open vowel sounds of the "a" and the "i" moving into the humming sound of "nn" and "mm" in "infinite immensity," iconically resemble the speaker's unencumbered, floating state of peace and happiness.

Brontë's representative poem reinforces the norms of the bourgeois poetic tradition. The poem erases its own materiality in an attempt to stabilize the changeability of that material or to halt the sliding signifier; it strives for coherence, linearity, wholeness and closure, abjuring the feminine. Moreover, bourgeois poetic discourse-- aiming for closure along the syntagmatic chain, therefore offering a coherent position for the reader as subject of the enounced, subordinate and silenced--is a metaphor for and can be regarded as operating within the bourgeois co-dependent family, a system of which Brontë was apart and which strives likewise for psychological, emotional and behavioral
closure/containment. The co-dependent system strives to stabilize family roles and to silence speech and agency; it functions to provide the family (and the "selves" within the family) with centeredness, stability, and social normalcy. But, in so doing, the system also holds its members in a closed behavioral and emotional loop, "disavowing" each member's voice. Like the closed co-dependent system, bourgeois poetic discourse attempts to "efface" the reader, remove the reader from the act of production, robbing the subject of agency and denying the reader the position of subject of enunciation.

While a poem like "I Am Happiest" exemplifies Romantic expressivism, much of Brontë's poetry reveals the emergence of the instability contained by Romantic poetics. The feminine body, the material site of intrinsic disability, often dominates her poetry. The distressed, repressed, and denied body amplifies its own presence, and poetry's intrinsic compression of the sensual image is a perfect venue for advancing the body's visibility. In Brontë's poetry, the feminine body is visible (although repression and denial also are there) through its continuous entrapment in graves, chains and dungeons and its relentless suffering, grief, and death.  

Going further, feminine visibility and instability are also privileged through poetic effects that create a destabilization or incoherence of the centralized ego. This effect is often achieved through dramatic forms. Burlinson makes the point that Romantic "Transcendent subjectivity may still be desired in Brontë's writing, but the impossibility of this project is repeatedly figured" (56). In "What Language Can Utter the Feeling": Identity in the Poetry of Emily Brontë," she looks at how Brontë's poetry addresses Victorian doubt about the self's coherence, the self's relation to language, and its ability or inability to achieve a transcendent state. Brontë, she says, "identity and
representation" (64). Armstrong and Bristow's classifications of female poetic forms also assist in clarifying Brontë's poetry as moving outside the boundaries of poetic norms. Her narrative/dramatic poems (most obviously in the so-called "Gondal" poems) undermine the dominant tradition of Romantic expressiveness by taking up the narrative medieval ballad tradition and moving toward modernism, often by destabilizing coherent subjectivity. Dramatic poetry, as Armstrong and Bristow point out, destabilizes subjectivity in that drama inherently offers "multiple centers of consciousness" which "clearly differentiate the speaker from the poet's persona." According to Armstrong and Bristow, by the late 1880s "the individual monologic voice has virtually disappeared," and the lyric "no longer remains a vehicle for the spontaneous expression of emotion." They conclude, therefore, that because the newly emerging dramatic poetry interrogates dominant and accepted poetic norms through refuting "a unified and authoritative subjectivity" it is "a deeply skeptical form" (xI).

"The Prisoner. A Fragment," (H: 236) one of Brontë's more frequently anthologized poems is, through its imagery, rhymed couplets, and its Romantic transcendent consolation, bent upon the denial of the body; yet, in its very fervency to deny, it highlights the feminine body and privileges the feminine. The speaker, a young man, comes upon an imprisoned woman in the dungeon of his father's castle. There he taunts the captive, jeering at the excessive and needless restraints—the "triple walls" and the chains that "bind" and "clench" her. The captive woman then replies that the "bolts" and "irons strong" cannot truly imprison her; they may keep her body imprisoned, but they are powerless over her spirit, her apparently "true" self. In a spiritual, Christian sense, her pain frees her. As she tells her visitor,
Yet I should lose no sting, should wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks, the earlier it will bless;
And robed in fires of hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald death, the vision is divine! (57-60)

Like Christ (an intensely feminine, disabled figure), the captive attains heaven through physical suffering. The poem closes with a clear, unambiguous message: the young man realizes that whatever sentence "man" has levied on this woman, it is "unapproved and overruled by Heaven" (65). The poem clearly attempts to deny the feminine body by emphasizing transcendence: heaven's authority, along with the restraint of the woman's body, signifies the denial of the material. But this attempt is obstructed by the material fact of the body. The feminine insists on privileging itself—the material cannot be denied. First, the body is everywhere. The constant references to body parts—"eye," "tongue," "face," "brow," "hand," "heart," "lips," "breast"—culminate in the fourteenth stanza:

Oh! dreadful is the check—intense the agony—
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain. (53-56)

The references to the body are underscored by the rhyming "ear" and "hear," "brain," "again," and "chain," and by the repetition of "flesh." The poem attempts to cope with the material obstruction through transcendent philosophy. But again (and again ironically) the reader finds the material, feminine body everywhere.

It should not go unnoticed that the fourteenth and fifteenth stanzas depict the pain of physical torture. Here the captive woman defiantly explains that she welcomes her
agony for it signifies her ultimate release from the body. However, the images of the body dying and the body in pain and tortured out of its material into a "vision" "divine"—a "vision" without words—again still throws the body into relief even as they mute it.

"The Prisoner: A Fragment" is also a melodrama, harkening back to the twelfth-century metrical romances told in narrative/dramatic form; it can be classified with Armstrong and Bristow's "monumental legends." The story has two speakers, two consciousnesses with which the reader can identify, one a man, the other, a woman trapped. Although the subjects in the poem are clearly delineated, and the reader is positioned as subject of the enounced, the reader is not meant to identify with the centralized ego of the poet. In this way, the effect of a centralized ego is subverted, and an awareness of the materiality of the poem and its staging, is produced.

"Remembrance" or "R. Alcona To J. Breznaida" (H: 222) works in similar fashion to undercut Romantic expressiveness. In this poem, one of the many dramatic monologues from the Gondal poems, the speaker addresses her "Sweet Love of youth" who is now dead and in the grave; she recalls how, after he died, she forced herself to go on "check [ing] the tears of useless passion,/ Wean[ing] her young soul from yearning after thine":

Cold in the earth, and the deep snow piled above thee!

Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!

Have I forgot, my Only Love, to love thee,

Severed at last by Time's all-wearing wave? (1-4)

Granted, there is a single, monologic voice in the poem; the "I" of the poem, the character speaking, offers a coherent ego position for the reader. But, as in "The
Prisoner," there are two characters in the scene (one dead and a memory) and the reader is not held to the centralized ego of the poet; the dramatic situation highlights the poem's production and acknowledges the poem's materiality. But more forcible are the images of deprivation that in their attempt to limit the body's influence, actually bring it to the foreground. The feminine body is amplified by tactile "cold," as the speaker describes the death state of her lover and her love. The encasement of the grave and the distance between herself and her lover, who is "removed" and "severed," place the dismembered body in the foreground.

Likewise, the poem "Death, that struck when I was most confiding" (H:224), figures deprivation yet intensification of the body:

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
Where that perished sapling used to be;
Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish
That from which it sprung--Eternity. (29-32)

The last stanza closes with the Romantic/Christian hope for transcendent "Eternity," projecting a desire for freedom from nature, for escape into the absolute and permanent non-material realm. But in the poem's desire for stability, it foregrounds the image of the body decimated, corrupt, and violently struck down by death (it is a "mouldering corpse"). Moreover, there remains the ironic and inescapable fact that the body of the poem is enclosed by the words "Death" and "Eternity"; this enclosure is emblematic of the imprisonment of the body--perhaps the body of the lover in the poem, perhaps also the body of the reader (the poem closely adheres to Romantic expressiveness) and the speaker, certainly of the poetic body of the poem.
The poem "Enough of Thought Philosopher" (H: 220), although embodying the denial of instability and femininity through transcendent vision, adherence to Romantic poetics, and the subtle intimation of feminine domestication, also insists on the visibility of the feminine. In brief, the poem reads: the reader is presented with two speakers, the Seer and the Philosopher. The speakers are engaged in a dialogue in which the philosopher yearns for the oblivion of death in order to quell his inner strife and achieve a sense of unity. The poem begins with the Seer admonishing the Philosopher for "dreaming / Unlightened" (2-3) shut up in a dark room while "summer's sun is beaming"(4). The Philosopher replies that he wishes to lose his "identity," an identity constituted by "Desires" that he describes as "quenchless fires" (13) and "quenchless will"(14). He continues to lament to the Seer that he has "Three Gods within [his] little frame / [that] Are warring night and day" (17-18) and that he will only find relief from this struggle when his "present entity" (22) is forgotten. The Seer then relates how he saw a "Spirit" unify "three rivers"(27-9) which are analogous to the three conflicting entities within the Seer. The Philosopher responds that his search for the Spirit is "endless--and always wrong! (44)" He tells the seer that if he had "but seen his glorious eye / Once light the clouds" he would not be such a "coward" (45-7) and wish for death.

In the first stanza, the Seer employs the language of disembodiment and transcendence: he calls the Philosopher a "soul" that "sweeps" "space" (5) and urges him to abandon "thought" and "dreaming" and "musings" (1-6). Although the presence of the Seer and the Philosopher are affected--the seer names the Philosopher and refers to the Philosopher with the pronouns "thou" and "thy"--readers are not offered direct corporeal images. The Seer's consolation to the Philosopher recalls the Coleridgean imagination.
Recalling "Khubla Khan," the Seer describes a dream-like vision of a "Spirit" (27) who unified three divided rivers that "tumbled in an inky sea" (34); the unification of the three rivers is intended to offer the consolation of transcendence—the Philosopher would do well to transcend the inner division that causes him such intense earthly suffering.

The Romantic tradition is pursued in the poem's wish for transcendence and the stability of oneness. The Seer, an unearthly visionary, presumably experiences a sense of wholeness and oneness with the universe; therefore, he is contented. The Philosopher, however, who represents the rational faculty and the corporeal body, suffers because of his inner fragmentation. Wholeness is rewarded. Furthermore, Brontë's poetics bear the marks of the Romantic impulse, which, according to Easthope, moves toward coherence through the effacement of enunciation. Meaning is reinforced through syntax and sound.

In the last stanza, the Philosopher wishes to be "lost in one repose":

O let me die, that power and will
Their cruel strife may close,
And vanquished Good, victorious III
Be lost in one repose. (53-6)

The wish for unity in death is embodied in the syntax. The words "one" and "repose" are rhetorically placed at the close of the stanza; they work iconically in that they create closure not only in their meaning but where they are placed in the poem—the illusion of unity is achieved when things (the poem) end. Another example is the way that closure and unity of the three rivers is, for example, embodied in the run-on line, "The Spirit bent his dazzling gaze / Down" (35-6) and the beauty of unity is enhanced by the alliterative "Far, far more fair" (39). The Philosopher says explicitly in the final stanza that he
wishes to be "lost in one repose." His wish for unity is embodied in the word "one" and it is placed strategically alongside the final word in the poem "repose"—oneness will be found in death, in the end. The poem conveys the message of unity and also attempts to enact the closure implicit in unity by iconic placement of the words. Enunciation can be seen to be subordinate to meaning.

Also affecting control of instability and bodily erasure is the domestication of the feminine energy of the poem. Although the two speakers, Seer and Philosopher, are engaged in typically masculine enterprises, the two characters in Brontë's poem bear the qualities of tamed femininity. The Seer, as Bristow notes, "watches and "waits," "in a state devoid of identity and thought" (19). Passivity, a repression of energy, is domestication. Moreover, the Philosopher's identity and agency are defined by his powerful feelings and desires—links with feminine energy and instability—and because of these feelings, the Philosopher wishes for complete repression and annihilation.

The wish, however, for annihilation and death is a wish for control that does not render the body invisible. In fact, the effect is the opposite. Incessant talk of death, of erasing the body, of the body leaving the world, underwrites its presence and in linking it with death links it with the ultimate depravity and disablement. The Philosopher, for example, wants death to obliterate all feeling and sensation; yet the poem's insistent and repetitive language (mostly verbs) underscores and creates the effect of the life of desire, a desire inextricably connected with the body: he wants to "cease" and "cease" again, to find "oblivion," to "die," to "close" off his feelings, to vanquish and then "Be lost" (48-56). The Seer's attempts to undercut the power and presence of the body fail: the poem is replete with images that insist on the body's presence and unstable materiality. The
Philosopher tells the Seer that he is "sentient" and "living." Body parts are named repeatedly. The Spirit has "feet" (29) and an "eye" (45), and the Philosopher, while calling for death, stretches his "eager hands" (50). Images of entrapment and suffering also work to manifest the body. The Philosopher is enclosed in a living grave, a "chamber drear" (3); and his violent passions are locked within his "little frame" (17). The Philosopher "suffers" under the force of his inner fragmentation, and the "Desires" that war within him are "wild" (11). The body is rendered substantial through the speaker's fragmentation and pain; and his wish to end his suffering further intensifies the body's materiality.

Indeed, the "present entity" refuses erasure. Femininity, instability, the unwanted and disabled feminine body insists on its presence. For instance, a further departure from the poetic Romantic enterprise of expressiveness in "Enough of Thought Philosopher" surfaces in the dramatic form and use of dialogue. As Burlinson observes, the poem "explicitly addresses self-division" (57). As in "The Prisoner. A Fragment," there are, in fact, two separate voices, two "I"s. The reader is not meant to identify the voices with the authoritative voice of the poet. Coherence is unseated, materiality augmented. The two egos are designated by quotation marks and, in the second and third stanzas, by italics. In the attempt to produce the union of subject and object, the reader is invited into sympathy both with the feelings of the Philosopher and with the experience of unity that the Seer describes. But a unified consciousness does not emerge; the reader does not identify these voices as the voice of the poet or as him or herself. Further, there is no pronoun "we," and there is no "we," effected. The separation between the two is clear: the Seer is located outside, in the light of "summer's sun," and has seen the unity of "Golden stream,
and one like blood, / And one like Sapphire" (31-2); he believes in the unifying ability of
the Spirit. Conversely, the Philosopher lives opposed to the Seer in a dark "chamber
drear." Significantly, the Philosopher is divided not only from the Seer but also within
himself. He cannot unify and therefore quiet the "Three Gods" within (Burlinson 57).
Moreover, even though the Philosopher desperately wishes for unity and the Seer has
"seen" it and apparently feels it, and even though the formal elements in the poem
attempt to ape it, unity cannot be achieved--materiality cannot be erased; the poem closes
with a seemingly endless cry for oblivion.

"In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid" (H: 190) also releases the grip of the
monologic voice by presenting a dialogue between two speakers:

[In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid,
 A grey stone standing over thee;
 Black mould beneath thee spread
 And black mould to cover thee.

'Well, there is rest there,
 So fast come they prophecy;
 The time when my sunny hair
 Shall with grass roots twinéd be.'

 But cold, cold is that resting place,
 Shut out from Joy and Liberty,
 And all who loved thy living face]
Will shrink from its gloom and thee.

'Not so: _here_ the world is chill,
And sworn friends fall from me;
But _there_, they'll own me still
And prize my memory.'

Farewell, then, all that love,
All that deep sympathy:
Sleep on; heaven laughs above,
Earth never misses thee.

Turf-sod and tombstone drear
Part human company;
One heart broke only there
_That_ heart was worthy thee!

Although, as in "Philosopher," the "signs of person" or "marks of enunciation" indicate that there is indeed a presence (a conscious "ego"), as Burlinson observes, the speakers in this poem do not remain as clearly distinct from each other as the former poem (58). The identity of the unnamed speakers is unknown, and in the final stanza a third voice seems to emerge. The first speaker seems to warn the other that she will end up in the grave before long. The second speaker has an attitude similar to the Philosopher's. She seems to wish for death; pain is here on earth; the grave is preferable; she says, in the grave "sworn friends" (14) will "prize my memory" (16). In the fifth
stanza, the first speaker bids "Farewell" to the second speaker, and apparently the two are then parted by death: "Turf-sod and tombstone drear/Part human company" (21-2).

Until the final stanza the two speakers are distinct. However, with the introduction of the past tense in the third line of the final stanza (line 27), a third and omniscient speaker appears. The abrupt shift out of the present tense jars the reader's sense centeredness; the coherence of the supposed speaker in the lines, "Turf-sod and tombstone . . ." is destabilized. Now the voice takes on the characteristics of an uninvolved storyteller who has watched over the dialogue of the first two speakers and now relates to the reader the events of that fateful day: "One heart broke only there--" (23). The entire lyric seems to shift into narrative mode. Indeed, the "discours" of the poem, the dialogue between the two speakers ("In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid") now seemingly takes place inside a narrative framework; like the medieval ballad, discours now functions "on the basis of histoire, that is within the narrative" (99 Easthope).¹⁸

Further confusing stability and coherence is the last line: "That heart was worthy thee." It would seem that the newly emerged third speaker refers to the heart (of the first speaker) that "broke" when the second speaker died ("That heart," the heart of the remaining first speaker). Lastly, the reintroduction of the pronoun "thee" seems once again to shift the reader's perceptions of a coherent and fixed center. "Thee" would indicate that the speaker of the entire stanza is, after all, the second speaker, since "thee" has been used by the second speaker five times in reference to the first speaker. But even if the reader accepts this reading, why then does the second speaker use the demonstrative "That" to designate the broken heart instead of claiming ownership with
"[This] heart was worthy thee"? Perhaps the speaker is alienated from past experience: the breaking of the heart divides the speaker from self and the acceleration of time is anticipated in line 6, but the confusion over who is the central "I" in this poem undermines the central project of Romantic poetry. The poem offers no coherent, transcendent, central presence; instead, largely because of multiple perspectives, the speakers are clearly an effect.

Further feminizing that features the materiality of poetry and departs from the norm of Romantic expressiveness is also evident in Brontë's use of the narrative form, rhyme, and rhythm of the medieval ballad. Recalling the medieval ballad, the "mock orality" in women's poetry takes the shape of a "simulacrum of the oral poem" (Armstrong and Bristow xxxvii). Many of Brontë's poems take on this form. "The Night-Wind" (H: 146) for instance, is a dramatic narrative in which the speaker relates a conversation with the wind. While being offered the consciousness of both the wind and the speaker, the reader is told a story. Below are the first two stanzas:

In summer's mellow midnight
A cloudless moon shone through
Our open parlour window
And rosetrees wet with dew.

I sat in silent musing,
The soft wind waved my hair:
It told me Heaven was glorious.
And sleeping Earth was fair.
Surmounting the press of Romantic poetics (enjambment, iconicity, alliteration and rhyme) the process of enunciation emerges in various elements. In narrative form, the dialogue has two voices, coordinators are frequent, and the meter is iambic trimeter (not pentameter). Sharing formal similarities with such medieval ballads as "Barbara Allan" and "The Wife of Usher's Well" and "Sir Patrick Spens" "Robin Hood and the Three Squires," "A Day Dream" (H: 198), the poem exemplifies Brontë's use of the ballad form. The speaker, surrounded by the life and beauty of spring, relates the coming transformation of May to June with a tone of regret for the fleeting season:

"The birds that now so blithely sing,
Through deserts frozen dry,
Poor specters of the perished Spring
In famished troops will fly." (29-32)

The speaker then tells us that "in fit of peevish woe, / I stretched me on the moor" (39-40). From this point, until "The music ceased--the noonday Dream / Like dream of night withdrew" (69-70), the reader enters a dream-like reverie in which the "air" is filled with "glancing fires" (41) and "silvery lyres" (43) sound; the speaker's breath "Was full of sparks divine" (46), and the speaker's "couch" of heather "was wreathed/By that celestial shine" (47-8). Following this reverie, the "glittering spirits" (51) begin to sing, urging the speaker to reconcile with temporal earthly life, for they say, "could we lift the veil . . . / Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live, / Because they live to die" (65, 67-8). The dream then vanishes.

The poem is in quatrains with every other line rhyming, and the rhythm is tetrameter alternating with trimeter. The four-stress, accentual meter of the ballad form
undercuts the traditional iambic pentameter, a rhythm which dominated (and still dominates) Romantic poetics and which is suited to the affectation of the individual and monologic voice that is associated with male authority. The four-stress meter is heavily rhythmic and conducive to group recitation and/or clapping, for instance. A feminized rhythm, it stresses a community of voices and a dispersal of authority.20

The accentual, four-stress meter underscores enunciation, highlighting the words of the poem and muting any transparency. Hence, the meter in this poem, and in others, insists on the visibility of the unstable material of poetry. Brontë's work is replete with ballads in accentual meter: "A Day Dream" (H: 201), "The Night-Wind" (H:146), "Tell me, tell me, smiling child" (H: 30), "Ah! why, because the dazzling sun" (H: 225), "Alone I sat; the summer day" (H: 48), "I am the only being whose doom" (H:36),"Riches I hold in light esteem"(H: 163), "Aye, there it is! It wakes to-night" (H: 165), are only samplings.

Although the rhymes in this poem and in "The Night-Wind" exhibit some of the subordinating rhyming techniques characteristic of English bourgeois poetic discourse, the supporting rhythm and verse form of the ballad, on the other hand, render the rhyme simpler and less bonded with meaning than that of a typical expressive Romantic poem. For instance, in the third quatrain of "A Day Dream" the rhyme "crests/guests" is an exact rhyme made up of similarly spelled words that are also the same part of speech (noun) used in parallel functions. The second and fourth line with the rhyming "clear" and "there" works the same way; the parts of speech are the same (adverbs), they are used in parallel functions in the sentence. The rhyme here is not exact, but since each rhyme falls on the third stress in that line, enunciation is underscored. The rhyming tendency is similar throughout.
In Brontë's poetry the unstable body struggles to surface from under the cover of Romantic invisibility and normalizing. In Chapter 4, I look at the similar double-sidedness of Christina Rossetti's poetry. On one hand, the sonnet sequence, "Monna Innominata", and the narrative poem, "Goblin Market", employ frames for disability. In these poems, the frames that employ traditional theme, form, and prosody, conceals differences, and the implication of this concealing mechanism is that the disabled (unstable) body is linked with the unfit. Yet, with unrelenting contradiction, Rossetti destabilizes the traditional (the spiritual, the immaterial) by foregrounding the unstable (the physical, the material). Her poetry makes differences visible, obvious. Rossetti's poetry anticipates the edginess of modern poetry; it transgresses the boundaries of normalcy to become a poetry of feminine visibility.
Notes


2 Armstrong and Bristow offer new labels for the forms within which women poets worked: the "monumental legend," a form with the ancestry of "the lay, the romance, the ballad, the story, the tale, the epilloyn" and the "oceanic monody," characterized by "expansive language of highly expressive emotion and feeling." In their view dramatic poetry replaced the monumental legend and the "compressed lyric" replaced the "oceanic monody" (xxxviii).

3 The iconicity discussed above, while evidence of Augustan English poetic norms, also represents the expressiveness of Romanticism. Romantic theory, says Easthope, deepens its effacement of enunciation in that "non-poetic or spoken intonation is represented [and] taken to an extreme: the poem's enunciation now seeks to conform thought to the state of mind of its represented speaker. The effect is novel and merits separate designation as expressiveness" (Easthope 130). Through the syntax, rhyme, run-on lines, and sound effects the reader is "held onto the speaker's represented state of mind" (131); the reader passes through the language and identifies with the state of mind of the represented speaker in the poem.

4 The sentence structure is subordinated, and when this is combined with the manipulation of word order, the process of enunciation is clearly subordinate to the enounced. In contrasting the medieval ballad with bourgeois poetic discourse, Easthope notes that a feature of the ballad is its paratactic structure: "The ballad combines separate units [which are] narrative ideas. . . . And these are well adapted for juxtaposition [rather than a coherent linear development affected through the 'subordination of elements' (82) simply because they do tend to be unitary and self-contained. The ballad form usually lets events and dialogue stand by themselves without generalization and explanation" (85). The ballad is comprised of simple sentences (subject, verb word order), which "promoted a loose and' open' syntagmatic chain"(98). Paratactic sentence structure "allows paradigmatic elements that would otherwise be excluded from the syntagmatic chain to appear alongside each other within it" (82).

5 Easthope explains semantic closure in Shakespeare's Sonnet 73: "The syntax [of Sonnet 73] supports firm linearity in the [syntagmatic] chain, for it is strongly recursive, stringing

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phrases and basic sentences together hierarchically. . . . It has 'an ostentatious air of
exactitude about it', the accumulation of relative and appositional clauses acting 'as if to
make the focus ever more precise.' . . . Though anticipated semantically, . . . closure is
postponed making the demand for it more insistent. The demand is answered in the
abstract, epigrammatic language of the couplet, and the sonnet closes with authority if not
entire conviction" (98).

A brief summary taken from Easthope of Wimsatt's observations will be helpful.
According to Wimsatt, rhyme works in two ways: it either supports the meaning in the
poem (as in the example of Alexander Pope's rhymes) or it is "in a relationship of
equality"--coincident with--meaning (as in the example of Chaucer's rhymes) (90). When
two rhyming words are encountered in a poem, an expectation of continuing similarity is
set up. Easthope gives Wimsatt's example of Chaucer's "tame" rhyme (the adjectives
"grene" and "kene"). Because the rhyming words are the same parts of speech used in
parallel functions (the adjective comes at the end of the line, describing the hood and
arrows of the character) the reader's expectations for similarity are fulfilled. This is
coincident rhyme. When the rhyme is coincident, then "meaning is allowed to follow
sound as much as sound does meaning" (90). In Bronte's poem, however, even though
the rhymes appear to be simple like Chaucer's ("light" and "bright" are masculine rhymes
and have the same spelling), they can be analyzed in the same way as Pope's rhymes:
they are exact, yet are different parts of speech. "Bright" is an adjective and "light" is a
noun; "away" is an adjective and "clay" is a noun. Rhyming in which "we anticipate
similarity and find difference . . . works to throw a stress upon the meaning so that
meaning dominates sound and the rhyme is subordinated" (90-91).

Easthope explains: "In Augustan theory 'form' and 'content' are recognized as
irredeemably separate, yet the wish is to make 'form' adhere to 'content' as closely as
clothes fit the body" (112).

Easthope outlines the forms of iconicity as produced by intonation and sound. He uses
the example of T. S. Eliot's line: "'A lonely cab horse steams and stamps'" wherein the
rhythm of the poem places stress on "steams" and "stamps"; this imitates the sound of
horse hooves. Another form of iconicity is phonetic: "the phonetic properties of
language . . . set up resemblance to a phenomenon, so that the sound is felt to 'express' or
'enact' the sense (104-5).

The heroic, closed couplet of eighteenth-century poetry invokes ideological
connotations of order and closure (119). The couplet also assists linear coherence of
meaning along the syntagmatic chain. Easthope explains: "The couplet tries to deal
[with the enunciative sound and signifier] at a stroke by gathering all enunciation into the
single uniformity of the rhyme. The effect is to separate off enunciation as 'form' [--
enunciation becomes a formal device, not a process of production]. At the same time the
couplet is able to act as a powerfully syntagmatic force, sustaining 'content'. This is
because the very uniformity of the couplet, constantly repeated, tends to make it invisible
except as a sign for continuation" (120). Couplets operate as a force for semantic closure—in a couplet the reader expects closure and receives it in the second line of the couplet.

10 Easthope refers to Dryden's edict "that 'propriety of sound' is 'to be varied according to the nature of the subject' . . . . Iconicity [in Pope] now aims to comprehend sound, intonation, syntax and word order" (116).

11 Athena Vrettos makes the observation that spatial metaphors are somatic representations of the neurotic psyche. For instance, enclosed spaces such as drawers and desks are representative of the body that manifests the imprisonment of the psyche (63).

12 There appears to be some arbitrariness in the classifying of Brontë's poems as either "lyric" or otherwise. Burlinson, for instance, refers to "In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid" (H: 190) as a lyric, distinct from the "Gondal" poems, a classification in which she includes, "I am the only being whose doom" (H: 36). In the Hatfield collection, however, the manuscript poems included under the title "GONDAL POEMS" and that were also published in Charlotte Brontë's Poems by Currer, Eillls, and Acton Bell (1846) include "In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid." Furthermore, "I am the only being whose doom" was not included in the original manuscript labeled "GONDAL POEMS"; "I am the only being whose doom" is found in Clement Shorter's The Complete Poems of Emily Brontë (1910), designated by Hatfield as the "J" classification; the manuscript for the poems from Shorter's book is "unknown" by Hatfield (26 Hatfield). To further complicate the matter, however, Fannie E. Ratchford in an introduction to Hatfield's collection, has arranged Brontë's poems as they might have been ordered in a coherent "Epic of Gondal." Ratchford includes almost all of the poems in her reconstruction of the Gondal story: "A study of Emily Brontë's poems as they are presented by Mr. Hatfield in the present volume reveals that the majority, perhaps all of them, pertain to an imaginative country called Gondal, which she created when she was thirteen or fourteen years old and continued to develop so long as she lived." (14 Hatfield; italics mine). For clarity, Brontë's poetry is referred to by the page number from the Hatfield volume. I refrain, except where obvious, from classifying her poetry as part of or excluded from (and therefore lyric) the Gondal poems.

13 Burlinson comments that Brontë's multiple subjectivities are relevant to discussions of Romantic, Victorian, and "modernist writing" (64).

14 The version chosen here appears in Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, 1846. This version consists of Lines 13 to 44 and 65 to 92, with four additional lines at the end. For an explanation, see Hatfield 241.

Joseph Bristow makes the case that the Brontës "continually throw into question exactly what constitutes the 'feminine.'" In Emily's poems, this issue of feminine definition, he says, "is extremely vexed, since her speakers frequently evince a strong identification with the structures of masculine authority. . . . [Her poems] represent personae who are struggling to locate themselves within a male-defined tradition of visionary writing inherited directly from the Romantics" (Bristow 18). "Enough of Thought Philosopher," ostensibly suggests that the Seer's power holds more sway than the Philosopher's reason. But Bristow sees the power of the Seer as mitigated—the seer sits passively watching and waiting; whereas, the Philosopher, driven by "wild" energy, possesses enough willpower, for example, to wish himself dead (19).

Easthope provides an outline of Todorov's (1981) and Benveniste's (1971) "marks of enunciation" or "signs of person" (pronouns, demonstratives, relative adverbs) which are "those features of discourse which exhibit 'the imprint of the process of enunciation in the utterance'" (qtd. in Easthope 41). He further explains Benveniste's "two modes of enunciation, discours and histoire." Discours indicates the presence of a speaker; it is "'seeing' through the speaker's eyes" (129) and in "the case of histoire there necessarily continues to be enunciation but the speaker is in effect absent, the facts are presented as they are supposed to occur and 'the narrator does not intervene'" (41).

Easthope notes the histoire of the ballad (i.e., no signs of person) and the discours of the Shakespearean Sonnet #73. The sonnet, as he says, "proceeds from the outset as discours, "I" and "thou", that time Y A ou maist in me behold' (99).

Easthope says, "For an alternative to the dominant discourse one has to turn back to the ballad or forward to Modernism" (133). Like the medieval ballad form, modernist poetry "Can be understood as working towards a single end—to foreground signifier over signified, to acknowledge that the reader is positioned as subject of enunciation producing the enounced of the poem. Modernist poetry can be seen as denying a position for the transcendental ego. By insisting on itself as production it asserts the subject as make, constituted, relative rather than absolute"(134-5).

Easthope contrasts the hegemony of iambic pentameter with the gradual, historically recessive four-stress, ballad meter. Iambic pentameter has a counterpoint action between the metrical pattern (weak-strong stress) and the "non-metrical intonation" (the non-metrical emphasis put on the words). The counterpoint leaves a space between the metrical pattern and the intonation in which "any performance is free to find its own inflection" (73).
CHAPTER 5

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI’S POETRY: VISIBLE GOBLINS

In Chapter 3 on Emily Brontë's poetry, I explained how poetic tensions reveal an implicit struggle for the unstable, disabled body to be seen, a body traditionally invisible. On one hand, the poetry works to be normal and thus maintain the abled world of stability, framing and erasing the disabled body and attaching pejorative connotations to the disabled. On the other hand, however, the unstable/disabled body emerges. In Brontë's poetry this struggle manifests itself, for instance, by exhibiting poetic conventions of Romanticism, adhering to a central unified authority in theme, subjectivity, and syntax. But looking toward Modernism, her poetry undercuts the Romantic impulse by a "feminine" off-centeredness evident through the revision of the ballad form and through a decentering of subjectivity affected, in part, by loosening of closure in the syntagmatic chain, clearing the way for substitutions along the paradigmatic axis (the "vertical" axis) and opening up space for multivalent associations. Brontë further foregrounds materiality through her imaging of the entrapped female body and its suffering. Chapter 4 is designed to demonstrate the force of the emergence of instability despite all attempts by Rossetti (ostensibly) and her critics to contain it. Rossetti's poetry, more radically than Brontë's, loosens the strictures of normalcy, foregrounding instability, offering a poetry that in its play allows the feminine body, and by extension the disabled body, as yet unmatched visibility.
As I have attempted to show, the construction of disability operates on many different levels from many different sources. From the readers and critics of writers' works and from the artists themselves, our understanding of disability, and hence our attitudes toward the disabled, takes shape. Early in the nineteenth century, Frankenstein showed how culture constructs disability, foretelling Victorian eugenics. Later in the century, Charlotte Brontë constructed Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights as monstrous, and at the same time, through apology framed the novel's differences in an attempt to neutralize their socially abnormal and uncomfortable effects. Fearing feminine instability and its disabling effects, Victorian critics (perhaps representative of society at large) moved to sterilize differences in Christina Rossetti's poetry, fitting it into the parameters of normalcy. Rossetti's best poems, two of which I analyze here, "Monna Innominata: A Sonnet of Sonnets" and "Goblin Market", were initially muffled under a Victorian domestic and religious critical blanket of norms that regulated female poetry.

By characterizing the living and conflicting energy of Rossetti's poetry as "weird" (Bowker 827) and by hence emphasizing its religiosity, Rossetti's contemporaries carefully control the poetic ambiguities that were thought improper in, and uncharacteristic of, the nineteenth-century female sentimental poet. These moves neutralize material instabilities and sexual innuendo and therefore define the disabled as "less-than". The saccharine language of contemporary reviews frames her work as normal "feminine" sentimentality. Significantly, however, it is often not so much what critics say about Rossetti's poetry, as what they omit. Edna Kotin Charles (1985) notes that Ruskin "and other critics of the period . . . gave the greatest share of critical attention to the poet's 'devotional poems,' . . . omitting the narratives, ballads, and poems that do
not have overtly religious themes" (24). This inattention to Rossetti's masterpiece, "Goblin Market", and all of Rossetti's more secular verse suggests either implicit criticism or the kind of avoidance that implicates a covert but operative motive. Skirting tensions implicitly privileges mainstream norms, banishing feminine energy to the margins. In 1975, Germain Greer offered a Freudian reading of "Goblin Market" averring that "post-Freudian readers" have noticed but undersold its rendering of incest, a taboo in which we are all complicit. This avoidance is a denial of our own guilty acts: "To unravel [the sexual meanings] would be to reveal more of the psychology of the unraveler than it would of the meaning of the poem itself" (ix). But because the twentieth century stimulated a psychological sensibility does not mean that Victorian's did not see incest in "Goblin Market". Victorian critics—psychologically savvy or not—could not fail to notice the sexual/sensual aspect of "Goblin Market"—and they chose to leave it out. Instead, in 1888 R. R. Bowker found a "singular sweetness" (827) in Goblin Market while Arthur Symons (1887) described it as "fresh and strange as the dreams of childhood," (Symons 340).

However, instead of addressing Rossetti's work in Arnoldian sweetness and light, some critics employ language that directly avoids the body's assertion, its feminine sexuality, and its inherent temporality. Edmund Gosse, for example, compares "Goblin Market" to a "queer Japanese figure." First, the OED defines "queer" with a revealing choice of words: "queer" is something "not in a normal condition." This "queer" figure (like the poem) is "clothed with brocade" that creates an "effect beautiful and harmonious without having ceased to be grotesque" (215). The connotations of "grotesque" in the sentence's context are positive, suggesting that the pretty clothing on the figure does not
(and should not) mar the figure's grotesqueries. However, the reader will recall my discussion of the usage of "grotesque" in Chapter 2; its associations are with the monstrous or, at the very least, the untouchable. Moreover, in Gosse's article, even though he seems to value the grotesqueries of the poem, he links the word with a foreign-a "queer"--nationality and race. To the Victorian reader, at the height of British imperialism, the Japanese, the queer, the grotesque, and the feminine sexual energy (in "Goblin Market") were properly--and necessarily--conflated and dismissed. Another anonymous critic minces no words, comparing an "element" of "Goblin Market" to the monstrous that, in turn, mars Rossetti's characters: the poem is, in part, "grotesque and disproportionate"; Lizzie and Laura are therefore "inhuman and un-real." (Charles 19). If contemporary critics were not framing Rossetti's work in rhapsodies of "tragic ecstasy" (Saturday Review 6) and yearning "hearts," (Catholic World 127), and "resignation" and "acceptance," (Chambers 164) and "grace and sweetness as though they were the nursery songs of Heaven" and "the national hymns of Heaven" (Johnson 59) they were marginalizing its energies and defining the parameters of disability.

In addition, the language used to distinguish Rossetti's style and prosody similarly smoothes out all discomfort of difference and neutralizes the sexuality that is so obvious in the pervasive dichotomous rub of Rossetti's best work. Symons makes a typically repressive move: while allowing Dante Gabriel's poetry its complexities, he normalizes Rossetti, noting her "sincerity" and her employment of "homely words" (339). Dante Gabriel's poems are studded with "polysyllabic and consonated harmonies" that "require the whole range of stops of the organ of verse" (338-339). His writing has "consciousness" (implying—even—sentience); hers, "innocently unaware of their own
beauty," has a sense of undeveloped and unsexed pre-pubescent children (Symons 338-339). Symons further normalizes Rossetti by connecting her poetry with traditional, Romantic expressivism:

Every poem almost leaves on the mind a sense of satisfaction, of rightness and fitness; we are not let to think of art, but we notice, almost unconsciously, that every little word seems to fit quite perfectly in its place, as if it could not possible have come otherwise. This equable style, self-poised and instinctively select, seems by its simplicity and absence of emphasis, only faintly distinguished from the rhythms and tone of mere conversation. It has no italics, no waltz beats, nothing insistent, no unnecessary words; there is nothing of metre for metre's sake; absolutely no display. . . . While very few lines venture above a certain pitch, there is not a note which does not ring true (Symons 338).

Under Symons' pen, Rossetti's poetry exemplifies the epitome of bourgeois control and repression of the feminine and the material (the process of enunciation is erased): it uses "little" words, is undistinguishable from "mere conversation," and it eschews "art" and "display." When critics do highlight the unusual elements of Rossetti's poetry, its meter for instance, their comments are encased in language that reflects the cutely curious. Her poetry, for instance, has "much quaintness"; her "quaint conceit" is "unthought-of naturalness" (Symons 345). Interestingly, a date list in the OED online displays increased usage in the Victorian period of the adjective "quaint" to mean the cute and dainty. Furthermore, a "quaint," although obsolete before Rossetti's time, was another word for female genitalia.² In this context, then, in which the feminine is at issue, the use of
"quaint" proves useful in neutralizing the threatening power of difference. Difference is controlled and contained.

The one document that did just as much (if not more) to suppress the vitality of Rossetti's poetry--at once disabling it and contributing to our modern understanding of the disabled--as Charlotte Brontë did for the perception of Wuthering Heights as outside the acceptable mainstream was William Michael Rossetti's, *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti With Memoir and Note &c* (1904). This book greatly influenced future readers' perceptions of Rossetti's poetry by representing it as part of the sentimental stream of feminine poetry that dominated women's verse in the nineteenth century. His categorization of her corpus did much to direct readers' focus on the religious/moral aspects of her poetry. In his preface, William states: "It may perhaps be said that the two ideas most prevalent of all [in Rossetti's poetry] are the strenuous and onerous effort to attain to the salvation of the soul in heaven, and the ardent absorbing devotion to the work and the very person of the Saviour Jesus Christ" (ix); thus, he highlights her "Devotional Poems." In the memoir, he goes further. Rossetti had "the spirit of self-postponement which passed into self-sacrifice whenever that quality was in demand " (lxvii). Submissive and self-sacrificing, she becomes a Christ figure. As "a soul as pure, duteous, concentrated, loving and devoted, as ever uttered itself in either prose or verse" (lxxi), Rossetti appears both a domesticated "angel" ("loving and devoted") and a disembodied "soul." Significantly, this "soul," says William, speaks ("utters itself") in writing--Rossetti's poetry is imaged as a "speaking soul"--the picture of the transcendent and disembodied voice of Romanticism. Rossetti is cast both as "feminie" in the pious, Victorian sense and as a poet in the normal masculine,
transcendent, Romantic mold. Her poetry and her person are conflated; on all fronts she is an unsexed female, a soul speaking.

William further separates Rossetti's work from the rhythms of the material, temporal world (this move would also potentially narrow her readership) by underscoring what he calls its uniform quality, which, in William's characterization implies restriction and a lack of aliveness. Unappealing to the "great mass of readers," her poetry attracted only "devout minds of a certain type" because "the material proffered was too uniform, too restricted, and was too seldom concerned with breathing and diurnal actualities" (Ixxviii).

While generalizing her as "resembl[ing] all the members of her maternal stock" (lxvi), William also constructs her as unconscious, faith-blind, and sheep-like: "To ponder for herself whether a thing as true or not ceased to be part of her intellect" (Ixxviii). And, "As in politics, so in fine arts of form . . . she had little fundamental opinion of her own, and no connoisseurship" (lxx). She composed her poetry casually, without thought or without revision; she seems, in William's view, to have little effect on anything at all:

Her habits of composition were entirely of the casual and spontaneous kind. . . .

If something came into her head which she found suggestive of verse, she put it into verse. It came to her . . . very easily without her meditating a possible subject, and without her making any great difference in the first from the last form of the verses which embodied it . . . . (Ixviii)

With no thought and no body to affect her own poetic material (the "form of the verses which embodied it") Rossetti and her poetry are neutralized and almost completely erased in every way but that of a religious "singer" and a broken-hearted lover.
Thus, William etched the image of Rossetti as both a heartbroken Sappho figure and a pitiable invalid, the "truth" of whose work could only be seen if viewed through a sympathetic and sentimental lens. The myth was propagated via her romantic relationships. Apparently her first suitor, James Collinson, converted to Catholicism, and so Rossetti broke off their engagement. Collinson's defection, William reports, "none the less struck a staggering blow at Christina Rossetti's peace of mind on the very threshold of womanly life, and a blow from which she did not fully recover for years" (lii). "Staggering" under the "blow" of a lost love, Rossetti is a sad and wounded lover. Despite his own admission William never was cognizant of the "details" of Rossetti's love life, he does not refrain from pronouncing that although she rejected Charles Cayley "She loved him deeply and permanently" (liii).

Along with the language and the assumptions, the structure of the memoir works to underwrite Rossetti's image of an unsexed, withered spinster. According to William, Rossetti "remained immovable" as a rock in her refusal to marry Cayley. His account is then strategically punctuated with short words and a colon that signify the finality of her decision and the quick passage of time; all is laced with poignancy: "Years passed: she became an elderly and an old woman, and she loved the scholarly recluse to the last day of his life, 5 December 1883, and, to the last day of her own, his memory" (liii). In this rendition, Rossetti's time and work between Cayley's death in 1883 and her own in 1894--9 years--was spent merely fading into oblivion. Moreover, as a pure, Victorian woman should, she remained a true and faithful lover to a disembodied idea, "his [Cayley's] memory." William then reiterates Cayley's obituary. Raising Cayley to mythological proportions implies the depth of Rossetti's loss. Thus plummeted, Rossetti's life takes on
an interminable dullness: "Apart from these [affairs], the life of Christina Rossetti presents hardly any incident. Her life had two motive powers,—religion and affection: hardly a third" (liv). Rossetti is squeezed out of the Victorian wringer, flattened and sterilized.

Lastly, draining all blood from Rossetti's life and work is William's picture of her invalidism. Again neutralizing her physicality with images of the normal nineteenth-century woman, William comments that her "constitution became . . . delicate." He then asserts that "anyone who did not understand that Christina was an almost constant and often a sadly-smitten invalid . . . would form an extremely incorrect notion of her corporal, and thus in some sense of her spiritual, condition." Rossetti is a poor woman with a death wish, who adopted the persona of a brave little soldier ("As an invalid she had courage, patience, and even cheerfulness" (l)). William's account evokes pathos and sympathy for the disabled woman (that is the abelist's virtue—we *sympathize* with the disabled, placing distance between them and us), drawing energy away from Rossetti, washing her over with sympathetic strokes. Moreover, the reader of the memoir has understood that Rossetti is a "soul," not a body, and that soul is also, in effect, her poetry. So when William corrects our view of her "spiritual condition" (we must understand her invalid body to correctly understand her spirit, he says) he conflates her spirit (her poetry) with invalidism. In so doing, William disables the vitality—our reading of the vitality—of her work. For future readers, William Rossetti determined the stubborn fusing of her sad personal life and her aesthetic. The image of the broken-hearted invalid sterilized her poetry, banishing it to the feminine graveyard. Nature and disability were effectively controlled.
Rossetti's sonnet sequence, "Monna Innominata: A Sonnet of Sonnets", is regarded as intertextual. Indeed, the poetic body is a controlled assemblage of authoritative sources that construct a stable frame to contain the conflict between love (erotic, fragmented, feminine) and Love (spiritual, whole, masculine). Drawing upon the authority of past literary "fathers"--including contemporary male poets such as Arnold, Browning, Tennyson, and her brother, Dante Gabriel (Harrison Context 142-174)---Rossetti's sequence is fortified by historical convention, safely containing change and nature, acting as an enforcer of normalcy.

Rossetti's prefatory remarks refer to Dante, Petrarch, the troubadours and the Albigenses. The epigraphs that precede each sonnet, lines from the poetry of Dante and Petrarch, appear to buttress her work with the masculine structure of history in an attempt to neutralize the Victorian feminized and dehistoricized culture. Further, their consistent pairing achieves a metaphor of symmetrical unity, affecting an overt link with the historical authority--spirituality and unity--of the male voice.

Also contributing to the unifying framework is the circular structure of the traditional sonnet sequence, or macrosonnet (as in Dante Gabriel's House of Life). The fourteen lines of the individual Petrarchan sonnet are aped by each of the fourteen poems in the sequence. The sequence presents itself as a unified whole. Further, the bourgeois poetics of the sonnet form, linguistic closure along the syntagmatic chain (closing off optional associations on the paradigmatic axis), iambic pentameter rhythm (its counterpoint promoting the individual voice and the effect of transparency rather than the collective voice), and subordinate rhyme (that de-emphasizes the phonetic, highlighting meaning rather than sound and thus the presence of the speaker in the poem), work to
eclipse the poem's materiality and create the effect of a central and authoritative
subjectivity; this is done in a similar way to Brontë's "I'm happiest when most away" in
Chapter 3.

However, there is an irony implicit in framing. A frame works not only to contain
the material inside, but also to enhance the material within the frame. Indeed, in "Monna
Innominata," it is the frame itself that ironically highlights disability. The construction
of the bits and pieces of bodies from the charnel houses of Rossetti's literary fathers
recalls Frankenstein's creature, the quintessence of fragmentation and feminine
instability. Rossetti's sequence is stitched into wholeness, but its undeniable
fragmentariness renders it a portent of modernism and the ever-increasing visibility of the
disabled.⁸

Furthermore, this traditional framework offers a site for destabilization; Rossetti's
"Poem of Poems" is an intensely feminized revision of the traditional masculine sonnet
sequence. Armstrong and Bristow argue that Rossetti's sonnet sequence is a "dramatized
lyric," a "deeply skeptical," feminized form that interrogates the authority of central
subjectivity and "shared knowledge"(xi). In Rossetti's sequence, the voice of the speaker
is not the poet: it acts the part of Beatrice, Laura, and other troubadourian donna
innomiates. And although the bourgeois poetics affect a central subjective voice (thus
"disavowing enunciation"), the "I" is not Rossetti herself. This feminization precludes
the Romantic, expressive, conflation of the poet-speaker, such as we find more
pervasively Brontë's poetry. In this poem Rossetti is interacting intimately with her male
predecessors, adopting their forms, adopting their religion and its attendant transcendent
themes, yet changing them in a way that insists on the revelation of the feminine (change itself) and the physical.

Thematically, "Monna Innominata: A Sonnet of Sonnets" appears to have as its sole endeavor a unity of body and spirit, renouncing the material and the temporal in favor of the spiritual and permanent. The sequence moves toward a total abandonment of the body, offering not a corporeal and present fulfillment of earthly love but a transcendent, spiritual promise of love of God. The sestet in the final sonnet of the sequence closes with the (ostensibly) permanent silence of the speaker: "Youth gone and beauty gone, what doth remain? . . . / Silence of love that cannot sing again." Forming the sequence's logic, then, Sonnets 1 and 2 offer bodily imagery and a speaker who wishes for the bodily presence of her lover, and Sonnet 14 seemingly rejects the body entirely, privileging the immaterial. This seeming abjuration of the body acts as a metaphor for stability and the denial of nature. But, a look outside the compelling teleological frame of disembodiment reveals a declaration of the precedence of the body.

Sonnet 3 is a good example of both the concealment and the revelation of the body. At first, as it is with the entire sequence, whether in theme or form, the body seems concealed and rejected. Here, the lover-speaker regards the beloved as only available in a dream world, non-corporeal and ideal:

I dream of you to wake: would that I might
   Dream of you and not wake but slumber on;
   Nor find with dreams the dear companion gone,
As Summer ended Summer birds take flight.
   In happy dreams I hold you full in sight,
I blush again who waking look so wan;
Brighter than sunniest day that ever shone,
In happy dreams your smile makes day of night.
Thus only in a dream we are at one,
Thus only in a dream we give and take
The faith that maketh rich who take or give;
If thus to sleep is sweeter than to wake,
To die were surely sweeter than to live,
Tho' there be nothing new beneath the sun. (1-14)

The final triplet concludes with a desire for death; the material world does not offer her fulfillment; therefore, to dream and "To die were surely sweeter than to live." The concluding line, with its Biblical allusion, underscores the rejection of the material world "beneath the sun," since "there is nothing new" on earth. Therefore, only the bodiless state of sleep and dreams, free from the mutable laws of the temporal world, can offer the desired oneness with the beloved.

The theme of transcendent unity is underscored by bourgeois poetics that promote the illusion of unity and centrality of subject and meaning. Repetition and chiasmus, for example, characterize the sonnet. The word "dream" appears seven times; the contained symmetry of the body of the poem is underscored by this number: the number of repetitions (seven) is one-half of the fourteen lines of the poem and of the fourteen sonnets of the entire sequence. The phrase, "Thus, only in a dream" is repeated twice in successive lines, and the reversal of syntax from traditional subject-predicate order reinforces (iconically) the importance of the immaterial. The parallel structure of
the independent clauses, "we are at one," and "we give and take," and "who take or give"
and the chiasmus of "give and take," along with the explicit suggestion that the lovers are
"one" in the ideal/transcendent world all affect unity.

With the thematic movement toward bodily abjuration, the unifying,
transcendental poetics occur more intensely, such as those in Sonnets 4 and 5, for
example. Resolving the bodily impulses of the first three sonnets (the lover's desire for
the beloved's actual presence) (Harrison 153), Sonnet 4 sets up in the octave a lovers'
duel:

I loved you first: but afterwards your love

Outsoaring mine, sang such a loftier song . . .

Which owes the other most? My love was long,

And yours one moment seemed to wax more strong;

I loved and guessed at you, you construed me

And loved me for what might or might not be— (1-2, 4-7)

The affected competitive dance of the two lovers in these lines is meant to resolve into
wholeness, a union of the two in the sestet, which begins in the eighth line with a
rejection of "weights and measures" that "do [them] both a wrong":

For verily love knows not "mine" or "thine";

With separate "I" and "thou" free love has done,

For one is both and both are one in love:

Rich love knows nought of "thine that is not mine;"

Both have the strength and both the length thereof,

Both of us, of the love which makes us one. (9-14)
Although "mine" and "thine" and "I" and "thou" are spatially separated in each respective line, they are joined by conjunctions ("or" and "and"). "Mine" and "thine" are exact rhymes within the line; the diphthong of "i" is repeated in "mine" and "I"; and the "th" sound is repeated in "thine" and "thou." Also, the concepts are linked via the repetition of "both" and "one" and by the chiasmus. "Thine" and "mine" are repeated, "Both" is repeated three more times, and the sonnet closes with the third repetition of the word, "one" to complete the unifying effect. Further, in Sonnet 5, transcendence is conceptualized through the insertion of God into the triad: "O my heart's heart, and you who are to me/More than myself myself, God be with you." Again repetition of key words ("heart" "myself" "you") juxtaposed with "God" and "me," as Harrison points out, render the lover, the beloved, and God as one (Harrison 178).

However, there is a revealing irony in the poem's deferential comment that "there is nothing new beneath the sun."11 For, as pervasive as the norm of unity and transcendence and the abjuration of the physical in favor of the ideal is, the presence of the feminine/physical body is insistently present and the sonnet sequence in Rossetti's hand—in spite of or perhaps because of its intertextuality—is renewed. Rossetti has, for the first time, given readers of the traditional sonnet, insight into Beatrice, Laura, and the troubadour objects de l'amour. The feminine, incorporeal beloved of the sonnet tradition is present in her poetry. And of course, the role of the female is reversed: she is the lover, not the passive beloved. Moreover, this "woman" is not beautiful or ethereal in any way (beauty being the necessary corollary to transcendence in traditional sonneteering); she has, instead, a "wan" and "poor face."12 In addition, Harrison also mentions the powerful "solipsistic impulse" of Sonnet 3 that "finally yields a desire for
death as providing the only possible achievement of the ideal" (176-177). As in Bronté's poetry, however, death and a wish for it inevitably highlight the physical. Along with wistful wishing, ("I dream of you to wake: would that I might / Dream of you and not
wake but slumber on"), and the melancholy tone in the reminiscent allusion to autumn ("As Summer ended Summer birds take flight"), and the promise of "sweeter" sleep, dreams of seasons and sleep and death intensify the presence of the physical body.

Even though the poem affects (in bourgeois fashion) a speaker who imagines an ideal spiritual oneness with the lover, metaphors work against this effect to manifest the physical (abilities in this case): "I hold you full in sight," says the lover, who then describes her own and her beloved's physical features: "I blush again who waking look
so wan;/Brighter than sunniest day that ever shone/ . . . your smile, makes day of night" (italics mine). Moreover, the temporal and sensory are clearly foregrounded with references to the seasons, times of the day, and the body's waking and sleeping, living and dying patterns. Perhaps it is these patterns that are the things "beneath the sun" and are indeed, "nothing new," but the possible spiritual/psychological meanings of the allusion--the denial of nature--do not erase nature's presence.

As seen in Sonnet 3, Rossetti repeatedly foregrounds the passage of time, thus rendering present the physical, temporal world. Sonnets 1 and 2, in which the lover laments the beloved's absence and wishes she could recollect their first meeting, are primarily concerned with time and its consequences. Time is made concrete as the lover "waits" and "watches" "long" for her beloved to "come again." The speaker relates her waiting patterns: "While, when you come not, what I do I do/ Thinking 'Now when he comes,' my sweetest 'when.'" While the word "when" is repeated three times for
rhetorical effect (eliciting the feeling of anticipation), thus amplifying the ego-presence of the speaker, the time issues are all related to the lover in the "world." The lovers physically move in the temporal world: they "meet" and "parting comes too soon," and the lover's hope is compared to a "waning, waxing . . . moon." Time and the changes it brings in the natural world are inevitably present.

Sonnet 2 is even denser with references to the physical effects of time's passage. Trying (and failing) to "remember that first day, / First hour, first moment of" the lovers' encounter, the speaker muses on the seasons of their meeting, "Summer or Winter," and how it "slip[ped] away." The changes that occur with time's passing--her love's fruition in spring (the "budding of my tree/That would not blossom yet for many a May")--went unnoticed, and the winter season characterizes the unremembered "day of days" that she "let . . . come and go," when she compares that day to a "traceless . . . thaw of bygone snow."

When thinking about disability, most of us who have lived relatively free of physical deviations remain unaware that we all, if we live long enough, face disability. We age; the movement of time indeed erodes the physical body. Since in poetry, fleeting seasons and winter's melted snow typically represent the transience of time, these metaphors also indicate eventual disability. The rendering of disability is even more obvious in the speaker's faulty memory and in the forgotten tactile sensations of the meeting: ("If only now I could recall that touch,/First touch of hand in hand") The lover's physical body is supposedly unrecalled by the speaker; yet, the concrete description of this loss in the poem ironically serves to underscore the inevitable presence of the material, and, further, the inability (or disability) to make contact.

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In addition, the forgotten season of their meeting is described with metaphors of sight that are unstable, constantly shifting from ability to disability. The season was either "bright" or "dim"; the speaker was disabled and then could see: "blind . . . to see." Sight, however, is static and fully restored in the transcendental dream world; the lover "holds" the beloved "full in sight." Likewise in Sonnet 13, the speaker is "helpless," "impotent" and blind (her "sight most dim") in the material world; therefore, she "commends" her beloved back to the bodiless state, "back to [God]." Rossetti presents the material world as disabling (an accurate assessment); she then rejects that world, replacing it with a fantasy of wholeness and unity in which "loss and decay and death" transmute into love (Sonnet 10). This, of course, is a fantasy, a poetic thought, and one, significantly, that casts the inevitable disabling of the body in a pejorative light. But, as it is with talk of death, the constant talk of a bodiless state—whether in disrepair or repair—invariably foregrounds the physical, sensory body.

The physical body—the overtly feminine body—is concretized in Sonnet 8, which employs the Biblical story of the heroine, Esther:

'I, if I perish, perish'—Esther spake:

And bride of life or death she made her fair

In all the lustre of her perfumed hair

And smiles that kindle longing but to slake.

She put on pomp of loveliness, to take

Her husband thro' his eyes at unaware;

She spread abroad her beauty for a snare,

Harmless as doves and subtle as a snake.
She trapped him with one mesh of silken hair,

She vanquished him by wisdom of her wit,

And built her people's house that it should stand:-- (1-11)

First, time and its disabling effects are imaged with the sonnet's opening concept of perishing and death: "I, if I perish, perish'--Esther spake"; moreover, the feminine is further brought forth through the visibility of Esther via the use of the direct quotation (and its marks). The next line figures her as married--and therefore sexualized--to the material, temporal world: Esther is the "bride of life or death." She is further sexualized through the sensory images of her hair: Rossetti uses visual ("lustre"), olfactory ("perfumed"), and tactile ("silken") descriptors. Esther's "smiles" draw the sexual heat of fire (they "kindle") and that fire's subsequent satisfaction/quenching ("slake"). Desiring a life lived through the physical body, like Esther (who is drawn also as morally questionable), the speaker then says,

If I might take my life so in my hand,

And for my love to Love put up my prayer,

And for love's sake by Love be granted it! (12-14)

Fostering the tension typical of Rossetti, the sensual is in the final lines denied by a projected idea of transcendent "Love" (as against earthly "love"). Closure is created through the repetition and juxtaposition of "love" and "Love," and the appeal to God for the speaker to "be granted it" supports and affects spirit and unity over flesh and the fragmentation of disability. But even though the ideas, underscored by form, affect unity, Esther's feminine physicality--along with the speaker's reference to her "hand," remains the outstanding feature of the sonnet.
Moreover, as Harrison observes, the extreme sensuality of Esther is not mentioned in the Bible; it is Rossetti's invention (Harrison, 180). Rossetti's Esther, endowed with body, sex, voice, and strength to "vanquish" masculine tradition and that tradition's impetus to deny the feminine, marshals forth the feminine. Similarly, the voices of Beatrice and Laura destabilize the stable and stabilizing historical, masculine tradition of the sonnet. [It is also interesting to note that the disabled body in this poem is Esther's husband who is blind with "eyes at unaware." The vital, sexualized Esther can "see" physically and metaphorically; she overcomes her enemy, Haman, "by wisdom of her wit". By bringing feminine sexuality into a Victorian public arena that typically works to normalize and deny feminine nature, Rossetti foregrounds nature, the physical, and the disabled.

In the religious context of "Monna Innominata", death liberates the soul from bodily imprisonment and becomes the conduit to "Love." Yet, even as death becomes the key transcendence, it along with grief and pain represents the feminine unstable, physical body in its most disabled form. In Sonnet 10, the speaker invites the lover,

Let us go fall asleep, dear friend, in peace:
A little while, and age and sorrow cease;
A little while, and life reborn annuls
Loss and decay and death, and all is love. (11-14)

According to a traditional reading of these lines, "Life" in line 13 follows death, reversing the effects of "Loss and decay and death." However, "Loss and decay and death" may be pathways to God, but they are always present and necessary in actual life. Because of their constant presence in the sonnets, Rossetti (whether unconsciously or not)
underscores their inevitability. Moreover, death is in fact the ultimate disablement faced by all of us. Whether or not spiritual "transcendence" is achieved, death—always manifest in matter and form— is always present. Death's dependence on the living body is emphasized, for example, by the syntax of line 13 of Sonnet 3: "To die were surely sweeter than to live." Leaving aside the speaker's fantasy of spiritual oneness, and observing the poetic line, the reader can see that syntactically, the word "death" precedes "to live." The syntactic privileging of death highlights the inevitable interdependence of living and dying. Death is, of all events in the physical world, the most clearly physical and necessary (so much so that it creates the physical world). Thus, Rossetti, in a most complex way, insists on, and even privileges the material.

Sonnet 10 also offers a good example of the way Rossetti foregrounds the feminized material body through her handling of rhythm. Setting aside, for the moment, the inevitable gap between the abstract pattern (unstress/stress) and the intonation of the words in iambic pentameter that promotes the illusion of a single voice speaking in the poem, the strictness of the pentameter rhythm is broken, allowing for an exhibition (albeit fleetingly) of meter, thus materiality. An example is the first line, "Time flies, hope flags, life plies a wearied wing." Because this is a sonnet we expect the iambic rhythm, but the pentameter undertow is refused. While privileged because it is the first line in the poem, the stress in the line falls clearly on each single-syllable word, creating a spondaic rhythm, momentarily granting the reader (the voice reading) space and agency (Easthope 72-73). Granted, the rhythm is tied to meaning: the spondees march inevitably toward the word "Death" in the second line, "Death following hard on life gains ground apace," but the metricality of the line is prominent, even before pentameter takes hold (and
meaning takes hold). Another notable difference in rhythm is line 13 (the second line qtd. below) of Sonnet 12:

Your pleasure is my pleasure, right my right,
Your honourable freedom makes me free
And you companioned I am not alone. (12-14)

Although the four-beat line is swathed in rhetorical repetition and chiasmus, its irregularity, its demand for four beats, foregrounds its metricality. There are, of course many other metrical deviances, and they also add significantly to Rossetti's feminizations of the traditional form.

Sonnet 7 also seems to privilege the non-material. Stability is built into the final line of the poem: "And death be strong, yet love is strong as death." First, the ten syllables are distributed evenly through the line--each word is a syllable; thus, the syllabic cement undergirds the line, which, in turn, undergirds--to conceal--the instability and contradictions inherent in earthly love that are presented in the first thirteen lines of the sonnet. Further, the chiasmus of "death be strong" and "strong as death" interpolated by the word "love" works to conflate love, strength, and death, forming a supportive foundation. Lastly, the final word in the sonnet is "death," a closure device foreshadowing the final silence of the speaker in Sonnet 14. But the nature, the material, the temporal is also foregrounded. As an antidote, The Bible--itself a reified metonymy for the voice of God--soothes the cruelty of human "jealousy" and, more importantly, the fear of death; moreover, death is described concretely, emphasizing the body through the image of the bodily container, "the grave." This, along with the "house on rock" and
"sand" and the angry, "raving winds," the "citadel," the "bonds," metaphors for love and human emotions, accrue to make visible the mutable, material world.

In Sonnet 11 the body is abjured; it closes with unity in death, the "gate" to transcendental fulfillment:

Beyond this passage of the gate of death,

I charge you at the Judgment make it plain

My love of you was life and not a breath. (12-14)

In the last line, "life" is presented as an idea, a spiritual concept independent of bodily "breath." Moreover, "breath" and "death" are exact rhymes; the rhyme creates closure. Moreover, "not breath,"—to not have a breath—means physical oblivion or death.

Characteristically, however, the body asserts itself. For one,"breath" operates metonymically for poetry's bodily source. Also, the word "breath" takes a privileged position as the final word in the sonnet, and in this position it acts like "death" in that it privileges the material. "Breath" signifies the living (or dying) body that is also blind to heaven (which is "out of view"), and moreover, acutely feeling the physical (and emotional) fragmentation of "parting in exceeding pain."

Sonnet 14 attempts to capture and close all in a unified and transcendent whole.

First, Sonnet 14 contains a good sampling of the unifying intertextuality of the sequence. One of the main concerns of this sonnet, beauty's transience, mirrors the thematics of Petrarch (Harrison 184):

Youth gone, and beauty gone if ever there

Dwelt beauty in so poor a face as this;

Youth gone and beauty, what remains of bliss?
I will not bind fresh roses in my hair,
To shame a cheek at best but little fair,--

Leave youth his roses, who can bear a thorn,--

I will not seek for blossoms anywhere,

Except such common flowers as blow with corn.

Youth gone and beauty gone, what doth remain?

The longing of a heart pent up forlorn,

A silent heart whose silence loves and longs;

The silence of a heart which sang its songs

While youth and beauty make a summer morn,

Silence of love that cannot sing again. (1-14)

This sonnet also echo's Keats' diction and play between the material-spiritual/transience-permanence. The diction in the octave recalls "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal--yet, do not grieve;

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,

For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Furthermore, Biblical allusions also contribute to the intertextual framework (Harrison 160), the Bible providing the unifying theme of transcendence so pervasive in Dante and Petrarch. The sonnet's image of Christ's crown ("who can bear a thorn") alludes to the closure of Christ's release from his corporeal state of suffering to unite with God. Sonnet 14 does the same for the speaker. Closure is affected as the changing world of the body is denied through silence and death. A "love that cannot sing again" is a love
that is dead to the material world. The speaker has transcended that world and realized her fantasy. In addition to its intertextual components, the sonnet is also fortified with stabilizers. For instance, the cycle of the seasons in the poem acts as structural cement for the theme of transcendence. The "blossoms" that the speaker "will not seek for" and the "common flowers" that "blow with corn" connote spring and fall; the last line describes "summer" as the hour of "bliss," and although the sonnet closes in the silence of winter--"the silence of love"--transcendent redemption (Spring) has occurred.

However, although all of the above strategies work in concert as normalizing operatives (the influential power of tradition and normalcy is formidable, almost blinding), affecting a sense of unity, therefore denying nature, change and the material body, the body still emerges as an undeniable presence. For instance, the image of Christ is rendered sensuously via the image of the crown of thorns and is experienced painfully by the reader. Here, Rossetti and Keats again intersect. Both negotiate the tenuous line between the sensual (bodily pain) and the spiritual/ideal world (manifest in Rossetti in Christ). The body, and grief for its disablement (death), in part informs the tension in Keats' work (and, interestingly is also part of his personal mythology). A similar Keatsean line of paradox and play of body and spirit, producing an unstable Rorschach-like effect manifests itself in Rossetti's poem in the reference to Christ: the Christ-spirit exists because of the materiality and the pain of the Christ-body. On the flip side, the Christ-body exists because of the Christ-spirit--God. Rossetti's use of Keats, then, is not only an intertextual/structural move. Her allusions to his poetry are further evidence of a struggle that brings forth the instability of the disabled body. For, to assert the stability of the spiritual world and deny the unstable body--the site of pain and decay-
highlights their dependent relationship, therefore the reality of the unstable, material body is validated.

Furthermore, Rossetti's references to seasons, while offering structural unity, also metaphorically signify the temporal feminine cycle of the seasons. Moreover, the body asserts itself in the rendering of grief. In the closing lines, grief—which always highlights the corporeal—is apparent: the worldliness of "youth" and "beauty" make "a summer morn" (grieve). Finally, the earthly "love" and the "song" of the speaker are ultimately disabled—muted in silence and death. Pain, grief, death, and silence bring the body (and its disabilities) to the foreground.

Rossetti's "Monna Innominata," like many of Brontë's poems, seems on the surface to adhere to formal and thematic conventions, signifying stability and normalcy. However, the apparent conventionality of the sonnet is deceptive. A closer look at the tension in "Monna Innominata," reveals the insistence of the materiality of the body, the site of instability. In part, I chose to analyze "Monna Innominata" precisely because of its obvious and much discussed framing and renunciatory traditions. In themselves, these traditions of form and theme are a norming force. Furthermore, the themes of bodily transcendence are also themes of bodily denial. But, within this traditional framework, Rossetti's poetry also brings that body forth. In a complex way then, "Monna Innominata" can be seen as highly unstable. On the one hand, the poem refuses the body, thus constructing pejorative conceptions of disability. On the other, it brings the body forth, refusing its repression and making it visible.

"Goblin Market", however, although its themes seem also to denounce material goodness and sensation, revels in bodily pleasures. Brought forth unabashedly, the
instability of the body surfaces as the poem's raison d'être. The body is on display, and although one of its main metaphor's for that body—the goblin—is demonized, the experience of that materiality is privileged over any moral framing device.

"Goblin Market"

Angela Leighton in Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart (1992), characterizes "Goblin Market" as a "moral nonsense poem which puts religious myth and sexual temptation into a market economy of language which is endlessly unstable." The instability emanates from metaphor (138). What Leighton observes is the salient quality of the poem—its ultimate privileging of instability and the material body. In my analysis of "Goblin Market" I will look at how Rossetti asserts instability. While she frames the unstable with a moral message, the material body is insistently visible. Nature is the encompassing metaphor, itself unstable and the purveyor of disability, and all other metaphors, as I will demonstrate, fall under that umbrella. Finally, Rossetti anticipates Modernist poetic techniques. Together, metaphor, image, form, and structure, connote instability and disability.

In my analysis of disability, I have used the concept of framing as a metaphor for the containment and white-washing of instability (disability). Brontë uses Nelly's voice to frame the story of Catherine and Heathcliff as a moral tale. Rossetti frames "worldly" instabilities with authenticating history. First, the teleology of the surface narrative and its overt moral message operate to norm and stabilize the apparent threats of the natural world. Gilbert and Gubar have read "Goblin Market" as an allegory of the temptation and fall of Eve in Genesis and of Lizzie as a Christ figure who "saves" Laura (564-566). Innocent and uninitiated, the sisters are tempted to "buy" the luscious wares of
"merchant" goblin men, trafficking in the nearby meadow. One sister, Lizzie, resists their calls; the other, Laura, "falls." Paying for the fruit with a lock of hair, she recklessly imbibes, but is not sated. Her yearning increases when she finds that she cannot any longer hear or see the goblin men. She sickens and ages. Fearing for her sister's life and determined to save her, Lizzie takes a penny to buy some of the fruit. The men do not want her money; they want her to consume the fruit; they tempt her, force her and smear her with the juices; remaining untainted, she withstands them. Throwing the coin back to her, the men retreat in frustration because she will not eat. Lizzie returns and Laura is ultimately redeemed. "Drinking" the juice smeared on Lizzie's body, Laura revives and returns to her youthful state. The poem offers clear narrative closure: both women are mothers now, and Laura "Would talk about the haunted glen, / The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men, (552-53) . . . Would tell them how her sister stood/In deadly peril to do her good, / And win the fiery antidote" (557-59); sisterhood is valued, and the children are told to depend upon each other, "$For there is no friend like a sister" (562).

Within this neat, conventional frame the goblins work as a metaphor for instability. A familiar figure in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fairy tales, the traditional goblin is a demon, ugly and mischievous. Seemingly molded in a similar morally stable cast of deviance, the goblins in "Goblin Market" are characterized as "evil people" (437). Their "looks were evil," and like devil-animals they "[lash] their tails" and "Claw with their nails" (397-401). They "[writhe]" like satanic snakes, and like ghostly fish they "haunted" the glen (440). Their evil also extends to their sexual deviance and rapaciousness. "Queer" and "sly" (94, 96) their greed is not for money (they reject Lizzie's coin) but for sex: they have "hungry, thirsty roots" (45) ("root" is a
term for penis [OED]) and stand, "Leering at each other"(93) (perhaps in secret collusive understanding of their nasty intentions toward Lizzie or perhaps in mutual sexual attraction). When Lizzie would pay for the fruit only with money (rather than physical consumption), they turn from "wagging [and] purring" to "grunting and snarling." They then brutalize Lizzie: "Tore her gown and soiled her stocking" (403). Kicking her, tearing "her hair out by the roots" (404), they

... cuff ed and caught her,

Coaxed and fought her,

Bullied and besought her,

Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,

Kicked and knocked her,

Mauled and mocked her. (424-429)

But Rossetti's creatures are not solely evil; they are shape-shifters. Not only are they different animal-types, but they are also "goblin men," merchants, and brothers (Leighton 137). Wavering constantly from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from friendly to dangerous, from delightful to horrific, from pleasure to pain-giving, the goblins are inherently unstable (Leighton 137) and unfamiliar, signifying the changes in feminine nature, highlighting the potentially disabled or disabled body. For example, the goblins are delightfully likeable. The cataloguing of pigeons, doves, fishes, cats, dogs, snails, "jolly" parrots, chickens, turkeys, and pigs evinces a sensuous circus of child-like delight. One goblin has

... a voice like voice of doves

Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather. (77-80)

Here, the goblins are presented in images of safety and comfort, a sense of belonging "all together." They are kind, "full of loves," and the sound of their "Cooing" transmits peace and tranquility. Speaking in "tones as smooth as honey" (108) they are drawn also as domestic, as one "weave[s] a crown" (99). They are humorous and fun; they are laugh[ing], "chuckling," "puffing" and "blowing" like whales and "clapping" and "crowning" like a delighted audience (330-34). When Lizzie reappears in the meadow, they welcome her enthusiastically. Offering her a delicious feast, they

Hugged her and kissed her:
Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Closely connected with the shifting nature of the goblins is their "fruit," which becomes a highly unstable metaphor. First, the word "fruit" itself is laden with connotations: fruit is organic and sexual and associated with the feminine. Additionally, the fruit in "Goblin Market" acts metaphorically to signify its unstable and shifting contexts. Even though the goblins' market fruit, this is not a normal market (nor is this normal fruit): the market is set in nature, not the city ("Men sell not such in any town" (101)), and the goblins don't exchange the fruit for money. Rather they take hair and others' pleasure in exchange for fruit. And, although the goblins are "men" selling fruit, the poem also tells us "Such fruits as these/No man can carry" (375-6). Most importantly, however, the fruit works to foreground the body: it brings both bodily pleasure and rejuvenation and bodily pain and sickness. The above quotation reveals evidence of bodily pleasure associated with the fruit: the reader tastes the sounds, "tones" like "honey," and feasts on a visual rainbow of colors with the apples, cherries, peaches, dates, grapes that are "Russet," "dun," and "red." As Lizzie is invited to "Pluck and suck" the fruits (the guttural "uck" sounds literally engaging the mouth and tongue in a fullness) recalls the sensuous pleasure of a childhood summer and the innocence of a child's innocent sensuality.

However, even though the fruit is "Sweeter than honey from the rock,/Stronger than man-rejoicing wine, / [and] Clearer than water" (129-131), it also poisons and destroys. Its poisoning effects are manifest in Jeannie, the sisters' "fallen" and now-dead predecessor, and Laura. Jeannie is invoked in the scene in which Lizzie upbraids Laura
for dallying in the meadow with the goblin men, a scene in which Rossetti complexly envisions instability:

'Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the moonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so.' (147-162)

In this scene, the reader is presented with a constellation of metaphors--fruit, moon, seasons, Jeannie--that shift and mix to represent the instability of nature. Jeannie meets the goblins in nature's meadow; there she eats their fruit. Nature's meadow thus bears sweet things but is at the same time an "evil" glen. The fruits are described as "gifts" that the goblins offer her and as pleasurable to taste and to sight. But the fruit,
also, is poison. Moreover, the fruit is offered to her by the natural light of the moon, which operates simultaneously as a romantic/seductive metaphor and also as a metaphor for feminine insanity and pain. Rossetti also underscores the feminine when she links Jeannie with time and the changing seasons: Jeannie consumed the fruit in Summer, and afterward, from night to noon and "night and day," she pines for more. The season of summer alone is ambiguous: on one hand, it is a warm, inviting season, offering the body (and Jeannie) warmth and ripe fruit; but, on the other, summer brings the death of Jeannie. Seasonal changes in the poem indicate time passing, and Jeannie "dwindled and grew grey," just like the fall season. She dies in winter ("Then [she] fell with the first snow"). And, as Jeannie dies, the grass on her grave dies, also. Therefore, death, here as elsewhere in Rossetti, signifies (and brings) the ultimate disablement of the body—sterility and oblivion. In a complex association of metaphors, then, disability is linked with the instabilities of nature, and the body is foregrounded.

Like the fruit, the moon, the seasons, and Jeannie, Laura is also a metaphor of instability/disability. After she eats the goblins' fruit, she falls into a frenzy of bodily pain. Her descent into sickness is gradual. First, she is contained, deprived of sensory awareness:

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone. . . . (53-4)

The narrator then asks, had she "Gone deaf and blind?" / Her tree of life drooped from the root: / She said not one word in her heart's sore ache; /But peering thro' the dimness, naught discerning/ Trudged home. . . " (59-63). Laura has been rendered mute and deprived of sight, both literal and metaphorical. Aging ("Her hair grew thin and grey"
"She dwindled" (278). The fruit of the goblin men has had the effect of closing and containing her in a world without senses. "Listless," Laura eventually deprives her body of food and becomes disabled; like an anorexic she "would not eat" (298). The destabilizing disabling of Laura peaks when the narrator tells us that Lizzie links the now-deaf Laura (who "could not hear" the goblin voices (309)) with the dead "Jeanie [who is morally fallen] in her grave" (312). Jeannie is dead and Laura is almost dead; both representatives of the feminine are mute and silenced, blind and deaf. The feminine body--unstable and disabled--is undeniably foregrounded.

Although narrative closure thematically renounces and thus frames instability, the threat of bodily instability and disability dominates through Rossetti's treatment of sex. As in "Monna Innominata", the body and the instability of its experience is manifest in concrete images of both sexual pleasure and pain. The erotic imagery and the insistent prododic elements refuse to be contained within the renunciatory, moral frame. For example, Laura's initial contact with the goblins and fruit is clearly sexual and clearly pleasurable. She "sucked their fruit globes fair or red" (128), and the "juice" flows ("Clearer than water flowed that juice" [131]). Innocent Laura "never tasted such before" (132), and the narrator asks suggestively, "How should it cloy with length of use?" (133). The implied penis and its "length" is insured by the pleasure of innocent/experienced sucking, as exemplified in the lines, "She sucked and sucked and sucked the more ... / She sucked until her lips were sore (134-6).

Clear images of feminine sexual arousal further manifest the body-in-pleasure--but these images of desire are often quickly preceded or followed by obstacles to that desire. Acute frustration is the result, both in the reader and in Laura. Moreover, the
resulting tension heightens the material and temporal. For instance, the image of
feminine lubrication is created when Laura returns home with "her pitcher dripping all
the way" (263). But countering the energy of arousal is the image of her labor as she
"Trudged home." Later, she is clearly aroused and "passionate," but she is also "yearning
/ And gnashed her teeth in balked desire" (267). Her passion is repressed into painfully
grinding teeth and the pain of unfulfilled desire. Similarly, double-sided images of the
body in both pain and pleasure are also registered when Lizzie returns with a "penny . . . /
Bouncing in her purse"(453) ("purse" draws up images of tightly closed mouths and
labia) and with the antidote--her body smeared with the poisonous juice--to Laura's
illness. Lizzie's offering of her body to Laura is couched in terms at once endearing and
innocent and sexually suggestive, even cannibalistic. Her invitation to Laura to kiss her
and "eat," "drink," and "love" her evince images of one body consuming another:

    Come and kiss me . . .
    Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
    Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
    Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
    Eat me, drink me, love me. (466.468-71)

Indeed, bodily pain and sexual innuendo mix after Laura "drinks" the antidote:

    Her lips began to scorch,
    That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
    She loathed the feast:
    Writheing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
    Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
....
Straight toward the sun,
....
Swift fire spread through her veins, ...
Met the fire smouldering there
....
She gorged on bitterness without a name ...
[And] Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past
Is it death or is it life?
Life out of death. (493-524)

Desire, only moments ago luscious and wet ("She clung about her sister, / Kissed and kissed and kissed her: / Tears . . . / Refreshed her . . . eyes, / Dropping like rain . . .") [485-9] is now matched with "anguish fear, and pain" (491). Her desire is figured with the heat and pain of fire ("scorch, " "fire," "smouldering"). The fruit juice, although a "feast," is at the same time, "wormwood" and "loathed" and has the harsh taste of "bitterness." Laura's pain is evident as she laments, "Writhing." She inflicts self-abuse
when she tears her clothes and "beat[s] her breast" (499). Finally, she "fell at last." Her fall here seems to contradict the "fall" she had after first tasting the fruit. And again, immediately after she falls, "pleasure" and "anguish" are paired. Further, in the next line, death and life are paired, and the next line shifts the order to "life out of death." Thus, the body and sex are rendered at once pleasurable and restorative and painful and sickening.

Instability (via the body and sex) is also portrayed in Lizzie's exchanges with the goblins. Lizzie resists the goblin fruit, even as they forced and "squeezed their fruits/Against her mouth to make her eat" (407). She, "Like a royal virgin" (418) stands fast while the goblins grope at her, "Mad to tug her standard down" (421). Sexual aggression is mixed with sexual innocence ("virgin"), and moreover, imperial England is defined by sexuality—clearly Lizzie in her "royal" steadfastness and virginity stands for the normal standard of women in England, as she fends off the deviance that would defrock and disable her. Yet, after the goblins have "mauled" her, the sexual imagery shifts to that of disability and sexual abstinence mixed with sensuousness and sexual pleasure: The lines between ability/disability/pain/pleasure are blurred, and the site of that blurring is the body:

Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrupped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd. (430-436)
Lizzie is now mute. And although she abstains from taking the fruit into her body, the
metaphors and imagery highlight her body: Lizzie's mouth and lips are an obvious
substitute for the vagina and labia that she refuses to "open" to the goblin "length" of
fruit/flesh. Indeed, these metaphors of disability/sex and abstinence coupled with images
of arousal ("drip / Of juice" on her face) and sweet tastes ("juice that syrupped . . . / . . .
and lodged in dimples" around her mouth) do not fail to manifest the body and its endless
instabilities.

It is apparent that nature is the primary metaphor for instability, and all other
metaphors (goblins, fruit, Jeannie, moon, seasons, death, Laura, sex) are linked with
nature. And, of course, control is maintained via the moral frame around instability.
Moreover, Rossetti's language has the ambiguous quality that anticipates a modern
Hardyesque vision (nature embraces both innocence and corruption). The renderings of
the natural world in relation to Lizzie, Laura, and the goblins are evidence of unstable
ambiguity. The pre-lapsarian Laura and Lizzie are contained in images of domestication
that anticipate Tess's verdant world before its corruption:

   Early in the morning
   When the first cock crowed his warning,
   Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
   Laura rose with Lizzie:
   Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
   Aired and set to rights the house,
   Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
   Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should. (199-209)

Circumscribed with adjectives such as "sweet," "dainty," and "white," the purity and safety of the sisters' domestic life suggests the Victorian's idea of a normal woman. Even more outstanding, though, are verbs like "fetching," "airing," "kneading," "feeding," "sitting" and "sewing" that create a picture of subdued containment. The women buzz like bees in a little circle, not far from the hive. Because there is a sense of time standing still, it is as if the moral goodness and health of the women is dependent upon and can only thrive in a controlled natural world, a control necessary to control disability and maintain normalcy. But in Rossetti, the stillness and innocence of this vision are, of course, (also like Hardy) interrupted by and juxtaposed with the riotous motion of the goblins and all they represent—the unstable world of time and change.

"pace," "hurry," "skurry," "chatter," "flutter," "glide," "claw," and "mock." Moreover, successive and repetitious nouns and verbs foreground Laura's and Lizzie's corporeal and emotional needs ("lip from lip," "Come and kiss me / . . . Hug me, kiss me . . . "), and, of course, the ubiquitous verb "suck," while rhyming with "fuck," underscores the movement of desire.18

"Goblin Market", in the final analysis, should be regarded as a feminine poem employing feminine poetics, privileging the body and its instabilities over any historical and/or moral sanction and frame. Like Armstrong and Bristow's "monumental legend," it is a feminized form of the traditional metrical romance that "summons up a primordial, distant, and indeterminate history, . . . a simulacrum of the oral poem" (xxxvii). Indeed, with its rejection of the central, subjective "I" of Romanticism and the dominant poetic characteristic of paratactic structuring (Leighton 138), it departs even more radically from the bourgeois masculine traditions than Brontë's poems and Rossetti's own "Monna Innominata." Phrases like "Eat me, drink me, love me" (471), or

Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by. (377-9)

and

Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
...
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance. (442-3, 445-6)
work to create the motion of time, foregrounding material in and of the poem, suggesting, in Leighton's terms, "an aesthetic of pleasure, a sensual art for art's sake" (138-9).

Nature is signified by change and movement which is, in turn, embodied in the goblins—the shifting and unstable "monsters" of Rossetti's poem. We are reminded again of Frankenstein's creature. Shelley's creature represents the body that society loathes, the piecemeal and fragmented but perhaps more authentic body. As it turns out, the real monstrosity in Frankenstein is not the monster's body per se, but others' reactions to that body's difference. Rossetti's goblin monsters, on the other hand, represent nature's inherent instability, which brings about fragmentation and bodily disablement. These metaphors of monster and goblin, then, inscribe repulsion of the vulnerable and fragmented material world, and in this way, can be seen to contribute directly to the enforcement of normalcy. However, Rossetti distinguishes herself by the fabric of her language, her use of shifting and unstable metaphors to produce an experience of unstable meaning. This writing suggests a cultural shift toward Modernism, which can be characterized, in the context of disability, as the acceptance and rendering of instability. Rossetti's poetry anticipates Modernism's breaking down of the conventional—normal—body and its attempt to disempower the established norm. In this wave, the previously unacceptable, the feminine and the disabled body, for instance, surface from under the weight of privilege blurring the once distinct (and safe) lines between normal and abnormal.
Notes

1 Edna Kotin Charles reports that Bowker's characterizations are "typical" (32).

2 c1320: "Hir queynt abouen hir kne Naked pe kniţes knewe" (Her quaint above her knew naked the knights knew); c1386 Chaucer, "The Miller's Tale": "Pryvely he caught hir by the queynte." 1598 Florio, Becchina, "a womans quaint or priuiGees. (OED).


4 Harrison characterizes Rossetti's framework of intertextuality and her struggle between the spiritual and earthly as ultimately implementing a social critique; "the effect of [the synthesis of the "ascetic and aesthetic"] is, finally, to distance her poetry from its immediate historical contexts and by doing so--paradoxically, it would seem--to present a forceful ideological critique of those contexts. Her work's focus on broad cultural issues and traditions--religious, amatory, philosophica--draws attention to the inadequacies, hypocrisies, and false values of her society as well as the literary work that has preceded her and that proceeds around her" (159).

5 Thematically, Rossetti's sequence is adherent to the Albigenses, the troubadours, Dante, Petrarch, and the religious/Christian tradition to which she also alludes. All of these traditions grapple with the reconciliation of erotic and worldly love (nature) with the love of God (spirit). The central doctrine of the Albigenses, an heretic sect of Southern France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, was the doctrine of dualism--the conflict of the spiritual and eternal with the material and temporal (Wakefield, Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France 1100-1250 27). A prominent feature of this belief system is that the physical, material, changing world is undesired; the material body is considered a creation ascribed to an evil creator or a prison for the entrapped soul. (SumpGon, The Albigensian Crusade 33-35. See also, "The Doctrine of Dualism" venus.uwindsor.ca/english/projects/rossetti/monna/dualism.htm). The Albigenses believed that the achievement of unity of spirit and body requires the rejection of the physical world. The troubadour finds resolution between spirit and body via the elevation of the female. The troubadourian woman is idealized. Her physical beauty was considered "the outward manifestation of her intellectual and spiritual perfection" (Madaule, The Albigensian Crusade: An Historical Essay 14 qtd. in "Beauty and Perfection: Rossetti vs. the Troubadour Tradition" venus.uwindsor.ca/english/projects/rossetti/monna/troubad.htm). Dante and Petrarch's poetic conceptions of love can be traced back to the poetry of the troubadours, and in the medieval courtly love tradition (Harrison 165) the female is completely abstracted. Lifted to unattainable spiritual heights, her physical body is erased; she is a non-sexual, symbolic force of spiritual guidance and inspiration. In this state she remains whole and uncorrupted, for there is no material to fall apart, and her purpose is to guide the male to
the unity of transcendence. This linking of physical beauty is a necessary corollary to spirituality and eventual transcendence, for the male is an example of the marginalization of disability. Put another way, the demand for physical perfection, because "perfection" is an ideal, erases the physical and its potential differences.

6 See Elliot Gilbert, "The Female King: Tennyson's Arthurian Apocalypse," for a discussion of Victorian dehistoricization.

7 See the discussion of pentameter and subordinate rhyme in my analysis of Brontë's poetry and Easthope 70-4 and Easthope 90-1.

8 Ann Jamison suggests that, although publicly, modern poetry's beginning is attributed to Baudelaire it also begins with Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market and Other Poems: "Rossetti's modernist tendencies are profoundly transgressive [even though they did not "shock" and "burst" forth as Baudelaire's]: subversive, difficult, disruptive, sensuous, material, her poetry . . . is marked by all the qualities we have come to expect from Baudelaire and the tradition in modern poetry he is understood to have inaugurated" (1). Also in this vein, Anthony Harrison makes the case that Rossetti's intertextual method is what Claude Lévi-Strauss calls "bricolage," also seen in Dante Gabriel's and T.S. Eliot's work. Eliot's poem "reorganizes the fragments of the preceding system [Dante Gabriel's work in "The Blessed Damozel"] in "a process of transvaluation"" (160).


10 Biblical allusions are replete throughout the sequence. Noting that the bulk of religious connotations begin with Sonnet 5, Anthony Harrison counts one in the first quatrain of the macrosonnet and fourteen in the second quatrain (Harrison 180). The allusions do two things. They anchor the work in masculine historicity and the religious themes mirror the conflict between nature and spirit or "secular love and love of God" (Harrison 180), one of the central issues being worked out in the sequence. To give the reader an idea of Rossetti's religious connotations, and themes, I provide a short list of some of her allusions. Sonnet 3 closes with the line, "Tho' there be nothing new beneath the sun" which reads in Ecclesiastes 1:9, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." The tone and language in the octave of Sonnet 5 are that of a blessing that the lover bestows on the beloved (Harrison 178): "Give you all good we see or can foresee, / Make your joys many and your sorrows few, / Bless you in what you bear and what you do," and the lover also exhorts the beloved with an allusion to Matthew 5:48: "Yea, perfect you as He would have you be." (The corresponding biblical lines read: "Be ye therefore perfect; even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.") Also in Sonnet 5 is the reference to the flood and Jordan; and the closing line, "Since woman is the helpmeet made for man" originates in Genesis 2:18. Sonnet 6 refers to Lot's wife-- "Nor with Lot's wife cast back a faithless look"--when the lover compares the beloved to Lot's wife who
was turned into a pillar of salt because she failed to control her curiosity. Casting a forbidden glance back at the city, she was turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). Also in Sonnet 6, the lover describes herself in Biblical terms, as an angel and a sheep, "the feeblest of God's host, / The sorriest sheep Christ shepherds with His crook." Sonnet 8 describes Esther who became a heroine-martyr to save her people; the opening line in the sonnet, "I, if I perish, perish" is from Esther 4. Sonnet 9 varies the story in Genesis 3:2 in which Jacob wrestles with an angel (Harrison 161).

11 Anthony Harrison's interpretation regards this quotation as a reminder "of the ideality of the whole endeavor the author and we readers are engaged in." He associates is presence with the "imaginative recreation of the contents of an imaginatively generated (Dantean and Petrarchan) mythos, extending a long tradition of such love poetry" (177).

12 Harrison points out that readers of the sequence have mistakenly regarded it as a biographical rendering of Rossetti's failed love with William Cayley and as such, a personal lament and confession. But this sort of reading, while clearly inaccurate as Rossetti's preface indicates, robs the poem of its literary, historical, and social complexities.

13 This rendering of the masculine as less competent and the feminine as conscious (abled) is found in Jamison's unpublished article, "Passing Strange."

14 Easthope 74

15 Harrison suggests that the silencing of voice in Sonnet 14 is not, as feminists have postulated, "a relapse into the role of 'silent object,' as in Petrarchan tradition" but instead a "mode of redemption, a poetic pattern of return to grace." He sees Rossetti as "a martyr to the redemption she desires for her culture" (183).

16 The sisters are morally "good," and the relation between the goblins and sisters sets up the traditional, binary good/bad framework by which we judge those with differences.

17 See Gilbert and Gubar: "Obviously the conscious or semi-conscious allegorical intention of the narrative poem is sexual/religious" (566).

18 Ellen Moers in Literary Women makes the point that "suck" explores the oral eroticism of children (102-3).
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In the fiction and poetry of Shelley, Brontë, and Rossetti, I have attempted to trace the construction of the conceptions of disability and the troubling of those conceptions in the nineteenth century. Although my work was largely informed by the theories of Lennard Davis on the controlling concept of normalcy, the limitations of which I will address shortly, each writer anticipates a literature (and a culture) that insists on problematizing unquestioned distinctions of gender, race, class, nationality, and, now, ability/disability. These writers, although mired in, and influenced by, the weight of nineteenth-century British cultural normalcy, also break up and destabilize atrophied norms.

One of the metaphors used to both enforce and challenge norms is that of the monster. This metaphor is found in the feminine monster, and it is also introduced vividly in Shelley's monster, carried on through Brontë's Heathcliff (and Catherine and Hindley) to Rossetti's goblin men. On one hand, the monster figure enforces norms because it is measured against the standard of normalcy. Its differences from that standard render it "other," marginalized, abnormal, reinforcing the normal as normal. Pejorative conceptions of the disabled spring from this conception of normalcy. No matter how stringent Shelley's critique of society's treatment of the creature is, for instance, in the end, the monster is a monstrosity among us, feared and obscured and
unable to propagate his species. Brontë's monstrous characters and Rossetti's goblins, by the same token, are metaphors of moral indifference and depravity. However, these metaphors, especially in Rossetti's Goblin Market, shift and destabilize meaning. Shelley's monster is an innocent child of nature, kind-hearted, corrupted only by the cruelty of society. Brontë's monsters blur the lines between the living and the dead. And Rossetti's goblin men represent unstable nature, on one hand morally "bad," on the other delightful and attractive. At the heart of all of these conceptions is the real culprit—the instability of nature's material body and the way it breaks, sickens, corrupts, and eventually dies. This fragmentation of a wholeness that we imagine and desire seems the root of our most fundamental human fears, recalling the central Romantic impulse, the attainment of a unified heaven and earth. Romantic hope dies hard. Disability, a visual reminder of our fragile instability, does not fare well on the social register.

At the outset of this dissertation, writing about disability presented unique difficulties, which began with my reading of Susan Sontag's Illness as Metaphor (1978). In this short and powerful book, Sontag condemns the use of disease as metaphor. She writes that "illness is not a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiest way of being ill—is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking" (3). Illness used as metaphor (i.e., the moral blight of the "body politic") or illness described and understood through metaphor (with cancer and TB, for instance, the body is "eaten") promotes harmful "fantasies" that inject the ill person with pejorative attitudes that hinder healing. If, as Sontag says, the ill person is seen as corrupt, morally weak, or emotionally disturbed, this attitude has been conveyed through metaphor (cancer is a feeling repressed; Laura is sick and "fallen"). In AIDS and Its Metaphors

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written ten years after *Illness as Metaphor*, she qualifies her stringent critique of metaphor, admitting "one cannot think without metaphors. But that does not mean there aren't some metaphors we might well abstain from or try to retire" (93). Her argument against metaphor is extremely persuasive, and her insistence that metaphor can be damaging to the ill and, by extension, to the culture at large is one I readily adopt. For, my discussion about disability is a discussion of the metaphors (monsters and goblins and nature) around which our common conceptions of disability have formed. Sontag, however, places the critic, who, at the time of criticism and writing is different from the person at home with cancer, in a morally tricky position.

On the one hand, all writing is metaphor and to write about cancer or deafness or insanity is to refer to those things metaphorically. On the other hand, to be blind, for instance, is to experience the physical consequences of the functioning or not functioning of the body's seeing apparatus. How then, do we define and talk about disability? Perhaps the answer is in the definition of disability. But definitions are complex. Sander Gilman, for instance, cites the World Health Organization's 1980 definition, "Impairment is an abnormality of structure or function at the organ level, while disability is the functional consequence of such impairment. A handicap is the social consequence of an impairment and its resultant disability" (271). Gilman then troubles this definition by invoking the example of obesity: while there is a medical definition of obesity, "it is also clear that the notion of who is obese changes from culture to culture over time" (217). Here we have moved from physical function to metaphor. Mitchell and Snyder, in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*, assert that "disability" "designate[s] cognitive and physical conditions that deviate from normative ideas of
mental ability and physiological function" (2). These definitions seem far from Sontag's "reality" that somehow exists outside of metaphor. Nevertheless, Sontag's work held sway over me. As I wrote, I held myself responsible and accountable (after all, a dissertation admits one into the field of scholars who "know") to the "reality," the actual physical "fact" of the body. Here, I found myself caught in conflict between the body (the "real" lives of the women) and the metaphor (their writing). The result was an exaggerated sense of the importance of authorial biography. I was compelled to represent these women as literally, physically disabled so as to legitimate looking at their work through the lens of disability studies. However, I found this an impossible task. Not only was I still required to properly define disability, but also my task paralleled the difficult relationship between real bodies and disability metaphor: there is an inherent tension between real lives and the discourse "about" those lives. In criticism, the "real" and the discursive are discrete. What the reader and critic have of writers' bodies is their writing and other critics writing: metaphor. Moreover, even if I accepted the physical fact of the disability of the writers I had chosen, unless I treated language and art as mimetic, I again abandoned the realm of the "real." It was impossible to stay with the physical fact of Shelley's, Brontë's, or Rossetti's bodies.

Another problem dogged my pursuit of coherence. Where do I stand, as Michael Bérubé has asked, as a person "more or less 'in the field' who does not identify as disabled" (337)? How do I qualify to write authoritatively about this subject when perhaps, (again to lean on Bérubé) "my attitude toward disability remains that of a person who grew up thinking unreflectively about human beings in precisely the terms that have been called into question by disability studies" (337)? Therefore, as a way in (or a way
out?), I take as the jumping off point for this dissertation Brenda Jo Brueggmann's observation in "Enabling Pedagogy" that "The definition of disability always begins (and probably ends, too) in its ambiguity, in its indeterminate boundaries": "Disability stabilizes most in its instability" (Bérubé 338).

First, I am, like so many, not yet disabled. Let me qualify: so far I am only partially disabled. If glaucoma does not blind me then perhaps the disabilities that inevitably do come with age will be minimal. On the continuum of ability/disability, I am, as I stand, "temporarily able-bodied" (Bérubé 338). This said, the question then becomes what does my (almost?) disability have to do with my ability or disability as a critic? It is certain that if my eyesight is compromised, reading and writing will be affected. However, returning guiltily to disability as metaphor, this was my discovery: the act of criticism, the manipulation of metaphor, is an act of disability. I am disabled in this realm. For, the definition of disability that I have adopted is about the instability of the material body. The perfect, healthy, and whole body is a fantasy. The disabled body, the disparate, the composite, the broken, the fragmented monster body is the reality. In my act of criticism, then, I have reached to construct perfection and wholeness of form and argument. I have strived for independence of thought, the control of thoughts and words necessary to show my worthiness as an independent thinker, and in doing so, I find that I am constructing a "ruse of wholeness" and am, instead, unstable and disabled. This act of piecing together fragments from the "charnel house" of bodies, is influenced, fragmented, compromised, broken, and reassembled (and full of metaphor); it is endlessly unstable and, moreover, destabilized by the influences and demands of the
norms of literary criticism. The product is a composite monster body, a descendent, if you will, of Frankenstein's monster and Rossetti's goblins.

In this dissertation I have explored the ways that three key women writers of the nineteenth century constructed conceptions of disability. I chose these women because they were writing during the period in which the concept of normalcy emerged. Also, I chose to focus on women writers because of the socio-historical propensity to conflate the feminine and the female with an unfit, disabled form. The questions that underpin my work are these: how is disability constructed and defined? Is normalcy patrolled in the works of these writers? Is the distinction between normalcy and abnormalcy troubled? As mentioned, I have, however, in showing how normalcy operates in the literature of these women, confined myself largely to the theories found in Lennard Davis' "Constructing Normalcy" and Enforcing Normalcy. As a result of this dependence, I imply that all three women, Shelley, Brontë, and Rossetti tend toward privileging and enforcing normalcy.

Further work in this area should focus more intensely on the instabilities (the challenging of normalcy) in nineteenth-century literature. For example, the decentralization of narrative voice that is present in Frankenstein links Shelley's novel to the decentralization of the subject/ego of Romanticism, as seen in the poetry of Brontë and Rossetti. Or, in Brontë's Wuthering Heights, I tend to "side" with the idea that in the end, Brontë stabilizes all with the frame of Nelly's voice. However, multiple voices and the unstable "wuthering" of the characters between life and death and between the Heights and the Grange, suggest that Brontë problematizes and critiques society's enforcement of norms. By using a series of first-person narratives in Wuthering Heights.
Brontë foregrounds the partiality of those narratives and thus refuses to give the reader the kind of clear authoritative position that ultimately enforces normalcy. Therefore, this dissertation potentially lays the ground for a critique of Davis' arguments that the novel necessarily promotes the "middle" or normal ground of nineteenth-century society.

Turning to my analysis of Rossetti, I have stated that instability and the material body surface persistently in her poetry. While Rossetti frames difference within a conventional moral frame—as her contemporaries emphasized—sensuousness and materiality insist on being seen. The two poems I analyzed, "Monna Innominata" and "Goblin Market," frame instability with morality. There are, however many Rossetti poems that eschew this moral frame, and, as Angela Leighton observes, also avoid the language of feeling, and these poems deserve a closer look in terms of disability. In particular, Rossetti has a range of poems that deal directly with death. In general, the idea of death in these poems privileges normalcy in that death controls (and disables) the unstable movement of nature. Death denies all sensory experience (the body is blind, deaf, mute, and paralyzed). Yet, as previously mentioned, the frame (or the stabilizer of the endlessly unstable) paradoxically works in the opposite way—just like Brontë's female captives who are chained and imprisoned, the death and control of the material makes the material prominent, visible, and the disabling of the body is experienced by the reader. The instability of the body becomes the focus of attention. But secondly, more particularly, in Rossetti, death is used as a metaphor not for transcendence and abjuration of the body, but as a figure for the disabling loss of human connection. The broken body is the broken spirit. One poem that clearly treats this relationship of death and disability is "A Chilly Night." In this poem both the speaker and her mother are disabled: the
speaker's dead mother's eyes are "blank" and "could not see" and the speaker "could not hear a word" that her mother spoke. The body is the purveyor of understanding and affection, and in this poem, understanding, human connection and belonging is prevented not only by death but also by disability.

Of further interest regarding Rossetti's treatment of death is the fact that often her speakers speak either from a place of being already dead (and still aware) or in between life and death (a kind of purgatory). Moreover, often the physical body and its vulnerability and pain is linked with loss and indifference to that loss. Therefore, disability is pictured as loss of both physical viability and loss of feeling. If we take Rossetti as a representative poet, a discussion, then, of how death defines and offers an avenue for the discussion of disability would be especially pertinent in the study of nineteenth-century women poets.

In the twentieth century, modernist fiction writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Katherine Mansfield, and mid-century writers such as Flannery O'Connor, Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath represent perversions or bodily grotesqueries more graphically than their nineteenth-century counterparts. Why is this? If we return to Davis' theory, that the disabled body is used as a touchstone for defining and patrolling normalcy, then we must look at these writers as a force for normalcy. Perhaps inadvertently this is so, for theirs is a culture that insists on a standard of normal behavior. But Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper so expertly blurs the lines between sanity and insanity, freedom and imprisonment that those lines between normal/abnormal begin to be written as indistinct. Mansfield, moreover, does the same: within the confines of genteel society lurks the perverse--often the two are barely indistinguishable. Flannery
O'Connor likewise addresses the difficulty of defining disability. While the grotesque takes an ironically privileged position (the most grotesque—the outsiders—are often the purveyors of spiritual awakening), the typically "privileged" or "normal" people are the "disabled" (monsters). For instance, Hulga, in O'Connor's story, "Good Country People," is physically disabled with a weak heart and a missing leg, and further, she is disabled spiritually. When her date, Manley Pointer, runs off with her prosthesis (wooden leg), and she realizes the hollowness of her illusions (both physical and intellectual), O'Connor blurs the typical normal/abnormal distinctions.

Hopefully, I have made my reader aware that one of the main issues about disability is that far from being the plight of the "monstrous" "other," disability is, or will be, part of each of our lives. As I enter into the scholarly community, I am acutely aware of the wave of aging baby-boomers populating my profession, and how, so far, the reality of aging, and old people themselves, have been denied, concealed, disparaged, and demeaned in Western society. But, if for no other reason than the numbers, the aged will command attention. Products and services that aid, enhance, alter, and support the issues of aging will increase. (Perhaps the relatively recent surfacing of disability studies is, in part, testimony to these social phenomena.) This possibility has interesting implications for the field of disability studies, and, I hope will enable perspectives that begin to shift our cultural obsession from the youthful and healthy to include the neglected community of the aging and aged. The fiction and poetry of both women and men, I think, will prove to be an untapped storehouse.
Note

1 Leighton's thesis is that Rossetti's poetry departs from the women poets of sensibility--may of her poems suggest that "feeling is not identical with truth, especially not poetic truth" (146-7).
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VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Georgia E. Standish

Address:
110 Blueberry Lane
Henderson, Nevada 89074

Degrees:
Bachelor of Arts, English, 1984
University of British Columbia

Master of Arts, English, 1990
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Special Honors and Awards:
Sigma Tau Delta, The Int'l English Honor Society, Epsilon Rho Chapter, 1998
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Professor of the Month, Panhellenic Council, March 2000
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Dissertation Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Beth Rosenberg, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Nick LoLordo, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Kelly Mays, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Elizabeth White, Ph. D.