Pathological Poetics: Melancholy and Nostalgia in Charlotte Smith's Lyric Poetry

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And as the time ere long must come
When I lie silent in the tomb,
Thou wilt preserve these mournful pages;
For gentle minds will love my verse,
And Pity shall my strains rehearse,
And tell my name to distant ages.

- Charlotte Smith, “To My Lyre”

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Abstract

This study investigates the troubled relationship between British Romantic poetry and the female body by exploring disease as a distinguishing feature of Charlotte Smith's lyric poetry. My thesis argues that Smith develops a complex pathological poetics in *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784–1800), "The Emigrants" (1793), and "Beachy Head" (1807). Smith's oeuvre displays and diagnoses symptoms of disease and thus features her lyric speaker as both patient and physician. I contend that Smith constructs this pathological persona to emphasize the consequences of making a diseased female body public by taking advantage of the implied female body attached to the female poet's lyric "I." Smith's pathological poetics are most compellingly manifest in her poetry's concern with melancholy—the "accredited pathology" of great poets—and with nostalgia—the modern disease of "compulsory movement" (Schiesari 9; Goodman "Uncertain Disease" 200). My thesis first surveys relevant criticism and theory to propose new feminist theories of melancholy and nostalgia. I then present focused analysis of the various manifestations of disease in Smith's poetry to expound Smith's pathological poetics. The first chapter reveals the influence of literary melancholy on Smith's poetic form, on her rhetoric of sympathy, and on her poetic geography. Collectively, Smith's lyric poetry sustains and embodies a distinctly feminine melancholy that reveals the radical momentum of women's creativity and suffering. The second chapter builds on Smith's vision of a mobile melancholy to address how her exilic poetics generate and respond to nostalgic communities, materials, and waters. Smith's poetics of nostalgia expose both national and domestic narratives as alienating fictions, particularly for women. Thus my thesis joins Smith in imagining new models for articulating the female self through disease and challenges Romantic poetics to account for a more active melancholy and a more domestic nostalgia.

Résumé

Cette recherche porte enquête sur la relation tendue entre la poésie romantique de la Grande Bretagne et le corps féminin en analysant le thème de la maladie comme un élément caractéristique de la poésie lyrique de Charlotte Smith. Ma thèse soutient que Smith développe une poétique pathologique complexe dans ses œuvres *Elegiac Sonnets (*1784-1800), «The Emigrants» (1793) et «Beachy Head» (1807). Dans sa poésie, Smith décrit et diagnose des symptômes de la maladie, représentant ainsi son locuteur lyrique comme patiente et médecin. Je soutiens donc que Smith construit ce personnage pathologique afin d'utiliser le corps féminin (corps implicitement attaché au «je» de la femme poète) pour mettre en évidence les conséquences de la publication du corps féminin malade. Cette poétique pathologique de Smith se manifeste particulièrement dans la façon que sa poésie adresse le sujet de la mélancolie — la «pathologie reconnue» des grands poètes — et de la nostalgie — la maladie moderne du «mouvement obligatoire» (Schiesari 9; Goodman «Uncertain Disease» 200). Ma thèse aborde, en premier lieu, les critiques pertinentes, et la théorie, afin de proposer de nouvelles théories féministes de la mélancolie et de la nostalgie. Ensuite, je présente une analyse ciblée des diverses manifestations de la maladie dans sa poésie afin d'exposer sa poétique pathologique. Le premier chapitre révèle l'influence de la mélancolie littéraire sur sa forme poétique, sur sa rhétorique de la sympathie et sur sa géographie poétique. Dans son ensemble, la poésie lyrique de Smith soutient et incarne une mélancolie distinctement féminine qui révèle l'énergie radicale de la créativité et de la souffrance des femmes. Le deuxième chapitre s'encadre dans la théorie de Smith d'une mélancolie mobile pour expliquer comment sa poésie d'exile génère et répond aux communautés nostalgiques, aux matériaux et aux eaux. La poétique de la nostalgie de Smith expose les récits nationaux et familiaux comme des fictions aliénantes, en particulier pour les

femmes. Ainsi, ma thèse s'engage avec Smith pour imaginer de nouveaux modèles qui articulent l'image féminine à travers la maladie tout en proposant une conception de la poétique romantique qui tient compte d'une mélancolie plus active et d'une nostalgie plus domestique.

Acknowledgements

This project emerged, in part, because of my interest in a pervasive cultural reticence to engage with women's sadness and anger. I have appreciated the incredible synergy of working on this project as women's stories have exposed the extent to which an imbalance in power and a culture of silence have perpetuated patterns of sexual violence and harassment in our public and private spaces. I believe even more profoundly now in the power and the truth of women's sadness as a conduit to social revolution and to a deeper understanding of our humanity, and so I dedicate this thesis to the women—the poets, the activists, the prophets—who harness the power of their stories.

I must acknowledge the financial assistance of the Department of English and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which made this research possible.

Next, I am grateful for my brief but fruitful partnership with Professor Michael Nicholson, my supervisor. The spirit of this project is undeniably a product of this partnership, since I trace its inception to my introduction to Svetlana Boym's work on nostalgia in Michael's graduate seminar in the fall of 2017. Michael's scholarly contribution has perhaps only been surpassed by his enthusiasm for this project and my vision of Smith's lyric poetics. As the first in what I expect to be an illustrious line of Michael's graduate students at McGill, I hope that this thesis, particularly the section dedicated to Smith's footnotes, serves as an apt tribute to his skill and enthusiasm as a supervisor.

I must also extend a special thank you to Erin Grant, Mathieu Bouchard, and Raf Finn (and regular guests Diana Little and Zoe Shaw), the other students in Michael's seminar, for allowing me to workshop my early ideas for this project during our discussions of Smith.

Next, I must thank my colleagues at the Burney Centre for their support during my time at McGill. To the peerless Peter Sabor, I am forever indebted for employing me for the duration of my time at McGill, for deepening my knowledge of the material and social culture of the eighteenth century and of editorial practice, and for his unflagging good humour. To my fellow Centurions and colleagues (Stewart, Elaine, Megan, Laura, Cathy, Willow, Caroline, David, Beatrijs, Sarah, Nathan, and Mathieu)—a true stronghold of eighteenth-century enthusiasts—I am likewise indebted for their advice, their insights, and their friendship. A special thank you to Mathieu Bouchard for translating my abstract into French with such nuance and thoughtfulness.

For this particular project, I also owe a debt of gratitude to Jon Saklofske and Stephen Ahern of Acadia University, who passed on their respective visions of a radical Romanticism and a female melancholia to me as an undergraduate.

Writing a thesis can be, at times, a solitary endeavor, but the completion of this project is a testament to my family and friends, who surround me at all times (and often from a distance) with love and support.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, and independent work by the author, Davita DesRoches.

INTRODUCTION

Poor melancholy bird—that all night long
Tell'st to the Moon thy tale of tender woe;
From what sad cause can such sweet sorrow flow,
And whence this mournful melody of song?
(*Elegiac Sonnets*, Sonnet III, "To a nightingale," 1–4)

This question, directed to a nightingale by the sonnet's speaker, seems an appropriate one for Charlotte Smith herself. In the preface to the first and second editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith presents the collection as "Some very melancholy moments [that] have been beguiled by expressing in verse the sensations these moments brought" (3). Smith's lyric poetry is saturated with references to melancholy: the humor, the disease, the affect, and the poetic affliction. Treating Smith's poetic melancholy as a disease is appropriate, even just as a metaphor, because of how it spreads to or, more appropriately, infects the form, the speaker, the lyric object(s), and the region of her lyric poetry.[1] Although melancholy is the most visible of the poetic diseases in Smith's lyric, her oeuvre also engages with the trauma of both literal and figurative exile. Exile, while not technically a sickness, was one of the root causes of the contemporary disease of nostalgia, a diagnosis for literal homesickness. While both melancholy and nostalgia are of interest to scholars of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry, none of this scholarship has explicitly diagnosed the nostalgia of Smith's poetry. Furthermore, none of this scholarship has addressed the relationship between the two diseases, a relationship made clear by Smith's poetics.

[1] This thesis treats disease as both a literal and figurative feature of Smith's poetry and reimagines the infectious potential of disease as productive in a literary text, suggesting positive connotations for the language of disease alongside the conventionally negative connotations.

This thesis will therefore determine the extent to which melancholy and nostalgia infect Smith's lyric poetry. While the most obvious subject of pathological scrutiny would be the poetic speaker—or perhaps the poet herself behind the lyric "I"—the fractures of psychological and physiological trauma are embedded deeply in the complex landscape of Smith's lyric poetry. Thus this thesis will argue that Smith employs a poetics of disease or, perhaps more appropriately, a diseased poetics. Furthermore, by using disease as a point of entry into the gender politics of institutional Romanticism, this thesis will expose the many ways that existing theories of Romantic poetics have misread the female body. Since Smith's disease has its roots in the ambiguity of eighteenth-century medical discourse, this thesis will use a more fruitful synonym: pathology. Pathology has multiple definitions from pathology as the nature of a disease, including its various symptoms or behaviors, to pathology as the study of disease, or laboratory medicine (*OED* II a & b). The *OED* notes another possible definition of pathology, with an example dating to 1828, as "the study or investigation of abnormality or malfunction in the moral, social, linguistic, or other sphere" (II d). Smith's poetics are therefore pathological because they display and interrogate symptoms of disease and thus investigate the moral, social, and linguistic abnormalities imposed on the female self—a chronic disease that targets the female body. It is therefore fitting to frame a study of Smith's deeply self-reflexive lyric with a word that contains such rich nuance and multiplicity.

The genre of Romantic lyric, which takes as its mascot the melancholy nightingale, hinges on the lyric "I" and its mediation of a poetic self. Thus lyric implies a concern "with the personal as opposed to the social, and with the autobiographical as opposed to the historical" (Zimmerman ix). Widely accepted as "a poetry of vision" (Curran "The I Altered" 189), Romantic lyric proves selective in terms of which person or which autobiography is worthy of

preserving, with a critical history that was "written wholly, and arbitrarily, along a masculine gender line" until the early 1990s (187). While historicist and feminist critics have challenged many tenets of Romanticism since then, a tacit critical consensus preserves certain characteristics of the lyric form: "solitary = asocial, sincere = antitheatrical, introspective = dis-engaged" (Zimmerman 2). If the function of Smith's pathological poetics is to draw attention to the abnormalities imposed on the private *and* public female body, then lyric is a poor choice of form. However, Sarah Zimmerman reframes this consensus to reveal the political potential of the form precisely because of "its capacity for submitting the seemingly private reflections of an autobiographical speaker to public view" (ix). Therefore, the lyric form offers a compelling case study of the political utility of writing the female body into public record by "collapsing these distinctions" between private and public and by performing a solitary sincerity that attracts (and potentially infects) a curious reader (Zimmerman ix).[2]

However, existing case studies of Romantic lyric still maintain the subject position of the solitary male genius as the default Romantic lyric subject. Diane Hoeveler suggests that male Romantic poets unite "their masculine and feminine components" in an act of poetic androgyny that renders any female figures in their poems "either projections and/or symbolic extensions of the masculine psyche" (2).[3] Thus the masculine self is not only the default Romantic lyric subject but also absorbs and appropriates the feminine. However, Romanticism is not a collection of "single great poets, as the canon of Great Men implies" but rather a "collective [effort] that

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[2] In *Writing Romanticism,* Jacqueline Labbe suggests that the lyric poetry of Charlotte Smith and William Wordsworth is a form of "*dramatized* monologue," a precursor of the nineteenth-century dramatic monologue (106). Thus Labbe's argument suggests that the sincerity of the lyric subject can be understood as performative as opposed to being a case of naïve solipsism.

[3] Hoeveler's study was published on the cusp of the feminist revisionist movement in Romanticism (1990) and therefore deals primarily with the Big Six—Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Byron—the six poets who had defined institutional Romanticism until the early 1990s. Her reading of Romantic androgyny is, in one sense, out-of-date but nonetheless functions as a compelling counterpoint to Anne Mellor's reading of femininity in the traditions of the female poet and the poetess.

[expresses] a number of things—the taste of a time, the longings and aspirations of a people, the creative genius of a poet, and the feelings of individual writers" (Backscheider 14). This thesis will participate in an ongoing critical project to reframe the Romantic lyric specifically by exploring "the full range of responses [that are] possible for a form closely associated with subjectivity" (Zimmerman 3). By focusing on a non-male lyric subject, this investigation of Smith's poetics contributes to a more expansive and inclusive Romanticism.

Starting in the early 1990s, feminist scholars have revitalized the Romantic canon by recovering the work of contemporary women writers and theorizing a feminine and feminist Romanticism. Anne Mellor proposes that British women poets in the Romantic period can be divided into two distinct traditions: (1) the poetess, an "improvisatrice" whose poetry follows Burke's "aesthetic of the beautiful"; and (2) the female poet, whose poetry is "political" and "didactic" and calls for reform and revolution ("The Female Poet and the Poetess" 261–62, 265). Neither tradition aligns with the characteristics of canonical Romanticism, however, since the poetess confines her vision to the beautiful instead of the sublime, and the female poet confines her vision to the material instead of the transcendent. Mellor's landmark study therefore perpetuates the scholarly bias that treats the work of women poets as less serious for being non- or even anti-Romantic and that polices overt femininity in their writing.[4] The title of poetess has been applied retroactively to diminish a female poet's literary contributions even when a poet avoids "troping her femininity," and the literary trajectory from "poet to poetess to silly" is an experience that Smith shares with many other female poets (Labbe *Writing Romanticism* 9–10). This thesis will therefore employ an opposite tactic to that of Anne Mellor, who distinguishes

[4] It is worth noting that while Mellor categorizes Smith's poem "The Emigrants" as belonging to the tradition of the female poet(s), Smith addresses three sonnets in *Elegiac Sonnets* to the nightingale—III (as quoted above), VII, and LV—an allusion that recalls Philomela, which Mellor cites as a convention of the poetess tradition (262). Therefore, these traditions are clearly not as distinct as Mellor's argument seems to suggest.

serious women poets from their "silly" counterparts, and will interrogate why the feminine has historically been relegated to the margins of the canon and the sidelines of 'serious art'. A close study of a poet like Smith reveals that the marginalization of women's Romantic poetry is more likely a reaction to their radical act of making the female body public in their lyric poetry than it is an evaluation of their poetry's aesthetic value.

As scholars return to these women poets and their contributions to Romanticism, it is also important not to assume that women poets embed femininity in their texts naively. In *Fatal Women of Romanticism*, Craciun explores the figure of the femme fatale in women's Romantic poetry as a site of "duplicity" and "mimicry" (7). These fatal women allow women writers to enact resistance to discursive power by "using figments of male fantasy" to articulate new readings of "women's relationships to power and violence and the relationship of power and violence to women's bodies" (1, 9). Craciun's critical approach "resists feminism's persistent ideology of the consolation of women's natural nonviolence and benevolence" (9). The dominant cultural histories of the Romantic Poet are heavily skewed toward the poetics of male writers, as Curran and Hoeveler argue. However, as Craciun argues, this does not imply that the poetry of Romantic women writers is fully complicit with or fully resistant to these histories.

To dismiss conformity and to champion resistance, or vice versa, is a tactic of masculine histories that require moral absolutes, and the literature of Romantic women writers is a corpus uncomfortable with absolutes. In her book on Smith's and Wordsworth's poetics, Jacqueline Labbe characterizes poetic composition as an act of near-divine creation, an act of creation that is no less experimental and audacious than Dr. Frankenstein's just because the seams are less visible. Their shared poetic project reveals that "in order to compose poetry they must also compose the Poet" (Labbe *Writing Romanticism* 144). Each woman poet's oeuvre therefore

offers a distinct approach to this act of composition. This thesis will conduct a detailed analysis of Smith's poetic praxis to reveal how Smith composes a female lyric self from the raw material of various cultural histories, articulating a dynamic and nuanced theory of the feminine and the female.

This project will use disease as a foundation for this analysis because composing a poetic self that is melancholic and nostalgic as well as female requires deftly navigating the fraught history of the medical sciences and the female body. The sources from which Smith draws her poetic meditations on disease and affect include texts as diverse as those from famous English bards (Shakespeare and Milton) to those from contemporary botanists and physicians. This is not unique to Smith's work, however, given that "art and science had not yet entirely severed their umbilical ties" in the late eighteenth century (Boym 7). In fact, disease in Smith's poetry belongs to a "poetic science" (Boym 7) or at least a discursive science in which "metaphors and analogies are themselves constitutive elements of science" (Schiebinger 24).[5] In "Beachy Head," Smith implicates contemporary science in her speaker's failure to determine the origin of some fossils: "Ah! very vain is Science' proudest boast, / And but a little light its flame yet lends / To its most ardent votaries" (390–92). Smith's analogy of science as an obscure religion and of scientists as its enthusiastic adherents subverts the rational authority of a Western epistemology of science. Thus Smith might compose a diseased female body from the discursive materials of contemporary medicine and science, but her pathological poetics acknowledge science as possibility and as metaphor, not as boundary.

It is therefore critical to ground this study with some context regarding the discursive

[5] In *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, Schiebinger argues that emerging notions of sexual difference between men and women were imposed on the study of botany, which emphasized "sexual difference" and "sexual hierarchy" among plants (13).

function of disease in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Alan Bewell theorizes the relationship between colonial geography and disease: "Geography framed diseases . . . and this pathologizing of the globe was instrumental both in describing the biomedical boundaries of the modern world and in bringing them into being" (17). Furthermore, this pathological geography is also a "gendered construction, in which race and sexuality were superimposed on each other," and the abject—the colonial space—is gendered as female (Bewell 23). Although these pathological boundaries must remain stable to centralize the power of the 'healthy', Ian Baucom describes the relationship of England to its empire as one of "imperial confusion" in which "territories of British imperialism [act] as spaces of bewilderment and loss which continue to trouble and confound England's subjects" (3–4). Smith's pathological poetics provoke a different confrontation with English identity: a confrontation with English locality as a similarly bewildering space. Smith's poetics of region uncover "the deep, hidden narratives" of the local (Stafford 21). Among these narratives is the pathologizing of the nation in which gender, race, and class map onto biomedical boundaries, a discursive science that maintains the health of England by ensuring the disease of women and of the dispossessed. Taking its cue from Bewell's postcolonial study, this thesis will advance a feminist reading of Romantic disease to expose the false objectivity of medical and scientific discourse. In lyric poetry, the lyric speaker mediates the lyric object(s) much as "the observer and the observed" occupy "the same causal scientific plane" in the social and natural sciences (Harding 11). This project therefore models the importance of acknowledging the "social locations" of all discourse to better evaluate both disease and lyric form in Smith's poetry (Harding 15).

This thesis will first survey relevant criticism and theory to propose new feminist theories of melancholy and nostalgia. Then, this study will investigate the pathological poetics of Smith's

three major lyric works: her sonnet sequence or collection, *Elegiac Sonnets*; her blank verse poem, "The Emigrants"; and her poetic fragment, "Beachy Head." The existing critical coverage of Smith's poetic oeuvre often speculates that these works, which span the length of Smith's publishing career (1784–1807), are exemplars of three distinct strains of Smith's poetics—the *Sonnets* of the autobiographical Smith, "The Emigrants" of the political Smith, and "Beachy Head" of the Romantic Smith. These distinctions do not acknowledge the chronological evolution of Smith's poetics, since Smith republished *Elegiac Sonnets* with new poems and with a new ordering of the sonnets several times over the course of her career and regularly workshopped images or scenes from her longer works in her other published poems (e.g., "The Emigrants" and "The Female Exile"). To treat Smith's poetic project as infectious is to acknowledge its compulsive self-reflexivity, which suggests that her poetry must be read both in and out of sequence to uncover its abnormalities.

The first chapter of this thesis will address Smith's pathological poetics of melancholy, positing that Smith's poetic self participates in the eighteenth-century tradition of the woman of feeling. The chapter will begin with a brief cultural and literary history of melancholy, the "accredited pathology" of single great poets (Schiesari 9). In texts as disparate as those written by Robert Burton, Elizabeth Carter, and Sigmund Freud, this chapter will address the tension between melancholy and the female body. This tension and the literary tradition from which it emerges recur throughout Smith's poetics, and this chapter will subsequently analyze melancholic influence on three critical aspects of Smith's poetics: form, objects of sympathy, and region. Smith's hybrid poetic form, the elegiac sonnet, alludes to two melancholic traditions—the elegy and the Petrarchan sonnet—but refuses the symbolic consolation of both forms in order to highlight the sustained suffering of a female subject within the patriarchal

order. Her poetic subject then harnesses the power of sympathy to propose a mobile melancholy that creates affective communities. Finally, Smith's poetics of region locate melancholy in spaces on the edge of society, a literal example of affective mapping, which Flatley defines as a process by which communities are able to visualize an otherwise abstract political plight (4).

Moving from the abstract to the visible political plight, the second chapter will investigate Smith's pathological poetics of nostalgia, which weigh the trauma of female non-agency in patriarchal societies against the trauma of political exile. This chapter will first explore the cultural evolution of nostalgia, from its origins as a disease caused by the trauma of "compulsory movement" to its status as the "incurable modern condition" (Goodman "Uncertain Disease" 200; Boym xiv). This chapter will then present an original theorization of domestic nostalgia by analyzing the community of exiles, the material of nostalgia, and the temporalities of water in Smith's poetry. Smith's sympathetic identification with fellow exiles distinguishes the plight of her lyric speaker as a perpetual exile from which homecoming is neither possible nor desirable. For the domestic or "metaphorical" exile, the home is a space under patriarchal rule and is therefore not "secure" (Rennhak 582). Thus Smith guides her speaker to participate in the "ethical and creative challenge" of Svetlana Boym's reflective nostalgia, which turns from the lost home to imagine new narratives of identity (xviii). Smith's interest in the material of nostalgia in her poetry and in her extensive footnotes suggests a historiography that is encyclopedic without submitting to external authority. Smith continues to privilege unstable models of authority as she moves from the linear, masculine temporality of the Arun River to the nonlinear, feminine temporality of the ocean. With her pathological poetics of nostalgia, Smith proposes that the alienated subjectivity of the feminine nostalgic self possesses radical creative agency because of her unique relationship to identity, history, and time.

CHAPTER ONE: MOBILE MELANCHOLIA

Smith's lyric poetry inherits a cultural preoccupation with melancholy and nervous disease as a vehicle to express the self and to distinguish the poet. Smith's poetry also participates in a contemporary female poetic tradition that attempts to theorize the woman of feeling alongside the fashionable and visible man of feeling. By engaging with melancholy as a topos and as a poetic posture, Smith's lyric integrates these various literary conventions with a deft awareness of the problem of inserting a woman's body and a woman's voice into the tradition of poetic melancholy. Drawing on a rich body of scholarship on contemporary theories of melancholy and on Smith's particular melancholic pose, this chapter will explore the relationship between the particular sorrow of women and the visionary pathology of men in Smith's poetry to propose a feminine and feminist poetics of melancholy.

First, this chapter will address Smith's formal poetics and the melancholic origins of the elegy and the sonnet, the two forms that Smith combines to create her elegiac sonnet. Moving from form to content, this chapter will then explain the significance of the restless and wandering motion of the melancholic figures introduced in the sonnets, a motif that retains its momentum as Smith's poetics evolve formally in her two longer lyric works: "The Emigrants" and "Beachy Head." Having addressed how melancholy infects both the form and the bodies of the poem, this chapter will conclude by investigating the extent to which Smith associates melancholy with region and with nature. Collectively, Smith's lyric poetry presents a sustained and embodied feminine melancholy that reveals the radical energies of female creativity coupled with female suffering.

Melancholy has a complex etymological history, used in early medical theory as an interchangeable term for black bile, one of the four humours, and as a name for the condition

caused by an excess of black bile. In its earliest definitions, the word allows for the possibility of both health and disease, of balance and imbalance. The particular symptoms associated with an imbalance of black bile changed over time with conditions as diverse as "epilepsy and apoplexy" or "a partial insanity, characterized by delusional thinking about some limited subject matter" identified as manifestations of melancholy, whether these symptoms were temporary or chronic (Radden 4–5).[6] Juliana Schiesari identifies the end of the Middle Ages as the advent of the cultural shift in which melancholy began to be considered "an elite 'illness' that afflicted *men* precisely as the *sign* of their exceptionality" (7). Schiesari, working primarily from Renaissance texts, identifies various scholars who can be retroactively diagnosed with melancholy, this "gift of inspiration," from Plato and Socrates to Dante and Petrarch (8). Because of the artistic and philosophic stakes of the illness, there is a large corpus of prose and poetic works that try to define this "accredited pathology" (Schiesari 9).

Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1621, is one such treatise on this famously fraught condition. Burton's exhaustive volume opens with a poem entitled "The Authors Abstract of Melancholy *ΔΙΑΛΟΓΙΚΩ˜Σ*" (lxix).[7] Burton's poem embeds the ambivalence of a melancholic diagnosis in its form, using a literary technique to reveal the symptomatic psyche of the poetic self. The first and last refrains of the poem crystallize the paradox of melancholy as somehow signifying both genius and disease. The first stanza ends with "All my joyes to this are folly, / Naught so sweet as melancholy" (lxix 7–8), and the last

[6] In *The Nature of Melancholy*, Jennifer Radden notes that these various definitions of melancholy coexisted "without tension" until the emergence of clinical distinctions between melancholy, melancholia, and depression in the late nineteenth century (4). While the melancholy of Smith's poetry borrows from poetic and cultural manifestations of this affliction, it is worthwhile to note that Smith's melancholy exists alongside the fluid and multiple definitions of this disease and therefore requires a "careful reading" (Radden 4).

[7] While the constraints of this project demand a focus on the intertwined cultural histories of poetry and melancholy as opposed to a strict medical history of melancholy, the inclusion of this poem in Burton's canonical text suggests that these various disciplines or genres cannot be entirely divorced.

stanza ends with "All my griefes to this are jolly, / Naught so damn'd as melancholy" (lxxi 19–20). The refrain of each stanza follows the same metre and rhyme scheme, although the sentiment of the refrains alternates between the positive sentiment of the first refrain and the negative sentiment of the last. In addition to this poetic representation of the ambivalence of melancholy, Burton's poem draws attention to the hyperbolic nature of the pathology as there is "Naught so sweet" or "Naught so damn'd" as melancholy. Furthermore, each stanza explores the melancholic imagination with both positive and negative visions, from "Sweete musicke, wondrous melodie" (lxix 34) to "Ghostes, goblins, feinds, my phantasie" (lxx 4). Thus Burton's poem dramatizes the oscillating extremes of melancholy and the pathology's particular relationship with poetic imagination.

In eighteenth-century literature informed by the culture of sensibility, melancholy became fashionable as one of the key attributes of the man of feeling. Before 1780, a person of sensibility, or a person "of great sensory perception and intuition," was also believed to possess a higher capacity for rational and moral thought, particularly when that person was also melancholic (Dolan 24). For eighteenth-century men of letters, "nervous disease . . . was a form of self-expression" (Deutsch 44–45). As Stephen Ahern notes, performing a poetic and intellectual persona in the eighteenth century required melancholy's "capacity for exquisite feeling" to access a "wellspring of ethical, aesthetic, and even spiritual good" (248). However, writers' adoption of the melancholic pose also left them vulnerable to the transgressive dimension of sensibility—namely sensibility could be "effeminizing" for male writers (Ahern 248). Since melancholy and various related nervous diseases caused heightened emotional sensitivity, the male melancholic was effectively appropriating a feminized mode that created a "transparent" male subjectivity and body, requiring the female body to be "opaque" (Deutsch

35).[8] Therefore, Deutsch argues that this act of appropriation necessarily excludes the possibility of "an embodied woman of feeling" (35). Elizabeth Dolan similarly observes that women were seen "more often as bodies than as reciprocally perceptual beings" and thus struggled to become "seeing subjects" whose nervous disease could act as a conduit for their self-expression (12).

In fact, most contemporary accounts characterize nervous disease as "debilitating" for women, which makes Smith's choice to adopt the melancholic mode as a woman poet in the eighteenth century a risky one (Ahern 248). In Burton's text, female melancholy is particularly pernicious when diagnosed in women who do not have a husband: "they are in despaire . . . and yet will not, cannot againe tell how, where, or what offends them" (415–16). Female melancholics are therefore alienated from the "symbolic order's prime system, language," in contrast to male melancholics who become more eloquent and articulate (Schiesari 15). In place of the poetic accreditation of a melancholic diagnosis, women's nervous disease was often diagnosed as hysteria, a disease that was sometimes 'cured' by marriage (Keane 15). In the eighteenth century, hysteria was also attributed to a feminized "weak constitution" because women were enclosed in the home, leaving them vulnerable to "an excess of feeling," or sensibility (Gould 641). Thus nervous disease diagnosed in the female body, whether melancholy or hysteria, was understood as debilitating rather than an "enabling ethos" because of the particular constraints placed on that body (Schiesari 15).[9] Nervous disease was not only diagnosed differently for women but also prevented a woman from participating in poetic or intellectual production by rendering her silent or unintelligible.

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[8] Deutsch's argument regarding gender roles in the literature of sensibility or the literature of melancholy shares its image of "literary absorption/cannibalization" with Hoeveler's *Romantic Androgyny*. While acknowledging the pervasive history of the masculine appropriation of the feminine, this thesis imagines a poetic space for femininity or the feminine that is not fully colonized or silenced by the masculine.

[9] In early anatomical theory, the uterus was thought to move around a woman's body, causing "unusual symptoms," i.e., symptoms of hysteria (Gould 641).

Sonnet LXX in Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* dramatizes the enclosure of the female body, as evident in its title: "On being cautioned against walking on an headland overlooking the sea, because it was frequented by a lunatic" (61). Although Smith's speaker has been cautioned to avoid this cliff, she defies these instructions by imagining the lunatic, this "solitary wretch" (LXX 1), in the question that composes the first eight lines of the sonnet. Smith's speaker invokes this "wretch" who "With hoarse, half-utter'd lamentation, lies / Murmuring responses to the dashing surf" (LXX 7–8). In Smith's sonnet, the lunatic, not the female speaker, is the figure alienated from the prime system of the symbolic order, to borrow Schiesari's phrase; namely, this unsocialized wretch can no longer access coherent language. In contrast, the poetic speaker retains ultimate control over language by using her imagination to create the cliff and the lunatic. Furthermore, the speaker acknowledges that it is "envy" not "fear" (LXX 10) with which she reflects on this scene, since the lunatic's position on the literal edge of society and the symbolic edge of sanity renders him insensible to "The depth or the duration of his woe" (LXX 14). The poetic speaker is therefore characterized in opposition to this lunatic as being sensible of her woe, or "[cursed] with reason" (LXX 13). Thus Smith's sonnet posits an alternative to existing models of feminine melancholia by displacing the embodiment of debilitating madness onto the male object in this poem. The lot of the female poetic speaker is woe cursed with reason, and in the tradition of the great melancholics before her, she transforms her "feeling of disempowerment into a privileged artifact" (Schiesari 8).

An embodied woman of feeling is therefore not absent from eighteenth-century literature. Rather, Ahern argues that women writers in the eighteenth century initiate a key shift in the literary function of melancholy from a "catalogue of symptoms" to "a repertoire of affective responses and rhetorical gestures," which is used to articulate the "deep, self-reflexive

subjectivity" that emerges in early Romantic lyric (250). Melancholy takes on a prominent role in the poetic imagination of eighteenth-century women poets as a personified proper noun. In Elizabeth Carter's 1739 poem "Ode to Melancholy," "Melancholy" is personified as the "companion of my lonely hour" (1–2). Notably, Carter's personification of Melancholy is not assigned a gender, unlike the personification of Melancholy as female in the epitaph of Thomas Gray's famous "Elegy Written in a Church Courtyard": "Melancholy marked him for her own" (120). Kathryn Pratt observes that Milton, Warton, and Gray personify Melancholy as female in their poems to "maintain a stable masculine identity safely distant from 'feminine' sentimental excess," which further confirms the complex gender coding of melancholic literature (565). Gray's personification of Melancholy therefore contributes to the literary tradition of masculine melancholy that either excludes or objectifies feminine melancholy.

Although contemporary women writers do not exclude the female body in their melancholic literature, their use of melancholy gestures to this uneasy relationship between the disease and the female body. In an edition of Carter's memoirs, Montagu Pennington appends a note to a 1762 letter in which Carter meditates on the afterlife to clarify that "the thoughts of the passage from this state of existence to another . . . never affected Mrs. Carter's mind with melancholy" (I 417). Pennington's editorial impulse reveals the cultural anxiety about a female mind infected with melancholy. In contrast, Carter's poetics of melancholy problematize this stark division between the proper female body and melancholy, actively contradicting the respectability politics of Pennington's editorial voice. Carter's Melancholy is personified as a "soothing" companion, which suggests an intimate relationship between speaker and disease (4). Later in the poem, another metaphor describes melancholy as a source of light whose "penetrating beams disperse / The mist of error" (55–56). Carter's poem therefore inherits the

Renaissance image of melancholy as a space of intellectual clarity amid various sources of turmoil. Although Carter's poem does not represent an embodied female melancholia, the poem's speaker does describe Melancholy as a state in which the female intellectual thrives apart from the restrictions of social space: "I from the busy croud retire, / To court the objects that inspire / Thy philosophic dream" (10–12). Carter's "Ode" appropriates the visionary melancholy of the poet on behalf of the feminine poetic imagination, in defiance of attempts to characterize the feminine melancholic as absent or opaque.

Other eighteenth-century women poets navigate the relationship between the female body and this pathology by using melancholy as a modifier of the speaker's temporary state or of some facet of the setting. Anne Finch's 1701 poem "The Spleen" joins Burton in embracing the ambiguous origins of melancholic diagnoses by outlining the diverse manifestations of this disease, without a "real cause" or "one continued shape" (3–4). Finch then uses melancholy as an adjective: "the melancholy head" (13) and "a melancholy air" (102). In these examples, Finch explicitly identifies a melancholic body in contrast to other poets like Carter who situate melancholy entirely outside of the body. Catherine Talbot's "Elegy" follows Finch's approach with its "melancholy sigh" (2), but the modified noun, a sigh, is transient and aural. Elizabeth Tollet's 1724 poem "On a Death's Head" returns to the convention of melancholy as a proper noun: "How high does Melancholy swell!" (23). Although her poem does not personify melancholy, Tollet introduces another metaphor—melancholy as music—that gestures to an intimate relationship between the pathology and the lyric voice. Susanna Blamire's 1786 poem "Written on a Gloomy Day" places melancholy in the setting, external to the speaker, with Blamire's "melancholy hour" (12) recalling Carter's "lonely hour" (2). With each of these "affective responses and rhetorical gestures" (Ahern 250), these eighteenth-century women poets

locate melancholy in relation to the female self, sometimes as close as a sigh or an intimate friend. Many of these poems also invoke melancholy alongside death or an analogous experience of emotional or mental darkness. Finally, their melancholy is noticeably vocal and thus linked to the act of writing the female self into lyric.

In his 1917 paper *Mourning and Melancholia*, Sigmund Freud makes this loose association between melancholy and loss explicit.[10] Freud distinguishes between mourning and melancholia as being caused by conscious and unconscious loss respectively (Freud 244). Melancholia can be provoked by the loss of an object, but the melancholic subject has yet to fully understand the significance of the object. Schiesari reads Freud's distinction between melancholia and mourning as a gendered distinction that further elevates the masculine and subjugates the feminine. She argues that Freud's distinction occurs along gender lines so that "a woman's lament, grievance, or suffering is seen as the 'everyday' plight of the common (wo)man, a quotidian event whose collective force does not seem to bear the same weight of 'seriousness' as a man's grief" (Schiesari 13). Thus woman's suffering is inherently a discrete act of mourning, never the more serious and perpetually deferred loss of melancholia.

The Freudian theory of melancholy and its implicit gender biases also implicate cultural and critical responses to women's suffering made visible in poetry. By reading this suffering as emerging from the quotidian or the everyday, existing critical paradigms of female affect label any expression of lament from a female poetic subject as occasional and transient, a label that, in turn, excludes contemporary women's lyric from traditional definitions of Romantic lyric. However, as seen in the examples above, eighteenth-century women poets actively interrogate

[10] Although early psychoanalytic theory postdates Smith's poetry, its influence on the cultural history of melancholy informs current feminist scholarship on the historical melancholia of female poets and, as Schiesari argues so compellingly, contributes to the continued marginalization of female affect in poetry.

the relationship between melancholy and the female poetic subject, a melancholy that is no less serious because of its particularity. Eighteenth-century women poets navigating the poetic pose of a particular feminine melancholy facilitate the emergence of a "self-reflexive subjectivity" and a self-reflexive sympathy (Ahern 250). Developing an early Romantic poetics of melancholy requires attention to the work of women writers who "figure imaginative identification with the suffering of others as painful self-sacrifice to communal imperatives, and see their own suffering as the consequence of an unjust society" (Ahern 249). This feminine and feminist poetics of melancholy is not exclusively aesthetic or performative because it must acknowledge the social consequences of the disease. The culture of sensibility made suffering and sympathy into a public spectacle, and it is the sustained visibility of women's suffering in early Romantic lyric that proves so problematic and so radical.

The project of tracing early Romantic poetics through the evolution of the female melancholic subject is an ongoing one that has returned often to Smith's lyric poetry since the early 1990s. For example, Adela Pinch cites Hume's distinction between taste and passion as precedent for scholars' equating poetic affect with autobiographical experience in women's poetry.[11] Pinch argues that "the fundamental confusion" (55) at the core of both Hume's theories and early feminist recovery efforts is, first, an assumption of the "proximity of taste and passion in women" and, second, the consequent inability of a feminine sensibility and melancholy to distinguish between life and art (53). Thus feminist scholarship builds its theories of the female Romantic poet on the assumption that "women's writing is about women's experience" and strips the aesthetic dimension of their work in favor of its political dimension (Pinch 55). Pratt

[11] Hume distinguishes between a "delicacy of passion," which features a strong emotional response to the circumstances of life, and a "delicacy of taste," which features a strong emotional response to art and social etiquette (Pinch 51).

also gestures to this tension between art and experience in a woman's body of work when she characterizes Smith's use of melancholy as "theatrical ventriloquism" (563). Pratt argues that Smith adopts the rhetorical function of the melancholic figure in sensibility discourse to expose the fundamental theatricality of both literary melancholia and actual sorrow. This theatricality, however, does not dilute or exaggerate the "authentic experience" of suffering; rather, this theatricality is "the inescapable mode of experience" (Pratt 564). Furthermore, positioned at the end of the eighteenth century, Smith's publishing career bridges the literature of sensibility that grants aesthetic and intellectual capital to melancholy and an emergent political climate that impacts the public reception of melancholy as a cultural and literary performance.

In her study of suffering in women's Romantic literature, Dolan investigates the gender politics of melancholy at the turn of the nineteenth century. By the late eighteenth century, melancholy had moved firmly out of the realm of physical suffering and into the realm of aesthetic and intellectual suffering such that its victims could claim "literary genius based in suffering, rational power, and linguistic facility" (Dolan 22). As Dolan argues, this move to exclude "acute sensibility" from and to emphasize rationality in melancholic diagnoses necessarily complicates the role of women poets because of "gendered conceptions of rationality and sensibility" (23). Dolan's analysis of Smith's poetry highlights examples of embodied melancholy in her lyric to demonstrate how Smith refuses the contemporary schism between the melancholic body and the melancholic mind (23). Dolan, like Pratt and Pinch, acknowledges the inevitability of the politicized female body but uses the community of melancholics found in Smith's poetry to argue for a "social context for creativity" in contrast to "the solitary Romantic genius" (47).

Claire Knowles embraces Dolan's model of creative communities but tracks Smith's

legacy and influence through the poetic production of generations of women poets after her. Like Dolan, Knowles stresses the embodied nature of Smith's particular take on sensibility and melancholy. However, Knowles does not identify this embodied female melancholic in the text but highlights the "connection between the poet's physical body and her body of work" (9). Smith's poetry contains few references to the physicality or sensuality of the female body, but as Knowles's argument reveals, for the female author, it is not an overtly sexual and feminized literary self but the act of publication that places the author's physical body on display and on trial. Thus the culture of sensibility allows female poets "to publicise (and often politicise) their experiences of bodily and emotional suffering" (Knowles 9). Smith and the communities of female poets who inherit her particular poetics of suffering must exploit the inherent theatricality of the melancholic pose "without calling this exploitation to public attention" (Pratt 563; Knowles 9).

The transgressive and ambivalent figure of the female melancholic facilitates the cultural transition between the literature of sensibility and Romantic poetics. Furthermore, the complex politics of the female melancholic body in Smith's lyric poetry implicates the longer cultural history of melancholy and nervous disease by which female loss, mourning, and suffering have been systematically erased or diminished. It is therefore unclear what the most radical legacy of Smith's poetry is: situating the woman of feeling as the harbinger of early Romantic selfhood in the late eighteenth century or implicating the cultural discourse of the last two centuries that has continued to obscure and to pathologize women's public lament. That Smith's poetry is critical to understanding contemporary poetics has been a much-touted observation among her current critics; that Smith's poetry continues to reveal the critical predisposition to still misread women gives her fresh relevance to feminist projects.

FORMAL MELANCHOLIA

In her collection *Elegiac Sonnets*, first published in 1784, Smith combines two poetic forms—the elegy and the sonnet—to create what Labbe calls a "hybrid" (*Writing Romanticism* 21).[12] The sonnet is a form of restraint and precision, bound by fourteen lines, a clear rhyme scheme, and a prescribed number of stanzas, whereas the elegy, "a poem of mourning and consolation" (Sacks 2), is a form defined by mood or a rhetorical function. Many critics have therefore argued that Smith's hybrid form signals the absorption of the content and the mood of the elegy into the form of the sonnet. Daniel Robinson argues instead that Smith's title highlights the "formal paradoxy" of her sonnets ("Formal Paradoxy" 185). In 1742, James Hammond published a collection of elegies in which he diverges from previous English elegists, like Alexander Pope, who wrote in heroic couplets and instead uses heroic quatrains, with the rhyme scheme *abab* (Robinson 187–88). Thus Robinson argues that the English sonnet with its three heroic quatrains and a heroic couplet combines "both English elegiac meters" (189).

Meanwhile, the sonnet had disappeared from the English poetic tradition by the beginning of the eighteenth century, with an almost sixty-year gap between Milton's sonnets and Thomas Edwards' sonnets published in 1748 (Backscheider 318). Although Samuel Johnson made the now familiar claim that the sonnet is "not very suitable for the English language," Curran argues, rather, that the absence of the sonnet for so many decades is evidence of "the cultural distance the eighteenth century imposed between itself and the Elizabethans" (*Poetic Form* 29). Once reintroduced into literary fashion in the mid-eighteenth century, the sonnet became subject to various debates regarding its "legitimacy" that further discredited the English or Elizabethan sonnet form. Poets such as Anna Seward and William Wordsworth rejected the

[12] Labbe identifies hybridity as a defining component of early Romantic poetics, from Smith's elegiac sonnet to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's experiments with the lyrical ballad.

English sonnet in favor of the Petrarchan or Miltonic form (Robinson "Reviving the Sonnet" 102). In her personal correspondence, Seward strongly advocates for the poetic standard of the Miltonic sonnet because of the "manly firmness" and the "certain hardnesses" of his language and composition (*Letters* I 190, 201). Seward, who famously attacked Smith's illegitimate sonnets in a letter to William Hayley (*Letters* II 223), favours a sonnet form that possesses "characteristics of masculinity and even virility" (Robinson 102). Instead of deferring to masculine forms in pursuit of "canonical inclusion" like Seward, Smith develops a sonnet "with only the superficial identifier of fourteen lines" that is not only a hybrid form but also an illegitimate and feminized one (Robinson 110).

This section will argue that Smith's poetics of melancholy originate in the hybrid form of her sonnets and subsequently infect the lyric speaker: a diseased form leads to a diseased body. Smith's sonnets exist in the liminal space between performative and actual grief, since her biography reveals actual loss to be elegized and her poetry obscures that loss with conventions, both borrowed and new. By appropriating two melancholic literary traditions, Smith manages to reinvent and to surpass both forms. Judith Hawley observes that Smith foregoes "consolation and renewal" and thereby rejects the therapeutic power of the elegy (184). Smith's sonnets also follow in the tradition of the late-eighteenth-century sonnet and replace the "complex, volatile experience of the lover" with the suffering of the poetic self (Ahern 252). From one formal paradox emerges another: a female poet writing firmly within an established literary tradition without capitulating to its rules.

As Mary Moore argues in her study of Petrarchan influence on the work of women sonneteers, "women poets must confront the construction of poets and of women implicit in each [poetic] mode" (159). In reconstructing two modes with histories of melancholia, Smith must

confront both the melancholic poetic subject, typically gendered as male, and the object, typically gendered as female. By reinventing both modes and excluding the female self defined by Petrarchan "erotic desire and objectification," Smith composes a new female poet and asserts her claim to two storied poetic forms on "merit alone" (Moore 158; Robinson "Reviving the Sonnet" 112). Furthermore, Smith's experiments with formal paradoxy create the perfect vessel to contain a feminine literary melancholia—an elegy without consolation, a sonnet without romance.

Many critics observe that Smith's sonnets diverge significantly from the English elegiac tradition. Samuel Rowe observes that Smith's sonnets do not fulfill either of the functions of an elegy, either "to designate a lost object" or "to propose a means of recuperating that loss" (4). Peter Sacks theorizes the failure of female elegists more broadly by arguing that the elegy uses "predominantly male symbols of consolation," which "[impinges] on women's experience of mortal loss" (13). According to Sacks, the "elegist's reward" is uniquely masculine: "inherited legacies and consoling identifications with symbolic, even immortal, figures of power" (8). Backscheider challenges Sacks' argument because his claim that women do not write elegies tacitly accepts "gendered judgments of mourners" (277). Starting in the eighteenth century, poetic mourning was understood to be an outlet for the male poet's "suffering" and "creativity," whereas female poets who exhibited similar behavior would be described as "depressed, distraught, and neurotic" (Backscheider 277). Furthermore, Sacks defines the elegy based on the pastoral elegy tradition (Vincent 31). The pastoral elegy only accounts for one type of eighteenth-century elegy and a type that is poorly represented among the output of contemporary women elegists (Backscheider 276). Vincent therefore maintains that Sacks' study canonizes the most "masculinist" form of elegy with its "ideology of vocation and heroic succession" (31).

On the subject of succession, it is important to note that Smith's poetry has a complex relationship with systems of inheritance and frequently criticizes the contemporary legal system that denies women agency. Smith's adult life was overshadowed by the legal melodrama that followed her father-in-law's death. In an attempt to keep his fortune away from his irresponsible son, Smith's father-in-law had left his fortune to his grandchildren in his final will. However, the litigation of this will, which was written without legal consultation, lasted twenty-three years, and the final settlement took place long after the deaths of both Smith and her husband (Curran xxi). Curran, in his introduction to an edition of Smith's poems, argues that Smith's portrayal of the legal system as "an arbitrary machine of power operating without any essential relation to equity" is a motif that runs through her poetry and novels (xxi). Therefore, by embedding her refusal to complete the work of mourning in her elegiac poetics, Smith publicizes her inability to claim the right to inherit under the British legal system in her day. This refusal does not disqualify her poetry from the English elegiac tradition; rather, Smith's poetic project confirms the existence of a non-masculinist elegiac poetics in the English tradition.

By writing within a non-masculinist elegiac tradition, Smith reinvents models of inheritance and consolation and reappropriates melancholy as a rhetorical pose to articulate women's sorrow. In the elegiac tradition, women appear as muses who "[enable] the male poet's voice" and, at times, as "agents of feeling" (Vincent 29). Smith's *Sonnets* frequently invoke both types of elegiac women but situate the muse alongside the lyric subject as a fellow agent of feeling. An anonymous essay published in 1767 describes the elegiac muse as "the natural companion of distress," an image that recalls Carter's "Companion of my lonely hour" from

"Ode to Melancholy" ("Formal Paradoxy" 220).[13] Smith's version of the elegiac muse, like Carter's personified Melancholy, is an external character on which Smith's speaker maps the ambivalence of the woman of feeling. Poetic melancholics typically revel in the "ecstasy of sadness," or the paradox of pain and pleasure that becomes synonymous with the figure of sensibility or melancholy in the eighteenth century (Schiesari 6). Schiesari argues that this affective paradox becomes the mark that distinguishes the poet and isolates him from the common man (7). In contrast, the Romantic poetess uses a "rhetorical formula of echo and reply" to create a "sympathetic construction of self within a knowable community" (Vincent 27). This suggests an alternate reading of Smith's elegiac muse in which the muse functions as a representative of a sympathetic community rather than an enabler of a singular experience of sorrow. Unlike the masculine tradition, in which melancholy is a boundary of difference between the collective common and the solitary genius, Smith's elegiac mode simultaneously explores the aesthetic isolation and the sympathetic community of the melancholic.

Smith's elegiac muse may be the "natural companion" for the poetic speaker's distress, but her companionship does not provide consolation. In Sonnet I, Smith pays tribute to the "partial Muse" (1) who "[weaves] fantastic garlands for my head" (4).[14] In this sonnet, Smith's speaker makes visible the process by which the muse "Points every pang, and deepens every sigh" (11) to create "dear delusive art" (6). The meta-poetic argument of this first sonnet insists that the quality of poetic production relies on the suspension of consolation, or in the words of the closing quotation from Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard": "Ah! then, how dear the Muse's favours cost, / *If those paint sorrow best—who feel it most!*" (I 13–14). The allusion to Pope's poem in

[13] Robinson cites this essay titled "Essay on Elegies" and notes that Arthur Sherbo attributes this piece to Samuel Johnson on the basis of internal evidence.

[14] Garlands, a recurring image in Smith's sonnets, are perhaps a rustic or feminized alternative to "Petrarchan laurels" (Moore 155).

the final line recalls Schiesari's argument regarding melancholy as the "accredited pathology" that legitimizes the poet. However, Smith strips the masculine pronoun from Pope's original line, creating linguistic space for the accreditation of the female melancholic. Furthermore, by requiring sustained melancholy for continued poetic composition, "Smith challenges the romantic [and sentimental] faith in a transcendent, consolatory language" (Vincent 35).[15]

In 1797, Smith published a second volume of *Elegiac Sonnets*, and the final sonnet in that volume, "To the Muse," functions as a matching bookend to Sonnet I. In this sonnet, it is not the ambivalent favor of the Muse but the absence of the Muse that is foregrounded. The sonnet begins with two questions directed at the Muse. The second question is particularly interesting in the context of the elegiac work of mourning. The speaker asks, "Wilt thou, while the day / Of saddening Autumn closes, as I mourn / In languid, hopeless sorrow, far away / Bend thy soft step, and never more return?—" (LXXXIV 5–8). Although the speaker still mourns, it seems that the elegiac muse has forsaken her role as companion throughout the work of mourning, perhaps because "Thou canst not heal an heart like mine that bleeds" (11). Instead, the speaker imagines that when she has died, the Muse may return to keep "one sorrowing vigil . . . / Where Pity and Remembrance bend and weep!" (13–14). In line 14, Smith alludes to the final line of Thomas Gray's "Epitaph on Sir William Williams": "Where melancholy friendship bends and weeps" (12). Daniel White compares the early Romantic elegiac lyric of Smith and Gray and observes that both poets "[resolve] personal alienation by inviting others to participate through sensibility

[15] Whereas Vincent characterizes Wordsworth's "elegiac language . . . as a reaction to the despondency" of Smith's sonnets through which he seeks the consolation that Smith never allows, Onno Oerlemans notes the absence of transcendence and consolation in Wordsworth's "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" (*Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* 42). Distinguishing between masculine elegy as consolatory and feminine elegy as not consolatory is therefore an artificial divide that ignores significant variation in the elegies of both male and female Romantic writers.

in the poet's alienated and elegiac consciousness" (68).[16] Both poems acknowledge the presence of a mourning community composed of personified abstractions and use this rhetorical technique to bequeath the work of mourning to a sympathetic audience.

This sonnet "To the Muse" is a clear example of the poetic speaker's attempts to self-elegize without an external object of grief, which is the first objection that Rowe raises regarding Smith's elegiac form.[17] Without an object of grief, Smith's sonnets seem to gesture to an act of self-destruction. Eric Parisot observes that even though Smith's speaker seems obsessed with death, the performance or the intent of suicide only appears in the Werther sonnets (662). He then argues that even the appearance of suicidal intent would render the poetic speaker a "fallen woman," since "suicide is a claim for utter subjectivity, for an experience beyond the capacity of language and the limits of sympathy" (665). "Utter subjectivity," of course, is the province of masculinity. Werther, a canonical man of feeling, does not have to abide by rules of propriety to be lauded by his cultural audience because his melancholic excess is accredited. However, Vincent argues that a nonliteral act of self-destruction—"[renouncing] the speaker's own fictive self"—is characteristic of the feminine sentimental elegy (29). Thus Smith creates an alternate elegiac form in which the self-elegizing speaker is evidence of a "more self-conscious, . . . more self-destructive" elegiac poetics that allows the female poet to claim utter subjectivity through her performance of melancholy and loss (Vincent 37).

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[16] Michael Hansen argues that in addition to being one of the first Romantic poets, Smith belongs to the eighteenth-century school of graveyard poets, along with Gray ("Elegy, Ode, and the Eighteenth Century Sonnet Revival" 312). Eric Parisot in *Graveyard Poetry* defines this "school" as a group of poets who wrote a "loose conglomeration of British poetry . . . that meditated upon the transience of life, the imminence of death, and the consolation accorded by a Christian afterlife" (1).

[17] It is important to note here that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century definitions of the elegy allow for an elegy without a direct object of grief. In *Table Talks*, Coleridge explains that while the elegy "*may* treat of any subject, . . . it must treat of no subject *for itself*; but always and exclusively with reference to the poet [herself]" (*The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 491). Keane similarly argues that Smith's elegiac poetics follow the literature of sensibility in treating "the feeling, not its origin [as] significant" (18).

Sacks defines "melancholia" as "a lasting return to . . . regressive narcissism . . . such that the melancholic tends toward self-destruction" (17). Sacks' definition of elegy and of melancholia adopts the patriarchal logic by which genre and affect must follow the cultural norms that define the masculine as active and the feminine as passive in their patterns of mourning and of melancholia. By this logic, the woman of feeling is actually the longer-suffering melancholic, since she is denied the literary recourse of the man of feeling—suicide and fame. However, Vincent argues that this melancholic persistence keeps Smith's melancholy "grounded in the body, performing loss in an increasingly theatrical manner" (37). Without the possibility of transcendence, the body of the female elegiac subject becomes a visibly deteriorating boundary in Smith's poetry. As an elegist without a clear object of grief, Smith extends the masculine elegy's work of mourning into the relentlessly iterative and embodied work of melancholy. Thus Smith's sonnets "map existence itself as something recessive, predetermined according to a calculus of loss" (Curran "Elegiac Hybridity" 244). Smith's elegiac poetics offer an alternative to patriarchal logic by actively revising literary traditions to test the limits of female subjectivity and to undermine the false consolation of the masculine elegy.

Smith's elegiac sonnet enacts a hybrid poetics of melancholy because her hybrid form also engages with a melancholic sonnet tradition. In her translations of Petrarch's sonnets, Smith reimagines Petrarch as an eighteenth-century man of feeling in the tradition of Goethe's Werther. Petrarch predates the fashion of poetic melancholy, but he nonetheless diagnoses his own nervous disease as the medieval acedia (248).[18] In *Saturn and Melancholy*, the authors retroactively diagnose Petrarch—"the first of a type of men who are conscious of being men of

[18] Acedia refers to a "mental or physical slothfulness" (*OED*). It was a disease with a spiritual element given that it was seen as equivalent to the Deadly Sin of Sloth and was often diagnosed among monks and hermits.

genius"—with melancholy (Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl 248). Therefore, Petrarch's poetry and his poetic persona emerge from the paradox of genius and disease, which makes him a particularly compelling figure for the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility.

Smith identifies Sonnets XIII–XVI as translations of Petrarchan sonnets in her footnotes, but Luca Manini clarifies that these are not mere translations:

> Charlotte Smith translates freely . . . : she modifies, refashions, and recreates Petrarch's verse, and is fundamentally faithful to his sense and meaning, but also shows herself willing to introduce elements which respond to her own poetical discourse, thus creating a close-knit network of verbal echoes. On the one hand, she pervades her own sonnets with Petrarchan echoes, on the other, she introduces features of her own into Petrarch's verse, 'modernizing' and 'romanticizing' him. (99)

Smith's translation technique, as Manini describes it so eloquently, is therefore less about translating from Italian into English and is more about translating the Petrarchan lover into the literary conventions of the eighteenth century. Sonnet III, which does not belong to the Petrarchan subsequence in *Elegiac Sonnets*, is an example of this translation technique. A note from Smith identifies this sonnet as inspired by Sonnet 311 of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*: "Quel rosignol, che si soave piagne" (14). Smith reimagines Petrarch's nightingale that "weeps" for his "brood" or "dear companion" (311 1–2) as a "songstress sad" (III 13) without a prescribed romantic or familial "cause" for her "sweet sorrow" (3).

In the same sonnet, Smith's speaker wishes "that such my lot might be, / To sigh, and sing at liberty—like thee!" (II 13–14). In the course of these two lines, Smith introduces the problem of the poet's responsibility to an emerging literary marketplace and the revolutionary implications of eighteenth-century liberty into the original sentiment of Petrarch's sonnet.

However, the allusion to liberty may not be Smith's innovation, given that Catherine Talbot also wrote a sonnet based on Sonnet 311 in 1761 called "Sonnet in Ye Manner of Petrarch" (Backscheider 319). Talbot's nightingale is also female, and her "hapless Fate" is softened "since she can in liberty relate / Her griefs, that freedom does those griefs allay" (3–4). Mary Anne Myers further characterizes Smith's translation as following "its etymological sense of moving meaning" (245). Both Talbot and Smith carry out a translation of Petrarch that moves Petrarchan language and imagery into the linguistic domain of eighteenth-century female poets to articulate their desire for agency and liberty.[19]

Smith's intertextual reading of Petrarch therefore extends beyond a few exercises in translation. In Sonnet XIV, Smith adapts the last line of Petrarch's Sonnet 90 to "The shaft extracted does not cure the wound" (14). Ahern observes that a "body . . . wounded by love" is a convention of early English prose fiction (252). Smith absorbs this convention into her translation of Petrarch in Sonnet XIV and into the non-translation Sonnet VII in which she describes "Sorrow's rankling shaft" embedded in a "tortured bosom" (9–10). Similarly, in Sonnet XV, the Petrarchan speaker describes the "angel form" of his dead Laura (7), which is a translation of "angelica forma . . . a typically Petrarchan phrase" (Manini 100). In Sonnet XCI, a sonnet published in the second volume of *Elegiac Sonnets*, the poetic speaker declares her grief for "that form adored" (9) and later describes the same person as "my angel" (13). Mary Moore argues that Smith's deployment of Petrarchan language and convention is "a complex allusionary strategy" that extends the Petrarchan influence to the level of both language and form (151).

[19] This intertextual reading of Talbot's poem raises an important question for Smith's allusionary poetics more broadly. The allusions noted by Smith and then by Stuart Curran in his scholarly edition are almost exclusively to male poets, from Shakespeare to lesser-known contemporaries. These notes suggest that Smith is writing within a masculine tradition, perhaps to the exclusion of her fellow women writers, in the manner of a poet like Anna Seward. However, as Talbot's sonnet demonstrates, Smith's allusions clearly extend beyond what has been recorded thus far by editors of her texts, and further work is required to understand the extent to which contemporary women's writing appears in and influences her poetry.

Although Smith does not follow the Petrarchan sonnet form, her translation and non-translation sonnets alike still show evidence of her intertextual reading of Petrarch as a key source of her melancholic poetics.

Smith's translations also refashion the original narrative of Petrarch's sonnet sequence. Smith's adaptation of the Petrarchan romance plot erases any reference to the original Laura's rejection of Petrarch's courtship and Petrarch's subsequent "fifteen-year-long moaning" (Manini 102). Even though Smith's translations exclude the prime melancholic theme of unrequited love, her sonnets highlight Laura's eventual death to capitalize on yet another image of mourning. Laura reappears in Sonnet XV after her death as a heavenly vision that consoles Petrarch: "Ah! yield not thus to culpable despair, / But raise thine eyes to Heaven—and think I wait thee there" (13–14). In Smith's text as in the original, the "continuity of love . . . also represents a continuity of lament" (Manini 99). Like the Muse weeping over the speaker's grave (LXXXIV) and Charlotte weeping over Werther's grave (XXIV), Petrarch mourns over "the pale ashes which her urn contains" (XVI 14).

Thus Smith's hybrid form inherits multiple poetic traditions of mourning and melancholia that feature either a man or a woman of feeling with a continuity of sorrow and grief. The man of feeling, as celebrated by the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility, had access to an elevated intellectual state that was equated with poetic genius. Although critics have suggested that, in contrast, the woman of feeling was either absent or not a figure of genius, Smith's poetic self emulates the physical and affective role of the famed melancholic figures of Petrarch and Werther. Notably, however, Smith's sonnets only have overtones of romantic or sexual love when alluding to outside narratives like Petrarch and Laura and Werther and

Charlotte.[20] Like other women poets in the late eighteenth century, Smith "[sublimates] the language of erotic connection . . . into the terms of a desexualized sympathy" (Ahern 252). By highlighting a desexualized sympathy, eighteenth-century women's poetry moves from the stylized narratives of unrequited passion toward "the individualized treatment of the subjectivity of the feeling self" (Ahern 252). Furthermore, Moore argues that the pairing of Smith's sublimation of erotic love and her allusions to Petrarchan language "[provides] the scenery against which she enacts the economic dependency and erotic victimization of a female speaker" (151). By stripping the domestic woes of the nightingale from Petrarch's sonnet and emphasizing her liberty, both Talbot and Smith issue a clarion call for the agency of the female poet to articulate the experience of the female self outside of marriage and family. As demonstrated by Smith's elegiac sonnets, articulating the subjectivity of the feeling woman requires a reinvention and an allusionary critique of masculine poetic forms.

However, as White suggests in his comparative study of Gray's and Smith's elegiac poetics, this trend toward individualized subjectivity does not eclipse the importance of affective communities, or melancholic communities, to be more precise. *Elegiac Sonnets* is a fundamentally multi-vocal collection. This plurality emerges from the layered readings of poetry and poetic tradition that were required to craft Smith's hybrid form. Myers argues that by reading Petrarch, Smith learns "to create a lyric subject that is both distinct from and related to its creator yet also generic enough to invite participation in its lyric 'I' from a community whose members are self-selected through shared affect" (251). Myers seems to suggest that access to this community is not limited to exemplary men of feeling. Rather, Smith demonstrates that every

[20] Although Petrarch and Werther are the most recognizable of the love stories in *Elegiac Sonnets*, Sonnets 38 and 39 feature the lovers Emmeline and Godolphin from Smith's novel *Emmeline*, and Sonnets 49–53 feature the lovers Celestina and Willoughby from *Celestina*.

reader "who could engage in imagined intersubjectivity with other writers living and dead" has access to the position and the influence of the man or woman of feeling (Myers 257). This affective momentum is central to the literature of sensibility, but it is even more crucial to the project of the woman of feeling because it allows women both to read and to participate actively in poetic traditions that have long been understood as complicit in a patriarchal symbolic order.

COMMUNAL MELANCHOLIA

Smith's poetic speaker grapples with her own melancholy by relating it to others' experience of the disease in *Elegiac Sonnets*, "The Emigrants," and "Beachy Head." However, excessive sensibility and the corresponding exercise of sympathy had come under attack for facilitating radical fervor in the wake of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror (Dolan 24). By building her community of melancholics with the cultural capital of Petrarch and Goethe, Smith revives literary communities of affect in a political climate in which such communities are closely tied to political revolution. Because of the antiradical repression of sensibility, emotional excess became uniquely associated with feminine nervous disease instead of with both masculine and feminine nervous disease. Smith resists this model of affect determined by sexual difference and political repression by marrying emotion and reason in her portrayal of feminine melancholy. Furthermore, Smith fosters a radical melancholic sympathy by moving away from social centers and by exploring the subjectivity of the female self in solidarity with that of the outcast.

Smith's lyric speaker is, first and foremost, a wanderer. In the course of the sonnet collection alone, the speaker regularly wanders the Sussex countryside in the daytime and in the middle of the night. In his study of modernist melancholia, Jonathan Flatley theorizes the literary function of "non- or antidepressive melancholias" that act "as the very mechanism through

which one may be interested in the world" (2). Smith's speaker displays a non-depressive, mobile melancholy, which allows her to create what Flatley describes as an "affective map" of her geographical and social setting (2). Flatley argues that this kind of "melancholizing produces . . . the knowledge of the historical origins of [the subjects'] melancholias, and thus . . . of the others with whom these melancholias might be shared" (2).[21] This non-depressive melancholy is also politically active, since mapping affect reifies "previously invisible, opaque, difficult, abstract, and above all depressing" political plights and identifies the ways in which this affect "is experienced collectively" (Flatley 4). By mapping a melancholic community onto the margins of society, nature, and poetic form, Smith composes a powerful image of women's suffering.

By identifying melancholy in other bodies, Smith's poetic speaker participates in the complex cultural protocol regarding sympathy and the female body. The literature of sensibility institutes clear rules on "how to see particular kinds of suffering and how to be seen sympathizing with this suffering" (Dolan 39). The man of feeling sees suffering and is seen sympathizing with suffering, whereas the "(often female) sufferer is seen but does not see" (Dolan 39). In addition to claiming the agency of sympathetic sight for her female poetic speaker, Smith further revises the direction and function of sympathy. Pratt argues that within the practice of sympathy in a masculine poetic tradition, melancholy "[arises] from contemplation of a pitiable object and [ends] with the turn of sympathy away from that object" (566). Smith's speaker does contemplate a variety of pitiable objects of sympathy, but "the sadness felt by the speaker exceeds the contemplation of the object and appears to originate from elsewhere" (Pratt 567).

[21] Flatley develops his argument using texts by Henry James, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Andrei Platonov.

As outlined in the previous section, Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* feature a hybrid poetic form that fails to resolve its melancholy. The lyric speaker of the sonnets similarly fails "to alleviate her continuing melancholia" through sympathetic identification, since she repeatedly turns from the object of sympathy to discover that her melancholy has not dissipated (Pratt 568). The failure of Smith's poetics of sympathy may point to a broader criticism of the melancholic performance of the masculine poet "composing alone in his study" (Dolan 43). In Smith's poetics of melancholy, the failure of sympathy goes in both directions: sympathetic identification fails to resolve the speaker's and the object's melancholy. As Pratt argues, Smith's poetry therefore acknowledges that consolation through a poetic performance of sympathy is an empty promise for those who truly suffer. Dolan argues rather that Smith's "vision of female melancholic genius" presents "the sufferer as both wanderer and seer" and "cultivates sympathy for women's suffering without denying women agency" (43, 46). Smith's poetry grants her speaker affective agency by allowing her to express "excessive sorrow" in a literary climate in which affect must be restricted to a finite performance (Pratt 568). Excess is, of course, the birthplace of revolution, and Smith recognizes that she (and her speaker) must enact an imaginative revolution to create "a sympathetic world in which women's genius can flourish" (Dolan 46). The melancholy of Smith's speaker therefore critiques the sanitized genius of the male melancholic and his fashionable but passive performance of sympathy.

However, Smith's speaker does not entirely reinvent the conventions of literary sympathy. In *Elegiac Sonnets*, the speaker regularly engages in a kind of literary objectification, since she primarily identifies with emblematic characters: "the poor mariner" (XII 10); "the lone Wanderer" (XXXVI 1); "the unhappy exile" (XLIII I); "the unhappy Pilgrim" (LII 1); "the shivering native" (LIII 1); "a solitary wretch" (LXX 1); "the darkling Pilgrim" (LXXV 2). In

these sonnets, the lyric "I" often interjects to create a sympathetic link with these figures, although Smith's speaker consistently eclipses her object's sorrows with her own.[22] In Sonnets XII and LXX, the poetic speaker reflects on fictive melancholic figures. In XII, the speaker seeks consolation for the "mournful temper of my soul" (8) on the seashore: "Like the poor mariner, methinks, I stand, / Cast on a rock" (10–11). The simile in XII invents this emblematic and mysterious figure to better emphasize the speaker's distance from "socially acceptable geography" (Stokes 152). Christopher Stokes identifies this sonnet as one in which "anti-voices," such as the wind and the sea-bird, facilitate the "fracturing of subjectivity" in Smith's "lorn" poetic self (153). Sonnet LXX finds the speaker imagining a different geographical edge with a "lunatic" on a "tall cliff" (2) who competes with a different set of anti-voices—"the waves that chide" (4), "the sea-born gale" (5), and "[his] hoarse, half-utter'd lamentation" (7). In this case, the imagined madman offers a clear contrast to the speaker who must reckon with her sorrow while still possessed of her reason and her linguistic capabilities.

Smith's lyric "I" often embeds her sympathetic identification near the turn, or the volta, of the sonnet. Sonnet LXX follows the rhyme scheme of Smith's hybrid form with three elegiac quatrains and a couplet, but the interruption of the lyric "I" occurs in line 10, which is closer to the position of the Petrarchan volta. This rhetorical pattern recurs in Sonnet XLIII, which describes the bleak fate of an exile on an island waiting to catch sight of a sail on the horizon. The lyric "I" first appears in line 8 near the Petrarchan volta and then reappears at the English volta with a dramatic apostrophe: "Ah! so for me delusive Fancy toils, / Then, from contrasted truth—my feeble soil recoils" (13–14). In this sonnet, Smith's speaker again summons a melancholic figure who has reached the furthest edge of human society to find someone who

[22] Two of these sonnets, LIII and LXXV, exclude the first-person poetic speaker entirely and therefore do not contain overt examples of sympathetic links.

"perhaps may know / Such heartless pain, such blank despair as mine" (7–8). The final couplet is an excellent example of what Rowe describes as Smith's "negative turn" (2). With the negative turn, Rowe argues that Smith has manipulated the sonnet's rhetorical form "to articulate a gesture of affective dissociation and phenomenal withdrawal from the world" (2). This withdrawal is symbolically completed by the final word of the sonnet: "recoils" (14). Although this gesture is most obvious at the sonnet's turn, this dissociation is further emphasized by the sonnet's setting on "some unfriendly isle" (XLIII 2), which distances the lyric speaker from the lyric object.

Sonnet LII, written by Smith's titular character from *Celestina*, takes "the unhappy Pilgrim" as its lyric object as he wanders "along the giddy height / Of these steep cliffs" in the Hebrides (4–5). The sonnet switches into a new sentence from the speaker's perspective at the Petrarchan volta (9) with the lyric "I" appearing directly before the English volta (12). Again, the rhetorical turning points of the sonnet facilitate the speaker's sympathetic identification by blurring the affective boundaries between the seer and the sufferer. In his study of Romantic dialogue, Michael Macovski explains that the Romantic speaker's "exterior alliances become more vital than its internal machinations, since the actual definition of the self occurs at the junctures of this externalized exchange—along the boundaries of the 'I'" (7). Smith's poetics of melancholy push past the conventions of poetic sympathy in search of poetic self-definition and align the boundaries of the lyric self with the rhetorical boundaries of the sonnet. In each of these sonnets, the critical affective juncture is Smith's negative turn, with the literal boundaries of the cliff edge and the sonnet's stanzas highlighting the "precariousness inherent in a life of despair" (Dolan 43). As the title of Sonnet LXX reveals, social restrictions on women's movement prevent Smith's speaker from occupying a literal cliff. Still, the discursive boundary of sympathy

associates the female poetic speaker with these various melancholic figures, mirroring the precarious fate of the exile and the lunatic with that of the domestically enclosed woman.

In Smith's sonnets, the rhetoric and direction of melancholic sympathy emerge from poetic form. Richey argues that Smith absorbs the tradition of the humanitarian poem, a form that looks beyond the self for its object of sympathy, into her sonnets (427). Although the "egotism" of the sonnet is ill suited for fostering sympathy for others, the pairing of these forms demonstrates that the boundary of sympathy is the boundary of imagination (Richey 437).[23] Smith's sonnets are preoccupied with boundaries—between land and sea, between voice and anti-voice, between subject and object, between madness and reason. As these various boundaries collapse onto each other, the repeated failure of sympathy pushes Smith's speaker further in the direction of the precarious fate of melancholic despair. Therefore, Smith's speaker becomes a poetic surveyor of melancholy that pushes the limits of her sympathetic imagination by physically occupying the precarious edge in later sonnets and in her longer lyric poems "The Emigrants" and "Beachy Head." These two poems escape the formal constraints of Smith's elegiac sonnets, but their speakers share a common practice of mapping affect through sympathetic and imaginative identification.

"The Emigrants" and "Beachy Head" make the political work of this affective mapping explicit. In "The Emigrants," published in 1793, Smith narrates the arrival of the French emigrants, or émigrés, who sought refuge in England after the collapse of the French monarchy during the Revolution. Smith's speaker takes on a more authoritative and potentially distant role

[23] Richey's argument addresses both Smith's and Wordsworth's rhetoric of sympathy. He argues that whereas Smith uses her nuanced understanding of sympathy to court her readers' sympathies (and therefore their money or favour), Wordsworth is engaged in the more poetic pursuit of "[problematizing] the very idea of sympathy" (434). This is a fairly shallow reading of the rhetoric of sympathy in Smith's poems, particularly since other critics have so convincingly argued for Smith's rhetorical turns away from society and from an embodied lyric self (Dolan, Pratt, Rowe, Stokes, Vincent, Zimmerman).

because of "the visual mastery afforded by this prospect self-placement" (Labbe *Culture of Gender* 117) from her position "on the Cliffs" ("The Emigrants" I) and "on an Eminence" ("The Emigrants" II). The repeated intrusion of the speaker's own suffering, even at such a distance, complicates this poem's rhetoric of sympathy. Following the poem's publication, the *Critical Review* had some harsh words on the subject:

> Herself, and not the French emigrant, fills the foreground; begins and ends the piece; and the pity we should naturally feel for those overwhelming and uncommon distresses she describes, is lessened by their being brought into parallel with the inconveniences of a narrow income or a protracted law-suit. (299–300)[24]

The intrusion of the poetic self in "The Emigrants" therefore offers an interesting case study of the ethics of sympathy, since the above review seems to agree with Richey that a poem with humanitarian intent must maintain a calculated distance from the egotism of the sonnet or the personal lyric to be effective. If, however, the limits of sympathy are truly the limits of the imagination, it seems as if the intrusion of the lyric self is necessary to forge a real sympathetic identification between the speaker and the émigrés.

Furthermore, the rhetorical structure of Smith's poem articulates a much more sophisticated poetics of sympathy than a naive exercise in self-pity. In the first book, Smith's speaker examines "a group" of émigrés (95) from the cliff: "Methinks in each expressive face, I see / Discriminated anguish" (112–13). The perspective switches in Book II from the speaker's physical sight to an imaginative sight in which she visualizes scenes and characters in continental France. In addition to the notorious fates of Marie Antoinette and Prince Louis, the other source

[24] Kerri Andrews presents multiple arguments regarding the public function of "The Emigrants" in generating sympathy for the French émigrés, including the argument that Smith uses her public persona as "a wronged, suffering woman" to act as "natural arbiter for the exiles" (18). Andrews proceeds to argue that the *Critical Review* is perhaps more concerned that Smith has turned from sympathy as "entertainment" to sympathy as the catalyst for political and charitable action (19).

text for these scenes is the memories of the émigrés: "Shuddering, I view the pictures they have drawn / Of desolated countries" (II 216–17). In each case, the speaker matches the level of narrative to the level of sympathetic identification. For example, in Book I, the speaker recognizes the embodied behavior of the émigrés, saying "I too . . . have felt how sad / It is to look across the dim cold sea" (155, 157–58). In contrast, in Book II, the speaker instead names "The fearful spectres of chicane and fraud" (355) as the "hideous forms / . . . Pursuing my faint steps" (356, 358). The speaker mirrors her own systemic victimization at the hand of "the Law" (II 357) with the assassination of the French royal family and the burning and looting of rural aristocratic estates. Thus the speaker of "The Emigrants" presents herself as having "equal authority on the personal and the political" functions of sympathy (Labbe *Culture of Gender* 117). More importantly, the speaker's fixation on melancholic sympathy does not disappear with Smith's "unleashing of the subjective" into a longer and more political lyric work (Labbe 138).

One of the motifs in "The Emigrants" that captures the personal and political dynamics of the poem is the figure of the embattled mother. Because armed conflict requires the intrusion of "the 'male' world of warfare into the 'female' world of home" (Wolfson 534), Smith's poem presents mothers as the revolution's "most radical victims" (523). In Book I, one of the emigrant vignettes opens with a description of children playing on the beach "Unmindful of the miseries of Man!" (I 211), while "Their Mother, lost in melancholy thought / . . . now yields awhile / To kind forgetfulness" (212, 219–20). This is not entirely a sympathetic image, since the visions that console the melancholy mother are of Versailles, where "the crowd / Paid willing homage" (224–25). By alluding to Versailles, a politically polarizing symbol of aristocratic excess, the speaker seems to intentionally undermine any potential sympathy for the plight of the emigrant mother, since the mother's 'dream' is ostensibly an invention of the speaker's imagination.

In Book II, Smith's speaker makes a more explicit political allusion when she refers to the fate of Marie Antoinette, the "wretched Mother" (152) and "hapless Queen" (154) betrayed by the illusions of "Prosperity" (156) and "boundless power" (158). The speaker then expresses her sympathy: "Ah! who knows, / From sad experience, more than I, to feel / For thy desponding spirit . . . But eminence / Of misery is thine, as once of joy" (169–171, 173–74). This is an unusual moment of sympathy in Smith's oeuvre, since her speaker rarely acknowledges that her object's sorrow might eclipse her own. Labbe notes this extraordinary effort by Smith's speaker to humanize the Queen and consequently argues that Smith's portrait of the Queen explores how patriarchal systems uphold motherhood as the pinnacle of moral femininity but fail to protect mothers amid violent power struggles ("The Exiled Self" 46). Smith's poem then shifts dramatically from the French queen to describe the precarity of the family life and income of a "labourer" (II 182) in "yon low hut" (179), who is subject to the whims of disease, a fickle landlord, or unpredictable weather. Although this vignette of the rustic hind is followed by the consoling statement that "yet Peace is here" (II 205), it is an empty peace because of the persistence of the violence of poverty in 'peaceful' societies and because violence has failed to overturn the systems that exacerbate poverty elsewhere. These "alternations of sympathy and political review," a defining feature of Smith's blank verse poem, complicate the speaker's assertions of either personal or political sympathy (Wolfson 534).

Smith's poetry has often been misread as an egotistical vessel for personal melancholy; however, in "The Emigrants," Smith's poetics of melancholy are both personal and political because the speaker's purpose is to relate "the melancholy tale" of the émigrés (II 239). In her blank verse poem, Smith's speaker finally accesses the site of melancholic vision—the cliff's edge. From this vantage point, Smith's speaker continues to employ her sympathetic imagination

by narrating vignettes of émigrés on English soil alongside vignettes of less fortunate victims of the Revolution on French soil. Smith's ambitious and expansive affective map reveals a powerful political critique at the heart of a poem marketed as generating sympathy for the refugees of the Revolution. Smith turns this sympathy against her own country: against its corruption; its rural poverty; and its "corrupted . . . legal system as wolfish as the Jacobins' sanguinary rule" (Blank 85). In Smith's poem, the presence of melancholy—a disease of personal and political consequence—is the absence of peace.

"Beachy Head" is a poem populated with a series of unusual, solitary figures that forces another revision of Smith's poetics of melancholy. Smith's speaker in "Beachy Head" is attentive to detail, "exhaustively rendering and recreating Beachy Head's classes of life" (Holt 1). Near the end of the poem, the lyric "I" disappears, and two of the most compelling of Beachy Head's residents appear to take her place. The first is a squatter in a ruined mansion who composes songs, a pointed parody of the tortured melancholic poet. The lyric "I" returns with the insertion of this mysterious squatter's songs into Smith's poem: "I think, I could endure my lot / And linger on a few short years, / And then, by all but you forgot, / Sleep, where the turf that clothes the spot / May claim some pitying tears" (546–50). At first glance, the absence of the lyric "I" seems like the final dissolution of Smith's lyric speaker, but this poetic technique is not unlike the "ventriloquized voices" of her sonnets (Curran xxvi). Furthermore, the imagined mourner in the squatter's lyric recalls the imagined tableaux of grief from the sonnets featuring an intimate companion crying over a grave: Petrarch and Laura; Werther and Charlotte; and the speaker and the Muse. Labbe argues that "Beachy Head" "consolidates Smith's personae into a speaker who . . . is both there and not there" (*Culture of Gender* 143). Thus the lyric "I" might be absent, but Smith replaces it with another version of that lyric "I" in a clever example of self-

parody.

Both this mysterious poet and the final hermit figure in "Beachy Head" rely on the survival of their words or, more specifically, their poetry as a final elegy. The hermit of Beachy Head lives in a cave, "long disgusted with the world" (674). When the hermit dies one stormy night, his legacy is "mournful lines, / Memorials of his sufferings" carved in the cave in which he lived (727–28). The final two lines of Smith's poem seem to enact the consolation that is so elusive in her elegiac poetics: "That dying in the cause of charity / His spirit, from its earthly bondage freed, / Had to some better region fled for ever" (729–31). True to form, however, Smith does not make a sincere concession to the therapeutic power of elegiac consolation. The poem's moral is contingent on the act of reading, since only "Those who read / . . . these mournful lines" can appreciate the significance of the hermit's eternal reward (726–27). John Anderson observes that this conclusion echoes the conclusion of "The Emigrants" (566): "A few short months, and all the various pain / I now endure shall be forgotten there, / And no memorial shall remain of me, / Save in your bosoms" (II 374–78). The hermit's life work—both the inscriptions in the cave and his rescue efforts—exists on the margin of human society. This attempt at consolation is as precarious as any of Smith's other attempts to garner sympathy for her lyric speaker because a reader or a mourner must preserve the memorial of suffering. The poetic self cannot close the elegiac loop and therefore cannot guarantee the persistence of memory.

In "Beachy Head," Smith continues to take advantage of the rhetorical function of poetic form to further her work of melancholy. Christoph Bode suggests that the "mournful lines" of the hermit are not in fact missing from the poem; rather "the text ultimately *inscribes itself into itself*" (65). The fragmentary nature of "Beachy Head" highlights the simultaneous absence and

presence of the hermit's record of his melancholy and requires an ongoing readership to preserve this record. Smith effectively passes the work of melancholy to those who will join the Muse in keeping her vigil. The distinct melancholic subjectivity of Smith's speaker, who has facilitated the rhetoric of melancholic sympathy throughout Smith's poems, disappears into "the landscape itself" by the end of "Beachy Head" (Labbe *Culture of Gender* 144). By creating an affective map, Smith develops "a mobile machine of self-estrangement" (Flatley 7). This facilitates a reading process by which the reader learns to sympathize, as modeled by Smith's speaker, but is then estranged from that feeling of sympathy to reflect more productively on their own location on this affective map (Flatley 7). By carving her fragmented poetic voice into the rock of Beachy Head, Smith commits the ultimate act of poetic self-estrangement. Nonetheless, the conclusion of "Beachy Head" extends Smith's affective community to the geography of her lyric, which bears witness to the speaker's melancholy.

REGIONAL MELANCHOLIA

Like many of her Romantic peers, Smith is a poet of region, and setting participates in Smith's poetics of melancholy as a dynamic actor. There is "no demarcation in Smith's writing between natural history and strong feeling" (Landry 481). In *Elegiac Sonnets*, melancholy appears along the shores of the river Arun (XXXII), while in "The Emigrants," "melancholy rolls its refluent tides," merging with the flow of the ocean (I 141). Heather Kerr describes Smith's "bioregional poetic imaginary" as "a dynamic terrain of consciousness, a memory map of sites saturated with particular emotions and characterized by multiple, sympathetic affiliations" (183). Smith's regional melancholia emerges from "nonproprietorial relationships to place," a familiar anxiety for an affective community composed of the dispossessed (Kerr 184). Therefore, Smith's poetics of melancholy create a literal affective map in which an unstable relationship with nature

and geography exposes the political plight of a generation of English melancholics.

The most conventional of Smith's regional melancholia motifs is the association of the seasons with affect. In the sonnets, Smith juxtaposes "the recurrence of the seasons" with "the persistence of the [experience of] loss," another rhetorical gesture that dodges the elegiac "move of consolation" (Hawley 184). Smith's lyric associates spring and summer with conventional imagery of life and renewal: "sounds of harmony" (VIII 13); "gay pleasures" (XXXI 8); "gay change" (XLII 11); "fragrant hours" (LXVIII 11), and "delight" ("Beachy Head" 341). This seasonal affect does not translate to the speaker whose "despair" (VIII 14), "sad thought[s]" (XXXI 7), and grief (LXVIII 10) cannot be cured (VIII 14) or revived ("The Emigrants" II 40). The seasons that indicate the renewal and flourishing of nature do not alter the melancholic condition. Instead, autumn's "hollow sighs" (XXXII 3) and winter's "struggling light" ("The Emigrants" I 1) offer the ideal backdrop for poetic melancholy. These seasons offer a symptomatic mirror for the melancholic, who is "unhealthy, idle, unproductive" (Keane 18). As Hawley notes, however, Smith's seasonal affective disorder is unique among elegiac traditions for her repeated juxtaposition of the restorative energies of spring and summer with a persistent melancholy instead of consolation.

Having discarded the consolation of spring, Smith's poetics of melancholy turn to a more scientific therapeutic practice—botany. Dolan argues that "For Smith, the practice of botany served as visual therapy, and the Linnean system of classification offered a model for a language that might make one's suffering intelligible to others" (106). Thus Smith returns to the question of what language is available to the woman poet to express her melancholy. Donelle Ruwe observes that "Romantic era botanical practice and women poets' constructions of the creative imagination intersect at the image of the flower" and consequently argues that this floral motif

limits the feminine poetic imagination "to the vivacity of material reality" (118). However, this association of the feminine imagination with the material and impermanent bloom of the flower underestimates the ambition of Smith's melancholic vision. Botany offers order to replace melancholic disorder and language to replace the melancholic anti-voice, but Smith's poetics of melancholy repeatedly resist both order and language.

For example, Sonnet LXXIX invokes the therapeutic power of botany and of "fanciful parataxis" (Kerr 186). Smith's melancholic vision first turns to nature's "silent shades of soothing hue" (LXXIX 6). The speaker then leaves her immediate vantage point to imagine "the bright varieties" (8) and "veined [leaves]" (10) that she could discover in "mead or woodland," "wilds remote" (11), and "the humid caves" (12). Her vision even extends as far as the "coral rocks beneath the Ocean waves" (14). Even when engaging in therapeutic vision, the speaker's imagination moves to the far reaches of the natural world, beyond known botanical and scientific order. As with her visions of melancholic figures that occupy natural and societal edges, Smith's speaker must imagine botanical species that exist beyond her knowledge and her vision to understand the melancholic experience. In the most explicitly elegiac of Smith's sonnets, the speaker details her efforts to "mimic" floral arrangements in her drawings (XCI 1) but acknowledges that even with her skill, she could not preserve "a semblance of that form adored" (9). Instead, grief's "faithful art / Enshrines thy image in thy Mother's heart" (13–14). These feminine practices of botany and of drawing can only approximate the far reaches of the natural world and of a mother's grief, and the speaker emphasizes the failure of this approximation as a metaphor for the failure of therapeutic practices.

Even after rejecting nature as consolation or therapy, Smith's speaker continues to interact with natural life as a critical element of her affective map. Three sonnets use insects as

an object lesson to complement Smith's negative turns. Sonnet LVIII tells the story of a child placing a glow-worm in a jar to preserve his light only to find that the glow-worm is "rayless as the dust" (13) in the morning: "So turn the world's bright joys to cold and blank disgust" (14). Sonnets LXIII and LXXVIII contain similar analogies but compare "schemes of bliss" (LXIII 12) and "radiant dreams" (LXXVII 14), respectively, to the delicate threads left behind by the insect of the gossamer. Kristin Girten cites these sonnets as evidence that Smith develops a "tactile poetics" in response to scientific methods that required "tactile and kinesthetic encounters" (220). Contributing to an emerging body of ecocritical work on Smith's poetry Girten argues that Smith's poetics advocate for "an immersion of self in world" to "enable a profound interconnectedness between self and environment" (223). Therefore, Smith's object lessons about nature's fragility echo the instability of the melancholic self and acknowledge the complexity of the social and natural ecosystems that inflicts suffering on the most vulnerable.

In "The Emigrants," Smith acknowledges the difficulty of navigating this affective interconnectedness when creating a transnational melancholic community:

> I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known
> Involuntary exile; and while yet
> England had charms for me, have felt how sad
> It is to look across the dim cold sea,
> That melancholy rolls its refluent tides
> Between us and the dear regretted land
> We call our own. (I 155–61)

This excerpt from Book I of "The Emigrants" depicts the embedding of melancholy in the natural, since melancholy figuratively replaces the waters of the ocean (159). Furthermore, the

geographical mirror image facilitates the sympathetic identification in this passage, since Smith's speaker positions her own exile (in France, longing for England) in visual opposition to that of the French exiles (in England, longing for France). Smith's speaker extends her melancholic vision "to map the border zone between private experience and our common natures across troubled national boundaries" (Kerr 191). Like Andrews, Kerr cites the *Critical Review*'s response to "The Emigrants" to suggest that Smith fails in this project because her speaker or Smith herself takes sympathetic precedence (191). Labbe similarly argues that "Smith's poetic efforts, and my critical ones, cannot fully compensate for the antagonism inherent in Smith's attempt to marry the personal and the political" (*Culture of Gender* 118). Kerr and Labbe are both right to stress these tensions in the poem, but the search for a resolution to this antagonism may be a misguided critical impulse. Instead, the fracturing of transnational sympathy in "The Emigrants" further exposes the failure of the individual to speak for collective suffering and the failure of the collective to distinguish the suffering of the individual.

Smith's early experiments with poetic form in *Elegiac Sonnets* address the problem of inserting the female melancholic body into masculine poetic traditions. Each of these traditions, from the literature of sensibility to the English elegy, suggests a therapeutic or consolatory mode for the melancholic that relies on successful realignment with a symbolic order. As with any cultural discourse of affect or disease, the rules of the symbolic order are applied differently to a male body than they are to a female body. Consolation, as a woman poet and melancholic, requires submission to a passive role in this symbolic order. Smith's poetics of melancholy are therefore intentionally a poetics of failure: the failure of poetic form; the failure of melancholic identification; the failure of botanical therapy; and the failure of individual and collective sympathy. This failure creates and sustains an active and embodied feminine melancholy

throughout Smith's oeuvre.

This last excerpt from "The Emigrants" also demonstrates the collision of melancholy with exile in Smith's lyric poetry. Exile, like melancholy, is an affective state at odds with the symbolic order, namely with narratives of belonging to a domestic and national home(land). Starting in the seventeenth century, physicians attempted to diagnose and to treat the physical symptoms of an exilic pathology that they called nostalgia. Although melancholy and nostalgia share some symptoms, nostalgia, first diagnosed in populations of conscripted soldiers, is a disease of the masses, which makes it an unaccredited pathology (Boym 4–5). Nonetheless, Smith's poetry frequently pairs these two pathologies, which suggests that Smith's interest in hybridity extends beyond her experiments with the elegiac sonnet. Smith's pathological poetics generate a hybrid pathology that combines melancholy and nostalgia to comment on the unique tension between the female body and the lyric form.

Smith's pathological poetics therefore "[collapse] these distinctions" between melancholy as a private pathology and nostalgia as a public pathology to investigate the hybrid pathology caused by the simultaneous enclosure and exile of women (Zimmerman ix). Smith's poetics of melancholy demonstrate that an alienated lyric subject can form and facilitate an affective community and that suffering does not need to be solitary or non-productive. Smith's poetics of nostalgia must likewise negotiate the fracture of the nostalgic self and constitute identity from the margins of form, of self, of society, and of nation. By infecting her lyric with a melancholic nostalgia or a nostalgic melancholy, Smith makes visible the double alienation of the diseased female body and the repeated failure of language to relieve the suffering of the dispossessed.

Unlike melancholy, nostalgia is not explicitly present in Smith's poetry.[25] Rather, Smith's lyric poetry invites a diagnosis of nostalgia because themes such as exile, alienation, and displacement regularly appear in her poetry and in critical discussions of her poetry (Craciun, Curran, Garnai, Hart, Labbe, Rennhak, Wiley). To date, scholars of Smith's poetry who have identified citizenship, history, and memory as a source of trauma for her speaker have failed to classify this textual pathology as nostalgia. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the medical treatment of nostalgia was an attempt to mitigate the effects of mass movement in the midst of empire- and nation building. Thus nostalgia is predictably associated with masculine discourse and narratives. To construct a feminine poetic self that suffers from nostalgia, or a feminine nostalgic, is therefore as potentially transgressive as composing a feminine melancholic. Unlike the feminine melancholic who can reappropriate the feminized affect of the man of feeling, the

[25] The absence of allusions to nostalgia in Smith's lyric provokes the question of why her poetry has so many direct references to melancholy and none to nostalgia. It is clear, however, that melancholy had been absorbed into poetic diction by the eighteenth century, whereas writers rarely alluded to nostalgia directly. This is merely speculation, however, and further research is required to determine if there is a poetic vocabulary of nostalgia that would be analogous to the vocabulary of melancholy.

feminine nostalgic lacks a clear literary touchstone in the eighteenth century. For this reason, Smith's poetry primarily refers to the contemporary political milieu—the French émigrés who sought refuge on English shores and the swirling rhetoric of political revolution and reform—to explore the speaker's nostalgia. Smith's poetics of nostalgia exploit the imminence of fractured nations and failed revolutions to expose national and domestic narratives alike as alienating fictions, particularly for women.

The word "nostalgia" was introduced in the seventeenth century in a dissertation written by a Swiss doctor, Johannes Hofer, the first in a series of philosophers who have sought to understand the medical, psychological, and emotional condition of displacement. Nostalgia has its roots in a "poetic science" (Boym 7); the Greek roots of the word are "*nostos*—return home, and *algia*—longing" (xiii). The Greek *nostos* has ties to the classical epic, with the homecoming of Odysseus serving as a notable example of *nostos* (Boym 7). The addition of a suffix that means longing denies the resolution of the epic journey, a simple etymological fusion that aligns the consequences of European modernity with the evolution of literary genres. Nostalgia was "a disability of wartime and colonial mobility, a somatic and psychological protest against forced travel, depopulation, emigration, and compulsory movement" (Goodman "Uncertain Disease" 199–200). A medical treatment for this disability emerges as European empires expand their boundaries and provoke conflicts in greater quantity and at a larger scale.

Although the original medical diagnosis of nostalgia was almost entirely obsolete about a century after Hofer named the disease, the major European Romantic movements still suffered from widespread nostalgic anxiety and trauma. Curran identifies "displacement" as the "abiding notion" of European Romanticism ("Romanticism Displaced" 638). He argues that two major instances of "compulsory movement," to borrow Goodman's phrase, drive the cultural obsession

with displacement in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England: first, the wide deployment of the British military forces; and second, the almost 100,000 refugees or émigrés from the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror (Curran 637, 641–42). These conflicts of global consequence require "intimacy with and response to the suffering stranger" and the suffering alien (Favret 12). The plight of the displaced is therefore both visibly absent, in the case of the troops, and visibly present, in the case of the émigrés, for British Romantic writers.[26]

In 1793, Smith makes the visibility of the displaced French émigrés the subject of her poem "The Emigrants." Smith's lived experience of exile with her husband in France about ten years earlier certainly influences her exilic sympathies; however, Smith's experience on English soil has been no less alienating because of her inability to effect a resolution to the contentious legal case involving her father-in-law's estate (Curran "Romanticism Displaced" 642). Curran describes Smith's precarious status as equivalent to that of the French refugees: "a woman lacking legal standing in her own country and just as much negated by her present political system as the French ejected from their own country" (644). The exilic pathology that Smith explores in her lyric poetry is therefore a feminist analogue to existing definitions of masculine nostalgia that identifies the exilic trauma of those trapped within borders as an equally serious disease. After all, patriarchal societies subject women to many forms of compulsory movement, which leave them at the mercy of bad marriages and a legal system in which they have little to no power.

Instead of replicating Hofer's diagnostic method to propose a cure for nostalgia and to diffuse its threat to empire, Smith accesses the subversive potential of the pathology of

[26] Keane characterizes Smith's melancholy in her sonnets "not [as] a retreat from the world but a response to a culture that makes aliens of its authors" (16). Although the alienation of authors in the emerging literary marketplace of eighteenth-century England is beyond the scope of this thesis, Keane's argument is another example of how consistently critics associate Smith's poetics of melancholy with language that describes nostalgic trauma.

exile to highlight the need for domestic reform and to imagine identities beyond the boundaries of empire and patriarchy. Curran argues that for those of a radical political persuasion, the nostalgic figure of the exile promises "liberation," since it allows for a definition of self beyond "narrow nationalisms" ("Romanticism Displaced" 644). Labbe elaborates on the agency of exile in Smith's poetry: "For Smith, exile is both ejection and rejection, and alienation is both felt and performed" ("The Exiled Self" 38). Unlike Curran who explores the political possibilities of an enforced state of exile, Labbe theorizes a state of chosen exile or performed alienation. For women poets, "self-exile" provides "the freedom to fully reject the system that harms [a woman]" (Hart 314). After all, for the domestic or "metaphorical" exile, nostalgic trauma originates with her awareness that she "[has] never had a home which was secure enough to build a future on" (Rennhak 582). Although the female subject has a more pronounced exilic experience because she has no home—past, present, or future, this vacuum allows for the generation of anti-patriarchal or proto-feminist identity beyond the domestic enclosure.

Therefore, existing criticism on the function of exile in Smith's poetry suggests that nostalgia, the pathology of an exilic self, cultivates a proto-feminist imagination in Smith's lyric, an account that diverges significantly from existing theories of Romantic nostalgia. Although there is no critical consensus regarding Romantic nostalgia, current theories primarily diagnose and analyze nostalgia in poems written by male poets in which the mobile male figure suffers from nostalgia and the passive female figure occupies the domestic space for which the male nostalgic longs. The absence of a feminine poetics of nostalgia in Romantic scholarship does not imply that contemporary women writers were not interested in this pathology and its effects on identity and subjectivity. Rather, nostalgia, like melancholy, is a poetic disease that critics diagnose with a different set of words in the female body or self, words that are less suggestive

or less political. After all, nostalgia accesses narratives of identity that extend from the local to the global. Thus there is implicit political power in a feminine poetics of nostalgia that can manipulate these narratives in the same way that a poet like Smith manipulates poetic form and literary tradition.

Aaron Santesso proposes a critical theory of Romantic nostalgia that bypasses Hofer's early medical theory and instead starts with a more current understanding of nostalgia as a preoccupation with the past. Santesso first sketches the cultural history of nostalgia before arguing that eighteenth-century nostalgia consists of a poetic "longing for objects that are idealized, impersonal, and unattainable" (Santesso 16). Thus Romantic nostalgia does not imply a preoccupation with a historic past but rather with an aestheticized object of desire. Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" (1770) is therefore nostalgic because of its idealized vision of a now-abandoned village: "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain / Where health and plenty cheared the labouring swain" (1–2). Since the word "swain" is implicitly gendered as masculine, the sole purpose of this idealized past village is to sustain the life of its male inhabitants with the "bashful virgin" (29) introduced as a flirtatious object of desire and the "matron" (30), as a desexualized voice of morality. The masculine lyric "I" briefly contemplates the matron and the loss of "thy charms" (31). However, the possessive pronoun "thy" has an ambiguous antecedent and either refers to the matron or to the "sweet village" (31). It is therefore unclear if the women are independent actors in this idealized village scene or if they are merely absorbed into the feminized essence of its pastoral landscape.

William Wordsworth also has a distinct poetics of nostalgia in which women are often a feature of the domestic landscape for which a nostalgic male speaker mourns. In "I Travelled Among Unknown Men" (1801), the traveler describes his "melancholy dream" (5) of a lost love,

Lucy: "And she I cherished turned her wheel / Beside an English fire" (11–12).[27] The speaker's domestic vision is predictably Wordsworthian for its idealization of domestic industry, of the warmth of the domestic hearth, and of the inherent English-ness of that warmth. In lines 3 and 4, the speaker names "England" (3) as the object of his desire, which conflates the female lover with the nation to the extent that they become virtually indistinguishable. Thus Santesso's theory of nostalgia encompasses a tradition of nostalgic poems that include women in the list of "idealized, impersonal, and unattainable" objects (16). Wordsworth's "The Ruined Cottage" (1798–1804) features a woman named Margaret waiting for her soldier husband for "Five tedious years" in "unquiet widowhood, / A wife, and widow" (482, 483–84). In this poem, Margaret's identity is simultaneously wife and widow, an open question until news of her husband reaches her. Although "The Ruined Cottage" certainly acknowledges the reciprocal trauma experienced by the wife who waits, the poem uses Margaret as a fixed point of domesticity whose primary role is to serve as an idealized mourner for her absent husband.

Goodman offers a more nuanced account of Romantic nostalgia than Santesso that grapples with the ambivalence of absence in Wordsworth's oeuvre. She argues that Wordsworth's poetry still features nostalgia as a medical and psychological condition: "[the nostalgics'] minds are wholly occupied by absent things as if they were present, and their bodies absent to present things" ("Science of Nostalgia" 200). Wordsworth's nostalgics experience double alienation: first, the inversion of absence and presence; and second, the inversion of mind and body. "Guilt and Sorrow" (1793–94) dramatizes this alienation by staging an imagined reunion between a sailor with a coat "of military red" (8) and his wife: "By Fancy's aid / The happy husband flies, his arms to throw / Round his wife's neck" (59–61). This imagined

[27] This poem is also notable for its use of "melancholy" alongside nostalgic subject matter, a conflation of pathologies that is positively 'Smithian' (5).

homecoming is mutually therapeutic because the wife begins to cry "sweet tears . . . / As if thenceforth nor pain nor trouble she could know" (62–63). This homecoming fantasy does assign suffering to this idealized female figure, but her suffering is still contingent on the absence of the male nostalgic figure, much like "The Ruined Cottage." The woman is therefore primarily a therapeutic object of her husband's nostalgia rather than a subject of her own nostalgia. Although Wordsworth develops an interesting and ambivalent poetics of nostalgia—"the dialectic between cleaving to and apart"—his pathological poetics still overwhelmingly objectify the feminine body to define the nostalgia of his masculine lyric subjects (Goodman 209).[28]

Because "masculine and feminine are always defined 'against each other'" (Harding 13), any critical model that presents an image of nostalgia as mobile and masculine must gender the home(land) as static and feminine. This model relies on the same cultural logic that imposes separate spheres onto eighteenth-century England, but as Anne Mellor convincingly argues, women writers and intellectuals were incredibly active in the 'public sphere' in the eighteenth century (*Mothers of the Nation* 2–3). Thus existing definitions of Romantic nostalgia require revision to acknowledge the ways in which women writers compose an exilic female subjectivity that contributes to and challenges contemporary public discourse. Smith employs a robust poetics of nostalgia that demonstrate how the alienating and objectifying fictions of feminine domesticity can trigger nostalgic trauma. Patriarchal societies designate the male figure of the father or the husband as the protector of the home but allow the female figure of the daughter or the wife insufficient political, legal, or economic agency should her protector fail to provide this

[28] The clear exception to this rule in Wordsworth's poetic corpus is the titular female vagrant in "The Female Vagrant" in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* and in *Salisbury Plain*. The female vagrant "tells her own story to the Traveller," an example of pathological and nostalgic agency (Labbe *Writing Romanticism* 68). She tells her story of patriarchal failure—dead father, husband, and children, but the voice of the male traveler still ends the poem because the female speaker "had no more to say / Of that perpetual weight which on her spirit lay" (*Lyrical Ballads* 269–70). Thus a masculine voice still holds ultimate authority in the poem, effectively silencing the female nostalgic voice.

home, as illustrated by Smith's marriage. If a woman's home is always contingent and thus never secure, then the victim of feminine or domestic nostalgia is left to idealize a non-object or to imagine a home that can never be present. The feminine nostalgic therefore indefinitely defers homecoming to a non-home in an analogous manner to the female melancholic who cannot resolve her grief within a masculine symbolic order. However, this working definition of domestic nostalgia is a fairly simplistic reading of the complexity of patriarchal oppression in the private and public spheres. Smith's poetry offers a fascinating case study by which this theorization can be deepened because her poetry raises the issue of consciousness: whether the pathology of domestic nostalgia is naturally embedded in the female body or if this pathology emerges after the female subject is forced out of the enclosure of patriarchal protection.

As with her melancholy, the nostalgia of Smith's speaker is neither debilitating nor passive but instead offers a vehicle for imagining new identities and communities. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym offers a typology of the "incurable modern condition" on the basis of her cultural history of twentieth-century nostalgia (xiv). She distinguishes restorative nostalgia, which sanitizes and coheres collective histories and mythologies for nationalistic ends, from reflective nostalgia (Boym 41). Reflective nostalgia prolongs nostalgic longing and does not attempt to replace the lost home (Boym 49). Boym's reflective nostalgia instead offers an "ethical and creative challenge" that "explores ways of inhabiting many places . . . and imagining different time zones" (xviii). Thus a nostalgic outbreak can cause those in exile to imagine new epistemologies of identity and nation. Because Smith's poetics of nostalgia insert a female poetic self into the masculine discourse of nostalgia, her poetic project actively participates in the creation of a feminine or feminist epistemology of home(land). Smith's lyric subject is therefore "the subject/agent of feminist knowledge" in Smith's poetry, knowledge that is "multiple and

contradictory, not unitary and 'coherent'" (Harding 180–81). Thus a feminist nostalgia is a reflective nostalgia.

Goodman observes that Boym crafts her typology on the basis of current definitions of nostalgia as a preoccupation with the past and its artifacts ("Uncertain Disease" 201). Present-day nostalgia has a curious relationship with its pathological ancestor. In the eighteenth century, Friedrich von Schiller treated cases of nostalgia by "[miming] for the patient the desired return home" with "recreational tours of the countryside, . . . readings in pastoral literature, souvenirs of home or the past" (Goodman 201). The recuperation of "a simpler time or place" that is now a symptom of nostalgia was the historical cure for the disease (Goodman 199). Thus in the time elapsed between Hofer's original dissertation and the twentieth century, there is a "substitution of the cure for the disease" (Goodman 201–202). Therefore, Boym's reflective nostalgia can be understood as a cure for the domestic nostalgia of Smith's lyric speaker. It offers a cure for the environmental and systemic causes of Smith's poetic pathology, since prescribing restorative nostalgia as a cure would require returning to the patriarchal norms that displace and alienate women in the first place. The incisive political critiques of Smith's poetry refuse such resolution and contemplate instead the possibilities beyond the restrictive narratives and –isms of nation and gender.

Nostalgia is an affective mode that captures the tension "between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations [and] between personal and collective memory" (Boym xvi). Although Smith and many of her female peers had been excluded from the biography of the Romantic movement until the 1990s, a truly inclusive and exhaustive Romantic poetics of nostalgia must make space for the personal testimony of a displaced individual or group. Therefore, although Goodman makes an excellent case for returning to a historicist perspective

on the relationship between nostalgia and Romantic aesthetics, Boym's twentieth-century typology offers a critical precedent by which identities that exist outside of traditional histories can contribute to and revise these histories. Smith's poetry is a critical entry in the under-studied corpus of women's nostalgic literature because her lyric's affective map, composed of nostalgic bodies, materials, and waters, articulates a uniquely feminine and feminist nostalgic subjectivity.

NOSTALGIC COMMUNITIES

As with her poetics of melancholy, Smith's poetics of nostalgia emerge from the inherent multiplicity of her poetic voice. Nostalgia was first diagnosed among displaced populations and therefore involves a loss that is both individual and collective. Smith's lyric poetry features a series of sympathetic encounters between her poetic speaker and various nostalgic figures: exiles, émigrés, soldiers, and sailors. This sympathetic identification is not necessarily therapeutic for the speaker but rather distinguishes the particular pathology of the speaker. Hart argues that the speaker identifies this difference in suffering because she understands that the "exilic experience is a solitary one" (316). However, this disparity in nostalgic experience is most clear in staged scenes of homecoming like the prisoner of war returning to his family (LXIX) or the exile imagining his rescue (XLIII). Smith's poetics of nostalgia expose this therapeutic narrative of homecoming and repatriation as an empty performance. For Smith's speaker, the cure for nostalgia does not come from the restorative urge but rather from the urge to foster community and to imagine new social and political possibilities in her present exilic state.

Although many theories of nostalgia situate the pathology in the mobile, masculine bodies that participate in war and empire, Smith's poetry locates nostalgia in stationary, domestic bodies. Smith's lyric poetry offers an account of the trauma of war from those who live in a

region defined by military paranoia. The English coastline near Sussex, where the majority of Smith's poetry is set, "had been a prime landing place for foreign invaders in the past . . . and [was] recognized . . . as a likely landing place for invading French republicans in the [French Revolutionary War]" (Wiley 62). Favret argues that the experience of a "distant [or mediated] war unsettled basic temporal experiences of the British population" (11). An example of these unsettled temporalities is the clear divide between "the powerful and real safety of the everyday" and "the dangerous . . . and unreal spectacle of military aggression" (Favret 153). Smith's poetics of nostalgia collapse this distinction by investigating domestic cases of wartime nostalgia and by juxtaposing a pastoral vision of Sussex with its military past (and present).

Sonnet LXXXIII recounts "an engagement between two armed ships" that Smith had allegedly witnessed on Beacon Hill near Brighton (72). In the sonnet, an "upland Shepherd" (1), a peaceful "Rustic" (8), replaces Smith as the witness of the naval battle. The idealized pastoral tableau shatters when "war-freighted ships" (11) emerge "like dark plague-spots by the Demons shed" (9). The "purple radiance" (5) of the summer sunset takes on a macabre hue as "The mangled dead / And dying victims then pollute the flood" (12–13). The gruesome aftermath of war contaminates the pastoral landscape, and thus the "distant war" becomes an imminent threat. As is so often the case with Smith, her art imitates politics. In the mid-1790s, work began on a map of England as "a militarized nation state," so the military conducted an "ordnance survey" of Sussex (Wiley 56). Sonnet LXXXIII poeticizes this cartographical transformation as the cliffs of Sussex transform from a site of pastoral tranquility to a site of bloody conflict. Smith tests the consequences of this new map on her poetic object—a rustic whose innocence is irrevocably corrupted by political and military machinations beyond his control.

This sonnet does not, however, feature a sympathetic identification between the lyric "I"

and the shepherd, since a detached, third-person speaker delivers the conclusion to Smith's sonnet—"Ah! thus man spoils Heaven's glorious works with blood" (LXXXIII 14). In many of the other poems that address the exilic experience, Smith highlights the nostalgia of her speaker by using this motif of innocence traumatized by the political and social conditions of compulsory movement. In "The Emigrants," Smith's speaker describes the "Poor wand'ring wretches" as "hopeless, houseless, friendless" (I 296–97). Smith repeatedly uses the –less suffix, which is a linguistic device unique to the English and German languages that "negates what it has just articulated" (Curran "Romanticism Displaced" 643). Thus Smith negates the émigrés' ties to affect, property, and relationship in a single line. Non-combatant nostalgia, like the mediated experience of distant war, disrupts and negates everyday markers of time, place, and identity. Smith's speaker then interjects to forge a sympathetic connection with the émigrés by admitting that "I too have known / Involuntary exile" (I 155–56). By acknowledging this shared experience of exile, Smith's speaker discloses her intimate knowledge of nostalgic trauma, "[which] strips away previous public identity and replaces it with an almost meaningless intermediary identity" (Hart 308).[29]

In Sonnet XLIII, written the year before "The Emigrants," Smith uses the same suffix to diagnose yet another nostalgic figure:

> Sun after sun he hopeless sees decline
>
> In the broad shipless sea—perhaps may know
>
> Such heartless pain, such blank despair as mine: (6–8)

Instead of a list, Smith uses a parallel structure in consecutive lines of the sonnet to highlight the -less words. The lyric object of this sonnet, an unidentified exile, shares his "hopeless" fate with

[29] Hart unconsciously replicates Smith's linguistic strategy—"meaningless"—to emphasize the negation of meaning in the exilic identity.

the émigrés. Like the émigrés and the shepherd who witnesses the naval battle, the imagined exile of Sonnet XLIII occupies an exilic geography on "the bleak coast of some unfriendly isle" (2). The sonnet's speaker interjects that this exilic figure "may know / Such heartless pain, such blank despair as mine" (7–8). The speaker's use of the adjective "heartless" to describe her own pain equates the negation of the speaker's heart, a symbol of her affective or physiological home, with the negation of the exile's social and likely political status. Smith's analogy is appropriately hyperbolic because narratives of belonging are deeply gendered. The marginalized female lyric subject, who is "metaphorically homeless," has nothing to recover and is as "hopeless" (XLIII 6) as the "unhappy exile" (1) and the émigrés (Rennhak 583). Therefore, the only affective experience on which Smith's speaker can draw to illustrate the depth of patriarchal alienation is that of an exile on a "cold, barren, desart" island, beyond the reach of society (XLIII 3).[30]

Smith's poem "The Female Exile," which reimagines the tableau of the mother from "The Emigrants" (I 200–32), finds a closer approximation of the nostalgia of the poetic speaker. The mother in Smith's poem reflects on her children's fate as well as her own: "doom'd for life in chill penury to languish, / Or abject dependance, or soul-crushing toil" ("The Female Exile" 27–28). In *Mothers of the Nation*, Mellor argues that eighteenth-century women writers and intellectuals prioritized "moral virtue and an ethic of care" in public discourse (11). Even though Smith's speaker attempts to fulfill this moral obligation by expressing her desire to "alleviate the woes" of the female exile (34), she ultimately concludes that her own "hard fate" (35) means that "*I* can warm the cold heart of the wretched no more!" (36). Smith's speaker fails to uphold Mellor's ethic of care because of the unequal burden placed on women by "a society that

[30] This line from Smith's sonnet echoes a line from "The Female Vagrant" in the 1798 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*: "Helpless as sailor cast on desart rock" (182). This sonnet appeared in a later edition of the first volume of *Elegiac Sonnets* but was published before Wordsworth's poem, so this is another potential example of Smith's influence on Wordsworth and his vocabulary of nostalgia.

simultaneously requires her domestic identity and renders its sphere uninhabitable" (Labbe "The Exiled Self" 38). Therefore, Smith's poem and Labbe's argument revise Mellor's account of the moral imperative of eighteenth-century women's writing by exposing feminine benevolence as yet another alienating social script.

By highlighting the speaker's inability to intervene on behalf of her fellow exiles, Smith capitalizes on the rhetorical function of poetic sympathy to make her demands for reform public. Smith recognizes "that a lyric speaker could win readers and hold their attention precisely by appearing to ignore them" (Zimmerman 40). Thus Smith presents her speaker as impotent in effecting change to provoke discussions regarding reform among her audience. Zimmerman attributes the efficacy of Smith's calls for reform in her more explicitly political poems to the sympathy she garners in early editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* (57). The nostalgia of Smith's poetic speaker also contributes to the authority of her demands for reform because, as an involuntary exile, "she can understand the impact of national policies and actions on individual lives in a way that others cannot" (Hart 309). Parsing the complex power dynamics between public and private discourses and between collective and individual identities is a critical step for enacting meaningful social reform, and therefore, those who suffer from nostalgia are the ideal advocates for such reform.

In "The Female Exile" and "The Emigrants," Smith uses the motif of the "bereft mother" to advocate for social change (Labbe *Writing Romanticism* 56). The mother is a complex exilic archetype in Smith's poetry because she must remain oriented to her children's futures rather than succumb to despair. In "The Female Exile," the mother's gaze turns to her children: "Ah! victims—for whom *their* sad mother is dreading / The multiplied miseries that wait on mankind!" (23–24). In a passage from "The Emigrants" that is likely autobiographical, Smith

describes her desperate attempts "To save my children from the o'erwhelming wrongs, / That have for ten long years been heap'd on me!" (II 353–54). Smith's representation of motherhood as active concern for the fate of her children assigns a progressive political vision to the figure of the bereft mother. In "To a Little Invisible Being Who Is Expected Soon to Become Visible" (1825), Anna Letitia Barbauld symbolically aligns pregnancy with the genesis of political change. One of the most suggestive metaphors that Barbauld uses for birth is that of a prison break: "Haste, little captive, burst thy prison doors!", likely an allusion to the Storming of the Bastille in 1789 (29).[31] Smith's lyric poetry therefore participates in a contemporary poetic movement that highlights the "political viability of . . . motherhood" (Labbe "The Exiled Self" 38). The political burden of motherhood is the responsibility to conceive and to propagate a social or political future for all children.

Although Smith's poetry portrays a shared experience of motherhood, there is also a key source of tension between the speaker and the mothers in "The Female Exile" and "The Emigrants": the historical and contemporary enmity between England and France. In "The Female Exile," the mother observes her children playing, unconscious of their fate as "wanderers . . . on a once hostile soil" (26). Smith's admission that English soil could be hostile to the émigrés seems like an innocent gesture to English history, but Smith capitalizes on the sympathetic link between the nostalgia of her speaker and of the émigrés to expose how English soil can be hostile to its own natives. In a passionate defense of a nobility of merit in Book I of "The Emigrants," Smith's speaker turns her critical eye toward "this land of highly vaunted

[31] In *The Poetics of Decline in British Romanticism*, Jonathan Sachs offers a compelling reading of Barbauld's *Eighteenth Hundred and Eleven*: "The poem . . . simultaneously [imagines] multiple futures—one explicit, of ruin, and the other, implicit, of ruin avoided" (107). Although Sachs does not cite "Little Invisible Being" in his chapter, it would be interesting to consider how Barbauld's poetics of decline intersect with her poetics of revolution and whether her poem can express multiple revolutionary futures: one in which the revolution fails to live up to its ideals and one in which it does not.

Freedom" in which "Even Britons controvert the unwelcome truth" (245–46). Thus Smith's poetry uses the dual tyrannies of the French monarchy and the Reign of Terror to stage an analogous "drama of gender" regarding the failure of Peace and Liberty for the female political subject in England (Wolfson 546). It is therefore unsurprising that Smith's speaker continues to return to the margins of English society to make sense of her own nostalgia.

In her poem "The Dead Beggar," Smith describes the funeral of a "time-worn sufferer" (5) and signals the beggar's societal alienation with her use of the –less suffix: "friendless" (7) and "houseless" (8).[32] Whereas "The Emigrants" acknowledges the generosity of the English in receiving the French émigrés, "The Dead Beggar" is a clear example of the failure of that English generosity for its own citizens. As Smith's speaker commits the beggar to the mercy of God, she proclaims: "Death vindicates the insulted rights of Man" (20). Smith's use of this revolutionary phrase was so controversial that she added a footnote to the text denying the implied radical sympathies. This note, however, proceeds to criticize the "immense sums" raised for charity in England, funds that failed to prevent the death of this beggar (Smith 96). Smith's lyric poetry continues to show a keen awareness of the fate of those who wander through the cracks of English society and a desire to defend the insulted rights of exiles—domestic and foreign alike.

To the inelegant and impersonal funeral of the beggar, Smith adds yet another non-elegized death: the hermit of "Beachy Head." The hermit is a fascinating nostalgic figure because his exile is self-imposed when he withdraws "long disgusted with the world / And all its ways" (674–75). He spends his time on Beachy Head watching for shipwrecked sailors, rescuing those he can and burying those he cannot save (697–716) because "outraged as he was, in

[32] This poem, written in November 1792, shares its characterization of the beggar with the "houseless, friendless" émigrés from Book I of "The Emigrants," also written in November 1792 (297).

sanguine youth, / By human crimes, he still acutely felt / For human misery" (689–691). The hermit is perhaps an idealized projection of the speaker, who is bound by social restrictions on women's activity and therefore cannot join the hermit in his "absolute" and "active compassion" (Lokke 53). The poem ends abruptly after the hermit unceremoniously drowns in a storm. Theresa Kelley comments on the unresolved ending of Smith's poem: "as if to insist that fracture and incompletion are its elegiac subject, the poem ends without an ending by claiming that it will offer words inscribed in a cave to memorialize a dead hermit, but then does not" (290). Thus Smith's poem highlights the moral failure of society to give dignity to the hermit in life and in death.

The relationship between sympathy and reform is notoriously fraught in Smith's poetry, since it is often difficult to distinguish the most prominent object of sympathy: an emigrant mother or a dead beggar or Smith's speaker herself. Still, Smith's poetry demonstrates a commitment to representing the full spectrum of the exilic experience and to exposing political systems that turn citizens into émigrés, beggars, hermits, and women. Each of these voices for reform occupies a common position: the margin, of the page or of England proper. In Smith's poetics of nostalgia, the sympathetic community fostered among nostalgics has an unusual consequence. The alienation of the female subject—as wife or mother or woman—is mapped onto wandering, transgressive bodies, and this mapping exposes the exilic experience of the domestic female subject in patriarchal societies. However, the experience of exile demands imaginative political revolution to survive the negation of private and public identity. The absence of a manifesto for social reform in Smith's poetry facilitates its true reproductive power. Smith joins many contemporary women poets in reimagining pregnancy and childbearing as an act of revolution because children offer untainted promise and possibility. In this way, the female

nostalgic, or the domestic nostalgic, is primed for the work of Boym's reflective nostalgia, since she generates open narratives, open questions, and open futures.

NOSTALGIC MATERIALS

Memory fuels nostalgia, and, in Smith's poetry, memory is notably fragmentary and material, most literally in "Beachy Head"—Smith's contribution to the corpus of Romantic fragments. Boym's typology offers a helpful perspective for analyzing the prevalence of nostalgic material in Smith's poetry: "reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time" (41). As Goodman notes, however, lingering over nostalgic material was not a symptom in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century diagnoses of the disease; rather, physicians believed the material of memory to be therapeutic for the patient ("Uncertain Disease" 201). Citing Smith's pedagogical text *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, Dolan argues that Smith's theory of therapeutic botanical practice relies on a "relational framework" to bring greater clarity to individual cases of suffering (116). Thus Smith's careful documentation of the material of nostalgia, through her imagery and her extensive footnotes, provides a relational framework to further clarify the experience of her nostalgic speaker. Smith's treatment of this material also reveals the fragmentary nature of memory and of knowledge by refusing the strict organizing principles of science. Smith's poetics of nostalgia therefore model a scientific and affective gaze that "[takes] responsibility for [its] social locations and thus for [its] origins, values, and consequences" (Harding 15).

The nostalgic gaze of Smith's poetic speaker regularly falls on a conventionally Romantic and nostalgic motif: ruins. Scholars often highlight the Romantic preoccupation with ruins, as seen in Wordsworth's 1798 "Tintern Abbey" or Shelley's 1818 "Ozymandias". In *Poetics of Decline*, Jonathan Sachs offers a new reading of the Romantic ruin as a symbol of "the

incommensurability of multiple temporalities" (123).[33] Smith's poetry often depicts ruins of social spaces, which suggests that her lyric explores "the continuity between [social] past, [social] present" and social future, to slightly amend Sachs' phrase (120). The sonnets repeatedly pair ruins with darkness, most famously in Sonnet XLIV in which a storm "Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead" of an abandoned village eroding into the sea (7). In Sonnet LXVII, the speaker passes a deserted chapel where even the "ravenous Owl" (6) and "Fox" (8) that usually scavenge around the ruin have abandoned its "crumbling walls" (5) because of the violence of the storm. In each sonnet, the speaker identifies different kinds of decline: the first, the erosion of a community's history; and the second, the desertion of all living things, even animals. In Sonnet LXVII, death is associated with the desolate, crumbling edifice of the abandoned chapel: "That scene where Ruin saps the mouldering tomb" (11). In both the chapel and the village, the speaker selects tombs as an ideal ruin on which to map the alienation of her poetic self. These ruins are not only sites of death and decay but are also anonymous and the least noteworthy among the ruins featured in Smith's poetry. Thus the decline of these anonymous social spaces becomes an affective mirror for the speaker's desire for death and oblivion.

In two other sonnets, XLVI and XCII, Smith's speaker wanders the grounds of two estates—Penshurst and Bignor Park—artifacts of familial and genteel status as opposed to the anonymity of the previously cited ruins. Penshurst was the ancestral home of the Sidneys, and Algernon Sidney was famously executed for conspiring against King Charles II after the

[33] Although Smith's earliest editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*, which feature many conventionally 'Romantic' motifs, predate Wordsworth's publishing career, critics often cite Wordsworth as having originated early Romantic poetics. Labbe suggests that, starting in the early 1790s, Smith and Wordsworth participate in "a communal poetic project," "consulting and borrowing from common sources" (*Writing Romanticism* 13). As for the origin of the Romantic fascination with ruins, Christopher Nagle does note that Wordsworth read and revised Smith's Sonnet XLIV, "Written in the Church-Yard at Middleton in Sussex," which famously describes a village in ruins on the English coast (as cited by Labbe 11).

restoration of the monarchy in the seventeenth century (Smith 44). At the end of the eighteenth century, England was celebrating the hundred-year anniversary of the Glorious Revolution, "the symbol of British reason and liberty," as French reason and liberty carried out their ill-fated revolution (Backscheider 322). Smith's commemoration of Penshurst's "towers sublime! deserted now and drear!" (1) is perhaps an idealization of the "historic page" (14). However, because of the choice of setting and the decline of said setting, the subtext of Smith's poem points to the decline and even the reversal in revolutionary momentum, with the legacy of Penshurst and Sidney relying on "fame and beauty" to "defy decay" (13). Moreover, by taking as her subject the private space, or ancestral home, of an important historical figure, Smith illustrates that "the private *and* the political are the poet's sacred domains" (Backscheider 321).

This sonnet anticipates the passages in "The Emigrants" that highlight the private/public spaces of the "painted galleries" of Versailles (I 222) and the "Gothic battlements" that belong to the rural "feudal Chief" (II 292). Although Smith's blank verse poem is certainly not sympathetic to the Jacobin cause, her speaker singles out structural emblems of the monarchy and the landed gentry, both targets of the French Revolution. Smith's poetics of nostalgia therefore reveal a dual purpose: a naïve sympathy for personal alienation and a pointed critique of the systemic causes and the consequences of political upheaval. Smith's Penshurst sonnet imagines a personified History that joins the "musing wanderer" (3): "History points to all [Penshurst's] glories past" (XLVI 4). Hasperg describes this personification as revealing a "subconscious, constantly-ongoing process of reading the past in the forms that surround us" (11). The material of nostalgia is the material of history, and in defiance of various authorities who claim that history is static, the nostalgic gaze of the speaker continually rereads and revises that material. In Smith's poetry, this revision often occurs in her subtext or in her footnotes,

which articulate a poetics of nostalgia that aligns domestic decline with political decline.

As in Smith's other poems, however, her speaker's nostalgic vision turns from the macro-narratives of revolution and nation to the particular plight of the female poetic subject. In Sonnet XCII, Smith returns to Bignor Park, the estate on which she was raised, to wander beneath "these old paternal trees" (4).[34] Although "the dark shadows of the threaten'd storm" pass, Smith notes that she can no longer access the light of "the radiant star of day" (11) or "those rosy hours which here I used to see" (14). Curran argues in his editorial note that the tone of this sonnet reflects the irony of the legal case regarding her father-in-law's estate finally being settled near the end of Smith's own life (78). The therapeutic power of her homecoming is therefore lost on Smith. Furthermore, her various "paternal trees," whether that of her father, her father-in-law, or her husband, have repeatedly failed to protect Smith and her children. This sonnet dramatizes the epiphany of reflective nostalgia that "the home is in ruins" and so is the self (Boym 50). Smith does not register any sign of decay in the actual building but instead maps her affective decay onto this familiar space to juxtapose the idyll of the past with the nostalgia of the present.

In her final collection, *Beachy Head, Fables, and Other Poems*, Smith returns to the familiar motif of the Romantic ruin in "Saint Monica," a poem about an abandoned abbey.[35] In Catholic tradition, Saint Monica is the mother of Saint Augustine and is celebrated for her long-suffering devotion to her unfaithful husband and to her wayward son. In Smith's poem, Saint Monica's shrine is "the dismantled scite / Of an old Abbey" (1–2), an abbey that was likely ransacked in the wake of the "Stern Reformation" (19) when Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic Church in Rome (Curran 299). By citing the ultimate shrine to the longsuffering

[34] Pope uses the forest as a symbol of nationalism and poetic inspiration: "the Monarch's and the Muse's seats" ("Windsor Forest" 2); thus Smith's "paternal trees" evoke an image of patriarchal nationalism.
[35] Labbe notes that in an 1833 version of "Stanzas … Off Bees' Head," Wordsworth cites "Saint Monica" as the inspiration for his poem's style and stanzas (*Writing Romanticism* 4).

motherhood that Smith's speaker repeatedly performs, Smith returns to her critique from "The Emigrants" that mothers are the "most radical victims" of the displacement and the disruption of revolution, whether in the English Reformation or in the French Revolution (Wolfson 523). Furthermore, in "Saint Monica," Smith gestures to her other poems about ruins: "the owl obscene" (46), "the melancholy wind" (51), "the mouldering shrine" (56). Thus even though Smith's characteristic lyric "I" is absent from this poem, it is yet another crucial piece of the nostalgic fabric of Smith's lyric.

As with much of Smith's later poetic output, "Saint Monica" has a variety of footnotes that identify various botanical species and justify Smith's literary allusions. Smith's note on line 50 cites the criticism of a "judicious friend," who described the expression "matted tods" (50) as "obscure," but then defends her poetic license by quoting a passage from Spencer's *Shepherd's Calendar* (301). Smith's tone in this clarifying note is sharp and preemptively refutes any doubts of her authority as a poet: "And I think I could quote other poets as having used it" (301). In another note attached to line 29, Smith offers a definition for the word "gill" as well as linguistic variations of the word. She notes that "many parts of England" use this word and that in the West Indies, they use a variation of the word, "Gully," to describe a similar geological phenomenon (Smith 300). Thus Smith's footnotes gesture to plurality in language, in literary allusion, and in geology. Her notes offer a dynamic counter-narrative to her poetic language that asserts Smith's intellectual authority while actively undermining external authorities.

Smith's footnotes, which seem to grow increasingly long and prolific over the course of her career, have presented a long-standing mystery for her critics. Her notes offer an entirely distinct authorial persona from that of her poetry and even that of her other editorial framing (e.g., her prefaces) (Labbe *Culture of Gender* 23). Contemporary editions of Smith's poetry had

endnotes, which are "ancillary, even negligible," and thus current scholarly editions that format Smith's notes as footnotes result in a "semiotic reformatting" (Wolfson 524). Genette theorizes that defining the significance of paratext relies on, among other things, "determining its position" (263). Labbe offers a feminist reading of the position of this negligible text with her claim that the notes' "textual marginality reflects . . . the cultural marginality of femininity" ("Footnoting the Self" 73). This shared experience of marginality offers Smith "a proliferation of voices that substantiate the Self" from the textual and social margins (Labbe 73). Alternatively, Ruth Knezevich argues that "the voice of empiricism, authority, and scholarly reason . . . is pushed to the margins" in eighteenth-century women's poetry to invert gender power dynamics precisely because this authoritative voice is coded as male (1).

Nonetheless, Smith invokes science, history, and linguistics in her footnotes, disciplines from which women's voices are often excluded but by which womanhood is often defined. This allows Smith to compose her own narrative of female experience and subjectivity on all levels of her text. Smith's notes "challenge cultural formations of authoriality," particularly the images of authoriality offered by Coleridge's and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (Jon 1167). In fact, rather than publishing a separate treatise on her poetics, Smith uses her footnotes, the material margins of her poetic text, to interrogate whether or not it is possible to "[write] about oneself or the nation in a manner that is culturally—or formally—cohesive" (Jon 1174). Embedded in Smith's footnotes and their concern with culturally-mediated authority is the same nostalgic impulse that draws attention to and then fractures what appears to be cohesive and prescriptive. Paratext facilitates the process "by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public" (Genette 261). Therefore, Smith's poetics of nostalgia manipulate the expectations attached to the physical

material of the text to spread the disease of the text.

As previously argued, Smith's footnotes in "Saint Monica" justify her allusions and her diction but also introduce the possibility of multiple and simultaneous meanings of her poetic language. The same pattern holds for "The Emigrants" but becomes more explicitly political when Smith justifies her sympathetic (or unsympathetic) portrayal of various émigrés. In one such note, Smith claims that her portrait of a monk who "Regrets his pious prison" (I 124) is not intended "to reflect invidiously" on the French clergy (139). Still, the same note ends with her hope that "Adversity has now taught [the French clergy] the charity and humility they perhaps wanted," since elsewhere, Smith criticizes the Catholic monopoly on Christian theologies of salvation (139). Smith uses her footnote to add prosaic critique to her poetic critique with a final statement that "all but retracts its initial retraction" (Wolfson 524). Furthermore, Smith clarifies that her critique is intended for arrogant clergy who presume that their theology is the one true theology, a critique that warns against any similarly hegemonic ideologies.

Smith's speaker later describes another clergyman "dwelling" on his loss of "splendid palaces," "beds / Of silk and down," "silver chalices," and "Vestments with gold enwrought" (128–31). In the note attached to line 129, Smith again suggests that this portrait is not intended as "an insult" but then retracts this second "retraction" by elaborating that "France is not the only country, where the splendor and indulgences of the higher, and the poverty and depression of the inferior Clergy, have alike proved injurious to the cause of Religion" (140). As Curran notes in his editorial insertion, this note is likely intended to implicate similar corruption in the Church of England (140). Although the marginality of Smith's footnotes seems to soften or at least obscure their true intent, her notes on the clergy in "The Emigrants" are deeply polemical, and "once named, the charge of *error* sticks, indicting not just religious ideology but also its social

consequences" (Wolfson 524). In "The Emigrants," Smith's footnotes follow her characteristic rhetorical tactic of softening and then doubling down on her most incendiary social commentary.

Smith's footnotes are particularly prolific or "chatty," to use Goodman's descriptor, in "Beachy Head" ("Conjectures on Beachy Head" 987). This increase in volume is an appropriate escalation given the scope of this poem, which addresses a miscellany of topics from national and local histories to geology to botany. A recurring theme in the poem is the material of nostalgia and, in particular, the fragments of memory from which narrative and identity are constructed. As Smith's speaker investigates the geological layers of Beachy Head, she uncovers fossils of "sea-shells" lodged in the cliffs "Tho' surely the blue Ocean . . . / Here never roll'd its surge" (374, 376–78). The speaker first notes that the fossils embedded in the layers of rock at Beachy Head contradict the existing divide between land and sea and second, offers two potential justifications for such uncanny geology. Her speaker asks: "Does Nature then / Mimic . . . fantastic shapes / Of bivalves, and inwreathed volutes" (378–80), which is followed by a second question: "Or did this range of chalky mountains, once / Form a vast bason, where the Ocean waves / Swell'd fathomless" (382–84). Although Smith's note on line 382 cites this second possibility as a theory suggested by naturalist Gilbert White, the speaker's response to such "fantastic" possibilities is surprisingly anti-scientific: "very vain is Science' proudest boast" (390). Smith therefore undermines the footnote's citation of authority with the lyric speaker's speculation.

In her note attached to line 375, Smith explains that in her own wanderings on Beachy Head, she found some shells that were in "a fossil state" and others that were "more recent" (232). Regarding the mystery of discovering these two kinds of shells in such proximity, Smith explains that "I have never read any of the late theories of the earth, nor was I ever satisfied with

the attempts to explain many of the phenomena which call forth conjecture in those books I happened to have had access to on this subject" (232). Smith's note adds further ambiguity to her poetic speculations by questioning published authority while also observing that access to books and other literature dictates both authority and knowledge. Smith often alludes to the emergent contemporary discourse of geology in "Beachy Head" because it uniquely addresses "absent causes" and therefore proves "imaginatively compelling" for the poet (Goodman "Conjectures" 986). Thus Smith embraces epistemologies of uncertainty throughout her text and paratext. The science to which she alludes is in service of her poetics of uncertainty, never the other way around.

Numerous critics have attempted to clarify Smith's relationship with the Romantic sublime because of this conflict between her poetic and scientific vision(s).[36] Bennett defines the sublime as "fundamentally a discourse of ignorance," a poetic moment in which "the knowledge that the poet-figure seeks or desires is resisted" (56, 63). Smith stages this resistance to knowledge between her text and its paratext. At first, the antagonisms in Smith's lyric seem to contradict Smith's attention to detail in her footnotes and in the nostalgic vision of her speaker. However, it is Smith's commitment to "the textuality of closely observed flora" that "[reveals] the fine edge between the material and the immaterial" (Landry 482; Ruwe 129). The precision of Smith's poetic vision uncovers the sublimity of "absent causes," but her speaker does not resolve the anxiety of the unknown with a move to transcendence. Instead, the speaker's nostalgic vision operates at multiple scales and allows for multiple possibilities.

Just as the discovery of the shells challenges the geological boundary between land and

[36] John Pipkin famously revises Mellor's concept of the domestic sublime (*Romanticism and Gender*) to argue, rather, that Romantic women writers engage with a material sublime in which the materiality of nature interferes with the human speaker's attempt at transcendence ("The Material Sublime of Women Romantic Poets" 600).

sea, Smith's allusion to the excavation of elephant bones in Sussex challenges the clear boundaries that define English ecology and English identity. Smith remaps the boundaries of English identity using "a form of social ecology" in which "human interests" dictate the generation of natural knowledge and history (Landry 487). Smith's speaker describes the discovery of "enormous bones," which the local "wondering hinds" believe to be evidence of "giants" having lived in the region (417–18). This fantastic possibility is immediately preceded by an anecdote of an invasion by Claudius, whose army relied on the "huge unwieldy Elephant" (412). This invading elephant, as imagined by Smith's speaker, succumbs to a mammalian strain of nostalgia: on encountering "the Northern blast . . . his vast frame / Sunk useless" (415–16). This second potential backstory for the "enormous bones" suggests that those who leave their natural habitats will face immediately fatal consequences, a sharp warning for human nostalgics. Smith's social ecology relies on the causal narratives that communities develop to make sense of their surroundings, both familiar and abnormal.

However, it is again unclear which of these narratives Smith's speaker ultimately privileges as the "absent cause" of the geological improbability of finding elephant bones in Sussex. The speaker abruptly moves on to apostrophize "Ambition" (419) and leaves the explicatory work to "one of Smith's longest and most ludic notes" (Goodman "Conjectures on Beachy Head" 994). In this note, Smith describes the excavation of the bones in 1740 and the subsequent distribution of the bones among various museums and private collections, highlighting the fragmentary nature of archaeology and of historical preservation (234). She then offers various opinions about the bones' origins, including a minister who believes these to be remnants of the flood in Genesis and a passage from Milton's *History of Britain* that describes an invading Roman army with elephants in tow. Smith proceeds to admit that she has never actually

seen the bones and that she has no books that directly address their origins (234). Thus the problem of access to authority and knowledge recurs and complicates the already ambiguous narratives of "Beachy Head."

Anne Wallace argues that these "multiple abdications of scientific authority" mirror the "corresponding ruptures in the poem's aesthetics" (78). Thus Smith's poetic fragment challenges the coherence of scientific theories in its form and content. However, the epistemology of Western science has always been "contested terrain," since "science is politics by other means" (Harding 10). For example, the "central metaphor of scientific discovery" that relies on a "female nature and male science" maps onto traditional readings of the relationship between (female) nature and the (male) Romantic poet (Schiebinger 2–3). As Smith reckons with the cultural impossibility of the female scientific gaze, she privileges complexity over cohesion and ambiguity over truth. In addition to their repeated renunciation of scientific authority, Smith's notes also continue to "[intertwine] local subjects and global system[s]" and to locate "revolution and emigration . . . [in] the ground" (Goodman "Conjectures on Beachy Head" 994). Smith's speaker continues to compulsively excavate the material of nostalgia and to rearrange the fragments of natural and human history into the material of feminist knowledge: "multiple and contradictory, not 'unitary' and coherent" (Harding 180–81).

NOSTALGIC WATERS

Farewell, Aruna!—on whose varied shore
My early vows were paid to Nature's shrine,
When thoughtless joy, and infant hope were mine,
And whose lorn stream has heard me since deplore
Too many sorrows! (*Elegiac Sonnets*, Sonnet XLV 1–5)

Shores dominate Smith's lyric poetry, with the shores of the River Arun and the cliffs overlooking the English Channel serving as the most common settings for her poetry. This motif, however, has deeper symbolic resonance than the usual Romantic association of the edge with the sublime. Smith's shore poems use their vantage point from the Romantic prospect to explore memory as it is embedded in social and geographical space. In her nostalgic communities, Smith uncovers the extent to which nostalgic trauma creates fissures in the self. Smith's obsession with the material of nostalgia adds the impossibility of coherent narratives of place, of history, and of identity to the fracture of the self. In Boym's typology of nostalgia, the difference between restorative and reflective nostalgia is primarily the response of the nostalgic: to hide their longing behind the façade of cultural narratives of belonging; or to embrace their longing. Smith's poetics of nostalgia participate in reflective nostalgia by refusing to accept narratives of belonging without significant reform and by refusing to submit to hierarchies of intellectual authority. Smith's poetics embrace nostalgic longing and become increasingly imaginative and speculative as the dominant setting of Smith's poetic oeuvre moves from the enclosure of rural Sussex and the South Downs to the cliffs of Beachy Head and the ocean.

Reflective nostalgia "cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (Boym 49). Smith's poetry embeds memory in symbolically rich space, exploring the multiple voices and temporalities that exist in the liminal space between land and water. By invoking both river and ocean imagery, Smith explores two temporal systems. Rivers, which flow from source to mouth, offer a conventionally linear (and masculine) understanding of time and history. Oceans, which have no single source or destination, symbolize a cyclical (and feminine) model of time governed by the phases of the moon. Bethan Roberts argues that Smith's transition from river poetry to sea poetry mirrors her poetic transition from the masculine poetics of her early

sonnets set by the River Arun to a more expansive and inclusive poetics of the ocean, "an autonomous space" (665).

By marking this transition in clearly gendered terms, however, Roberts fails to take into account the nuanced relationship between time and space that Smith curates across her water poetry. Instead, Smith's poetry surveys all of these nostalgic waters, using the contemporary "conception of space and of geographical representation . . . not to account for an empirical reality . . . but to make a case for ordering social and political space in specific ways" (Wiley 57). By extending her poetics of nostalgia to space and to geography, Smith demonstrates that the experience of exile and of displacement instigates a personal and collective identity crisis that demands holistic reform. In *Elegiac Sonnets*, "The Emigrants," and "Beachy Head," Smith's poetics of water converge with her poetics of reflective nostalgia and embrace the absence of and longing for a coherent collective identity by exploring the multiple and porous narratives of individual, local, and national histories.

The histories of male regional poets dominate Smith's Arun sonnets. This subsequence of sonnets seems to depict an isolated case of nostalgic trauma in which the alienation of Smith's lyric speaker is caused by her exclusion from a regional lineage of poetic influence. In three of the Arun sonnets (XXVI, XXX, XXXIII), Smith's lyric "I" is absent. For Roberts, this "absence" indicates that "a sense of full connectivity with the present is lacking" (655). Instead, repeated allusions to three regional poets—Otway (XXVI 5), Collins (XXX 11), and Hayley (XXX 12)—replace the speaker as the only human subjects of these three sonnets. Roberts therefore argues that Smith's speaker maps a regional current of "literary influence, lineage, originality, and inspiration" from a vantage point that is beside but not within this poetic "flow" (650). This particular metaphor for memory necessarily excludes the feminine poetic voice because the river

implicitly symbolizes a linear and masculine model of formal influence. Roberts' argument suggests that Smith succumbs to restorative nostalgia in her Arun sonnets and posits a coherent narrative of a past poetic community that ironically excludes her own speaker. However, as is so often the case with Smith's lyric, Smith's depiction of the River Arun as a cache for poetic memory is hardly that straightforward.

In fact, Smith's subsequence of Arun sonnets disrupts the linear flow of time by featuring past scenes on the river's shores and by allowing multiple temporalities to occupy the same space. Sonnet XXVI imagines "the infant Otway" (5) and his childhood communion with the river's Muse but then returns to the present to acknowledge that "still the poet—consecrates the stream" (7). Sonnet XXX recalls the sounds of Otway's "plaintive strain" (9) and Collins' "powerful shell [lyre]" (11), even though the two poets lived and wrote in different centuries. To further trouble the linear flow of the river, Sonnet XXXII, which reintroduces the lyric "I," introduces yet another temporality by suggesting that Otway might be one of the "shadowy phantom[s] pale" who occupy the riverbanks after nightfall (5). The Arun is therefore a site of the "uncanny," a "non-place" in which Smith's absent "I" finds kinship (Stokes 149). The shores of the Arun have a long poetic memory that is neither fully past nor fully present and therefore embrace the "simultaneous presence and absence" of their poetic progeny, including the lyric speaker (Stokes 153). The criteria for who belongs in the poetic history of the Arun are therefore not dictated strictly by gender because Smith's Arun sonnets provoke several temporal ruptures that interrupt the linear and masculine progression of the river.

The uncanny River Arun subsequence and its non-speaker are yet another way in which Smith resists the "limited, objectifying languages available to enunciate a female 'I'" (Stokes 158). Stokes' argument implies that the nostalgia of the poetic speaker suffers from linguistic

exclusion as well as poetic exclusion. The female speaker, whose "I" is, at best, fragmentary and, at worst, non-existent, models the impossible task of writing her self into the masculine lineage in which Roberts is so invested. However, Boym's typology of nostalgia resists the fatalism of reading the feminine subject in the river sonnets as a non-self occupying a non-place; instead, reflective nostalgia can provide more than "a pretext for midnight melancholias" by offering the nostalgic an "ethical and creative challenge" (xviii). Indeed, Smith's "lorn" speaker shares her marginal state with at least one of her male peers, since Otway lived in "extreme poverty" in the late years of his life (Curran 30). Furthermore, Smith's Arun sonnets are notably non-social in that "the region's lonely lovers and poets . . . are depicted in communion with the banks, the stream, and its waves, rather than with the spirits of others" (Hasperg 107). Therefore, in Smith's sonnets, the haunted shores of the River Arun actually record an alternative to mainstream poetic and social histories that privileges the disenfranchised generations of poets from the region.

As Smith moves from the shores of the Arun to the shores of the English Channel, her poetic vision expands from local literary histories to the wealth and breadth of history contained by the ocean. Backscheider observes that many British poets "found in the sea a never-ending reflection of moods and a reinforcement of the sense of the unity of humankind and nature," unity that is understood as "both empathy and universality" (329). Thus the movement from the River Arun to the coastline facilitates the inclusion of broader narratives and deeper questions in Smith's lyric poetry. In "The Emigrants," Smith moves to explicitly political shores because the Sussex coastline, in her poem and in English history, is the landing site for the French émigrés. The ambivalence of this liminal space reflects the fate of the exiles who Smith's speaker observes, and Smith's poem explores the negating and fragmenting of national identity through the trauma of revolution and forced exile. Smith's speaker describes the gaze of the émigrés

"across the dim cold sea," even though "melancholy rolls its refluent tides / Between us and the dear regretted land / We call our own" (158–161). In this line, the melancholic nostalgia of the exile figuratively replaces the ocean, which symbolizes the depth and obscurity of the exilic experience, and thus the literal barrier to the exiles' homecoming becomes the pathological barrier to their homecoming. Notably, however, the sea is only symbolically a barrier to their repatriation. The true barrier is the negation of identity that has already taken place for the various émigrés on their native shores of France.

This negation is denoted poetically by the repetition of the –less suffix, a pattern observed by Curran. In Sonnet XLIII, this suffix reappears as another unnamed exile attempts to reconcile his exilic fate with the false hope of the horizon. In the sonnet, the "shipless sea" (7) does not act as a reminder of the absent home but as a reminder of the impossibility of rescue and of homecoming. Instead, the symptoms of the "unhappy" (1) exile's nostalgia manifest in mirages of "a distant sail" (10). Like "The Emigrants" and the "refluent tides," this sonnet uses the sea and its ambiguities as a mirror for the trauma and the delusion of the nostalgic. "The Emigrants" also highlights the reciprocity of the exilic experience with Smith's collapse of her speaker's "involuntary exile" (I 156) and the émigrés' experience into the pronoun "We" (161). By mirroring the émigrés' exilic gaze from England to France with her speaker's exilic gaze from France to England, the poem opens up the possibility of commenting on the barbarism of both shores and invokes the ocean as the site of and the witness to the exile's "blank despair" (XLIII 8).

The reciprocity of the speaker's nostalgic vision suggests that the shores and the waters of England have witnessed domestic nostalgia in addition to foreign nostalgia. Curran reads the exilic sympathy of Smith's speaker in "The Emigrants" in light of Smith's own legal

alienation from English society and compares the speaker and the émigrés to "flotsam, existential remnants of a culture that no longer signifies" ("Romanticism Displaced" 643). By comparing exiles to driftwood, Curran gestures to the long memory of the ocean and its shores. Although it seems that Curran's point is that the émigrés, like the speaker, are disposable to history, the flotsam metaphor reveals the threat posed by the long memory of traumatic cultural and political schisms that can wash up on England's shores without warning. Nostalgics threaten the homogeneity of their native culture and of their host culture, a double threat that recalls the double misrecognition between Britain and its empire (Baucom 3). Smith collects the exiles of "The Emigrants," domestic and foreign alike, and deposits them onto the shores of national memory.

Smith continues to explore the irregularities of ocean poetics in "Beachy Head." "Beachy Head" takes its cue from its dramatic setting on the edge of a cliff and continues the shift in the scope of Smith's poetic gaze from the intimate space of the Arun to the discursive expanse of the ocean. Goodman suggests that "Beachy Head" acknowledges two "presents," since the "complex historical present . . . paradoxically seeps into everyday existence" ("Conjectures on Beachy Head" 984). Kelley argues that in addition to staging the everyday and the historical present simultaneously, Smith's poem also "dramatizes an impasse in Romantic historiography" (287). Smith's poem invokes both "the large, supervisory project often characterized as the grand march of history" and "a narrative description of minutiae" (Kelley 287). As with critics who try to distinguish Smith's theory of the sublime, Kelley's historiographical dichotomy maps gender onto the scale of historical vision, since the feminine voice typically does not contribute to "the large, supervisory project" (287).

Smith excavates narratives of prehistory from the geological structure of Beachy Head to

address these temporal paradoxes and dichotomies, an instinct that Boym dubs "Jurassic Park syndrome" (33). Unlike her nostalgic counterparts in Hollywood, however, Smith's speaker does not attempt to reconstruct a facsimile of the past from the fragments and fossils she uncovers but rather allows several simultaneous yet contradictory narratives to temporalize "Beachy Head." The "fragmented nature" of Smith's poem is "a reflection of its view of reality" (Anderson 551). Therefore, Smith does not capitulate to a gendered scale of poetic vision; instead, "Beachy Head" posits that a female poetic self can constitute alternate histories (of all scales and temporalities) out of empirical noise. "Beachy Head" is a meta-poetic experiment that embeds the nostalgic gaze of the poetic speaker in its fragmented form, "constructing a ruin" by "using fragments expressively" (Anderson 547).

If geology is the science of "absent causes," then the ocean seems to function in "Beachy Head" as the source of absent causes. The second hypothesis on the origin of the shells (382–84) hinges on the absence of a prehistoric sea, much as the Claudius narrative for the origins of the elephant bones hinges on the sea as the delivery mechanism for fantastic creatures from "Afric's forest glooms and tawny sands" (414). Just as Smith's speaker resists scientific authority, however, the sea, a "nonlinear, nonhierarchical space," resists human logic and order (Roberts 664). By depicting the sea as a vehicle for memory, Smith maps the nostalgic bewilderment incited on the familiar shores of the River Arun onto the more problematic margins between land and sea, between England and the continent, and, because Smith's poetry is seemingly never free of this distinction, between male and female. The ocean forces Smith's speaker to deal with the consequences of memory and the recurrence of trauma, from the revolutionary driftwood of the émigrés to the mystery of the giant bones. From this vantage point, Smith's poetic speaker can distinguish "between identity and resemblance" and can recognize that any coherent narratives of

collective identity offered by history, science, gender or even regional folklore are insufficient because, ultimately, her "home is in ruins," or more appropriately, fragments (Boym 50).

Smith's poetics of nostalgia therefore adopt the laws of her poetic ocean, ruled as it is by a "mute arbitress of tides" (XLIV I). In Sonnet XLIV, Smith raises the uncanny stakes of her ocean poetics as her speaker narrates the erosion of a churchyard by the sea. This sonnet dramatizes the invasion of the sea into the order and sanctity of human society: the "wild blast . . . Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead, / And breaks the silent Sabbath of the grave!" (5, 7–8). In this sonnet, the chalky shells of "Beachy Head" reappear among the loose bones "With shells and sea-weed mingled, on the shore" (9). Community history is erased as the village and its churchyard erodes, and individual history is erased as skeletons are ripped apart and absorbed into the fathomless depths and layers of oceanic and geological histories. In this sonnet, Smith returns again to her nostalgic (and Romantic) obsession with ruins, and noticeably, it is the moon, "Night's regent" (LIX 6), that serves as the catalyst for the decline of human settlement. Smith's poetics of nostalgia align the ocean, an alternate site of collective memory and identity, with the feminine and the obscure. From this cache of feminist knowledge, Smith's speaker claims the power to reject the hegemonic narratives of identity that have rendered her disenfranchised without neglecting the "ethical and creative challenge" to imagine a new world order "in which women's genius can flourish" (Boym xvii; Dolan 45).

In her poetry, Smith uses shores to the full subversive and transgressive potential of the poetic metaphor of boundary spaces. Each space contains a chaotic collection of fossils and ghosts, with the human speaker slipping in and out of the scene—a simultaneously absent and present lyric "I." Smith's speaker registers a clear awareness that her political, social, and affective lot is that of an exile in her own home(land) but resists the urge to restore the ruin of

collective identity. Critical social spaces that uphold patriarchal and national norms, from churchyards to genteel estates, are either empty or eroding, while other sites such as the abbey in "Saint Monica" or the estate in Sonnet XLVI, which are connected to periods of revolution in English history, are abandoned and have been overwritten. The nostalgia of Smith's lyric speaker and of her fellow exiles revives the public threat of the original seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pathology because it exposes the human cost of imperial expansion and national assimilation. Smith's community of nostalgics possesses a long, fragmentary memory that inconveniently washes up on the shores of sanitized narratives of nation and culture. Smith's speaker invokes and anticipates the curative power of Boym's reflective nostalgia, taking a cue from the "nonlinear, nonhierarchical" ocean to temporalize a new space from which the disenfranchised and the reformers can collectively imagine narratives of being and of belonging. Most importantly, Smith's lyric poetry refuses to impose any one narrative on this space and instead declares that the future of nostalgia is in the multiplicity of freedom, not the singularity of patriotism or patriarchy.

CONCLUSION

In their feminist critiques of Western science, Harding and Schiebinger both clarify that neither feminism nor science are "value-neutral" (Harding 11). In both discursive fields, generating feminist knowledge or scientific knowledge respectively does not guarantee that this knowledge is progressive. Similarly, although scholarship on Smith's poetry since the early 1990s implicitly contributes to the feminist revisionist movement in Romanticism, this contribution is not necessarily progressive, even when grounded in a nuanced, historicist methodology. All knowledge is subject to its social location, even if that social location may not be as infectious as that of Smith's lyric speaker. Therefore, Smith's pathological poetics offer a clear case study of the tyranny of social location and of the value of treating science and the cultural history of disease as "politics by other means" (Harding 10).

Since Smith's poetry is subject to many centuries of sexual politics and gender politics, it is therefore naïve and unproductive to posit a coherent private or public female self from Smith's poetry that is representative of either Smith's experience or the contemporary woman's experience. This thesis has employed the opposite tactic: if the starting place of a female poet is the multiple and contradictory fragments of cultural narratives of femininity, then her poetic praxis in composing the female self implicitly generates new narratives of the feminine and the female. By invoking pathology as a key element of her poetics, Smith demonstrates her awareness of the inherent fracture and alienation of the diseased female self. In her poetry, discerning the origin of this poetic infection is nearly impossible, since Smith regularly implicates the disease of the various poetic forms and literary traditions with which she engages. Given the formal proliferation of Smith's pathologies, it is therefore unsurprising that Smith's speaker collects so many fellow melancholics and nostalgics as she conducts a survey of affect

along her wandering path. Flatley's conceit of affective mapping, from his study of modernist melancholia, is an appropriate metaphor for the final aspect of Smith's pathological poetics: her affective geography. Nature in Smith's lyric poetry acts as a discursive mirror for the complexity of classification and of causality while the speaker articulates her suffering.

Finally, this project presumes to join Smith in imagining new models for articulating the female self by offering an account of Romantic melancholia and nostalgia that is progressive precisely because it is speculative. As a new addition to the ongoing critical project dedicated to Smith's relationship with disease, nostalgia is a disease well suited to Romantic lyric, particularly to women's Romantic lyric, because of its historical affiliation with compulsory movement and the public/private dichotomy. Melancholy has already had a long life among Smith scholars because of its connection to the formal heritage of her elegiac sonnets and to the rhetoric of sensibility and sympathy. By combining these two pathologies, however, this thesis theorizes a more mobile melancholy and a more domestic nostalgia. Smith's poetry makes the material conditions of female suffering visible and pushes the limit of public sympathy as the social appetite for performative affect transforms into social distaste for affect that requires political action. Smith's disease is therefore as rhetorical as it is physiological and as political as it is confessional, collapsing the artificial boundaries between poetry and science and between the social body and the physical body.

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