Towards a Definition of the Female Romantic Wanderer: On Death, Fragmentation, and the Female Sublime

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Abstract

Although the wanderer is one of the central figures in male canonical Romantic poetry, one also finds this recurring trope in the long-neglected female poets of the Romantic period. In exploring the connection between wandering and the "female sublime," this thesis redefines and expands the traditional figure of the wanderer. Focusing on Kant's and Burke's concepts of the sublime as the theoretical framework, I study Mary Robinson's, Charlotte Smith's, and Letitia Landon's wanderers in connection with the recurring themes of death, fragmentation, the stage, melancholy, nostalgia, madness, and exile. This thesis argues that the female wanderer internalizes the inner divisions, the possibilities, and the element of violence intrinsic to the experience of the sublime. By perceiving her own fragmented, split identity as an object of sublime terror, she not only sees herself as a monstrously incoherent and terrifying "Other," but also as carrying imaginative and theatrical sublime potential.

Résumé

Quoique le voyageur soit l'une des figures centrales du canon de la poésie romantique masculine, on retrouve cette figure récurrente également dans les œuvres des femmes poètes longtemps négligées de la période romantique. En explorant le lien entre le voyage et le « sublime féminin », la présente thèse redéfinit et élargit la figure traditionnelle du voyageur. Partant du cadre théorique que constituent les concepts du sublime élaborés par Kant et Burke, je présente une étude des voyageuses de Mary Robinson, Charlotte Smith et Letitia Landon en relation avec les thèmes récurrents de la fragmentation, de la scène, de la mélancolie, de la nostalgie, de la folie, de l'exil, et de la mort. La présente thèse avance que la figure féminine de la voyageuse intériorise les divisions internes, les possibilités et l'élément de violence intrinsèques à l'expérience du sublime. En percevant sa propre identité divisée et fragmentée en tant qu'objet de terreur sublime, la voyageuse se voit non seulement comme une « autre » monstrueusement incohérente et terrifiante, mais aussi comme détentrice d'un potentiel imaginatif théâtral sublime.

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Introduction

Romantic criticism has almost exclusively studied the motif of the wanderer and its relation to the sublime in connection with the "big six" male Romantic poets. Anne K. Mellor argues that the reason why women assume only a marginal role within the discourse of the sublime may be that the sublime has always been an "experience of masculine empowerment" (Romanticism and Gender 85). Since women "do not count as so-called great melancholics" (Juliana Schiesari 4) who seek sublime experiences in nature, Romantic criticism as of yet has disassociated the work by women poets from the central Romantic figure of the wanderer. While illuminating the connection between wandering and the "female sublime," this thesis will determine the extent to which the Romantic construct of the wanderer needs to be questioned, expanded, and rewritten if one takes into consideration some female contributions to the discourse of Romantic wandering. Since Mary Robinson, Charlotte Smith, and Letitia Landon often link the female wanderer and her experience of the female sublime to ideas about death, fragmentation, the stage, exile, melancholy, nostalgia, and madness, I will examine their poetry in light of these recurring themes to determine how the trope of the Romantic wanderer needs to be redefined.

After giving a brief overview of the male wanderer motif and its connection to Schelling's, Kant's, and Burke's theories of the sublime, this thesis will examine the female contributions to the wanderer theme by focusing on Mary Robinson's, Charlotte Smith's, and Letitia Landon's portrayals of this recurring figure in light of the idea of the female sublime. As of yet, Romantic criticism has

studied the female wanderer and the female sublime only as separate entities, and I would like to fill this gap in scholarship by emphasizing that connection. Forced to live on the margins, Robinson's, Smith's, and Landon's wanderers inhabit less natural, and thus less perfect spaces, such as the stage, exile, urban surroundings, or even graveyards. Susan Wolfson aptly points out that "the life of 'woman' is not just taught, but also reduced, by our absurd institutions, to a perpetual conflict with herself" (Borderlines 5). With regard to the perception of the sublime, this inner conflict or split manifests itself in a very specific way. Unlike her male counterpart, the female wanderer primarily concerns herself with the sublime's imperfections, its contradictions, and its inner divisions. She embodies the divisions inherent in Kant's version of the sublime by perceiving her own self as a painfully split identity. In other words, the female wanderer is wounded at the core: she is an "incomplete," theatrical, ghost-like figure consisting of a fragmented identity. She is unable to grasp the origin of her own self and perceives herself as incoherent due to a lack of authenticity, which stems from her being literally or symbolically always on stage. At the same time, however, she is also able to conceive of the endless possibilities inherent in her multiple theatrical personae. During optimistic and imaginative moments of insight, which occur when she is in artificial spaces and on stage, she is able to see the endless sublime possibilities of self-transformation intrinsic to the various theatrical fragments of her identity. Through her affirmation of the stage, the city, madness, graveyards, and death as sublime spaces, the female wanderer embraces her own state of becoming, and more specifically, her theatricality and ability for transformation.

She ultimately conceives of and experiences the sublime as an inner fusion between pleasure and pain manifesting itself as an intense, transcendent, almost death-like state. This thesis will argue that the female wanderer internalizes and celebrates the divisions, the possibilities, and the element of violence inherent in the sublime in that she perceives her split identity as both a source of imaginative, sublime potential and a monstrously alienated, incoherent "Other." In other words, she ultimately sees her own self as an object of sublime terror.

The male wanderer, on the other hand, conceives of his identity and relationship with the sublime somewhat differently. M.H. Abrams's Natural Supernaturalism and Peter Larsen Thorslev's The Byronic Hero most succinctly define the two main variations of the male wanderer in Romanticism. The male wanderer in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron conjures up two main connotations: he either appears as a confident and curious traveler who deliberately wanders in nature to transgress boundaries, experience the sublime, and move from a state of "alienation to reintegration" (Abrams 196), or, as Peter Larson Thorslev points out, as a cynical, larger-than-life Byronic hero. As will be shown presently, both versions, which portray the male wanderer either as Romantic idealist or as Byronic Hero, link the figure to the concept of the sublime. Although not all of the male wanderer's journeys lead to fulfilling and satisfactory sublime experiences due to the Byronic Hero's troubled and wretched inner nature, the male wanderer nevertheless always seeks sublimity in one way or another.

Before examining Abrams's and Thorslev's versions of the male wanderer and their related poetic and philosophical traditions, two other versions of the wanderer deserve a brief explanation: the figure of the Flaneur and the Wandering Jew. Primarily defined by Charles Baudelaire as an observer of the crowd, the nineteenth-century Parisian Flaneur, is, unlike the Romantic wanderer, associated with urban spaces. According to Gregory Shaya, the "Flaneur captures the experience of the modern city […] urban alienation, the psychology of distraction provoked by the tumult of urban stimulation" (107). The figure of the Flaneur is particularly relevant in connection with Mary Robinson's urban wanderers. It is, however, important to keep in mind that her wanderers are performers rather than observers. Moreover, the popular figure of the Wandering Jew, or "Ahasuerus," is somewhat different from the Romantic wanderer. Although, as Thorslev points out, he has "become almost all things to all men -- including the lover of Herodias's daughter, a nationalist, a heretic, [and] the murderer Cain" (104), he is most of all restless and preoccupied with his death-wish. Thorslev ultimately describes the Wandering Jew as a "death-wishing outcast wanderer, cursed of God" (104). The overdeveloped death-wish renders him, similar to Charlotte Smith's melancholic female wanderers and Mary Robinson's male wanderers, too passive to seek out sublime experiences. Although both the Byronic Hero and the Wandering Jew show self-destructive character traits, the Wandering Jew's self-destructive tendencies seem more developed due to the recurring death-wish, which renders him an almost undead figure.

However, Abrams and Thorslev best define the distinguishing traits of the male wanderer motif. In the Abrams version, the idealistic traveler explores nature with the express purpose of attaining sublimity. The wanderer's quest for the sublime is one for "reintegration," or, as Abrams suggests, "a circuitous journey out of paradise and back to paradise" (207). Man lost his "state of innocence in Eden" (Abrams 203), and has ever since struggled to escape his alienation. He ultimately finds himself "on a course toward the greater good of a merited unity, which is a synthesis in which all divisions are aufgehoben" (Abrams 219). The male wanderer in the Abrams version is quite unlike the figure of the Flaneur, who wanders along urban streets like an empty vessel without a specific agenda. According to Abrams, the male wanderer does not "wander" in the traditional sense. He is on a "pilgrimage" (236); he is always going somewhere. More specifically, he travels to experience the sublime, which manifests itself as a "marriage between mind and nature," or a state of "higher integration" (Abrams 195, 193). His wanderings are most of all "painful journey[s] into self-division and inner conflict" (Abrams 214). When faced with the sublime object, however, the wanderer moves from a state of alienation to reintegration. He ultimately "regains" a lost "unity" (Abrams 179) through the experience of infinite greatness. Abrams furthermore presupposes that the male Romantic subject perceives a separation and constant tension between himself and nature, or self and "Other," which he can only resolve through sublimity. He explains that there are

> two dimensions, one cognitive and the other moral. The first of these manifests itself in a split within the nature of man himself. In its cognitive dimension, this division consists in the loss of the original unity of mind with nature, through man's emergent awareness of a separation of the subject that knows from that object, or 'nature,' that is known. In its moral dimension, it consists in the loss of the mind's original unity with itself. (Abrams 182)

Hence, the male Romantic wanderer's "journey [is always one] towards [his] original home" (Abrams 194), and it logically follows that the sublime becomes a substitute for the existence of a home. Abrams describes the connection between home and the sublime as a "shift from the metaphor of the search for a lost spiritual home to the metaphor of a marriage between mind and nature" (195). Unlike the female Romantic wanderer for whom the idea of home is something that she can neither imagine nor comprehend, which I will explain more thoroughly in the following chapters, the male wanderer has a more concrete and fixed ideal of home in mind. He often locates this ideal within something that is external: an object in nature. Whereas the female Romantic wanderer cannot even conceive of the concept of home as a possibility for the future, the male Romantic wanderer frequently experiences a nostalgia for a past home. Abrams points out that the male Romantic subject's "yearning for fulfillment is […] expressed as Heimweh, the homesickness for the father or mother and for the lost sheltered place" (194). Hence, the male wanderer in the Abrams version is not an aimless

wanderer in the traditional sense. He is a pilgrim who has an agenda in mind, and ultimately moves "onward towards an ultimate unity" (Abrams 214).

Abrams bases his definition of the male wanderer largely on Schelling's concept of the sublime, as articulated in his work Philosophy of Art (1802-5). Schelling defines the sublime as a fusion of infinite and finite, and of nature and art. He argues that "[t]he sublime in its absoluteness encompasses the beautiful, just as the beautiful in its absoluteness encompasses the sublime" (90). For him, "beauty and truth are essentially or ideally one, for truth, just as beauty, is ideally the identity of the subjective and objective" (31). Through the use of our imagination we are able "to think and to reconcile contradictions" (Abrams 174). The negation of the contradiction "between nature and intelligence, conscious and unconscious, subject and object" (Abrams 174) allows the subject to see the particular in the universal and the universal in the particular. According to Schelling, on whom Abrams bases his argument, "God produces nothing from within himself that does not in its own turn contain and express his entire essence, and hence nothing that is not productive in its own turn and is [not] itself a universe" (Schelling 84). The binary between subject and object collapses, and the boundaries between the beautiful and the sublime become unclear. Through the harmony generated by the aesthetic object, the subject is able to transcend the physical realm, experience infinite magnitude, and perceive the whole "universe in the form of art" (Schelling 16).

The "spots of time" in Wordsworth's The Prelude are typical manifestations of this harmony and of Abrams's and Schelling's versions of the

male Romantic wanderer. Wordsworth most succinctly demonstrates such experiences of infinite unity and greatness in Books VI and XIV of The Prelude. In his autobiography, Wordsworth describes himself as a curious wanderer who deliberately seeks to explore what Schelling has described in his theory of the sublime. One significant passage depicts Wordsworth wandering in nature, longing for the sublime. He crosses the Alps, climbs a mountain, and ultimately experiences the Absolute. The sublime manifests itself in the form of a "chasm" through which he sees "characters of the great Apocalypse / the types and symbols of Eternity, / of first, and last, and midst, and without end" (VI.638-640). Despite the fact that the image includes paradoxes such as "the immeasurable height / Of woods decaying, never to be decayed" (VI.624-25), he perceives it as the "workings of one mind" (VI.636). The boundaries between transience and eternity, and body and mind become blurred and unclear. The experience is one of ultimate harmony between self and "Other."

Wordsworth's other important experience of sublimity through wandering in nature occurs in Book XIV, in which he describes another significant "spot of time." This time, sublimity manifests itself through a "blue chasm," a fusion of moon and sea. He perceives nature as the ultimate manifestation of oneness when he writes that "waters, torrents, streams / Innumerable, [are] roaring with one voice" (XIV.59-60). He tries to make sense of the experience by describing the blue chasm as "a perfect image of a mighty mind" (Wordsworth, 1805 version XIV.69), which he later revises to "the type of a majestic intellect" (Wordsworth, 1850 version XIV.66-67). Although he has difficulties describing the sublime

aesthetically and concretely, he is nevertheless able to "endure" it in the first place, and keeps searching for new sublime experiences in nature.

Thorslev, in contrast, studies the Byronic hero, who can be understood as the second main type of the male Romantic wanderer. Thorslev conceives of the Romantic wanderer as a restless, "fatal" (8), and "individualistic" (195) figure, one who has no choice but to keep on moving. Thorslev links him to the character of Cain, a figure that is "cursed and defined by his eternal and compulsive wandering" (97). He is an exiled and "self-imposed isolated" […] "wanderer [who] speaks of his own longing for a home -- the goal of death" (Thorslev 39, 102). He furthermore shows characteristics of both "The Man of Feeling" and "The Gloomy Egoist" (Thorslev 47). Underneath the appearance of a "fatal and cruel lover" (Thorslev 7), defined by his "sensibility" (188) and "Satanism" (188), lies a "dark soul" (3). Although he too seeks sublimity through an external object (be it nature or a woman), he is incapable of experiencing the sublime due to his restless, wretched, and troubled inner nature. His inner nature, his heritage, and origins are unknowable as "there is almost always some obscurity or mystery connected with his birth" (Thorslev 30). For the Romantic wanderer, as Byronic Hero, the sublime serves as an external stimulus distracting him from his ennui and his empty, tormented, and unstable inner self. For him, the sublime is mostly a form of sensation, reminding him that he is still alive and "exist[s], even though in pain" (Thorslev 91). In addition to his existential ennui, he also suffers from a very particular feeling: "Weltschmerz" (Thorslev 88). Thorslev explains that

> those afflicted with this Romantic disease appear to suffer from an almost irreconcilable conflict between two opposing forces in their personalities: […] The one force or drive is to lose oneself in some vision of the Absolute; a longing for some intellectual and moral certainty, ranging from positive commitment to an orthodox creed, to a mystic conception of oneself as a part of a living organic universe. The twin and opposing force in the personality is toward a positive and passionate assertion of oneself as an individual […] any psychic activity, which will heighten and make more acute a sense of self-awareness and self-identity. (88)

These "two opposing forces" in his personality completely direct the Byronic Hero. Although the sublime theoretically serves as a perfect external stimuli "to lose oneself in some vision of the Absolute," the Byronic Hero never reaches the state in which his "sense of self-awareness and self-identity" is heightened. His own wretched, restless self limits him. Thorslev even goes as far as to associate the Byronic Hero's lack of direction and restlessness with existentialist philosophy. He argues that

> it is easy to see [his] 'state of mind' [as being] closely related to that described by modern existentialism: man caught between the realization of the relativity of all values ('If God is dead, all things are possible,' as Ivan Karamazov says), and the necessity for a positive self-assertion in this realm of relativistic chaos, this realm of the 'absurd,' in Camus' expression. (89)

Thus, the Byronic Hero, as defined by Thorslev, is deeply isolated at the core. Due to his wretched nature, he experiences a painful split when confronted with the sublime, a split which manifests itself as an inability to grasp, enjoy, and connect with the object's infinite magnitude.

Kant's version of the sublime most clearly accounts for this split and this sense of painful, violent divisions. In The Critique of Judgment, the sublime is something that is formless and knows no boundaries and limits. Kant's concept of the sublime differs from Schelling in that it is split. Kant bases his concept on several divisions, such as the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, subject and object, and the "mathematically" and "dynamically sublime." Both the mathematically and dynamically sublime describe a person's mental attitude toward an object, rather than the object itself.

The objects in nature appear as "dynamically sublime" if the subject perceives them as "a might that has no dominance over us" (Kant 119). Anne K. Mellor stresses that "Kant denies Burke's claim that the experience of the sublime is necessarily accompanied by fear or terror" (Romanticism and Gender 88). The subject experiences the sublime from within a safe position by recognizing his "physical impotence, [but] at the same time an ability to judge [himself] independent of nature" (Kant 120-121). Bjorn Myskja describes the experience as a "real danger that could threaten us without having to face it" (50). The perceived terror and pain turn into pleasure. The sublime, although incomprehensible, ultimately becomes empowering and elevating because the distance between subject and object generates a feeling of safety.

Kant essentially bases the mathematically sublime on magnitude: "what is absolutely large" (103). Although the interaction of the imagination and concepts associated with reason generally produce both the mathematically and the dynamically sublime, Kant ultimately points out the limits of the subject's imaginative powers. For Kant, the subject's imagination becomes insufficient in the moment of the sublime as it is too overwhelming for the imagination's capacity to comprehend it fully. Only "the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense" (Kant 106), and is capable of positing the concept of the infinite, which goes beyond any sensory perception or standard grounded on sense perception. David Martyn even goes as far as to suggest that "the sublime resides in a failure of the imagination" (156). Vijay Mishra also explains that "in Kant's moment of the sublime […] discourse itself breaks down as reason struggles with imagination for ascendancy: what can be grasped is not equivalent to what is meaningful" (20). The sublime, therefore, represents a transcendent, overwhelming, and somewhat incomprehensible endpoint of signification located within the internalized realm of the imagination.

Kant's theory of the sublime furthermore includes an element of violence. He writes that a "movement of the imagination [occurs]" (116), which he describes as a "breakdown [that] does violence to the inner sense" (116). The Kantian sublime is therefore not contemplative, but violent and turbulent. It seems that when the subject sees the overwhelmingly large object in nature, he experiences a painful split and an extreme form of internalized fear. A violent change takes place within the subject, and although the subject views the object

from a safe position, he perceives it as a power that can crush him. Mishra, whose interpretation of the Kantian sublime is particularly useful with regard to the female wanderer, points out that this sense of power and threat stems from the "momentary lapse on the part of reason as it gives imagination total freedom. If we examine the space we find that there is no lapse of self-transcendence available, as the subject simply dissolves into the pleasure principle, and, finally, death" (38). According to Mishra, during this short, overwhelming, death-like moment, "when reason gives way to imagination […] before it regains its power […] we are confronted with a kind of a blackhole theory of the sublime" (255). Kant thus bases his concept of the sublime on a "dissolution of the self in death" (Mishra 255) as it gradually moves towards a "blackhole": an overwhelming gap of signification inherent in the realms of violence and negation.

A similar element of violence is present in Edmund Burke's theory of the sublime. In his work A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, Burke describes the sublime as "a tension, contraction, or violent emotion of the nerves" (132). For Burke, the sublime is not necessarily rooted in nature:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger; that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror; is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion, which the mind is capable of feeling. (58)

Burke also links his version of the sublime to pleasure and pain. Mellor illuminates the connection with pleasure and pain when she argues that the Romantic wanderer

> first experiences terror or fear [when he encounters the object of infinite greatness] and then -- as our instinct for self-preservation is gradually relaxed -- astonishment, admiration, reverence and respect […]. Grounding his aesthetic categories on a psychology of pain and pleasure, Burke identified the experience of the sublime with the idea of pain of the annihilation of the self, at a time when one also knows that one's life is not genuinely threatened. (Romanticism and Gender 86)

If the subject knows that his life is not threatened, it logically follows that the terror generated by the object is mostly an imaginary one. Yet, during the first phase of the Burkean sublime, the male Romantic wanderer experiences a unique and authentic moment of terror, which he is, during the second phase, able to transform into "admiration" and "astonishment." Once the wanderer has mastered the phase of astonishment, he regains his power and control. It is significant that the terror, which the male wanderer experiences, is always a temporary one, although the Byronic Hero rarely achieves a full experience of the sublime. Nevertheless, Burke argues that "terror is in all cases, whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime" (58). Burke furthermore associates the terror accompanying the sublime with a breakdown of meaning or comprehension. He argues that "the ideas of eternity, and infinity, are among the

most affecting we have, and yet there is nothing of which we understand so little, as of infinity and eternity" (61). Unlike Kant, who sees the mind as being capable of processing the sublime to a certain extent, Burke suggests that

> the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. (57)

Frances Ferguson describes how "the sublime objects create particular problems for the sensations -- by presenting themselves as too powerful or too vast or too obscure or too much a deprivation for the sense to process them comfortably" (Solitude 8). Burke associates the sublime with death and power when he suggests that he "know[s] of nothing sublime, which is not some modification of power […] pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly. So that strength, violence, pain, and terror are ideas that rush in upon the mind together" (64). Hence, according to Burke, the mind temporarily surrenders to the object's power during the experience of terror. Ferguson explains the power of the Burkean sublime in comparison to the beautiful as follows: "we love what is beautiful for submitting to us, for being less than we are, we react with dread and awe to what is sublime because of its appearing greater than we are, for being more, and making us acknowledge its power" (Solitude 9). She furthermore observes that the Burkean "sublime involves loss of agency and loss of determinate bounds for subjects as well as

objects" (18). This "loss of agency" manifests itself in the male wanderer through a temporary feeling of terror and then stasis. However, as Mellor points out, the male wanderer is eventually able to transform this feeling of terror into admiration and an appreciation of the uniqueness of the sublime experience. Since the object of terror is completely exteriorized and transitory, the male subject believes himself in a safe position. Hence, whereas the female wanderer constantly perceives her own self as an object of sublime terror, the male wanderer's feelings of terror are temporary and externalized.

Selections from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Lord Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and Manfred serve as good examples of the second version of the male Romantic wanderer figure as defined by Thorslev. Childe Harold is "the first important Byronic Hero, and the prototype of all the rest" (Thorslev 128). He is the ultimate embodiment of the "gloomy wanderer" (Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage II.137) and a truly "wandering outlaw of his own dark mind" (III.19-20). Although Harold is

> Byron's first Cain or his Wandering Jew, [he] is above all a 'pilgrim,' not in the sense of being a tourist, on the one hand, or as a real penitent, on the other, but as marked and cursed of sin, wandering over the face of Europe in an almost hopeless search for self-restoration, and fearing that this can never come about, even in death. (Thorslev 135)

Harold is most of all a "fabled Hebrew Wanderer" (Thorslev 135); a figure that is always in movement. Like the Ancient Mariner, he is "more restless than the

swallow in the skies" (Byron, Childe I.319) because he is completely isolated "in the world alone, / Upon the wide, wide sea" (I.182-183). He perceives a split between self and "Other," and the world generally remains "external and even alien" to him (Thorslev 141). This is especially evident in Canto III, when "self-exiled Harold wanders forth again, / With nought of hope left" (III.136-139). Harold is a figure that is in a constant state of becoming and his travels define him in every possible way. Self-exiled and alienated, he "complacently accepts isolation as the natural lot of genius" (Rutherford 188). Childe Harold sees himself as cursed; he expresses his bleak outlook on life, and his melancholy condition. For Harold, "the race of life becomes a hopeless flight […] / But there are wanderers o'er Eternity / Whose bark drives on and on, and anchor'd ne'er shall be" (III.666-670). His ennui and lack of hope make him numb and "shut him off from the life around him [...]. [He] remain[s] a detached spectator, little moved by what he s[ees]" (Rutherford 184). His existential melancholy, his feelings of boredom, and his hopelessness ultimately render it impossible for him to experience the sublime.

Lord Byron's other important portrayal of the second version of the male Romantic wanderer is Manfred. Manfred is a self-destructive outcast, loner, and Faustfigure, and, perhaps even more so than Harold, tortured by guilt related to his incestuous relationship with Astarte. However, the details of his past misdeeds are only indirectly alluded to in the play. What really happened between Astarte and Manfred who "loved each other as we should not love" (II.1.27) is unknowable. Manfred's narcissism and egoism cause him to experience his union

with Astarte as impure and unsatisfying. He seems unable to experience true love. Although Astarte "had the same lone thoughts and wanderings" (II.2.110), he "wander'd o'er the earth / And never found [her] likeness" (II.4.142–45). For him, love is not a possible source of sublimity as it only emphasizes his loneliness and the split between himself and the world. He describes his divided inner nature as a "struggling heart" (II.2.168), and as "half dust -- half deity" (I.2.40). He experiences the sublime mostly as a source of conflict, which is obvious when he is in a potentially sublime natural setting, addressing the mountains: "Ye Mountains / Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye" (I.2.8-9). Manfred mentions love and beauty in reference to the mountains rather than fear and the sublime, which is significant. It seems that he is not inspired by the objects in nature, at least not in a sublime way, as with his "mix'd essence [he] make[s] a conflict of [nature's] elements." (I.2.41-42). Although he has "essay'd […] philosophy, and science, and the springs / Of wonder, and the wisdom of the world" (I.1.13), he feels deeply disillusioned about the world, heaven, and hell. His inner torment and unwillingness to succumb to anything external make it impossible for him to experience the sublime as anything but confusion. He even goes as far as to contemplate suicide when he exclaims to the world: "Ye were not meant for me -- Earth! Take these atoms!" (I.2.108). In light of these suicidal thoughts, which he expresses when he is up on a mountain and about to jump off a cliff, the possibility of the sublime in the play is only a perverted form of sublimity; one that is, just like Manfred, "most sick at heart" (I.2.113). Hence, although Manfred deliberately wanders in nature to experience the sublime, he never attains a state

of sublimity. William D. Melaney argues that "'Manfred' demonstrates that sublime experience is a potential source of chaos" (Melaney 461). Instead of being moved by nature's infinity, he seems crushed and disillusioned. Awe-inspiring objects in nature highlight the division between his tormented, self-destructive mind and the world, ultimately rendering the possibility of the sublime out of reach.

Similar to Byron's heroes, Coleridge's Mariner is a typical incarnation of the restless male wanderer. He is both isolated and cursed, and, although no Byronic Hero in the traditional sense, he nevertheless shows more traits of Thorslev's definition than Abrams's. Like the Byronic Hero in Thorslev's description, he is wracked with guilt for shooting the Albatross. Although he realizes that he "had done a hellish thing" (90) when he "killed the bird" (92), the Mariner is a very passive figure, and, as Warren aptly observes, "constantly acted upon" (356). He has no clear origin, and, as Anne Williams puts it, he "appears as if from nowhere" (241). He is a social outcast whose "strangeness and marginality" (Willliams 242) define him. His character is almost ghost-like: he is nameless and cursed to repeat his tale forever. He is alienated and isolated as he is "alone, alone, all, all alone / Alone on a wide wide sea" (Coleridge 232-233). In part 5, after blessing the snakes, he even sees himself as a ghost, which demonstrates his alienation once again:

> I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
> I was so light-almost
> I thought that I had died in sleep,

And was a blessed ghost. (305-308)

Williams aptly observes that his wanderings and repetitive movements become internalized: he "exist[s] only as a subject manifestly and eternally in process" (242). His wanderings are aimless and circular. Eilenberg furthermore argues that

> the Mariner apprehends the contents of his own psyche as alien and inexplicable, perceptible only in the forms of an unnatural nature, frightened and hostile men, and spirits. Everywhere he looks he sees with no recognition versions of himself, the human and natural worlds he moves in functioning as agents of his psyche, their energies and actions displacements of his own. (32)

Eilenberg makes a valid point when she suggests that "an alien spirit […] comes to inhabit the body of the Mariner's speech" (34). Due to the curse, he is alienated to the extent that he is neither in control of his actions nor his language.

Unlike Wordsworth's wanderings in The Prelude, the Mariner's wanderings are compulsive and do not lead to sublimity. Whereas Wordsworth chooses to wander, Coleridge's Mariner must wander. He nevertheless longs for the sublime, however, which is evident in the passage when he blesses the watersnakes and experiences a somewhat diluted and failed version of the sublime:

> Beyond the shadow of the ship,
> I watched the water-snakes:
> They moved in tracks of shining white,

And when they reared, the elfish light

Fell off in hoary flakes.

[…]

Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,

They coiled and swam; and every track

Was a flash of golden fire. (Coleridge 272-281)

The "elfish light" turns into a "flash of golden fire," describing an almost blinding, turbulent sublime experience. Yet, the "elfish light / Fell off in hoary flakes," which alludes to the idea that the sublime is only a temporary experience. The curse of repetition dooms any fragment of the Mariner's sublime experience to be deficient and incomplete. Given the overarching framework of determinacy and repetition, the sublime can never be original and unique, which are, according to Kant and Burke, important defining markers of the sublime. The sublime has no space within the repetitive world of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." It is part of the Mariner's curse to experience the sublime only through the filter of repetition. If sublimity reproduces itself over and over again, it fragments itself and eventually dissolves into an unattainable illusion.

Thus, both Abrams's Romantic idealist and Thorslev's Byronic Hero are, to a certain extent, empty vessels. The male Romantic wanderer experiences a fundamental lack, a sense of emptiness, and a deep-seated feeling of "homelessness" at the core of his being, and he unconsciously or consciously hopes to compensate for this lack by experiencing a state of sublimity. Even the Byronic Hero longs for the sublime in nature despite his awareness that he is too

wretched to connect fully with the realm of the infinite. Although an instant reaction of shock or terror accompanies the sublime, it creates a home for the restless soul, even if it is just a temporary one. Thus, the male wanderer in both Abrams's and Thorslev's definitions, and in its various incarnations by Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron, is a fundamentally homeless figure. Yet, he is not an aimless wanderer in the traditional sense. Although he does not always reach sublimity, he has a clear goal in mind and is always going somewhere. The connection between wandering and the sublime lies in the idea that the male wanderer hopes to find a home within the realm of the sublime, even if it exists only for a few moments, or, in the case of the Byronic Hero, as a failure or a form of perversion.

The female wanderer, on the other hand, is not in need of nature. Since she perceives her own self as an object of sublime terror, she does not hope to find the sublime through external natural stimuli. In fact, because of nature's associations with the idea of home, as Abrams has suggested, and its rather painful implications for her, she entirely avoids nature as a potential realm of the sublime. As an exile, she has a rather problematic relationship with the idea of home. Whereas the male wanderer incorporates the idea of home into his voyage and sublime experiences, his female counterpart conceives of home and journeying as completely opposed ideas. For the female wanderer, home represents the trauma of the domestic realm, which is something that she cannot and does not want to imagine. The concept of home becomes the realm of the inexpressible and she certainly cannot identify with it in connection with the sublime. The objects she

perceives in nature are too familiar and "uncanny," to use a Freudian term, to transform into something sublime. For the female wanderer, they represent pure terror itself, which recalls painful memories of the domestic realm that are entirely removed from the realm of the sublime. She therefore deliberately chooses to avoid the natural realm altogether. Instead, she experiences the sublime in spaces that are more suitable to her unstable self: the stage, the city, madness, or even death. Within these theatrical, dynamic realms, everything becomes possible. The female wanderer experiences pain, and yet is able to embrace and express her theatrical, fragmented identity, and her perception of herself as an object of sublime terror.

My first chapter will explore the different ways in which one could see the actress Mary Robinson as well as her characters in her poetry as literal or metaphorical wanderers, and more specifically as objects of sublime terror. Robinson's Memoirs, her letters, and her poetry portray the wanderer as somewhat inconsistent and incoherent actress figures that lack authenticity and are never able to exit the stage, metaphorically speaking. Nevertheless, Robinson is able to celebrate and embrace the painful sense of self-division intrinsic to the sublime by affirming the multiplicity and playfulness of the body on stage, which, ultimately, generates a liberating sense of sublime possibilities. Placing emphasis on recurring ideas such as theatricality and fragmentation, as well as the body, the city, and madness as a locus of the sublime, I will argue that the wandering actress and some of her more theatrical wanderers in her poetry experience a self-generated version of the sublime on stage. The female wanderer ultimately

perceives sublimity through her fragmented, multiple roles and identities, and more specifically through the art of imitation and self-adaptation as well as the sense of otherness generated by her different versions of the self.

In raising the question as to whether the sublime can survive during times of war, the second chapter will focus on the idea of fragmentation in Charlotte Smith's poetry. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's theory of melancholy, I will examine the wounded, exiled, and mad wanderer in light of the physical and psychological effects of the French Revolution. In her Elegiac Sonnets and her longer poem The Emigrants, Smith portrays her exiles as defined by pain, passivity, fragmentation, and suicidal thoughts. Smith's wanderers truly show physical and emotional scars. I argue that her wanderer figures perceive their identities as continually bleeding "open wounds" that are fractured by melancholia and the violent horrors of war. Since the only possibilities for sublime selfhood are themselves silenced and harmed, Smith's wanderers nostalgically mourn the loss of the potential for sublimity inherent in their pre-war identities. I argue that the female wanderer internalizes the psychological effects of war to the extent that she perceives her own self as a wounded object of terror.

Chapter three will focus on Letitia Landon's aesthetic of death and disembodiment by pushing the idea of fragmentation in a somewhat different direction. Landon's wanderers are fragmented, disembodied, and supernatural semi-monsters who are visibly self-divided and transcend the traditional boundaries of the female body. In transforming her wanderers into supernatural figures such as ghosts, mermaids, and sirens, Landon fragments the traditional

figure of the Romantic wanderer. All of these fairy-tale figures are essentially incomplete creatures that oscillate between the realms of the human and the non-human. Yet, they are also threatening and violent figures of ultimate transcendence who transgress even the boundaries between the living and the dead. Landon's wanderers attain a state of sublimity through their own terrifying identities as semi-monstrous hybrids and ghosts. More specifically, they reach sublime transcendence within the realm of fairy tales either through the half-death of the female body or through their magic powers as mermaids and sirens. In deconstructing the corporeal limits of the wanderer's appearance, Landon both redefines and fragments the boundaries of the female body and the figure of the Romantic wanderer as a whole.

Hence, the female wanderer conceives of herself as the personification of two realms: the realm of terror and the realm of the sublime. She sees her self as an imaginative and theatrical object of sublimity as well as a monstrously terrifying incomprehensible "Other." In other words, she experiences the sublime through her own fragmented identity. Mellor argues that "the sublime is associated with an experience of masculine empowerment; its contrasting term, the beautiful, is associated with an experience of feminine nurturance, love and sensuous relaxation" (Romanticism and Gender 85). Since the patriarchal discourse assigns the female Romantic subject the space of the beautiful, and not the space of the sublime, she perceives her own identity as entirely conflicted and displaced. As a female object of sublime terror, she is forced to live on the margins. In light of the divisions inherent in the Kantian sublime and the fact that

it locates the sublime entirely within the subject, the female wanderer personifies both the pleasure and the pain associated with the Kantian sublime. As I have illustrated above, the Kantian sublime does "violence to the inner sense" (Kant 116). Since the female wanderer perceives her own identity as a fragment and as an object of sublime terror, the sublime becomes a self-destructive, but also theatrical, act of violence against her own self. The female wanderer pushes the Kantian sublime towards the stage, madness, and, ultimately, towards the realm of death. Since she is not dependent on external stimuli such as nature, the sublime is inherent in her own subjectivity. For Robinson, Smith, and Landon, nature represents the realm of pure terror. Unlike the male wanderers created by the male Romantic poets, the male wandering characters by these three women writers also seek out the sublime in nature, but end up experiencing nothing but terror. The female wanderer therefore deliberately chooses to avoid the realm of the natural world. I argue that in Robinson, Smith, and Landon, the sublime becomes something that is only accessible to the female wanderer. It may only exist as a fragment, but it is conceivable and attainable. The female wanderer ultimately experiences sublimity through her own fragmented identity; more specifically as an internalized deathlike state on stage, in the city, through madness, and decay. Considering that the male Romantics such as Wordsworth condemned the sensationalism associated with theatrical, inauthentic spaces like the theatre, it is understandable that the female wanderer struggles with her self-image. At certain moments, she is able to imagine the endlessly elevating creative possibilities

inherent in the space between her multiple identities, and, during other moments, these possibilities become self-destructive, out of reach, and terrifying.

Chapter I:

Wandering Towards the Stage, the City, and Madness: The Actress and Poet Mary Robinson

Since it is my primary goal to expand the connotations generally associated with the trope of the Romantic wanderer, I would like to approach Mary Robinson's contribution to the figure by focusing on two questions. First, how does Robinson, as a female writer of the late-eighteenth century, perceive and illustrate the male and the female wanderer in her poetry? And second, how does she -– the poet, actress, and public persona -- redefine the connotations of the wanderer through her multiple constructions of self? Mellor makes an excellent observation when she argues that "Mary Robinson consciously created what we now call a 'postmodernist subjectivity'" ("Mary Robinson" 253). More specifically, Robinson created a wandering object of sublime terror, one that is not only in a constant process of becoming, but also unstable and fragmentary. In my study of the female wanderer's concept of subjectivity in this chapter, I will pay attention to both Robinson's autobiography -- her life as wandering actress and wandering poet -- and her poetry. Given Robinson's countless roles, her various affairs, and her restless identity as wandering actress, the first part of this chapter sees Robinson's actress persona in her autobiography and letters as a metaphorical wanderer figure. In exploring the different ways in which one could see her and her characters as wanderers, I connect the themes of the female wanderer, the female sublime, the stage, the city, and madness.

Mary Robinson, famously labeled "Perdita" (the lost one), was a well-known actress before she gained popularity as a poet, and she indirectly associates themes such as theatricality and the body as a locus of the sublime with her wandering figures. The "multiplicity of her poetic personae" (Pascoe, Mary Robinson 22), and her career as an actress suggest an interesting connection between the inauthentic realm of the stage and her unwillingness to limit herself to one specific poetic style in her poetry. Judith Pascoe describes the wandering actress Robinson as a "Romantic monster -- a blatant publicity hound, a poetic panderer, a staged self" (Mary Robinson 1). Robinson and her wanderers are indeed "Romantic monsters": they are monsters of sublime terror that lack authenticity and are never able to exit the "stage," metaphorically speaking. This is especially evident in her "Lyrical Tales," in which her wanderers appear as homeless and faceless strangers, fugitives, and guests, operating on a mental stage created by the pressures of reputation. Forced to live in physical or emotional spaces in which they feel they do not belong, the wanderers perceive a painful split between mind and world, manifesting itself through feelings of isolation and alienation. I will argue, however, that the wandering actress Robinson, as portrayed in her Memoirs and letters, and some of the more theatrical, urban wanderers in her poetry, affirm their restless existence by experiencing a self-generated version of the sublime on stage. Robinson is able to embrace, celebrate, and overcome the painful divisions inherent in the sublime by playfully affirming the multiplicity and the fluidity of the body on stage. The sense of otherness created between her different versions of the self opens up a large, liberating

realm of sublime possibilities. By perceiving herself and the figure of the wanderer as actors and actresses that are both nothing and everything at the same time, Robinson draws an interesting connection between the theatricality of the body and the theme of female wandering, almost anticipating a postmodern concept of identity. In light of her affirmation of the possibilities and divisions inherent in her theatrical identity as wandering actress, Robinson is the most positive of the three poets to be studied in this thesis. The pain or terror generated by the gap between real and false identity as well as by the idea that the sublime can only be experienced on stage can be overcome through the playful, liberating element inherent in the performances of her theatrical identity. Some of Robinson's less theatrical wanderers in her nature poetry perceive their own identities as alienating, painful, and divorced from the sublime; however, within the alternate realms of the stage, the city, or madness, the wanderer's alienation dissolves into imitation, play, and performance, and can eventually be overcome through the experience of a sublime moment of transcendence on a metaphorical or physical stage.

Throughout her lifetime, Mary Robinson was primarily defined by two things: her body and her reputation. Due to her public affair with the Prince of Wales, whom she met as a young girl while performing the role of Perdita in The Winter's Tale, she continued to struggle with her reputation as a fallen woman and her various representations of identity for the rest of her life. Forced to jump back and forth between different types of female roles and acceptable female spaces, Robinson was both a wandering actress and a versatile wandering poet.

Stuart Curran points out that "Robinson lived on a fringe that neither Southey nor Wordsworth ever experienced" ("Mary Robinson's" 32), and for most of her life as a poet as well as on stage, Robinson dealt with this situation by trying out a large variety of roles – a response, which rendered her identity somewhat incomprehensible. Indeed, not only Robinson herself, but also her scholars struggle with her various representations of identity. Mellor asks an important question: "Who -- or what -- was Mary Robinson?" ("Mary Robinson" 230). Considering that "Robinson adopted at least nine different pseudonyms during her writing career" (Mellor 252), it seems almost impossible to get at the essence of her self and her writing. Throughout her lifetime, her audience kept trying to understand the "multiplicity of her poetic personae" (Pascoe, "Mary Robinson" 22) by putting her into various categories. Robinson has been famously labeled a mistress, fallen woman, actress, libertine, Della Cruscan poet, Romantic genius, poet of Sensibility, and Sappho. Mellor even suggests that "Mary Robinson's production of her self as a set of written and visual texts [is] a conscious and calculated process of self-commodification" ("Mary Robinson" 253). Whether or not Robinson deliberately uses self-fashioning as a commodity, it seems that she conceives of her identity as fluid and subject to deconstruction. It is never stable, is always in process and motion, and it contains multitudes. In her Memoirs, for example, Robinson explains how radically diverse and oppositional her personae are: "Mrs. Robinson, the promising young actress, was a very different personage from Mrs. Robinson who had been overwhelmed with sorrows, and came to ask an asylum under the roof of vulgar ostentation" (II 19). The element of the

sublime in her career as wandering actress is most evident in this "fluidity" and contradictory ability for self-transformation. As exemplified in her Memoirs, it is sublimely overwhelming because of the endless creative possibilities inherent in her various, oppositional identities, and somewhat terrifying because it lacks consistency and stability.

Robinson's sublime experiences on stage are quite different from the male sublime. I would argue that Robinson is one of the first feminists who deliberately "avoid[ed] duplicating the claims of the masculine sublime" (Yaeger 198) by creating their own version of the sublime through their eccentric wanderings on stage. Patricia Yaeger aptly points out that "the claim of the sublime is that we can -- in words or feelings -- transcend the normative, the human" (192). Theatre, according to Jonas Barish, is all about "transcendence and the transgressions of boundaries" (26), thus providing an ideal space for the sublime. Although not all transgressions of boundaries generally result in the sublime, in her Memoirs, Robinson makes clear that the boundary-crossing that occurs on stage is, at least for Robinson herself, not a failed version of the sublime, but, in fact, her only way towards her ideal of liberation and self-transcendence. The female wanderer ultimately confronts her own terrifying and sublime aspects on stage. Robinson describes the sublime terror that she experiences while playing her role as Juliet as follows:

> When I approached the side wing […] I then began to fear that my resolution would fail, and I leaned upon the nurse's arm, almost fainting […] The thundering applause that greeted me, nearly over-

> powered all my faculties. I stood mute and bending with alarm, which did not subside till I had never once ventured to look at the audience. (Memoirs I 192-II 2)

Despite the fear, her experience on stage is empowering and affirming. Not only does her audience perceive her as an object of desire, but she is also her own object of desire. In playing these roles, she gets closer to her ideal version of her self. In her letter "To William Godwin" on August 24 1800, she writes: "I have [always] been a wanderer in search of something, approaching to *my idea* of a perfect being" (Pascoe, Mary Robinson 368). She is truly a wandering actress, who generates the female sublime through her own idealized version of herself by performing the ability to desire, to love, to transcend, and to be other than her self. In performing love and desire, she also generates a hope for change for her audience, who receives her with "thundering applause." Making use of her considerable acting skills, she demonstrates to her audience that the "idea" of her own perfect being as well as love, passion, overwhelming experiences, and possibly also the sublime are real and do indeed still exist, even if only for a few seconds on stage. Although she has trouble comprehending her self because her "faculties" are "overpowered," she nevertheless celebrates her role and becomes what she acts. As an actress she does not have an original self; her identity is solely based on her previous roles. Mellor points out that "in the case of Mary Robinson […] any distinction between the self as art and the self in art collapses" ("Mary Robinson" 256). Self is essentially "performance" (Mellor 254), and Eger suggests that Robinson "was […] reluctant to distinguish between life and

performance in fashioning her own identity" (39). Yet, given the large variety of roles and personae she adopted during her lifetime as wandering actress and poet, I would argue that self, for her, is not only performance, but most of all a journey. Although Robinson may have never arrived at a stable sense of self and at her ultimate "*idea* of a perfect being" (Pascoe, Mary Robinson 368), the act of imitation itself is empowering and transcendent.

Although it is true that, as Morgan Rooney points out, Robinson "belongs to no/body" (372), I argue that, in performing her multiple roles, she also belongs to every/body, which renders her, paradoxically, an autonomous, well-rounded, and creative but also a somewhat externally determined object. In other words, because she is able to transform her self into anything she would like to, but is also dependent on her audience, she is both free and unfree at the same time. Mellor claims that "we may think of Robinson as initiating that particular conception of the poetical character later so well defined by Keats: of the poet as a chameleon, as one who 'has no identity' but is continually informing and filling some other Body" ("Mary Robinson" 253). The element of sublimity inherent in this conception of the self lies in the idea of transcending one's own body by becoming another, possibly more desirable character, and in the sense of terror generated by the idea that Robinson no longer thinks of herself as her own individual self, but as a "character" whose reception and popularity entirely control and define her. In her Memoirs, Robinson writes: "Though I was always received with the most flattering approbation, the characters in which I was most popular were Ophelia, Juliet, and Rosalind" (II 5). It seems that the worth of her

identity depends on her roles and popularity on stage, which is alienating. Her abilities of transformation and lack of a stable self are furthermore present in statements such as "I would accustom myself to appear in comedy" (Memoirs II 6). In this context, it is also significant that the Prince of Wales fell in love with her while she was performing the role of Perdita on stage. Perhaps he fell in love with a copy, with one of her many constructions of self. Since it may be disturbing to be loved for a role, the stage becomes a space that embodies both sublimity through love and the terrifying realm of illusion at the same time. On the one hand, Robinson is not loved for her own authentic self, but on the other hand, the stage allows her to experience her first, most intense, and most overwhelming love affair, even if it may just have been based on an illusion. Hence, as Anne Close also points out, Robinson "writes her own happy ending" (183) through her career as an actress, despite its lack of authenticity. In consciously inhabiting, affirming, and celebrating her otherness by wandering towards the realm of the stage, Robinson creates a space for possibility, invention, and the sublime.

At first, it might seem somewhat obscure to locate the sublime within the world of the stage, especially since the theatre is so removed from the realm of nature, which is one of the most important defining markers of the Romantic male sublime. In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, the life of an actress was mostly associated with dissipation and corruption. Eger explains that

> actresses had a more regular and highly charged relationship with the public than any other group of women of their day. They were

> frequently open to accusations of immorality and tended to be associated with the prostitutes, or 'public women,' that frequented the pit, rather than the aristocratic ladies who occupied the boxes above. (34)

Due to her affair with the Prince of Wales, Robinson was certainly "open to [such] accusations of immorality," and many associate her career as wandering actress with promiscuity and sensationalism. Hence, at first glance, it seems rather difficult to establish connections among the realm of the stage and the sublime, especially since, while the theatre is entirely public, the male sublime is a predominantly private experience. Yet, surprisingly, Robinson uses this public space and the fact that she is "constantly on display" (Eger 39) to her advantage by generating a possibility for sublimity within this inauthentic but creative realm, which is especially evident in her Memoirs. From early on, Robinson conceives of the stage as an entirely affirmative and liberating space, and she soon develops a fascination with "the thundering applause that […] nearly over-powered all [her] faculties" (Memoirs II 1). Both Kant and Burke describe the sublime as an over-powering, turbulent experience. The fact that Robinson describes the nature of acting as "over-powering" hints at her association of acting with the sublime.

Moreover, she remembers the first time she appeared on stage at the Drury Lane Theatre as a particularly overwhelming day: "It is impossible to describe the various emotions of hope and fear that possessed my mind" (I 190). Again, she conjures up images of the sublime by describing her feelings as "impossible to describe" and as "possessing" her mind. It seems that her experience is so

powerful that it transcends the realm of language. In Book II of her Memoirs, she further associates stage life with the sublime and writes: "I then experienced, for the first time in my life, a gratification which language could not utter […]. A new sensation seemed to awake in my bosom" (II 3). Again, she describes the sublime as something that is beyond language. Hence, even as a young girl, the realm of the theatre has served as an ideal space for Robinson to affirm, perform, and celebrate her somewhat incomprehensible multiple identities as "inauthentic," promiscuous theatrical wanderer.

It seems tenable to be skeptical if such an artificial and inconsistent stage identity can really serve as a locus for the sublime. Ashley Cross argues that

> reputation might be read as a form of dispossession, providing identity at the same time it points to the hollowness of that identity, a subjectivity that is necessarily other within itself, continually requiring elaboration, and always defined by forces outside itself. No longer self-possessed, but a copy of oneself, and a copy that must be defended in order to maintain one's reputation as original, the writing subject is continually confronted with his/her own contingency. (537)

Although Cross makes a valid point in alluding to the disturbing, "hollow" aspects which accompany the process of copying and acting, I would like to argue that Robinson's enthusiastic portrayals of her acting career in her Memoirs suggest that she celebrates the terror associated with the "hollowness" of her unfree identity as a "copy," as well as her "interest in the fragmentary or

unfinished" (Pascoe, "Mary Robinson" 21) by performing it on stage and off stage. In her Memoirs, and in her exchange with Florizel in 1773, Robinson makes clear that she has always seen acting as something empowering, elevating, and liberating; and that even as a young girl, she was "passionately fond of Plays" ("Letter III Mrs. R. to Mr. Bristol 7th of October 1773" 23) and "looked forward with delight […] to celebrity" (Memoirs II 7-8). In fact, both Robinson's Memoirs and her letters show that she conceives of her identity as celebrity, role, and "copy" as superior to her original, natural self. It seems that the reproduction of her self, the "*idea* of a perfect being" (Pascoe, Mary Robinson 368)," improves upon and becomes more fulfilling than her "authentic" self. In imitating a role, that is, in becoming a copy, she is gradually getting closer to this "idea" of her own perfect being, even if that may not necessarily be authentic. Her most satisfactory, intense, and enthusiastic moments occur on stage as a "copy" when she is all dressed up in "pink satin, trimmed with crape, richly spangled with silver" (Robinson, Memoirs I 190) and her "heart throb[s] convulsively" (Memoirs I 192). Although Robinson might be aware of the element of terror inherent in this disturbing understanding of herself as copy and in the realization that, unlike the male sublime, the female sublime is entirely removed from the realm of authenticity, she renders this thought secondary because she perceives the glamorous endless sublime possibilities of self-transformation. Robinson therefore finds the sublime in the playful and theatrical space between original and copy; more specifically within the experience of transcendence on stage, this

somewhat disquieting process of displacement, self-othering, and the death of authenticity.

Robinson indirectly explores the connection between journeying, the sublime, theatricality, and madness through the imagery in her poetry. In "Ode to Rapture," nature seems theatrical, is gendered female, and acts as a reference to Robinson's own identity as wandering actress. Nature "trac'd the PASSIONS; at command" (5), and her "attributes" are "display'd" (2). Her act of tracing the "passions at command" seems somewhat mechanical and could even be seen as a symbol for selling one's emotions, thus indirectly alluding to Robinson's acting career and her reputation as "poetic whore." Nature is an artist figure who "found (to each) her pencil true" (8). Her "magic pencil, gay / Dipp'd in the RAINBOW's brightest ray" (14-15). The varied colors of the rainbow might evoke Robinson's theatrical multiple wandering identities on stage and her various gender roles. And yet, Robinson writes that "nature's pencil faint […] could not paint" (21-22), thus suggesting a failed artistic experience. It seems that nature has potential and skill, and yet the colors fail to form an artistic picture. The poem associates the realm of nature with a failed version of the sublime rather than a failure of the aesthetic in general because the vocabulary strongly suggests features of the sublime. Words such as "HEAV'N" (32) and "SWEET CONFUSION" (20) are forcefully capitalized which demonstrates again that the sublime is something that is very difficult to represent. In fact, it is exactly the difficulty of representation, which suggests the sublime. Moreover, to a certain extent, nature-as-woman is also able to experience the sublime through the realm

of madness and fantasy. In attempting to "prove on EARTH a transient HEAV'N" (32), hence in attempting to create the sublime, she finds herself in a state of "SWEET CONFUSION" (20). The form of transcendence she describes here is a sublime one because of its emphasis on its overwhelming nature, which results in a state of "sweet confusion." It is, however, important to note that nature- as-woman never arrives at the second stage of the Kantian sublime in which reason is able to process the experience. "Half-madd'ning at the view" (33), she perceives her own work of art that is her representation of rapture as a "glowing PHANTOM" (34). She never attains the state of calm appreciation and admiration, as described in Burke, for example. Nevertheless, even if the sublime is not fully completed in all of its stages, it is a potentially empowering space for the female subject to inhabit.

However, some of Robinson's more traditional and less theatrical wanderers in her "Lyrical Tales" who attempt to penetrate and imitate the realm of the male sublime by wandering in nature, fail miserably and appear as crippled, alienated, or haunted exiles and ghost-figures. Robin L. Miskolcze argues that "the world Robinson revealed in her writing was one marked by alienation and exile" (207), and although one can locate a hopeful sense of optimism in her works depicting urban or more theatrical settings, I agree that this does apply to her wanderers' failed attempts at attaining sublimity in her nature poems. The wanderers in her nature poems are indeed bleak characters. In "The Hermit of Mont-Blanc," Robinson depicts a wanderer figure in nature; a "lonely ANCHORET [who] pined in monastic horrors" (17). The wanderer in the natural

world experiences a pure form of terror, one that is completely divorced from the sublime:

> One dreary night when Winter's icy breath
> Half petrified the scene, when not a star
> Gleam'd o'er the black infinity of space,
> Sudden, the HERMIT started from his couch
> Fear-struck and trembling! Ev'ry limb was shook
> With painful agitation. On his cheek
> The blanch'd interpreter of horror mute
> Sat terribly impressive! In his breast
> The ruddy fount of life convulsive flow'd
> And his broad eyes, fix'd motionless as death,
> Gaz'd vacantly aghast! (104-114)

Unlike Wordsworth's wanderers in nature, for example, who eventually reach a sublime state of transcendence, Robinson's "alien Man" (60) remains in a state of stasis. The intensity of the pain that the wanderer experiences makes it difficult to locate hope within this bleak poem. He is both "mute" and "motionless," thus linking his experience very closely to the realms of death and nothingness. Unlike Wordsworth's wanderers who experience objects in nature as a form of *sublime* terror, Robinson's alien Man is only "thrill'd with terror" (135). The idea of *sublime* terror within the realm of nature seems inconceivable for Robinson.

In her poem "The Fugitive," moreover, Robinson uses the figure of a sad and exiled male wanderer to express the female subject's own state of alienation.

In “The Fugitive,” the lonely man is desperately looking for “his seat” (6), somewhere to go, and a place to rest. Robinson does not depict nature favourably; instead she describes it as a terrifying “dark scene” (36). The speaker in the poem approaches the fugitive with the following words: “Oft have I seen you Solitary Man” (1) and “Thou art here / A persecuted Exile” (38-39). She calls him a “Poor Traveller” (34) and asks: “tell me / tell me all -- / For I like thee, am but a Fugitive / An alien from delight” (34-36). The speaker includes herself in the rank of the aimlessly “trembling Creatures” (74-77) in the dark scene of nature, thus associating herself directly with the fugitive.

The title character of “The Maniac” is another exiled figure quite similar to the fugitive. Pascoe points out that “The Maniac” was written in a delirium induced by “near eighty drops of laudanum” (Mary Robinson 32), which might explain why the poem is one of Robinson’s bleakest depictions of the wanderer figure. The speaker strongly identifies herself and empathizes with the “wand’ring soul” (2): “O tell me, THING FORLORN! And let me share thy woe” (6). Even if the speaker is not necessarily a female one, the poem nevertheless shows her female perception of the wanderer’s self, which I consider to be an important angle of perspective in redefining the figure of the Romantic wanderer. Pascoe points out that the character of the maniac is based on a moment of terror when “Robinson witnessed an elderly man being hurried on by a crowd of people who pelted him with mud and stones” (Mary Robinson 122). The poor exile is in a hopeless, constant state of pain. He is described as a “WRETCH FORLORN” (81) who feels deeply isolated and alienated within the realm of nature. He is

completely divorced from the sublime and feels uncomfortable and displaced in nature, which is obvious when the speaker tells him that "ALL SEASONS are alike to THEE" (40). The poem is essentially a failed attempt at understanding the maniac. It contains several rhetorical questions opening the stanzas with "why art thou" (1) and "why dost thou" (19), which serve to illustrate the difficulty of comprehending the maniac's identity. Similar to Robinson's variable, multiple personae as a wandering actress, his subjectivity seems entirely incomprehensible. However, since "ALL SEASONS are alike to" (40) him, he is in a melancholic state of stasis and lethargy and unable to transcend the realm of nature. In contrast to Robinson's more theatrical and urban wanderers, he does not conceive of himself as an object of *sublime* terror. Alienated and stuck within the realm of nature, he perceives his identity as entirely filled with terror and pain.

Robinson portrays her wanderers in the city, on the other hand, in a more positive light. Urban environments are, similar to the realm of the stage, possible sublime spaces for the female wanderer. Due to its versatility, multiplicity, and theatricality, the city can essentially be seen as another version of the stage. Pascoe argues that Robinson "celebrates the theatricality of the city" (Romantic Theatricality 138), and it is understandable that, as an actress, Robinson feels most comfortable in such a diverse urban environment. In the city poem "London's Summer Morning," Robinson portrays London positively through a catalogue of its various elements and inhabitants, as opposed to Wordsworth's "The City of Blank Confusion" in Book VII of The Prelude, for example. Pascoe suggests that "Wordsworth mutes and Robinson highlights women's place in

urban streets" ("Mary Robinson" 8). She furthermore argues that Robinson finds in the city a "sustaining rather than alienating vision" (Romantic Theatricality 162), which is certainly evident in this poem. The female wanderer in "London's Summer Morning" feels at home within the movement of the fluid urban setting "of early walkers" (16), as opposed to in domestic or natural spaces. The multiplicity of the crowd and the theatrical fast-paced urban environment in which "every shop displays its varied trade" (15) resemble Robinson's own multiple and frequent shifts of identity during her lifetime. The multitudinous, contradictory elements of the city indirectly allude to the fluid, performative self of the female wanderer. The atmosphere of the city, although described with specificity, seems somewhat difficult to grasp as a whole because of its multitude, which is demonstrated here: "The din of hackney-coaches, wagons, carts […] Knife-grinders, coopers, squeaking cork-cutters / Fruit-barrows, and the hunger-giving cries / Of vegetable venders, fill the air" (10-14). Yet, the city is not incomprehensible in a destructive sense. In fact, this multitude does not lead to stasis, but to creativity, which is obvious in the last line of the poem when the "poor poet wakes from busy dreams, / To paint the summer morning" (42). Similar to the wandering poet and actress Mary Robinson herself, the crowd of the city has an "infinitely variable self" (Setzer 5). The long catalogue and listing of all the various urban elements in the poem generate a sense of endlessness and timelessness. It is as if the city transcends the limits of time and space through this never-ending catalogue, thus creating an ideal realm for sublime experiences. The city is also associated with the imaginary realm of dreams when Robinson

mentions the "sleepy housemaid" (6), the "smoke" (2) and "the street / [that] is lost in clouds impervious" (8-9). As the painting and the emphasis on creativity at the ending of the poem suggest, through the realm of the city, the female wanderer is able to envision a potential for the sublime even if it may only be transitory, dreamlike, illusory, or "lost in clouds." It seems that the poem celebrates the same qualities of the city that Robinson celebrates in herself. Hence, in seeing the city as a realm of transcendence and essentially as another version of the world of the stage, the female wanderer is capable of perceiving sublimity through her theatricality and her ability to envision the sublime aspects of her identity.

The realms of madness and ecstasy act as other potentially sublime spaces for the female wanderer to inhabit. Jacqueline Labbe suggests that in Robinson's poetry, madness is often linked to domesticity and "romance is synonymous with violence" ("Romance" 156). The female wanderer feels trapped and imprisoned within the realm of home, and ultimately experiences it as an utterly painful and violent space. The domestic realm essentially represents everything from which the female wanderer would like to escape. Home in association with the sublime is something that is entirely incomprehensible for the female wanderer, and yet, a sense of hope for release from the domestic realm's oppression can be located within madness and extreme forms of melancholy or nostalgia. Sublime meaning hence also lies within the bleak realms of madness and nostalgia; essentially spaces that are closest to the realm of death. Labbe accurately points out that Robinson "creates romances in which death, not love, is the resolution; where

poetry itself sabotages the romantic relationship […]. What Curran calls her 'pathetic poetry' finds its meaning in loss, despair, and disruption" ("Romance" 137-139). "The Widow's Home" is a perfect portrayal of a free spirit who experiences the domestic realm as a pure form of such despair and terror through stasis. Ever since her beloved died, the female subject has experienced her home as entirely destructive and imprisoning. The soldier's widow seems to be a wanderer at heart since she hopes for a path to "sweeter […] gilded Palaces" (103). Yet, due to her melancholy and heartbreak, she feels stuck and unable to move: "Every day / She wastes the hour glass, waiting for his return" (24-25). Stasis is one of the most common effects of the experience of trauma and terror, and, indeed: "every hour the widow anticipates the day, / (Deceiv'd, yet cherish'd by the flatt'rer hope) / When she shall meet her Hero" (23-28). Despite the fact that she knows that her husband "sleeps on the bed of death" (80), she keeps imagining the absurd possibility of his survival because she knows that this is the only thing that keeps her alive. Completely reduced to passivity and stasis, she is nothing but a ghost of her former existence: in other words, an object of terror. Through her imagination, nostalgia, and mad "melancholy music" (96), however, she is able to transform the terror that she experiences into a sublime one. Sublimity for Robinson's female subjects always means possibility, and in holding onto her nostalgia, the widow creates a possibility for sublime transcendence and a path to "sweeter […] gilded Palaces" (103), which keeps her from vanishing completely. Thus, through her madness and nostalgia, she is no longer an object of terror, but is instead capable of transforming herself into an

object of *sublime* terror -- one who is capable of wandering towards "sweeter" realms.

The poems "Poor Marguerite" and "STANZAS: WRITTEN AFTER SUCCESSIVE NIGHTS OF MELANCHOLY DREAMS" further demonstrate how the female wanderer transforms the realms of violence and madness into sublime spaces. In "Poor Marguerite," the "NUT-BROWN GIRL" (1) is portrayed as the typical wounded, restless, and mad wanderer who "was seen to haste; Wide waving was her bosom bare" (2). She is naked, vulnerable, and in a constant state of movement, which is obvious when the speaker observes that "across the waste of printless snow / All day the NUT-BROWN GIRL would go" (35-36). The Nut-Brown Girl furthermore embodies the realms of pain, terror, and solitude:

> Dark was her large and sunken eye
> Which wildly gaz'd upon the sky;
> And swiftly down her freckled face
> The chilling dews began to pace:
> For she was lorn, and many a day,
> Had, all alone, been doom'd to stray. (11-16)

Like in "The Maniac," the speaker seems to be incapable of making sense of the Nut-Brown Girl's identity, which she reveals through rhetorical questions such as:

> and why did she with sun-burnt breast
> So wander, and so scorn to rest?
> Why did the NUT-BROWN MAIDEN go

O'er burning plains and wastes of snow?" (79-82)

All the speaker is able to comprehend is the fact that the Nut-Brown Girl experiences extreme forms of internalized psychological torture and pain as she is "wrapp'd in fev'rish dreams" (5). This passage is quite similar to a passage in "STANZAS: WRITTEN AFTER SUCCESSIVE NIGHTS OF MELANCHOLY DREAMS" in which the speaker is "convulsive, wild, distraught" (45) as well as "o'erwhelm'd with agonizing dreams / And bound in spells of FANCIED NIGHT" (43-44). The speaker experiences terror in its most extreme form just as the Nut-Brown Girl does in "Poor Marguerite" who is tortured and wounded by her dreams and her melancholia. The speaker wonders: "Where lies hid the balsam sweet, / To heal the wounds of MARGUERITE?" (9-10). Both subjects in both poems seem to experience violence in its most internalized form: through their own madness. Labbe argues that although Robinson's violence is expressed through fantasy, "the violence masks desire which is itself masked" ("Romance" 156). I argue that Robinson's violence masks not only desire per se, but also the desire for the sublime. Sublimity manifests itself through the experience of violence. According to Labbe, Robinson "use[s] violence constructively" (156), and indeed, there is a sense of ambiguity and a liberating, elevating sublime potential inherent in Robinson's representations of violence and madness. The experience of violence through madness, or madness through violence, instigates the sublime. The Nut-Brown Girl experiences a sublime transcendence of time and space located entirely within her own reality of madness. It is beyond language and can only be expressed through "wild" (137) song. Ultimately, the

sublime manifests itself through a combination of her own art and madness when "wild she sung! [and] on the sand / She saw her long lost HENRY" (137-138). In "STANZAS: WRITTEN AFTER SUCCESSIVE NIGHTS OF MELANCHOLY DREAMS," the sublime is rendered visible in a very similar way when the speaker describes that

> Down my cold and pallid cheek,
> The mingling tears of joy and grief,
> The soul's tumultuous feelings speak,
> And yield the struggling heart relief;
> I smile to KNOW the danger PAST! (49-53)

The "mingling tears of joy and grief" are what define both the female sublime and the female wanderer's perception of herself best. The experience of terror is ultimately transformed into a sublime feeling of relief when the female subject "smile[s] to KNOW the danger PAST!" (53). Through her own madness, the female wanderer experiences a sense of sweet sadness, which ultimately dissolves the terror and the pain into a fusion best described as sublime terror.

Hence, as exemplified by Robinson's Memoirs, her letters, and poems, the realms of the stage, the city, and madness serve as potential spaces for the sublime. The divisions within the fragmented, theatrical female wandering self become internalized and manifest themselves within the realms of theatricality, violence, or madness. Ultimately, these realms prove to be empowering and liberating possibilities of breaking away from the female wanderer's general state of imprisonment and stasis. Thus, the wandering actress and wandering poet Mary

Robinson who thrives on stage and in non-natural spaces such as the city wanders away from the natural male realm of the sublime. She becomes whom she imitates, which is certainly terrifying and alienating due to the lack of authenticity, and yet she also accesses a feeling of overwhelming greatness inherent in the sublime, the space of the other, and this process of alienation. She thus wanders towards a new self-generated understanding of the sublime as she is capable of transcending the male version by creating a new one on stage. Robinson as well as the theatrical, urban wanderers in her poetry perceive themselves as objects of sublime terror in the sense that they are able to envision, celebrate, and expose the endless possibilities intrinsic to their various contradictory personae. Within the alternate realms of the stage, the city, and madness, the terror experienced is dissolved into sublimity, thereby allowing Robinson's female wanderers to "speak back" to the male sublime. The moment of the sublime ultimately comes about through Robinson's technique of self-making, the reproduction of her self on stage, and the gaps within the wanderers' identities. In embracing the idea that identity means possibility, Robinson and her theatrical, urban wanderers are able to display the various aspects of their endlessly variable personae. Even if the sublime can only be perceived for a few seconds on stage, within a crowd of strangers, or through the realms of madness and ecstasy, the experience nevertheless opens up space for the "other" as well as a large array of theatrical possibilities for the female wanderer to inhabit.

Chapter II:

"Wounded" by Melancholia:

Charlotte Smith's Fragmented Wanderers, The French Revolution, and the Possibility of the Sublime in a "half bleeding world"

This chapter will draw on Julia Kristeva's theory of melancholy to examine the theme of fragmentation in connection with the melancholic wanderers in Charlotte Smith's poetry. Jonathan Wordsworth claims that Smith "wrote mournfully because [she] was unhappy" (Smith, The Poems 3). Whether or not women are "constitutively melancholic" (Schiesari 17), one of the reasons for Smith's melancholy may be that after her separation from Benjamin Smith in 1787, she "was left to provide for eight children on her own" (Smith, The Poems 22). Moreover, on a political level, as Leanne Maunu demonstrates, "by the late 1790s, she no longer possessed […] hope for change" (68). In The Emigrants, her Elegiac Sonnets, and some of her other poetry, Smith reveals this lack of "hope for change." More specifically, through her examination of the condition of physical and symbolic exile, she generates bleak, melancholic portrayals of the wanderer figures and victims of the French Revolution who perceive themselves as living in a "half-bleeding world" (The Emigrants II.324).

Especially in Smith's later poetry as well as in The Emigrants, her wanderers internalize the psychological effects of war in that they show "signs of fracture" (Keane 106), transforming them into objects of (sublime) terror. Smith's "bleeding" and fragmented wanderers live during the time of revolution, which is itself an environment that is transcendentally sublime because of its idealism, but,

on the other hand, terrifying because of the pain and the horrors involved. The wanderer ultimately finds herself in an internalized, painful state of war with her own self. One wonders if Smith's wanderers, like Robinson's, view themselves as objects of *sublime* terror, or only as objects of pure terror. Can there really be a space for sublime selfhood in a world that is continually "bleeding"? Smith's fragmented wanderers definitely view themselves in a much bleaker and more hopeless light than Robinson's. The only possibilities for sublimity are themselves harmed, silenced, and fractured, almost to the point of non-existence. Fragments of sublimity lie in moments of nostalgia when the wanderers remember sublime experiences and conjure up more complete, more comprehensible, and more meaningful former identities for themselves that often never really existed. Due to the stark contrast between imagined past and current reality, the pre-war and present identities appear disconnected, incoherent, and fail to form a unified whole. Passive and frozen somewhere within the space between the past and the future, the exile sees life as painful and meaningless. Death serves as the only absolute hope and solution. I will argue that fragmentation and nihilism define Smith's wanderers in that these figures view their selves as continually bleeding "open wounds" that are fractured by melancholia and the violent horrors of war; they are objects of terror who experience the sublime only through the gap between idealized past and present selfhood.

Since the fundamental state of melancholy-depression is the reason for Smith's wanderers' terror-filled self-image, I will briefly elaborate on the

significance of Kristeva's theory of melancholy in relation to Charlotte Smith's wanderer figures before examining Smith's poetry more closely. Kristeva defines melancholy as an "abyss of sorrow, a noncommunicable grief that at times, and often on a long-term basis, lays claims upon us to the extent of having us lose all interest in words, actions, and even life itself" (3). In fact, Smith's wanderers show all of these symptoms of melancholy and depression: pain, alienation, a sense of fragmentation, loss of speech, nihilism, and a longing for silence and death. More specifically, the wanderer in Smith's poetry frequently finds herself in a state of stasis or shock while perceiving her identity as painful, or, in Kristeva's words, as "an abyss of sorrow" (3). Kristeva argues that the sorrow is so overwhelming that the subject suffering from depression can no longer specify the exact cause for her melancholy. Indeed, it seems rather difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of Charlotte Smith's and her wanderer's sorrow. Amy Billone notes that "throughout the Elegiac Sonnets, Smith describes grief as final, wordless, and unalterable" (14). In fact, Smith rarely specifies the exact object of loss in her poetry. Melancholy seems omnipresent and all there is in a "half bleeding world" (The Emigrants II.324) that is harmed by the effects of the French Revolution. Overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness and melancholy, Smith and her wanderers view "history […] as horrific repetition" (Wolfson, "Charlotte" 512), and, along the lines of Kristeva's theory of melancholy, ultimately experience "Todessehnsucht," the death-wish.

Smith most succinctly demonstrates these symptoms of melancholy in her Elegiac Sonnets. The central image of the "melancholy bird" in Smith's poem

"To a Nightingale" serves as an apt symbol of the female subject's innate melancholy condition:

> 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? --- (1-4)

Some critics have suggested that the cause of the bird's melancholy lies in the myth of Philomela who was transformed into a nightingale. I argue, however, that the frequent, almost obsessive use of rhetorical questions, and especially the first one in this first quatrain, shows that Smith ultimately leaves the "sad cause" for the bird's melancholy unknown. Even if the myth of Philomela is a possible explanation, Smith does not make this explicit. Through her repeated rhetorical questions in quatrains two and three, she clearly expresses a sense of doubt as well as the speaker's desperate need to understand the melancholy bird. It may be that the melancholy bird mourns the loss of a "disastrous love" (12), but Smith also phrases this assumption as a question, and it ultimately remains a guess. Karen A. Weisman makes a valid point in arguing that "Smith's sonnets rarely name directly the grief that occasions them; instead the fact of grief is presupposed" (6). According to Kristeva's theory of melancholy, it logically follows that the helpless recurring questions express "the depressed's denial of the signifier" (37). The melancholic only perceives the overwhelming condition of melancholy itself, not its possible pragmatic reasons. The state of depression is so severe that any sense of specificity vanishes. The melancholic is overwhelmed by

her feelings and can no longer rationally conceive of possible reasons for the melancholy condition, which would make it more manageable. Hence, the signifier in Smith's poem remains unknown, and considering the omnipresence of melancholy in Smith's sonnets, it also remains somewhat arbitrary.

Furthermore, when the female speaker in the second stanza asks "what mean the sounds that swell thy little breast" (6), she implicitly alludes to the limits and the death of language, as well as the speaker's general loss of meaning. The reason for the female wanderer's melancholy remains beyond representation and meaning. Kristeva points out that "with melancholy persons, meaning appears to be arbitrary, or else it is elaborated with the help of much knowledge and will to mastery, but seems secondary, frozen, somewhat removed from the head and body of the person who is speaking" (43). Yet, it is important to note that the bird's song is also described as "sweet sorrow," and associated with "liberty" (14), thus opening up a space for meaning, hope, freedom, and perhaps even sublime selfhood through the realm of music. The terms "liberty" and "sweet" suggest that there is a possibility of transcendence and bliss inherent in music, yet the larger implications of this "sweetness" and the real meaning behind the words freedom or "liberty" are not further developed in the rest of the poem. Since a liberating sense of transcendence is just one of many defining markers of the sublime in Kant and Burke, the only possibility for sublime selfhood in the poem remains a hint, and melancholy's "songstress sad" (13) the only signified.

Book I of The Emigrants also illustrates the wanderer's general state of melancholy. The female speaker explicitly identifies herself with the exiled

victims of the French Revolution, whom she describes as "poor vagrant wretches! Outcasts of the world!" (I.303). Smith writes:

> 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. (I.155-160)

Smith conveys melancholy's power and terror through the image of the "refluent tides." It is significant that she associates melancholy with the ocean, something that is fluid and in constant movement, as well as a source of overwhelming strength. The tides represent a potentially violent, turbulent force that can crush us, similar to the source of the sublime in Kant's version. Smith's use of the tides associates the melancholic self with a force that is powerful and too overwhelmingly fluid to be comprehended fully. One can only anticipate and vaguely perceive its full power. Smith's references to the large number of exiled victims and the speaker's statement "I too have known" generate a powerful image of melancholy's omnipresence. Jacqueline Labbe argues that "the émigrés function not merely as representatives of victims of the French Revolution, but as metaphors for Smith's own sense of marginality, personal and cultural" ("The Exiled Self" 38). She furthermore observes that "Smith's emigrants are also 'foreigners and strangers,' but rather than distancing them from her speaking self, [she] sees their strangeness as uniting them with herself" (42). Indeed, whereas in

her Elegiac Sonnets melancholy seems a rather private, solitary experience, in The Emigrants Smith makes clear that it is universally experienced and intrinsic to the figure of the wanderer. Hence, through the image of melancholy's fluidity and Smith's identification of herself with the wandering outcasts, she generates a strong melancholic image of unified marginality.

Smith connects the wanderer's self not only with the general theme of melancholia, however, but also more concretely with images of blood and wounds, generating a visually unpleasant image of terror and anticipating Freud's theory of melancholy as an "open wound" (262). The imagery in both her nature poetry as well as in The Emigrants suggests that, for her, the wanderer is a "wounded wretch" ("Ode to Death" 16), living in "a bleeding world!" (The Emigrants II.324). In the first eleven lines of her poem "To Hope," Smith constructs the speaker's self around the symbol of the "thorn," which resembles the image of the continually bleeding open wound:

> O Hope! Thou soother sweet of human woes!
> How shall I lure thee to my haunts forlorn?
> For me wilt thou renew the wither'd rose,
> And clear my painful path of pointed thorn?
> Ah, come, sweet nymph! In smiles and softness drest,
> Like the young Hours that lead the tender Year,
> Enchantress! Come, and charm my cares to rest:-
> Alas! The flatterer flies, and will not hear!
> A prey to fear, anxiety, and pain

Must I a sad existence still deplore?

Lo!-the flowers fade, but all the thorns remain. (1-11)

The speaker describes her life as a "path" and asks for "rest," which renders her a restless wanderer figure. Moreover, in describing her path as "painful" and as one "of pointed thorn," she clarifies that her "sad existence" is essentially nothing but a sorrowful wound. "[T]he flowers fade, but all the thorns remain," or, in other words, for her, all the joys of life have vanished. Hence, this image implies that any blissful moments that the speaker experienced in the past, are no longer available. The fragmented and harmed wanderer seems to have no choice but "to linger out long years in torturing pain" ("Ode to Death" 7). It is significant that, in Smith's poetry in general, as Susan Wolfson points out, the typical "figure of a globalized suffering [is] female" (541). She "brings the 'male' world of warfare into the 'female' world of home" (Wolfson, "Charlotte Smith's" 534) by relating her personal grief to the pain that the emigrants and exiles experience. Although Smith does not specify in this poem that the speaker is female, she genders the images of "hope" that are located and internalized within her self as clearly female. Hope is personified as an "enchantress" and a "nymph," -- female, semi-monstrous, and seductive creatures. Since "hope" might be nothing but an illusion, seducing and luring the self into even deeper levels of pain, the image of the nymph generates an image of terror. What seems so hopeful at first, might, in the end, turn out to be self-destructive.

Another symbol of pain in relation to femininity is exemplified by Book II of The Emigrants in which the speaker describes how her "soul is pain'd / By the

variety of woes that Man / For Man creates," as well as by the "sad fate [of] these ill-starr'd wanderers" (II.436). Smith describes the "suffering globe" as female, which she makes clear through the central image of "her bleeding breast" (II.423); an image of an open wound that is clearly gendered female:

> Liberty becomes a sacred fire,
> When Licence and Confusion bid it blaze.
> From thy high throne, above yon radiant stars,
> O Power Omnipotent! With mercy view
> This suffering globe, and cause thy creatures cease,
> With savage fangs, to tear her bleeding breast. (II.418-423)

The verb "bleeding" is particularly interesting in connection with femininity and fluidity. It seems that it is exactly this fluidity, the restless, never-ending motion of the pain that the female "suffering globe" as a whole experiences, which makes the female wanderer's existence so terror-filled. Hence, in associating the female wanderer's self with the rather repulsive image of the open wound, Smith constructs the female self explicitly as an object of terror.

Part of this terror that Smith's wanderers experience stems from the fact that they perceive themselves as something incomplete, as ruined fragments of their former selves before the advent of war and personal tragedy. The melancholic wanderer's problematic, fragmented identity manifests itself most clearly through her nostalgia. In fact, most of Smith's sonnets focus on the idea of loss and, in Kristeva's words, on "a past that does not pass by" (60). The wanderer remains passive, static, and a fragment of her former self. She remains

obsessed with "the pain / Of 'knowing such things were' and are no more" ("Sonnet XC" 9). It is significant that the term nostalgia finds its roots in the Greek words "nostos" ("to return home") and "algos" ("pain"). For Smith's wanderers, "nostos" is impossible. "Algos," that is the painfully restless, almost mechanical way of looking back, is all that remains. E. B. Daniels argues that "nostalgia presents a problematic of intimacy -- an intimacy with persons and things, community and country, an intimacy with a world which is not me but of which I am yet a part" (81). Due to this lack of intimacy with the present, the wanderer's identity remains in a constant state of fragmentation. Returning home (nostos) is impossible exactly because of what James Phillips calls "the process of interiorization, which homesickness has undergone in becoming nostalgia. […] In nostalgia, concrete experiences of separation from one's homeland become merely symbolic of internal states of mind. Terms such as home, exile, and return assume metaphoric meaning" (65). Since it is impossible to bring an interiorized abstraction, or a metaphor of an idyllic bittersweet past, back into reality, reality and imagination clash, and the wanderer experiences pain. Moreover, since the wanderer often does not even know what she has lost, she remains lethargic. The following passage from Book II of The Emigrants demonstrates the wanderers' problematic self-inscription into time:

> the lorn Exiles; who, amid the storms
> Of wild disastrous Anarchy, are thrown,
> Like shipwreck'd sufferers, on England's coast,
> To see, perhaps, no more their native land,

Where Desolation riots: They, like me,

From fairer hopes and happier prospects driven,

Shrink from the future, and regret the past. (II.9-16)

In this case, the exiles' nostalgia is particularly problematic because it finds its roots within a contradictory image of the past. On the one hand, the wanderers miss and idealize their "native land," and, on the other hand, they "regret the past" and look at it from a critical perspective. "Shrink[ing] from the future," the wanderers feel stuck in time. Phillips calls these nostalgics "exile[s] of the present, lost in the rush of lived experience, longing for a return to oneself […]. It is the self as divided and split temporally which is lamented in nostalgia" (67). It is exactly this "nostalgic, temporal split" which is the cause for Smith's wanderer's pain- and terror-filled self-image of fragmentation.

"Sonnet XLVI" portrays another image of nostalgic fragmentation, but here the speaker makes clear that even the sublime itself has become a fragment:

Ye Towers sublime, deserted now and drear,

Ye woods, deep sighing to the hollow blast,

The musing wanderer loves to linger near,

While History points to all your glories past. (1-4)

The first line of the poem "towers sublime, deserted now and drear" questions the existence -- or more specifically the completeness -- of the sublime in the present. Although one could argue that the towers are sublime now precisely because they are deserted and drear, the last line, which speaks of all "the glories past," negates this possibility. The wanderer here experiences the tower as a fragment of

sublimity. Although the wanderer can still perceive the towers as *sublime* towers, they are now fragmented, "drear[y]," and uninteresting. It seems that one of the most disquieting effects of war is this devastating transformation of objects of sublime terror into fragments of the sublime. And yet, considering the painful state of war in the present, this memory and nostalgia for the completeness and wholeness of the sublime may be the only thing that keeps the fragmented wanderer going.

The fragmented wanderer is truly a figure who lives in a fragmented world. Images of fragmentation are ubiquitous in Smith's poetry. Her long, unfinished poem "Beachy Head," for example, utilizes several affecting images of fragmentation. John M. Anderson argues that "the fragmentary form of this poem is not entirely an accident. […] Smith was attracted to the idea of constructing a ruin, of using fragments expressively" (547). Smith describes the stranger's home as "fragments gray of towers and buttresses" (509), and explains that "often he [would] muse […] among the ruins" (510). In "Sonnet XII," the female speaker uses similar images:

> On some rude fragment of the rocky shore,
> Where on the fractured cliff the billows break,
> Musing, my solitary seat I take,
> And listen to the deep and solemn roar. (1-4)

Smith's wanderers are at home within the surroundings of "ruins" and "fractured cliff [s]." In this context, it is important to note that incompleteness and fragmentation are particularly female problems, which Luce Irigaray illustrates in

her theory of female plurality. According to Irigaray, women always struggle with a sense of incompleteness. They are "neither one nor two" (352), "never […] simply one" (354). Considering the several, alienating roles which society imposes onto the female self, it is always incomplete and can never be whole. Smith's wanderers struggle with their fragmentation and their plurality at the same time. This interplay between fragmentation and plurality ultimately translates into an overwhelming, incomprehensible, and destructive self-image of terror.

This idea manifests itself further through images of grotesque violence that demonstrate not only the physical, but also the psychological effects of war. Harmed by melancholy, the fragmented wanderer associates both her external surroundings and her own self with an omnipresence of violence. Images of violence and the physical effects of the French Revolution are especially striking in the war sections of The Emigrants. Smith describes even Nature itself as having "sword-like leaves" (The Emigrants II.341). The following lines from Book II of The Emigrants are typical illustrations of the devastating effects of a "wide-wasting War [which] / Has […] thinned the world" (The Emigrants I.369). The speaker

> behold [s] the unhappy lot
> Of the lorn Exiles; who, amid the storms
> Of wild disastrous Anarchy, are thrown
> Like shipwreck'd sufferers, on England's coast,
> To see, perhaps, no more their native land. (II.9-13)

The verb "thrown" makes explicit the power of war as well as the helplessness of the "shipwreck'd sufferers." The violence that accompanies the "wild disastrous Anarchy" is the ultimate reason for the wanderers' problematic sense of identity. The wanderers perceive themselves as fragmented because of the condition of exile. The "shipwreck'd sufferers" no longer have access to their homes and origins, and are therefore incomplete and damaged figures. Images of psychological violence are furthermore inherent in Smith's frequent portrayals of the mad wanderer. Smith depicts the psychological effects of war clearly in the following quotation from Book II of The Emigrants:

> The day dawns
> On a wild raving Maniac, whom a fate
> So sudden and calamitous has robb'd
> Of reason; and who round his vacant walls
> Screams unregarded, and reproaches Heaven!-
> Such are thy dreadful trophies, savage War!
> And evils such as these, or yet more dire,
> Which the pain'd mind recoils from, all are thine. (II.308-315)

The description of his "pain'd mind," his "screams," and the image of the "dreadful trophies" make clear the intensity of the internalized pain and terror that he experiences. Although Smith opens up a potential space for sublime selfhood through the realm of madness or mad ecstasy, again she suggests this idea only implicitly and does not further develop it in the poem. Despite the fact that the maniac seems able to "speak back" and have some agency through his screams,

the potential for sublime terror remains an implicit, undeveloped, almost invisible fragment. The potential for sublimity is a fragment rather than a hint for it is made explicit through his terrifying, mad screams. The maniac's expression of madness is a form of transcendence and a possibility of transgressing the horrifying reality of war depicted in the poem. Ultimately, the "wild raving Maniac" resembles an object of pure terror as do so many of Smith's outcasts and exiled figures in The Emigrants who internalize the horrors and the violence of the French Revolution.

The wanderer in Smith's poetry is never the aggressor but always a passive victim of the violence. Metaphors of passivity, portraying the wanderer as a weak, paralyzed, or lethargic victim, are recurring images in Smith's poetry. According to Kristeva, melancholy persons experience "signs a[s] arbitrary" (43), which leads to a sense of alienation, and, consequently, to a lack of agency. The fact that Smith rarely clarifies the reason for her mourning generates a sense of disorientation, which is evident in descriptions such as "desolate I stray" ("Sonnet LXII" 10). The wanderer appears passive and alienated. Kristeva furthermore points out that "if in the nondepressive state one has the ability to concatenate, depressive persons, by contrast, riveted to their pain, no longer concatenate and, consequently, neither act nor speak" (34). This general lack of agency is present in her sonnets and The Emigrants. Passages such as this one characterize the exiles as helpless and passive:

> Sad Heralds of distress! Proclaim them Men
> Banish'd for ever and for conscience sake
> From their distracted Country, whence the name

Of Freedom misapplied, and much abus'd
By lawless Anarchy, has driven them far
To wander. (I.96-101)

In seems that the exiles have no choice but "to wander." The wanderers are passive victims crushed by the strengths and the powers of "lawless Anarchy." "Freedom" itself is "abus'd" and seems arbitrary, "misapplied," and might, in the end, mean nothing but restlessness and a lack of orientation. Verbs such as "driven" create a further sense of almost mechanical wandering. Similarly, in "Sonnet IV," the female speaker describes herself as a "stray[ing]" (2) and "[p]oor wearied pilgrim" (14). Passive and helpless, she "gaze[s]" (5) and "watch[es]" (3) the "toiling scene" (14).

This feeling of passivity sometimes also results in a sense of terror, which Smith makes explicit in her poem "The Female Exile. Written at Brighthelmstone in November 1792." Again, at the beginning of the poem, the female subject is passive and sad when "her eyes filled with tears" (7). Her passivity transforms into terror when

The sea-boat, her hopes and her terrors renewing,
O'er the dim grey horizon now faintly appears;
She flies to the quay, dreading tidings of ruin,
And breathless with haste, half expiring with fears. (29-32)

Although it seems as if it is the sea-boat, an external object, which instigates her feelings of terror, the terror she experiences is entirely internalized. The term "renewing" makes clear that "her terrors" are not rooted in the sea-boat, but

within herself and her past. And yet, the external object, the sea boat, is also her only hope, which demonstrates her lack of agency and generates her feelings of fear and terror.

Smith illustrates the wanderer's passivity not only through the figure's lack of actions, but also through her lack of speech. According to Kristeva, melancholy persons are often passive and have a slow rhythm of speech. Kristeva suggests that

> melancholy persons are foreigners in their maternal tongue […]. Faced with the impossibility of concatenating, they utter sentences that are interrupted, exhausted, come to a standstill. Even phrases they cannot formulate. A repetitive rhythm, a monotonous melody emerge and dominate the broken logical sequences, changing them into recurring, obsessive litanies. (33)

Moreover, "silences are frequent" (54) as depressed persons speak a "dead language" (53). I would argue that part of the terror which Smith's wanderers experience stems from their passivity with regard to language, or, in other words, from their silence and fragmentation of speech. And yet, within those dashes and pauses, Smith locates a potential, fragmented space for the sublime. If one tried to find a possibility for sublime selfhood in her poetry, it would certainly rather lie within what is not being said than in what is being said. Yet, this potential for sublime selfhood through silence remains incomplete because it is overshadowed by the terror of the constantly bleak discourse of melancholy in all of Smith's writing. Smith's poem "Elegy" serves as an apt example for such a possible but

fragmented sublime potential that inheres in her dashes. “Elegy” narrates the story of a “wretched maid” (81), a “widow’d wanderer” (29) who has a vision of her lost love while watching a thunderstorm. Smith writes:

> Dark gathering clouds involve the threatening skies,
> The sea heaves conscious of the impending gloom,
> Deep, hollow murmurs from the cliffs arise;
> They come -- the Spirits of the Tempest come!
> Oh! may such terrors mark the approaching night
> As reign'd on that these streaming eyes deplore!
> Flash, ye red fires of heaven, with fatal light,
> And with conflicting winds ye waters roar! (1-8)

The thunderstorm of “the threatening skies,” the “terrors,” and the “red fires of heaven” serve as a typical setting for sublime experiences, and yet Smith does neither elaborate on the meaning of the “hollow murmurs” (3) nor on the significance of the dash, which she places before “the Spirits of the Tempest.” The term “murmurs” suggests articulate speech that is below the threshold of perception, and therefore unintelligible, which hints at the possibility of the sublime. Moreover, later on in the poem, when she sees her lost love in a vision, Smith writes:

> Such, as when daring the enchafed sea,
> And courting dangerous toil, he often said
> That every peril, one soft smile from me,
> One sigh of speechless tenderness o'erpaid.

But dead, disfigured, while between the roar

Of the loud waves his accents pierce mine ear,

And seem to say -- Ah, wretch! delay no more,

But come, unhappy mourner -- meet me here.

Yet, powerful Fancy, bid the phantom stay,

Still let me hear him! -- 'Tis already past;

Along the waves his shadow glides away,

I lose his voice amid the deafening blast. (41-56)

Again, the vocabulary and images such as "speechless" and "powerful Fancy" suggest that the maid is alluding to the sublime. The dashes leave out important details of the possibly sublime experience, especially the exact moment before all "'Tis already past." Although the poem implies that the maid is tempted to commit suicide, the exact place, presumably the stormy sea, where she should meet him is not clearly named, but simply represented as a dash. Since the stormy sea essentially represents death, it follows that it is beyond representation, too transcendent, and possibly too terror-filled to be described through words. Hence, the dash may suggest the difficulty or even impossibility of presenting death itself, in Vijay Mishra's words, "that which is unpresentable, that which is sublime" (19). Considering Smith's constant depictions of terror and grief, one of the only traces of meaning can be found within the wanderer's silence, and her fragmented, passive use of language; essentially, signification lies within what the wanderer does *not* express through words.

Especially in her later poetry, Smith seems to negate any possibility for meaning and sublime selfhood as her exiles wander more and more towards nihilism and death. The wanderer in her present state in life is constantly tormented by the terror that stems from a complete loss of signification. Kristeva argues that "melancholia […] ends up in asymbolia, in loss of meaning: if I am no longer capable of translating or metaphorizing, I become silent and die" (42). "Desire no longer exists" (Kristeva 20), and life seems "joyless [and] cheerless" (Smith, "Ode to Death" 20). Indeed, in her later sonnets, Smith often associates wandering with nihilism and loss of hope. She essentially describes the wanderer's journey in life as something dark and bleak, whereas wandering carries more positive connotations when linked to death. "Sonnet LXII," for example, describes life as deprived of hope and happiness: "While thus I wander, cheerless and unblest, / And find in change of place but change of pain" (1). Similarly, in "Sonnet XXXVI," Smith associates wandering with a breakdown of meaning and a denunciation of life:

> Should the lone Wanderer, fainting on his way,
> Rest for a moment of the sultry hours,
> […]
> But darker now grows life's unhappy day,
> Dark with new clouds of evil yet to come,
> Her pencil sickening Fancy throws away,
> And weary Hope reclines upon the tomb;
> And points my wishes to that tranquil shore,

Where the pale spectre Care pursues no more. (1-14)

This poem describes and proves the exact effects of melancholy pointed out by Kristeva. For the wanderer, "language and life have no meaning" (Kristeva 51) as "darker now grows life's unhappy day, / Dark with new clouds of evil yet to come" (9-10). The speaker further describes hope as "weary." This is a typical perception of a melancholy person, considering that Kristeva links arguments about lethargy, exhaustion, and a sense of arbitrariness to the state of melancholy. In accordance with Kristeva's theory, the wanderer does not live in the present, but is, on the one hand, preoccupied with an intense nostalgia, and, on the other hand, with a very bleak anticipation of the future with "new clouds of evil yet to come." The wanderer experiences life and her existence in it as nothing but a never-ending state of terror and pain.

This nihilism manifests itself further through frequent allusions to sleeping, dreaming, and sleepwalking, ultimately expressing the wanderer's death-wish. Images of sleep in association with wandering and death recur in both Smith's sonnets and The Emigrants. In "Sonnet XI," for example, the speaker articulates her death-wish indirectly through the metaphor of sleep: "COME balmy Sleep! Tir'd nature's soft resort" (1). Smith associates the state of waking, on the other hand, with terror, which this passage exemplifies: "When the bright Sun of that delicious month / Should, from disturb'd and artificial sleep, / Awaken me to never-ending toil, / To terror and to tears" (The Emigrants II.348-351). The state of sleepwalking, as depicted in "Lydia," on the other hand, seems a possible mediation between life and death, which serves to endure the pain of the waking

state. The fact that Lydia is described as having a "wild yet vacant eye" (29) and as a "lonely wanderer" (9) who "loved to climb and gaze around" (10) conjures up an image of a sleepwalker whose eyes are wide open in a stare. Lydia is a sleepless creature of the night, who, "even as the Autumnal Sun withdrew" (11), comes "to meet the midnight Moon" (28). She claims that although she often sees the terrifying "Horseman's ghost" (33), "it gives no fear to [her]" (36). The state of sleepwalking allows her to mediate the intensity of the terror that she usually experiences during the day. Hence, the frequent references to death through indirect metaphors and images render the death-wish one of the most important defining markers of the wanderer's identity.

Besides indirect references to death through images of sleep and sleepwalking, Smith also directly illustrates the wanderer's longing for death in some of her most famous sonnets. In "Sonnet LXVII," for example, the female speaker describes herself as an object of terror by comparing herself to a "scene where Ruin saps the mouldering tomb" (9), essentially transforming her own wretched self into an image of a "ruined graveyard" (Hawley 187). Kristeva establishes a connection between melancholy and such longings for ruined graveyards, which are basically manifestations of the "death drive [or] destruction drive" (17). Moreover, in "Ode to Death," Smith describes the speaker as a "wounded wretch" (17) who remembers his "long years" (17) of wandering. The speaker is now in a state of melancholy and seeks death, which is described as a

> Friend of the wretched! Wherefore should the eye
> Of blank Despair, whence tears have ceased to flow,

Be turn'd from thee? -- Ah! Wherefore fears to die

He, who compell'd each poignant grief to know,

Drains to its lowest dregs the cup of woe? (1-5)

Death is the wanderer's only friend and solace. The wanderer is disappointed with life and "each poignant grief" (4), and death represents a possible end of wandering. Further on in the poem, Smith depicts death as "Misery's Cure" (21), and, ultimately, as the only force to end the wanderer's "long years in torturing pain" (7). Death's sweet and tender "calm embrace" (6) provides a stark contrast to the terror, violence, and pain which the wanderer endures in life. Due to the hopeful tone with regard to death, one could speculate that death is a state during which the wanderer's perception of herself as an object of terror might possibly transform itself back into the pre-war, pre-fallen, Edenic image of *sublime* terror. The phrase "the terrors of thy triumph brave" (24) conjures up associations with the sublime and, moreover, the speaker addresses death from a distance, which renders death an authority figure and a transcendental signified. The speaker's tone is very respectful, which is evident in the frequent use of "thee" and "thy" as well as in exclamations such as "Misery's Cure" (22) and "Friend of the Wretched" (1). Yet, since not all forms of transcendence and transcendental beings are necessarily sublime, Smith hints at and alludes to the potential of sublimity but does not further develop it. The possibility for sublime selfhood is simply a guess; it remains a fragment of hope shattered and possibly negated by the conditions and effects of war and personal tragedy.

Hence, it seems rather difficult to locate hope within Charlotte Smith's poetry. While applying Julia Kristeva's ideas on the symptoms of melancholy and depression to Smith's wanderers and exiled figures, this chapter sees the wanderer's general state of melancholy as the ultimate reason for her fragmented, terror-filled self-image. Smith's almost obsessive thematization of melancholy in relation to her wanderer figures suggests that she views sorrow and melancholy as ontological or intrinsic to the condition of all the exiled victims who had to deal with the immediate effects of the French Revolution. Although Smith never establishes a clear link between the horrors of war and its impact on one's perception of selfhood, I argue that her wanderers internalize the psychological and physical effects of the French Revolution. These effects of war manifest themselves through pain, nostalgia, passivity, silence, and suicidal thoughts. Indeed, Smith's fragmented wanderers show serious physical and emotional scars. Resembling Freud's metaphor of the self as a never-healing, continually-bleeding open wound, the wanderer's self generates a repulsive image of terror. Although the wanderer's identity does allow for a possible association with sublimity due to Smith's thematization of a nostalgia for the sublime, any fragments of sublime selfhood remain, just like all the other elements of hope in Smith's poetry, violated, silenced, and ultimately overshadowed by both the wanderer's overarching "Todessehnsucht" and her terror-filled existence within a "half-bleeding world" (The Emigrants II.324).

Chapter III:

Transcending the Female Body:

The Romantic Wanderer as Semi-Monstrous Hybrid

As of yet, the figure of the wanderer has not been studied in connection with Letitia Landon's poetry. One of the reasons for this gap in scholarship may be that Landon marks not only the "loss of the Romantic vision" (Riess 51), but also, as I argue, the loss of the traditional figure of the Romantic wanderer. Yet, at closer examination, one finds that wanderer-like figures, although metamorphosed into supernatural creatures, are omnipresent in her poetry. In fact, Landon constructs a typical environment for the wanderer: a world that is constantly changing; a world in which nothing, and especially not love, is permanent. She conveys this cynical, almost Byronic worldview by transforming the traditional figure of the Romantic wanderer into a beautiful, half-human female being who is visibly self-divided. Landon's poetry is haunted by supernatural fairy-tale figures such as ghosts, mermaids, and sirens: essentially creatures who are incomplete and oscillate between the realms of the living and the dead, or the human and the non-human. As a result, Landon defines the new female wanderer as a self-divided figure of ultimate transcendence: one that transgresses human and corporeal boundaries.

In deconstructing these corporeal limits, Landon redefines and transcends the limitations of the female body. Although it is certainly tenable to assume that those semi-monstrous bodies are fragmented, and as Craciun notes, to a certain extent "destructive" (Fatal Women 196), I claim, first of all, that they are indeed

destructive, but not self-destructive, and secondly that it is exactly their destructive nature, which makes them sublime and powerful. They are not nearly as weak, determined, and passive as the harmed and disabled bodies in Charlotte Smith's poetry. For Landon, the fragmentation of the female body is both terrifying and sublime. In fact, Landon's half-human wanderers have strong mobile bodies with dangerous supernatural powers. If desired, they can become invisible, walk through walls, or fly. It seems as if woman needs to die and be "disembodied" (by becoming a ghost, mermaid, or siren) to inscribe herself into the patriarchal order and become an actual threat to man, who is often seduced with spells or endangered in Landon's poetry.

Hence, Landon's almost morbid fascination with those self-divided creatures conveys, on the one hand, a sense of shock and terror, and on the other hand, a sense of superhuman transcendence, power, and immortality, all of which are, according to Kant and Burke, defining markers of the sublime. Landon's frequent portrayal of, and obsession with, human statues and monuments as well as her empowering Byronic connection of sexuality and death convey that her heroines do have agency and the possibility of eventually becoming sublimely immortal. More specifically, they attain a state of sublimity through their magic powers as mermaids and sirens. In fact, Landon's female wanderers have bodies that do not die. Often they are born as fairy-tale figures with bodies that transcend the limits of time and space, or they are transformed into mythical statues after death, thereby inscribing themselves into literary history. Just like Landon herself who has become "immortal" not only through her writing, but also through her

mysterious, mythical death as a young woman, her wanderers become immortal through Landon's aesthetics of death and disembodiment. In dying and inhabiting the form of a physical monument, the wanderer's unstable self can eventually be grasped, fixed, and remembered. Although Jerome McGann makes a valid point in arguing that "the truth that Landon discovers in beauty, including the beauty of art, is death" (Landon, Letitia Landon 24), the term "beauty" seems restrictive with regard to Landon's complex, transcendent renderings of the body as hybrid. The "truth," to use McGann's words, does not lie in the connection between beauty and death, but the sublime and death. The experience of sublime transcendence is possible exactly because of the death or half-death of the female body. This chapter argues that Landon's women are undead and self-divided but powerful and transcendent wanderers, who wander forever; they are truly ghosts of sublime terror.

The mermaid Melusina in "The Fairy of the Fountains" is probably Landon's most extensive portrayal of such a ghostlike semi-monster of sublime terror. The figure of Melusina/Melusine is based on the famous mermaid Melusine, who, as McGann notes in his annotations, "wanders wailing around the Castle" (Landon, Letitia Landon 241). Like her mother, she is a lonely, isolated wanderer who was "punished for [her] father's deed" (132), "banished from her mother's arms" (195), and since then has become "an exile" (133). Craciun makes clear the intensity of her exiled condition by pointing out that "Melusine is born into one exile and dies in another, thus she cannot claim a maternal plenitude, or unalienated wholeness" (Fatal Women 211). The fact that she follows in her

mother's footsteps and repeats her curse further highlights the impossibility of ending the cycle of endless wandering.

Craciun argues that "Landon's poetics of despair […] originate[s] in the body and its dangerous powers" (195), and, indeed, Melusine the mermaid is a monstrous hybrid who physically shows "scars" of violence through her division into two different bodies. The poem frequently refers to violence, such as when the heroine feels that "pain is in her languid eye" (532-533). Craciun points out that "her mother's first words, 'Tis not at my choice,' suggests both that she has been violated somehow, and that her mermaid nature is a curse" (210). Similar to the sublime, which, according to Kant, does violence to our inner sense, Melusine's body is an act of violence in itself. She is literally self-divided into part woman, part serpentine-like fish. Even her name is self-divided and violated. At the beginning of the poem she is referred to as "Melusina," the woman, and later on in the poem when her mermaid appearance becomes more apparent, her name changes to the famous and legendary mermaid "Melusine," thus highlighting once again notions of self-division generated by the human/non-human boundary.

Considering this emphasis on her self-divided nature, Melusine appears to be an incomplete character, one that is difficult to grasp, similar to the concept of the sublime in Kant's and Burke's versions. In the first half of the poem, Melusine alludes to her perception of herself as an object of terror, wondering why "must she be her own dark tomb" (172). I argue that she is also an object of *sublime* terror in that she is both human and supernatural animal at the same time. In

transgressing the boundaries of the human body, she becomes a complex, sublime creature. Melusine appears not only beautiful, sensual, and idealized, but also disfigured, harmed, and monstrous. She contains multitudes and opposites, which renders her identity somewhat contradictory and difficult to comprehend. On the one hand, her corporeal deformities generate a sense of terror, and, on the other hand, her identity as half human, half fish is difficult to grasp because it transcends the normal boundaries of the human body and goes beyond the realm and the powers of the human. Melusine is truly a sublime creature; not only because of her aura of immortality, but also because she is beyond words -- she leaves men speechless, confused, and "in mute despair" (557).

Moreover, as a mermaid within the framework of a fairy tale, she transgresses several human boundaries. Since fairies within fairy tales mythically exist and survive without a clear cause and origin, they generate an aura of immortality. Specific elements of sublime terror are inherent in this description of the animal part of Melusine's body:

> What below that form appears?
> Downwards from that slender waist,
> By a golden zone embraced,
> Do the many folds escape,
> Of the subtle serpent's shape.-
> Bright with many-coloured dyes
> All the glittering scales arise,
> With a red and purple glow

Colouring the waves below! (547-555)

She has the shape of a serpent -- an animal that is cursed, poisonous --, but, as Burke suggests, is also capable of evoking the sublime. Moreover, she is associated with "bright" light and divine "golden" colors as well as a "red and purple glow." Just like Lucifer, Milton's famous fallen angel, she is both angel and devil at the same time; a concept that is in itself too contradictory and complex to comprehend. The sense of terror is inherent in the idea that the second part of her female body is non-existent and replaced by a part of an animal's body. Moreover, Craciun notes that Melusine's "hectic blushes' and 'fever'd cheek of pestilent fever [can be] associated with the vampyre's plague" (220), which renders Melusine an undead, dangerous ghost and semi-monster. Craciun also argues that "Melusine is inherently dangerous because she is utterly Other, and in Landon's version of the legend, she bears the otherness of the grave and the corpse, to which her secret bower and secret body are likened" (219). Thus, the sense of sublime terror that Melusine conveys, stems from her dangerous corporeal potential and her association with death.

In fact, most of Landon's wanderer figures and exiles are associated with the realm of death. In addition to extensive portrayals of mermaids, sirens, and nymphs, dead bodies and ghost-like figures haunt her poetry. Her work repeatedly portrays women as stunningly beautiful but dead, and although Landon's explicit depiction of decayed bodies certainly generates a sense of terror, it also suggests her obsession with the sublime aesthetics of death. Craciun points out that "Landon's poetry […] demonstrates not a 'wholesome fear of death,' but rather

an unwholesome fascination with it and its powers to disturb social relationships among the living" (249). Death, ultimately, becomes an empowering space not only for Landon who has become famous through her own mysterious death, but also for her wanderers who often demonstrate their control over their existence by deliberately choosing their exact moment of death by committing suicide. All of her wanderers are in one way or another incomplete, two-faced, or self-divided figures, who oscillate between the realms of life and death. The female wanderer in "The Indian Girl," for example, who has been seen "wandering 'mid the woods" (8) and "looks more cold than all" (67), is both ghost and human, and appears "pale as death" (97). Similarly, in "The Phantom," a beautiful female spirit seduces her lover in her wet grave with the following words: "I come to thee now, my long hair on the gale / [it] is dark with the sea damps, and wet with the spray" (21-23). In fact, it is not uncommon for Landon to describe homes as graves; some other examples can be found in "Fountain's Abbey" (310), in "A History of the Lyre" (120), and in "Corinne at the Cape of Misena" (48). Considering Abrams's and Schelling's argument about the connection between the idea of home and the sublime, as well as Ramazani's claim that "the sublime is inextricable from the death drive" (173) for death "is its ultimate occasion" (163), it seems that Landon associates death and decay with a sense of aesthetic sublimity. For example, Pascoe points out how Landon's "The Fragment" devotes "two thirds of the poem to [a woman's] appearance after death" (232), thereby demonstrating her obsession with "showy death scenes" (233). Even though, as Vijay Mishra notes, "death has no way of representing itself" (79), Landon seems

immensely interested in the aesthetic representation of her wanderer's deaths, thereby "present[ing] that which is unpresentable, that which is sublime" (Mishra 19).

By emphasizing her women's appearances and lives after death rather than narrating their actual life stories, Landon deliberately places the female subject outside of the conventional patriarchal boundaries. One of Landon's most common ways of conveying a sense of transcendence and immortality is her somewhat obscure obsession with representing her female protagonists as "cold" and "dead" statues. In fact, Landon frequently and literally transforms her female wanderers into statues, usually towards the end of the poems. A passage from "The Fairy of the Fountains," when "sits the fairy ladye there, / Like a statue, pale and fair" (369-370), serves as a good example. Similarly, in the song "The Charmed Cup" in The Improvisatrice, the female protagonist "whom JULIAN left […] stood / A cold white statue; as the blood / Had, when in vain her last wild prayer, / Flown to her heart, and frozen there" (588-591). Angela Leighton argues that in representing her female protagonists as statues and "objects," Landon transforms woman "into a sexual or artistic property for the man" (61). I claim, however, that this metamorphosis of female wanderers into monuments is, in fact, not an act of objectification, but empowering in that it primarily serves as a way to make sense of and freeze the wanderer's unstable self into something that is more powerful, substantial, and permanent. Moreover, by transforming them into statues, Landon manages to give "voice" to her female wanderers. Statues often represent important ideas that need to be inscribed into history because of their

worth and meaning. They are thus markers of permanence, something that will not die, and yet is "dead" and "cold" at the same time. Hence, in dying and assuming the physical shape of a monument, the female wanderer finally assumes historic significance and becomes immortal, thereby transcending and haunting the patriarchal living world.

Moreover, Landon often explicitly associates these cold and dead statues with a sense of sublimity and the divine. This passage from "The Hindoo Girl's Song" in The Improvisatrice establishes a direct connection between these beings made of stone and the realm of the sublime:

> I turned me from the crowd, and reached
> A spot which seemed unsought by all –
> An alcove filled with shrubs and flowers,
> But lighted by the distant hall,
> With one or two fair statues placed,
> Like deities of the sweet shrine.
> That human art should ever frame
> Such shapes so utterly divine! (921-928)

The statues are described as unique and distant because "unsought by all." They are "like deities of the sweet shrine." Moreover, in "The Hall of Statues," Landon illustrates statues as emanating a "light sublime" (15), as well as a "cold" light (55). Landon therefore connects again the realms of death and the sublime by making sublime divinity attainable through the realms of absolute silence, coldness, and death:

Silent was the hall around,

Moved no step and stirred no sound;

Yet the shapes of life were there,

Spiritual, calm, and fair -

Statues to whose rest seem'd given

Not the life of earth but heaven;

(26-31)

Such images convey both a sense of terror (because they are basically nothing but dead, silent bodies) and a sense of sublime transcendence. The sense of terror stems primarily from the idea that woman needs to dispose of her female body and die in order to conceive of the sublime light. The sense of sublimity, on the other hand, is inherent in the idea that statues have "not the life of earth but heaven." They are made of stone, will never die, and essentially generate a divine atmosphere.

In "A History of the Lyre" Landon paints a typical and highly-detailed picture of such an unstable, self-divided, statue-like female "ghost." This long poem centers around the Italian female protagonist Eulalie, or Eulalia. She is a true wanderer at heart, or, in Landon's words, a "wayfarer in this bleak and bitter world" (119). At a later point in the poem, she is described as "an orphan" (125), and as one of the "immortal dead" (136), who "wander in the moonlight" (419). She is born into an environment typical for the wanderer: a world that is "fallen from some noble star" (319), in which everything constantly changes. The "past

magnificence" (308) of stability is wholly lost, as even the speaker passes one "year of wandering" (379).

It seems that Landon sets up oppositional binaries only to deconstruct them and reveal their inherent lack of stability. "History of the Lyre" describes the female wanderer in accordance with Kant's and Burke's definition of the sublime: as something that is utterly overwhelming as well as beautiful and terrifying. The heroine is truly overwhelming in the sense that she is completely inconsistent. She oscillates between her identities as "Eulalie" and "Eulalia," just as "Melusine" or "Melusina" does in "The Fairy of the Fountains." She is inherently self-divided between her personae as "Eulalie" and "Eulalia," which are sharply contrasted with each other. Eulalie, for one, is described as "pure" (15), associated with light, and dressed in white. She is a musician playing beautiful divine music. Eulalia, by contrast, is described in bleak terms and seen at night: "it was in June, / Night, but such night as only is not day, - / For moonlight, even when most clear, is sad" (28-30). Unlike Eulalie, Eulalia only produces an echo of Eulalie's past amazing melodies, "low music" (59). She is sublime in that she contains both identities, and, on the other hand, the constant shifts between identities generate a sense of terror. Eulalia lives within a

> fallen palace - stain'd and gray
> The marble show'd amid the tender leaves
> Of ivy but just shooting; yet there stood
> Pillars unbroken, two or three vast halls,
> Entire enough to cast a deep black shade;

And a few statues, beautiful but cold, -

White shadows, pale and motionless, that seem

To mock the change in which they had no part, -

Fit images of the dead. (35 – 43)

Eulalie's "white[ness]" (70) here appears only as "white shadows"-- she has become nothing but a fragment without substance, an incomplete echo of her former self, or, in her words, "different […] from all / I once dream'd I could be" (156-157). Whereas Eulalie's "robe was white" (69); Eulalia's dress "was Indian red, and work'd with gold" (94), which suggests her loss of innocence. Although the poem gradually moves towards the realm of death, the progression of her identity is not necessarily destructive for it also becomes more stable. In fact, towards the end of the poem, and shortly before her "last sleep" (447), Landon repeatedly describes the heroine as a statue, finally rendering her a more stable character. For example, while traveling through Rome, the speaker describes Eulalia as "oh so changed! / Her cheek was colourless as snow; she wore / The beauty of a statue, or a spirit / With large and radiant eyes" (408-413); and in the last lines of the poem, Landon writes: "There was a sculptured form / […] EULALIA leant beside; 'twas hard to say / Which was the actual marble: when she spoke, / You started, scarce it seem'd a human sound" (432-437). She is "beautiful but cold," just like the statue that the poem describes earlier. Through her death and metamorphosis into a dead object, she is ultimately able to assume the sublime aura of a statue. As such a "spirit" and through this act of

disembodiment, she finally moves beyond “human sound” and attains divine, sublime transcendence and permanence.

Hence, the realm of death is definitely a potential sublime space for Landon’s women wanderers. At this point, it is important to elaborate on the relationship between love and death, since Landon rarely discusses these two ideas as separate entities. In her portrayals of love, Landon consistently goes to extremes. If requited, love is divine and sublime, but if unrequited or lost, it is destructive and inevitably leads to the death of the broken heroine. The instability of love and its close proximity to either sublime divinity or destruction and death evoke a sense of existential uncertainty and terror. Frederic Rowton most famously labels Landon "a female Byron" for cynical Byronic views on love and death like the following: “Human life has never seemed to me anything more than a series of mistakes. It is a mistake to be born -- another to live -- and a third to die. However, there is one other mistake, more absurd than all the three -- and that is marrying” (Landon, “Sefton Church” 87). Landon expresses similar views in her poem The Improvisatrice: a wedding turns into a funeral, which is certainly very telling from a feminist perspective.

In the same poem, Landon establishes a connection between love and sublime creativity by narrating the story of the heartbroken creative Improvisatrice, an exiled Italian wandering poet who dies because of rejection by her beloved. Landon demonstrates the closeness of love to sublime divinity when the heroine describes the intensity of her love: “I loved him as young Genius loves, / When its own wild and radiant heaven / Of starry thought burns with the

light, / The love, the life, by passion given" (965-68). In associating love with "genius," "light," and a "wild and radiant heaven," she conveys notions of divine transcendence and the sublime. Just like the sublime, which Kant defines as something turbulent and violent, love is overwhelming and "wild." Landon also conveys love's closeness to death later in the poem when the heroine's death is immanent:

> It is deep happiness to die,
> Yet live in Love's dear memory […]
> Stars in their poetry of night,
> The silver silence of moonlight, --
> The dim blush of the twilight hours,
> The fragrance of the bee-kissed flowers; --
> But, more than all, sweet songs will be
> Thrice sacred unto Love and me.
> Lorenzo! Be this kiss a spell!
> My first! — my last! Farewell! — Farewell! (1517-1530)

The heroine's last "sweet songs" (1527) of goodbye are the most idealized passages in the poem; they are close to the sublime in that they combine contradictory, oppositional emotions of happiness and pain. It is furthermore significant that the heroine describes her kiss as a "spell" (1529), thereby equating love with magic and hence with a sense of power, even if it be one that is on the verge of death.

The combination of death and power in these poems illustrates an element of violence and a sense of turbulence present in Landon's concept of love that is similar to that found in the Kantian sublime. Love, in Landon's poetry is so overwhelming that it can potentially crush the female wanderer in an act of violence, and yet sublimity lies exactly within this moment because of its powerful and somewhat terrifying closeness to destruction and death. Landon frequently enacts "explicitly erotic death-scenes" (Pascoe, Romantic Theatricality 231); and Pascoe is right in assuming that Landon's aesthetics of death and love are very similar to "the aesthetic implications of Edgar Allan Poe's declaration that 'the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world'" (Romantic Theatricality 231). Sublime agency is intrinsic to the violence associated with the death of love and the female body. The tragic end of love often instigates a flow of poetic creativity. In "Fragment of Corinne's Song at Naples," for example, the female creative "Genius wander[s] through the world" (61), thereby implying that she keeps telling and retelling her stories of heartbreak until they become permanent and manifest themselves over and over again within the magical world of Landon's other fairy tale poems. Hence, although it is true that, as Anya Taylor notes, "love in L.E.L. […] causes heartbreak for women" (505), and is essentially an act of violence in itself, Landon recognizes that "there is a power" ("Corinne at the Cape of Misena" 34) and a flow of creativity generated by the death of love and the female body.

Landon also locates agency within the female wanderer's magic powers as mermaids and sirens. In fact, most of Landon's heroines actively use their

femininity and their magic powers by becoming cynical, seductive aggressors and Byronic heroines, thereby transforming, externalizing, and displacing their despair and their heartbreak onto something that is more empowering. Craciun suggests that "the frequent appearance of female semi-monstrous figures in Landon's poetry such as mermaids, nymphs, and sirens, is significant, for they offer us an alternative model of the Romantic woman poet, a poet who may be broken-hearted, but who uses her song to destroy" (Fatal Women 201). Hence, the despair that the women experience is not necessarily self-destructive, but most of all threatening to the male figures, who are often the victims of violence. Examples of such female villains who kill their former lovers and clearly express their "hate" ("The Fairy of the Fountains" 28) for men are omnipresent in Landon's poetry. For instance, in "The Hindoo Girl's Song" in The Improvisatrice, the heroine herself is portrayed as a powerful and strong young woman using her magic powers: "PLAYFUL and wild as the fire-flies' light, / This moment hidden, then next moment bright, / Like the foam on the dark-green sea, / Is the spell that is laid on my lover by me" (1-4). It is significant that Landon's women use their spells almost always near oceans or rivers: fluid environments. Drawing on Irigaray's and Kristeva's association of femininity with fluidity, I argue that the heroine in "The Hindoo Girl's Song" uses the feminine surrounding of "the dark green sea" as a means to embrace and strengthen her femininity. Landon portrays the heroine's power and strength in the following passage:

Where was LORENZO? – He had stood
Spell-bound; but when I closed the lay,
As if the charm ceased with the song,
He darted hurriedly away.
I masqued again, and wandered on
Through many a gay and gorgeous room. (893-898)

While Landon portrays the female wanderer who "wandered on" as an active, dynamic, dangerous villain casting "the spell," her beloved Lorenzo is unable to move and speechless. Such portrayals of female Villains appear quite frequently in Landon's poetry. In fact, this image of Lorenzo who "stood Spell-bound" strongly recalls a passage from "The Fairy of the Fountains" where "at the strange and fearful sight" (557) of the semi-monstrous mermaid Melusina the knight stood "in mute despair" (559). Similarly, Craciun notes that in "The Enchantress," Landon "develops a Satanic heroine based on Byron's Manfred" (Fatal Women 206) who seduces and destroys her lovers. This frequent portrayal of seductive, dangerous heroines and weak, male victims suggests that Landon's female wanderers, unlike Charlotte Smith's passive wanderers, accept the element of terror inherent in their identities as self-divided supernatural creatures of sublime terror. In using and abusing their special powers as Other -- that is, the part of their body that is not human but sublimely *beyond* the human -- the traditional figure of the female Romanic wanderer creates a space for itself through its metamorphoses into Byronic Heroines with special powers.

Therefore, since it would have been inconceivable for woman -- as woman in a female body -- to embrace and dominate the realms of power and the sublime in traditional ways, Landon chooses to disembody, depersonalize, and fragment her female wanderers. In contrast to Craciun, who emphasizes "Landon's poetics of despair" (195) and the wanderer's self-destructiveness, this chapter focuses more on the empowering consequences of this destructiveness. In fact, it seems that the wanderer's self is more destructive to others than self-destructive. Moreover, it is exactly through her destructive fragmented self that the wanderer becomes sublimely powerful. In victimizing the female subject, Craciun seems to perceive Landon's wanderers as pure objects of fragmentation and terror. I argue, however, that in Landon's case, the fragmentation of the female body becomes sublime. Landon's female wanderers use their inherent destructive potential and their fragmented bodies to their advantage. By transforming her wanderers into ghosts, undead statues, sirens, and mermaids that are essentially fairy tale figures, Landon imbues her women wanderers with a sense of divine power and sublimity. On the one hand, the supernatural environment of fairy tales creates a framework of safety to express whatever is desired, and on the other hand, it transforms the traditional figure of the Romantic female wanderer into a somewhat insubstantial, undead "myth" that never really dies, generating an aura of monstrosity and terror. Moreover, since the constant rewriting of fairy figures and fairy tales makes their origins and limits particularly difficult to trace, they also generate a sense of sublime immortality. Landon's wanderers, more specifically, are divine figures with special powers that are beyond the traditional boundaries of reality.

They attain a state of sublimity either through the aesthetics of death and disembodiment, or through their magic powers as mermaids and sirens. By transgressing the limits of the female body and by pushing the physical appearance of the wanderer to its corporeal limits, Landon expands the terminology associated with the trope of the Romantic wanderer. However, due to this metamorphoses of the wanderer into powerful supernatural ghosts, mermaids, and sires that embrace the realms of the living and the dead, as well as the human and the non-human, Landon's contributions to the figure of the wanderer end up embracing the realm of fantasy. What remains is a somewhat morbid and terrifying image of self-divided, disfigured, half-dead semi-monsters, as well as a sense of sweet sadness generated by the idea that the wanderer's experience of sublime transcendence is attainable only through the half-death of the female body, and within the realm of fairy tales.

Conclusion

Examining Mary Robinson's, Charlotte Smith's, and Letitia Landon's contributions to the discourse of Romantic wandering, this thesis has intended to expand the traditional male construct of the wanderer. I argue that the female wanderer in Robinson's, Smith's, and Landon's poetry internalizes the element of violence intrinsic to the concept of the sublime in that she perceives her identity as split. She ultimately conceives of her self as an incomprehensible, painful, and terrifying "Other" as well as a source of sublime, imaginative potential. Instead of seeking out a sublime object in nature, she perceives herself as an object of sublime terror. In emphasizing the connection between the female wanderer and the female sublime, this thesis has served to question the two traditional concepts of the male wanderer as either Romantic Idealist or Byronic Hero.

Unlike the male wanderer created by these three women writers, who tries in vain to find the sublime within the realm of nature, Robinson's, Smith's, and Landon's wandering actresses, female exiles, mermaids, and ghosts deliberately avoid the realm of the natural world. Since the male wanderer seeks out the sublime through nature -- and since nature represents the realm of pure terror -- the sublime becomes something that is only accessible to the female wanderer. Experiences of sublime terror occur mostly in less perfect realms such as the stage, urban surroundings, madness, fantasy, and even death. Since the female wanderer's own self is so theatrical and unstable, she feels at home within these dynamic, transcendent realms in which everything becomes possible. In these realms, she is able to conceive of the endless possibilities of self-transformation

and the power inherent in her split identities. As a wounded and incomplete figure consisting of multiple, fragmented selves, the female wanderer is primarily concerned with the inner divisions inherent in the sublime. In Robinson's case, the sense of terror is generated by the fact that the female wanderer is always literally or symbolically on stage and thus unable to grasp the origin of her own self. She is overwhelmed and perceives herself as incoherent. In Smith's case, the terror is rooted in the pain generated by the condition of melancholy and exile, and in Landon's, in the blurring of human and non-human boundaries. Thus, in extending the experience of the sublime to the realms of the stage, nostalgia, and fantasy, all three women poets describe the female wanderer figure as one that transgresses the traditional realm of nature; she escapes "reality." Robinson's actresses, for example, extend the concept of wandering by relocating it into metaphorical realms; the wanderer becomes an almost postmodern actress figure; a metaphorical wanderer. For Smith's fragmented, mad, and melancholic exiles, the mechanical act of wandering serves as a way to deal with the horrors of war, and Landon's wanderers relocate the realm of wandering into the supernatural realm of fairy tales, in which they are able to transcend time and space.

Moreover, if one compares the male wanderer by the six major male Romantic poets and the female wanderer created by these three women poets, one notes that the two figures wander for different reasons and that their experiences of wandering are quite different. Whereas the Byronic Hero wanders so restlessly because of his *own* wretchedness, the female subject wanders because she is born into a wretched world. Since the outer world is itself in a state of pain or "half-

bleeding," to use Smith's words, nature can no longer serve as a potential realm of sublime experience. Furthermore, whereas the male subject's wanderings are always solitary experiences, his female counterpart's wanderings are often communal ones that are sometimes even caused by historical events. In Charlotte Smith's case, for example, the phenomenon of mechanical, helpless, and exiled wanderings in times of war becomes a communal, political event that the outer world imposes onto the wanderer. Similarly, in Robinson, the phenomenon of the wandering actress becomes a communal experience, one that has ensured many fallen women's survival.

In comparing Robinson, Smith, and Landon in more detail, one notes that all three poets construct the figure of the wanderer around the theme of fragmentation. Each poet consistently describes the female wanderer as self-divided, incomplete, and fragmented, and the sublime, which she perceives through her own self, ultimately remains a fragmented experience as well. However, it is significant that the sublime is also instigated by this sense of fragmentation. Whereas the male wanderer by the six male poets experiences Schelling's version of the sublime as a wholeness between self and other, ironically, the female wanderer perceives an element of sublimity inherent in the endless possibilities of self-transformation generated by her multiple, fragmented selves. The female wanderer thus conceives of the sublime by fragmenting, disposing of, or rendering secondary her female body; more specifically through the inhabiting of other bodies (Robinson), through imagination and nostalgia

(Smith), or through the half-death of the female body (Landon). In other words, for the female wanderer, fragmentation becomes sublime.

The metaphorical "wanderer" that is the actress in Robinson's poetry, for example, perceives both a fragmentation of her identity on stage and the sublime through that fragmentation. She fragments her original self by giving up her former identities, but in becoming a different self she also experiences fragments of the sublime through bodily transcendence. Moreover, the stage is itself a realm that fragments the traditional, male version of the sublime, since it is, unlike the boundless male realm of nature, a confined, theatrical, and somewhat inauthentic space. Considering that she can perceive the sublime only through this artificial, displaced realm, she experiences a sense of confinement and terror. Smith's wanderers, in contrast, experience a terrifying sense of self-annihilation and fragmentation through their melancholy condition. Although the sublime exists only as something internalized within the female subject itself, she is still able to access it through her nostalgia, her imagination, and her past. The sublime ultimately becomes a fragmented, silenced experience that the female wanderer can access through her memory. The wanderers in Landon's poetry, on the other hand, are fragmented through their self-divided, half-human bodies. However, in transforming the traditional figure of the Romantic wanderer into a fragmented monstrous hybrid, the wanderer becomes sublimely powerful. Through this corporeal fragmentation and this act of violence, the female wanderer is ultimately capable of transcending the boundaries of corporeality.

Hence, since this recurring idea of fragmentation in all three poets is expressed through the discussion of violence and self-division in Kant and Burke rather than that in Schelling; it follows that Kant's and Burke's versions of the sublime have proven more relevant for the female wanderer. With regard to the female wanderer and also the wanderer figure as whole, one notes that Abrams over-represents Schelling's importance. For the female wanderer, the sublime is a transcendent act of violence against her own self, not a harmonious fusion between self and "Other." Since the experience is entirely internalized as the female wanderer views her own self as an object of sublime terror, she renders secondary the experience of oneness between subject and object, which Schelling focuses on.

Given these broadened notions of the wanderer figure, and, more specifically, Landon's supernatural wanderers, this thesis also sheds a new, and possibly sublime light on the male Romanic poets' portrayals of female wanderers. The two female supernatural figures Life-in-Death and Geraldine in Coleridge's works "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," for example, appear somewhat more complex if placed in the context of Landon's work. Both Life-in-Death and Geraldine are restless, terrifying creatures. Neither are the protagonists of the poems; instead they inhabit the marginal realm of pure terror. In the context of Landon's sublime female supernatural wanderers, however, both female figures appear more significant and powerful. If one emphasizes the fact that Life-in-Death is the one who rolls the dice and is responsible for the Mariner's fate, her character gains importance and appears no longer a minor character in the poem.

Although her physical appearance inspires terror, she is also a figure of ultimate transcendence and the only transcendental signified in the poem. Since Life-in-Death is the only character in the poem who affirms and embodies the endless cycle of repetition and wandering, she becomes a transcendent figure. Through the acceptance of her corporeal, innate split between the realms of life and death, she ultimately gains control and becomes sublimely powerful. Similarly, Geraldine, who was abducted and can be seen as a victim of abandonment, ultimately becomes more powerful and a violent aggressor who is sublimely beyond words and leaves the "Other" speechless. Geraldine—the passive object of terror—is transformed into something that is close to the Kantian sublime, a power that can crush us. Since the poem is a fragment, Coleridge raises but does not answer the question as to whether Geraldine is a victim or the aggressor. Landon's work may be of help when it comes to answering that question.

My analysis of the differences between Robinson's, Smith's, and Landon's works on the wanderer figure determines that Robinson is the most affirmative, and Charlotte Smith the least affirmative poet that has been studied in this thesis. Whereas Robinson's wanderers are capable of using their multiple identities to their advantage by playfully performing the sublime possibilities inherent in their theatrical personae, Smith's exiles are melancholic, lethargic, and passive observer figures. Although both Smith's and Landon's wanderers are self-divided or harmed by fragmentation, fragmentation manifests itself in Smith's case most of all through weakness, which generates a sense of alienation, depression, and even terror. Landon's half human monsters, by contrast, are

equally "harmed" by fragmentation, but since the fragmentation is only externalized and not internalized through the condition of melancholy, the sublime generated by their supernatural powers often overshadows the sense of terror.

Although the female wanderer is centered around this theme of fragmentation, this thesis does not intend to fragment the figure of the wanderer itself. Instead, my argument serves to extend and broaden the notions associated with the trope of the wanderer and the sublime. In embracing the realms of the stage, the city, madness, fantasy, and death, the female wanderer transcends time and space and assumes an identity that is truly beyond words – one that leaves even their readers speechless. Although it seems that the female wanderer is a figure that resists labeling, all wanderer figures – male or female – still have in common with each other an inherent sense of restlessness, which results in a longing for transcendence and the sublime. The connection between wandering and the sublime is of utmost importance in both the female wanderer and her male counterpart. Ultimately, the figure of the female wanderer, as illustrated by Robinson, Smith, and Landon, becomes a global nomad that redefines not only the trope of the Romantic wanderer as a whole, but also some of the portrayals of female wanderers by the "big six" male Romantic poets.

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