



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

2011

Signifying Ruins: The Wreck and Rebirth of Modernity, Language, and Representation

Audrey Farley
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

© The Author

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/177>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

SIGNIFYING RUINS: THE WRECK AND REBIRTH OF MODERNITY, LANGUAGE, AND
REPRESENTATION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University.

By
Audrey C. Farley
B. A. University of Richmond, May 2007
M. A. Virginia Commonwealth University, May 2011

Director: Dr. Marcel Cornis-Pope,
Professor and Co-Chair, Department of English

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
April 21, 2011

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank, first and foremost, Dr. Marcel Cornis-Pope, not only for directing this thesis, but also for guiding my research on ruins for several years. His critical knowledge and insights—literary and theoretical—enabled my project and kept me engaged in a topic I might otherwise have abandoned. Without him, this thesis would not have emerged. I am also indebted to the members of my committee: Dr. Karen Rader, for helping me to historically situate my work; Dr. Rivka Swenson, for helping me to make this work more scholarly and authoritative, both stylistically and substantively; and Dr. Les Harrison, for helping me to contextualize my analysis of twentieth century ruins in the larger literary narrative of ruins and fragments. I would also like to thank Brigid Duffy, my college roommate, for sharing my early fascination with ruins and ruin-theory and for letting me bounce many ideas off of her in the course of this project and others. Lastly, but by no means least, I am grateful for my little girl, Grace, who afforded me many moments of comic relief throughout long days of research and writing, and my husband, Matt, for providing me quiet space and time to write and for encouraging me to undertake this endeavor in the first place.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	ii
Abstract	iii
Introduction.....	1
The Relationship between Ruins and Modernity	8
Fragmentation and Re-presentation.....	9
Ruins and Empire; the Gothic “Other”	155
Chapter I: The Crisis of Modernity: The Fracture, Culture, Reality, and the Self.....	17
Ruins, Modernity, and the City	17
Trash/Waste as Abject and Artifact	30
Chapter II: Corporeal Ruins, Dismemberment, and Re-memberment	45
Dismemberment and Re-memberment in <i>Ulysses</i>	53
Broken Bones in <i>The Waste Land</i>	65
“Wounded Creatures” and “Partial Beings” in <i>Midnight’s Children</i>	77
Chapter III: Language in Ruins and Revolution of/through Language	92
Noise, Gesture, and Word: ‘Weaving and Unweaving’ Language in <i>Ulysses</i>	95
“Diving into the Wreck” of Language and Patriarchal Signification	106
Chapter IV: Recycle and Rebirth From the Ruins of Discourse	Error! Bookmark not defined. 120
Works Cited.....	131

Abstract

SIGNIFYING RUINS: THE WRECK OF MODERNITY, LANGUAGE, AND REPRESENTATION

By Audrey C. Farley, M.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011.

Major Director: Dr. Marcel Cornis-Pope, Professor and Co-chair, Department of English

This study explores formal and thematic representations of ruins in twentieth century literary texts, including James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and Adrienne Rich's "Diving into the Wreck." Analyzing these texts and concepts of ruins in the theoretical work of Jacques Derrida, Walter Benjamin, and Julia Kristeva, I argue that ruins underscore the arbitrariness—and, thus, the fragility—of symbolic systems of signification. Ruins, by virtue of their fragmentation, invite nostalgic projections of totality only to betray totality as an illusion. Thus, the imagination of wholeness that the ruin incites allows—only to disallow—meaning. Modernity and language also initiate an allegorical process by which representation is made possible and impossible. Proclaiming an alliance (based on a contrast) between the past and the present, signifiers and signifieds, modernity and language likewise betray that representation, by invoking a radical alterity, is ruined from inception.

Introduction

The ruin does not supervene like an accident upon a monument that was intact only yesterday. In the beginning there is ruin. Ruin is that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze. Ruin is the self-portrait.
- Jacques Derrida

In the second chapter of *Ulysses*, Joyce's protagonist has just finished a lecture to his students on the battle of Pyrrhus when he pauses to muse on the panorama of violence that is modern history:

Fabled by the daughters of memory. And yet it was in some way if not as memory fabled it. A phrase, then, of impatience, thud of Blake's wings of excess. I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid, final flame. What's left us then?
(*Ulysses* 20)

Here, Joyce deploys the image of ruin to characterize history and the chaos and destruction that recorded history has imposed on the past and, even more problematically, on the present. Joyce's hero, Stephen Dedalus, is troubled by the illusion of totality that history, as it is traditionally conceived, promises. His apocalyptic vision—"the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid, final flame"—betrays his weariness towards a tyrannical, authoritative approach to history (such as that exemplified by the textbooks in his classroom). Stephen is disturbed by the unquestionable authority of the past, believing it to overlook the subjectivity of memory. By alluding to Blake ("fabled by the daughters of memory"), Stephen emphasizes the role of memory in the reconstruction of history. He also suggests the possibility of the imagination's revision of (and perhaps, escape from) the past. History is, Stephen later declares, "a nightmare from which [he is] trying to awake" (24). As the narrative unfolds, his quest becomes one to recover from the trauma of history, to redeem the past from tyrannical

modes of representation, and to redeem himself from the grip of the past by restoring meaning to the present. But, problematically, this last task relies on “fabled” memory.

Throughout the narrative, Joyce continues to question methods of re-presenting the past. He characterizes recorded history as a ruin, but this characterization might be extended to modernity, the central task of which is to re-present the past. Ruins represent the nostalgic projection of totality on the past. Modernity destroys (or ruins) the present by rendering it to the past and legitimating itself in contrast. In other words, modernity engenders itself in relation to “the past” as if the past were a whole body, not fragmented. It is necessary that modernity construe the past as whole in order to denote the past as the “other” that modernity is not. Thus, modernity and ruins are conjoined in that both modernity and ruins express and *expose* an imagined totality. Just as physical ruins connote an absent totality, modernity necessarily promotes a vision of the past as an organic whole. But in fact, as Stephen realizes, the past lacks integrity; it is fragmented by subjective experiences of it. Further, the re-presentation of the past relies on “fabled” memory, which imposes the imagination on the past in order to produce history. Ruins, like modernity, also expose a lack of integrity and invite allegorization. Like allegory, ruins posit wholeness, if only to deconstruct wholeness in the processing of positing it. The beholder of ruins is urged to imaginatively restore the ruin to wholeness. The imagination of wholeness is, in fact, enabled by the ruin, since its fragments demand restoration. Ruins thus reinforce and undermine the very paradigms of wholeness that they imply. Modernity, likewise, is both enabled and disabled by ruins. Modernity must destroy the present (which becomes the past) to assert itself; but modernity, by its very nature, is compelled to destroy itself the moment it is actualized.

In *Pleasure of Ruins*, Rose MacCaulay, explores the allure of beholding architectural ruins, arguing that “the ruin-drama [is] staged perpetually in the human imagination, half whose desire is to build up, while the other half smashes and levels to the earth” (100). Since the publication of MacCaulay's work in 1953, many critics have shared her curiosity in this paradox of the ruin. Raúl Rodrigues-Hernandez, for instance, echoes her comment, stating that “the ruin is not an either/or proposition; it is both construction and destruction” (6), noting the etymology of the word ruin: ‘derived from Latin *ruina*, a falling down, from *ruere*, to rush and outgo, to rise’ ruins] entail movements in opposing directions: a ‘falling down’ and a ‘rising up’ (6). According to Rodrigues-Hernandez, modernity ought also to be perceived as a kind of creative destruction, as it is both “a thrust toward the future [and] a wrenching toward decay” (6). Importantly, as these critics emphasize, ruins and modernity are linked by their capacity to create and destroy. Ruins and modernity simultaneously allow and disallow representation. Language, as well, initiates a process of re-appropriation that both establishes and undermines meaning; thus, it is no surprise that discussions of ruins and modernity tend to also critique the role of language. In this thesis, I shall argue that language, ruins, and modernity are all joined by their capacity and incapacity for signification.

Importantly, the trauma of ruins and modernity—which Stephen in *Ulysses* experiences—is their resistance to representation. By calling attention to what is ultimately un-representable, ruins and the concept of modernity expose the fragility of the symbolic order (and consequently, of the self that is established within that order).¹ This study will explore how various twentieth

¹ In his Seminar IV, “La relation d’objet,” Jacques Lacan explains the domain of the Symbolic, which is the dimension proper to culture, language and to signification, more broadly. The Symbolic order facilitates the signifier, which has no positive existence, but which is constituted by virtue of an object that is signified. The Symbolic is also the realm in which the subject posits the ego in relation to a radical other, a signified object.

century texts rework the ruin, an established literary motif and form, to critique the phenomena of modernity and cultural systems of signification (such as language), which are conjoined by their reliance on a system of symbolic relations. I will examine cross-genre texts from across the twentieth century that deploy ruins to challenge established modes of representation. The literary representations of ruins examined here vary in form and method, but they all use fragments (textual or thematic) to destabilize cultural systems of signification by exposing them as arbitrary and to suggest new means of perceiving and expressing the self and the world. In so doing, these texts expand upon the theoretical presentations of ruins in the work of two prominent theorists of the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, both of whom critique the ruin's role in the process of re-presentation in order to emphasize the illusion of totality.² I will also invoke Julia Kristeva's theory on the abject and the semiotic to show that identity and meaning are casualties (ruins) of signification itself but also to suggest that we can transcend the ruins by finding new forms of expression (of the body, of the pre-objectal), which gravely imperil symbolic modes of signification.

. Associating ruins with allegory, Benjamin analyzes the ruin's role in the re-presentation of history and the efforts to reconstruct the past in some kind of mythic totality. Derrida analyzes the ruin's role in the re-presentation of the self, focusing on the ruined subject's incapacity to self-appropriate. Both Benjamin and Derrida deploy the ruin in their discussions of modernity

Problematically, the very existence of this alterity destabilizes the ego in the same act that it establishes it.

² By emphasizing the illusion of totality, Benjamin and Derrida challenge Hegelian notions of wholeness or an Absolute. In the Preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes his concept of the Absolute Subject, which is both whole and non-relative. Hegel's Absolute describes being as something that is only comprehensible as an all-inclusive whole. In order for the rational subject to know its object (the exterior world), thought and being must be united; Absolute idealism is the expression of this necessary unity. For Hegel, wholeness is essential to all knowledge and truth. Truth does not decide knowledge, but rather, knowledge (of truth) decides what is true. In other words, there is no knowledge short of total knowledge, and there is no truth short of the totality of what is already known.

because the ruin reinforces the failed process of re-presentation. Importantly, modernity, too, is a process of re-presentation because modernity perpetually re-presents the past. Benjamin notes that modernity is “marked with the fatality of being one day antiquity” (*The Arcades Project* 22). Modernity is haunted by the past, and, in order to evade the past, modernity must constantly reinvent itself. But, problematically, modernity simultaneously relies on the past, if only to establish that from which it is then compelled to break free. Hence, both ruins and modernity, as Benjamin and Derrida discuss, allow and disallow re-presentation by virtue of a symbolic otherness. In the quest for representation, ruins and modernity invoke a radical alterity; but in doing so, they expose meaning as arbitrary and betray the fragility of the very paradigms they express. The relativism (and consequent instability) of ruins and modernity situate both within a psychoanalytic discourse.³ In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva discusses the subject’s noxious reaction to the abject—blood, waste, and decay that recall the mother’s body. The abject triggers psychic death, since the abject—which is neither subject nor object—recalls the pre-objectal, maternal realm, which evades signification. The abject is an “unnameable otherness” (191) that gravely imperils the ego. The abject must be expelled—abjected—in order for the subject to preserve the integrity of his borders and to enable, once again, a fantasy of wholeness. Confronting the abject, the subject conjures up an absent whole. Much the same way, ruins and modernity reflect an imagined totality. Beholding the ruin, the spectator sees not the remaining structure but what is conspicuously absent, and the imagination labors to restore the ruin to integrity. Likewise, modernity attempts to restore the present to wholeness by distinguishing it

³ Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory is centered around the subject’s experience in the Mirror Stage, which explores the formation of the ego in relation to a radical “other.” Lacan writes of a “symbolic order that precedes the infantile subject and in accordance with which he has to structure himself” (“The Direction of the Treatment and the

from the lost and broken past. Just as the subject individuates in relation to a radical, marginalized “other” (the mother), modernity defines itself precisely by what it is *not*. The subject is perpetually haunted by this other, which threatens his identity; likewise, modernity is perpetually haunted by the past, which threatens its very existence. Importantly, the threat of the past is twofold, the past threatens modernity, on the one hand, because the present that modernity claims to represent is instantaneously already part of the past, and, on the other hand, because modernity, as an idea or phenomenon, cannot define itself outside of a temporal context that necessarily implicates the past. The following chapters will elaborate on how the representations of ruins in the texts of James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Anne Michaels, Hoda Barakāt, Malcolm Lowry, Salman Rusdhie, and Adrienne Rich reiterate concern about cultural systems of signification. These texts are diverse in form and genre, spanning nearly the entirety of the twentieth century. Further, they invoke diverse kinds of ruins (textual, cultural, corporeal, and psychological). Yet, these various texts are representative of a larger, consistent response to the problems of modernity, language and symbolic modes of representation. I argue that by invoking ruins to critique modernity and language, these texts show that signification both ruins and is itself is a ruin, since signification precludes (rather than expresses) identity and meaning.

First, however, I intend to establish more precisely the relationship between ruins and modernity by invoking Benjamin, who links the two via allegory, and Derrida, who links the two by observing their mutual reliance on an alterity or a radical “other.” In short, Benjamin and Derrida declare that ruins and modernity are linked by their incapacity for representation. The first chapter will discuss modernity's fracture of culture, reality, and the self, as illustrated in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, Hoda Barakāt's *The Stone of*

Principles of Its Power,” 223). Like the subject's ego, ruins and modernity are both enabled and disabled by alterity.

Laughter, and Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*. By depicting modernity as a destructive force, these texts emphasize the violence of symbolic modes of representation. Eliot's, Lowry's, Barakāt's, and Michaels's protagonists are traumatized by modernity and history, suggesting that cultural systems of signification devastate the psyche. In these texts, the trauma of modernity and history is reinforced by the collapse of the city, a hallmark of modernity, and by the motif of trash and cultural debris. By relating corporeal and cultural ruins to Julia Kristeva's abject, I will further argue that ruins emphasize the collapse of the symbolic order. The second chapter will more fully explicate the motif of corporeal ruins (dismemberment) in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in order to argue that they destabilize the systems of signification upon which notions of modernity and the self rely. Broken bodies and dismembered parts recall the violence of the allegorical process, which tears apart the signifier and the signified. Thus, dismemberment also emphasizes the subject's symbolic decentered-ness, since the ego is always formed in relation to a radical "other." This chapter will also argue that the role of memory (or "re-memberment") is an effort to reconstitute the self from the fragments of experience. Finally, the third chapter will examine *Ulysses*, Adrienne Rich's poem "Diving into the Wreck," and the collection *The Dream of a Common Language* in order to foreground the ruins of language. This chapter will invoke Kristeva's notion of the semiotic, by which bodily, pre-oedipal instincts are sublimated by the structured order of language. Joyce and Rich suggest Kristeva's notion of the semiotic in their critique of the word made flesh, sharing Kristeva's hope for a modern poetic language that transcends the ruins of symbolic systems of signification by recovering the body and the somatic impulses that structured discourse disavows. By enforcing rules of syntax, language enforces corporate modes

of expression and stifles singularity. Further, language falsely supposes a relationship between words and objects, tearing apart signifying subjects and signified objects to enable representation. Yet the rhythms of the body affirm wholeness because they recall a pre-objectal modality that precedes signification. By recalling a realm anterior to signification, the body expresses, however impossibly, the inexpressible. Channeling ambiguity and plurality, the impulses of the body that imprint on language gravely imperil signification.

The Relationship between Ruins and Modernity

Importantly, Benjamin's association of ruins with modernity is both literal and allegorical. Benjamin explains that “[i]n the ruin history has physically merged into the setting” (*The Origin of German Tragic Drama* 177-8). The ruin displays the material object's subjection to the destruction of time. (This contributes to Benjamin's concept of the materiality of history, which will be addressed in Chapter I.) But the ruin also displays the transience of the concept, which is likewise broken and fragmented, a kind of historical palimpsest bearing the violent effects of the passage of time and the violence of the allegorical process. Thus, Benjamin's ‘modernity’ refers to literal ruins as well as to the process of historical decay that erodes the realm of thought and the realm of things. Ruins and modernity are further conjoined by allegory, since both ruins and allegory can be said to account for the distance between the present and an irrecoverable past. The notion that the past cannot be restored (or comprehended) explains, in part, why both Benjamin and Derrida declare modernity a ruin. For Benjamin, the past cannot be comprehended because its wholeness is only imagined. (Allegory deconstructs the myth of totality.) For Derrida, the past cannot be comprehended because the distinction between past and present (and

future) is false. The attempt to distinguish between the past and the present merely betrays a drive for the Other upon which the self relies. Hence, time, in Derrida's view, both makes possible and impossible the self because of its reliance on alterity, or an imagined Other.

Fragmentation and Re-presentation

Ultimately, Benjamin and Derrida declare modernity (reality, more broadly) a ruin because the past—or time for that matter—can be neither represented nor re-presented. Since the ruin is dynamic—that is, both allowing and disallowing re-presentation—the ruin does not happen, the ruin *is*. This detail complicates a linear conception of time. But time is neither linear nor continuous for either Benjamin or Derrida.

Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, written between 1927 and 1940 in the last years of the author's life (Tiedemann 929), offers historical snapshots of city life in Paris, reinforcing a disrupted sense of time and a fluidity of history and object. Reviewing these snapshots, the reader perceives that the arcades are fluid places; they are always in a state of flux and their meaning is always remolded. Benjamin's map of the past is fragmented because, he would argue, so too is the past itself.

In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin articulates his vision of history and the historian in his critique of a painting by Paul Klee:

A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his

back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (278)

It is impossible to do justice to this passage, but importantly, Benjamin insists here that the past is not a linear sequence of events but rather a violent storm that cannot, despite all effort, be arranged into any kind of meaningful form. Benjamin analogizes history to ruins, to a “pile of debris” (278) ever growing. He also critiques the impulse to restore the past, “to make whole what has been smashed” (278) and the futility of such efforts to impose order on the wreckage. Several of the literary texts engaged in my thesis share Benjamin's concept of a disjointed past and deploy the motif of the ruin to reinforce the fragmentation of history. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, for instance, recalls Benjamin's pile of wreckage by representing history as a blizzard of cultural debris that can be assigned to no one era or time but only to the chaos of modern civilization. Reality is but “a heap of broken images” (line 22), historical bits and pieces that are perpetually de-contextualized and re-contextualized, reconfigured and re-appropriated as meaning in the present.⁴ There always exists the urge to restore the fragments of the past, and this is, for Benjamin, the fundamental impulse of allegory. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, published in 1928, Benjamin famously declares, “Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things” (*Origin* 178). He connects ruins with allegory because both produce images of an impossible totality. For Benjamin, history lacks integrity; it is spatial and imagistic. The ruin, an image or snapshot of time, reinforces the fragmentation and discontinuity of time. Allegory, then, is an especially appropriate form of representation because

⁴ Bill Brown, a more recent critic and thing theorist, explores the ways that visual and material objects (including literary forms) recuperate history. Brown reverses the notion that historical context helps to explain literary texts, instead arguing that literary texts help to redeem an otherwise irredeemable history. For Brown, as well as Benjamin, material objects play a critical role in the formation of subjectivity, since they mediate discourses (*A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* 3-4).

it owns its inadequacy as a mode of representation; that is, allegory makes no false promises of totality. Because allegory disrupts the continuum of history, rescuing objects from illusions of organic wholeness, allegory is the only means by which the past is redeemed.

For Derrida as well, the ruin simultaneously makes truth possible and impossible by virtue of its ruination. In *Memoirs of the Blind: The Ruin and Other Self-Portraits* (1993), Derrida links the act of drawing to the act of writing since both acts incorporate blindness and memory rather than perception. Because of the reliance on memory, the self-portrait is ruined from its inception:

The ruin does not supervene like an accident upon a monument that was intact only yesterday. In the beginning there is ruin. Ruin is that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze. Ruin is the self-portrait, this face looked at in the face as the memory of itself, what remains or returns as a specter from the moment one first looks at oneself and a figuration is eclipsed. The figure, the face, then sees its visibility being eaten away; it loses its integrity without disintegrating. For the incompleteness of the visible monument comes from the eclipsing structure of the trait, from a structure that is only remarked, pointed out, impotent or incapable of being reflected in the shadow of the self-portrait. (*Memoirs* 68)

Like Benjamin's ruin, Derrida's ruin is also anti-dialectical, producing no over-arching totality. And yet, the “dimension of the ruinous simulacrum has never threatened—quite to the contrary—the emergence of a work” (Derrida 65). In other words, the ruin does not devastate the self-portrait after its construction; neither does the ruin simply precede the self-portrait. More precisely, the ruin enables the self-portrait since the latter is only made possible by memory. Derrida explains that the draftsman can never recapture his image in the very act of drawing because such a task requires him to see himself from the position of spectator. Gazing back at himself from the figure of the mirror, he occupies the role of spectator and thus renders

himself [as draftsman] blind. Derrida emphasizes that ruin pre-exists the self-portrait, but it is only because the role of the “other” is irreducible. Alterity, in a sense, ruins.

What distinguishes Derrida's discussion of re-presentation from Benjamin's is the former's emphasis of the role of memory. Memory, according to Derrida, allows the subject to see only to show him that he can see nothing:

The ruin is not in front of us; it is neither a spectacle nor a love object. It is experience itself: neither the abandoned yet still monumental fragment of a totality, nor, as Benjamin thought, simply a theme of baroque culture. It is precisely not a theme, for it ruins the theme, the position, the presentation or representation of anything and everything. Ruin is, rather, this memory open like an eye, or like the hole in a bone socket that lets you see without showing you anything at all, anything of the all. This, for showing you nothing at all, nothing of the all. ‘For’ means here both because the ruin shows nothing at all and with a view to showing nothing of the all. (*Memoirs* 69)

Memory is the individual's experience of his incapacity to restore anything to representation.

Memory is not the fragments of a lost totality, but the experience of he who sees that he cannot see. In his discussion of the blind draftsman, Derrida underscores the fact that adequate representation relies on the evidence of present intuition. But memory is incapable of recapturing the present (or anything at all). Hence, ruin results from the failure of memory. At the same time, it is memory that enables the draftsman to impose the past and the future on the present. Thus, memory, like ruin, makes it both possible and impossible for the subject to see himself.

Ultimately, both Benjamin and Derrida discuss ruins in terms of representation in order to explore what is “unrepresentable.” Like the ruin, modernity fails to re-present the past. Further, modernity itself is unrepresentable because it is too fluid, too fleeting. Charles Baudelaire, whose work on modernity Benjamin engages, observes modernity's self-erasure and self-

overcoming, pointing out that the present of modernity is always already consummated and projected in the past (Călinescu 49). Thus, modernity, insofar as we perceive it, will and can never be achieved. On a similar note, Paul de Man articulates the spirit of modernism, as a “desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at last a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure” (*Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* 148). De Man's observations about modernism can be extended also to *modernity*, which likewise seeks (however impossibly) to break free from the past, to establish itself once and for all beyond the scope of history that encapsulates the past. Interestingly, many critics and historians have reiterated Benjamin's and Derrida's critique of modernity by emphasizing its relativism. The relativism of modernity is reinforced by the motif of ruins because ruins are an allegorical mode of representation. That is, the ruin connotes something greater than the ruin itself; the ruin connotes what once was. The beholder of the ruin does not simply see the rubble and remains; he sees the rubble and remains in relation to what is perceived to be absent. The beholder reconstructs the ruin in its original integrity (or at least, as he/she imagines it). But this relativistic mode of representation is flawed because it diminishes the ruin itself. Like ruins, modernity, insofar as we perceive it, is not self-sustaining; modernity relies on the past (or notions of time) to define what it is and what it is not. Paradoxically, modernity claims to be concerned with the present, but necessarily implicates the past. It is precisely because of this central paradox that modernity is somewhat of an intellectual myth.

Yet, even though Benjamin and Derrida declare modernity a ruin, a recent critic, Jon Beasley-Murray, proposes that “[m]odernity creates the ruin”:

There is no such thing as an ancient ruin, for the ruin is always a modern concept. Ruination and modernity go hand in hand: the modern displaces the ancient and marks it as irredeemably part of the past precisely by construing it as ruined. (212)

According to Beasley-Murray, modernity makes a ruin of the past to discard it, but also to read it; moderns construct ruins in order to interpret them, and in doing so, to pass judgment on the past and forewarn for the future. Modernity's devastation of the past is necessary: “[a] sign of modernity's success and vitality is that past civilizations are in ruins all around” (212). Beasley-Murray's analysis reinforces Benjamin's and Derrida's claims that modernity is a ruin because of its failure as a mode of re-presentation. Yet importantly, Beasley-Murray articulates the imperial nature of modernity, and simultaneously, of ruins. Modernity betrays imperialist anxiety—the need to subjugate (or ruin) a radical other in order to sustain authority and the simultaneous awareness that subjugating *it ruins* the authorized subject, since his authority depends upon subjugation of a radical other. Modernity's impulse to lay to waste leads Beasley-Murray to declare that “to talk of ruins is always to talk of power” (212). Todd Samuel Presner likewise explores the conjunction of ruins, modernity, and imperialism in his analysis of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. According to Presner, Hegel's modernity is a “grand narrative that unfolds geographically” (201). This geographic narrative charts colonial travels, and the “ruins of past empires merely confirm the progress of the spirit and propel its march forward in a seascape that moves from overcoming the temporality of destruction and ruin to the permanent spatiality of a global Christian empire” (201). Hegelian modernity, thus, is essentially the destined triumph of the imperial imagination via “the subjugation of the non-European other” (201). In Hegel's narrative, modernity and empire convene at the site of ruins.

Ruins and Empire; the Gothic “Other”

The ruin's association with imperial imaginings is first expressed in the poetics of the nineteenth century, which is marked by the fragment as form and motif. Interestingly, some critics argue that literary fragments signal the onset of modern literature.⁵ Textual ruins convey an inconclusive nature that characterizes modernity as well. Modernity, by its very concept, is never actualized and so it only exists in incomplete form. Yet, modernity and ruins also share an imperial dimension that nineteenth century ruins express rather clearly. Take, for example, Shelley's “Ozymandias,” which deploys the ruin (a weathered edifice) as a symbol of the inevitable decline of sovereignty, power, and global expansion. Bearing the inscription “Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair” (line 11), the “colossal wreck, boundless and bare” (line 13) where “[n]othing beside remains” (line 12) is read as a metaphor for the ephemeral nature of empire. Given the ruin's allegorical form—its mysterious gaps—it is no surprise that the motif exploded in Gothic literature, since the Gothic concerns itself with the dark, unknowable “other,” with the fragment, the haunted and ruined house, and so forth. The haunted ruin, be it a collapsed castle or crumbling cathedral or abbey, becomes a metaphoric representation of the psyche. Thus, ruins in Gothic literature underscore that while ruins figure as evidence of empire and subjugation, the real tyranny of ruins is the narratives they inspire. Or, the tyranny of ruins is *that* they inspire narratives, that they, as Beasley-Murray observes, “come with no narrative of their own [and, thus,] have consistently to be ventriloquized” (215). Ruins invite creative appropriation, giving the subject control to complete them, to sketch a totality and restore the myth. Ruins legitimate, according to Benjamin and Derrida, by virtue of the wholeness that they

⁵ Elizabeth Wanning Harries notes that Petrarch's fourteenth century *Rime Sparse* (Scattered Rhymes), is both the

invoke. The imperial dimension of ruins, then, is the imagination of power that allegory enacts in the fictive retelling (of the past, of the Other). The Gothic ruin also betrays the sublimity of the imperial re-imaginings that ruins evoke. As Beasley-Murray maintains, “[t]he discrepancy between the ruin with its absences plainly present, and the totality whose presence is felt through those absences, magnifies still further the grandeur of the absent whole. . . . There is no limit to the sublime dimensions of the edifice that ruins imply” (215). Likewise, there is no limit to the power of the narratives that accrete around ruins. Ruins do not simply evidence hegemony (or its decline, as Ozymandias does), they *enact* hegemony through their fragmentary remains.

Paradoxically, posthegemony (a social order that is no longer organized by hegemony) involves the “denarrativization of ruins” but denarrativization is itself “further ruination” (Beasley-Murray 215). In other words, narratives legitimate and de-legitimate the ruins that they purport to complete. In describing the imperial, Gothic dimension of ruins here, Beasley-Murray evokes Benjaminian and Derridean ruins, which also simultaneously substantiate and undermine the paradigms of wholeness that they infer. Benjamin’s allegorical ruin and Derrida’s ruined self-portrait at once allow and disallow representation because they invoke totality and betray fragmentation through of a process of signification (allegory, alterity). Ruins critique systems of signification, which reveal and obscure meaning. Like modernity, which Paul de Man argues “cannot assert itself without being at once swallowed up and reintegrated into a regressive historical process” (151), ruins are self-effacing. They are marked by a kind of creative destruction. So, too, are systems of signification, which reveal and obscure meaning in the same act.

first fragmented form and the first work often identified of modern literature. As Harries says, “[m]odern Western literature could be said to begin with fragments” (14).

CHAPTER I: THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY: THE FRACTURE, CULTURE, REALITY, AND THE SELF

Like Benjamin's *The Arcades Projects*, many twentieth century texts present a picture of the modern world that is quite literally "ruined." This chapter will examine the following texts, all of which situate their narratives in settings of ruins, rubble, and debris in order to reinforce the violence of modernity and of symbolic modes of representation, more significantly: T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922); Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947); Hoda Barakāt's *The Stone of Laughter* (1990); and Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* (1996). Settings of ruins critique modern society, which has been literally fragmented (by modern warfare, by colonization) as well as culturally fragmented (by the tyranny of government and patriarchy); settings of ruin also dramatize the psychological fragmentation that modernity engenders. Importantly, by presenting the psyche as a casualty of modernity, these texts reinforce the violence of cultural systems and the methods of signification that they enforce. At the same time, these texts betray identity and meaning as fragile and arbitrary, as ruins that are only imaginatively restored to wholeness.

Ruins, Modernity, and the City

Interestingly, all of the above-mentioned texts (a modernist poem, a late modernist novel, a Lebanese Civil War novel, and a contemporary Canadian novel) situate their modern wastelands in the city, thus deploying the metropolis as a product (and casualty) of modernity. While the contemporary association of the city and modernity may seem natural, Michel

Makarius attributes the association to Baudelaire, who perceived the city as the hallmark of a modernity and represented the city as a ruin. According to Makarius, Baudelaire's city is multi-faceted, “an effervescent place, full of erotic appeal, [but] it is also a mirror that holds up to the poet an image of his own melancholy” (193). Makarius further explains that “without always being ruins as such, the object-symbols among which melancholy broods are directly related to an architecture laid waste; disorder betrays the random juxtaposition that results from the want, or loss of a principle of organization” (193). In other words, the city (modernity) reflects the fracture and fragmentation that comprise the subject's reality. Baudelaire's city anticipates Derrida's self-portrait, since both scenes depict mimetic ruin. Derrida's draftsman sees himself in the mirror and is fragmented (blinded) by the act. Similarly, Baudelaire's city in ruins stirs the poet to mourn the loss of organization. Yet, according to Baudelaire, the city is not simply a metaphor for modernity in ruins. The city reinforces the idea that *modernity ruins* by virtue of its mimetic capacity. Or, on the contrary, as Derrida would prefer, modernity mirrors the ruin that already is and always was. The ruin *is* and *always was* because it fails as a mode of representation. As Derrida emphasizes in *Memoirs*, “[t]he ruin does not supervene like an accident upon a monument that was intact only yesterday. In the beginning there is ruin. Ruin is that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze. Ruin is the self-portrait” (68).⁶ According to Derrida, mimesis is a ruin, since the very act of gazing fragments the subject and exposes meaning as relative and arbitrary. So, while Baudelaire assigns agency to modernity/the ruin (by virtue of its mimetic capacity), Derrida proposes that the ruin is anterior

⁶ In his Seminar IV, “La relation d'objet,” Jacques Lacan explains more broadly the domain of the Symbolic, which is the dimension proper to culture, language and to signification. The Symbolic order facilitates the signifier, which has no positive existence, but which is constituted by virtue of an object that is signified. The Symbolic is also the realm in which the subject posits the ego in relation to a radical other, a signified object. Problematically, the very

to itself. Incidentally, the texts examined in this chapter tend to promote Baudelaire's notion of modernity, since it is the city (a hallmark of modernity) that castrates the individual—from culture, from the past, and from himself.

The modern city in destruction links it to ruins of old. Romantic ruins consisted of broken monuments, decrepit estates, abandoned abbeys and cathedrals; urban ruins depict derelict or bombed houses, buildings, and factories. Cecilia Enjuto-Rangel observes that in the modern ruin, “progress and war take over the role of ivy and time,” explaining that “nature ceases to be the principal force that slowly ‘overcomes’ the works of ‘civilization’” (24). Modernist concepts of ruins transform Romantic concepts, which are concerned with nature's destructive power. Although Romantics celebrated the collapse of culture and empire (which had grown too decadent), it was nature's destructive power that Romantics really emphasized in the ruin. Christopher Woodward relates that in earlier art, ruins celebrated man's architectural and cultural achievements. But for the Romantics, “the ruins had become a work of Nature, not man” (67)⁷. More particularly, the Romantics celebrated Nature's erosion of ambitious human endeavor. Commenting on Shelley, Woodward observes the following:

It was in the ruins of ancient Rome that Shelley found hope for the future— more specifically, in the flowers and trees which blossomed in the Baths of Caracalla. Its mighty walls represented the power of tyranny: the power of Caracalla . . . But the structure erected by the cruelest of emperors was crumbling, as the roots of figs and myrtles and laurel loosened the masonry. Their exuberant and wild fecundity promised the inevitable victory of Nature— a Nature that was fertile, democratic and free . . . Nature had never seemed more beautiful than in its

existence of this alterity destabilizes the ego in the same act that it establishes it.

⁷ Robert Ginsberg also reinforces the centrality of nature in the Romantic conception of ruins, writing that “[v]egetation plays an essential role in the Romantic vision, for the life of plants kills the art of human building. The ruin is torn away from the human realm by the living force in nature, just as earlier, humanity, in its independent constructions, vanquished nature. All in vain. All in vine” (317).

destruction of tyranny. (66)

In the Romantics' vision, ruins devastate but such devastation is celebrated because it restores equilibrium. Ruins clear the ground but from the remains, there is rejuvenation. Only when ruins level can there be re-growth, even if such re-growth will eventually yield to further ruination.

According to Harries, late eighteenth century "ruins were chiefly a reminder of the chaos lurking behind all that rational order, the rancor of time and nature, the barbarity that threatened the established patterns of civilization" (57). For modernists, ruins are also associated with disorder, but it is the disorder of culture. Yet, although Romantic notions of the ruin emphasize the role of nature while modernist notions of the ruin emphasize the role of culture, for both, the ruin becomes a site of contemplation. Beholding the ruin, subjects construct narratives, both personal and cultural. In a recent study, Bill Brown analyzes how objects are used to make meaning. According to Brown, material and visual objects enable subjectivity, since we use them to make and re-make ourselves. Within the object, we find the subject (*A Sense of Things* 12). For Romantics and modernists, the ruin is an object—a fragment—that invites imaginations of meaning.

Importantly, however, such imaginations of meaning betray what is irrecoverably lost. Just as eighteenth century ruins inspired nostalgia for a bygone era (an era not yet marked by human decadence), the modern metropolis, too, connotes an irretrievable past. Whether the destruction is wrought by nature or modern warfare, ruins trouble the psyche because they remind the subject of his incapacity to restore the past to wholeness. In Baudelaire's "Le Cygne," the poet describes the painful nostalgia experienced by the speaker who recalls Paris in

its antiquity:

Suddenly watered my fertile memory.
As I crossed the new place du Carrousel.
The old Paris is gone (the face of a city
Changes faster, alas! than a human heart) (lines 5-8; trans. George Kalogeris)

The city triggers painful nostalgia as the speaker mourns that the old Paris is no more. His observation that the “the face of a city” changes “faster [. . .] that a human heart” reinforces the evanescence of place and of the present. And it is this detail which troubles the psyche. In this poem, Baudelaire reinforces the destruction—both literal and psychological—of modernity. Modernity ruins “the face of [the] city” but it also, and more importantly, ruins the beholder who is incapable of restoring the memory of the past.

Many twentieth century texts channel Baudelaire’s statements on ruins and modernity by foregrounding their narratives in the setting of the ruined, modern city. Perhaps the most famous instance is T.S. Eliot’s urban wasteland. Like its narrative structure, the poem presents “a heap of broken images” (line 22), a barrage of relics and remains that recall the romantic fragment poem, but that, as Thomas MacFarland notes, “now take a modernist form which we might relate to the crisis of World War I” (120). There is no question that Eliot’s mosaic of fragments demonstrates the chaotic state of modern existence.

Critics emphasize that Eliot’s wasteland represents the human psyche, which has been shattered by the world war.⁸ But the city not only mirrors the subject’s fragmentation, as Baudelaire suggests; the city fragments. As Marianne Thormählen argues, “the city in *The Waste Land* is not merely a stage subordinated to the action upon it; it helps direct the action and the

⁸ See Cook, Kenner, and Levenson.

action reflects on it, too” (237). After all, it is the city that forces the subject to confront the trauma of history. Consider the following lines:

What is the city over the mountain
Cracks and reforms bursts in the violent air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal (lines 371-377)

Coming face to face with the city, the supreme cultural artifact, the speaker is paralyzed by forces of history. The speaker connects the collapse of the European Empire to the collapse of great empires past; he is overcome with anxiety that Western imperialism, too, will crumble and fall. The speaker senses the impending doom, exclaiming, “London bridge is falling down falling down falling down” (line 426). But more troubling than fears of the empire's decline is the shattering of the myth, the blasting apart of the speaker's perception of the wholeness of the past. In the scene of falling towers, the past contaminates the present and vice versa. The fate of Jerusalem becomes the fate of Britain, and Western man now reads Jerusalem through a contemporary lens. The speaker senses that history lacks integrity and that it is incapable of restoration. Meaning is impossible: “I can connect/Nothing with nothing” (lines 301-2). Like the ruined portrait into which Derrida's draftsman gazes, the city mirrors the subject's psychological fragmentation. Thormählen observes that Eliot's “early poetry can [. . .] be said to describe the human condition in the modern city; in *The Waste Land* the human condition and the modern city are one” (240). The meaningless chaos of the modern city is registered within.

Thus, the city is, in part, responsible for the psychological fragmentation it mirrors in the individual, because it forces the modern subject to acknowledge the disorder of the present and the fictive organicity of the past. If the past lacks integrity, then so does the modern subject who

perceives that he is incapable of restoring it to wholeness. The ruined city also compels the subject to feel the weight of the meaninglessness of his modern existence. The line “I had not thought death had undone so many” (line 63) is a reference to Dante's inferno, in particular to Canto 4, in which Dante descends into the first circle of Hell, which is Limbo. (Eliot points to the connection in his notes [*Traditions* 113]). Eliot's allusion to limbo reinforces modernity as a meaningless abyss. Wandering around this abyss, the speaker's quest becomes a quest for meaning in a meaningless world.

Malcolm Lowry's late modernist novel, *Under the Volcano*, also presents the ruined city as the trigger of a kind of narcissistic crisis. Several critics have linked Lowry's Quauhnahuac to Eliot's London⁹, since it likewise represents the chaos and devastation that epitomize modernity. Certainly, Lowry's images of ruin often connote Eliot's. For instance, “[t]he shattered, evil-smelling chapel, overgrown with weeds, the crumbling walls, splashed with urine, on which scorpions lurked—wrecked entablature, sad archivolt, slippery stones covered with excreta” (14) evokes Eliot's descriptions of the ravaged, garbage-ridden city. Further, like Eliot's wasteland, the urban settings of ruin which form the background Lowry's novel are often the remains and ashes of war. And just as Eliot's speaker recalls the crumbled cities of past empires, Lowry's characters frequently recollect the ruins of past civilizations (Cholulua, the pyramids of the Aztecs), thus foregrounding cultural disintegration as the most visible dimension of modernity. In the first chapter, the narrator points out that “a fine American-style highway leads in from the north but is lost in its narrow streets and comes out a goat track” (3). The road depicts the path of modernity, which directs civilization to decay. In Lowry's text, cultural devastation is

⁹ See DeCoste and Markson.

responsible for the devastation of the soul because it estranges him from humanity. The protagonist wanders aimlessly around a post-war wasteland subjecting himself to internal and external ruin. His body and soul deteriorate because of his failure to acknowledge love; modernity has “ruined” him. Like Eliot, Lowry is interested less in the phenomenon of modernity than in the psychological impact of the phenomenon of modernity, the devastation of the ego, which is prompted by the hallmark of modernity, the city in ruins.

It is true that Lowry deploys ruins that are natural (volcanic), not just those that are man-made (the result of war, battle). However, the hero's act results from his subjection to modern civilization; his soul deteriorates as a result of his failure to recognize humanity in a society that has lost its integrity. Thus, it can be argued that it is the ruins of civilization (and not nature) that compel the hero's downfall. Like Eliot's speaker, the consul confronts the image of modernity in ruins and he is himself “ruined.” The consul is so disillusioned with the moral decay of modern civilization that his own body and mind decay. The reverse is also true: the corrupt leaders, messengers, and ambassadors of civilization destroy purpose and function in the modern world. But, more importantly, the scene of civilization's collapse troubles the psyche on another level. Ruins connote an even greater dissolution: the decay of the order of the universe. Confronting society in ruins, the consul subjects himself to an abyss of meaninglessness. This idea is reinforced when the consul literally plummets into an abyss (the ravine where a dead dog is tossed after him). But prior to this scene, he expresses the futility and despair which have consumed him: “[T]he word ‘pelado’ began to fill his whole consciousness. That had been Hugh's word for the thief: now someone had flung the insult at him. And it was as if, for the moment, he had

become the pelado, the thief - yes, the pilferer of meaningless muddled ideas out of which his rejection of life had grown” (389).

The psychological trauma of the ruined city, then, is that it recalls the collapse of all order, the breakdown of meaning. Importantly, the chaos and confusion that the ruined city evokes is not just literal. While Eliot's London and Lowry's Quauhnahuac have been literally brutalized by modern warfare and civilization, the truly threatening disorder is metaphysical. Eliot's and Lowry's ruins signal a semantic crisis, and this is evidenced by the trauma experienced by the protagonists who wander through the debris. Julia Hell argues that the ruin's ambiguity finally “bespeaks a potential vacuity of meaning” (6). Ruins complicate boundaries, both spatially and temporally; they seem to exist on the threshold of absence and presence and in between past and present. According to Hell, it is precisely because of its “ambivalence and amorphousness that the ruin functions as a uniquely flexible and productive trope for modernity's self-awareness” (6). The sense of modernity transmits the same ambiguity and confusion because modernity is paradoxical (killing itself in order to sustain itself). Like the ruin, modernity troubles the psyche because it recalls the subject's own transience, but more importantly, because it is irreducible.

The notion that the city in ruins triggers a kind of psychic death is also present in the 1990 Lebanese Civil War novel of Hoda Barakāt, *The Stone of Laughter*. In this text, the ruined city troubles the ego because of its demands for memory. Like Eliot and Lowry, Barakāt suggests that modern urban ruins traumatize because they compel the subject to acknowledge the failure of memory—that is, memory's incapacity to restore the past to totality or to confer the imagined totality of the past to the present. Barakāt foregrounds war-torn Beirut in her novel in

order to present the ruined city as a kind of mimesis of the psychological devastation endured by the protagonist, who is a victim of modernity, suffering from a “psychological crisis that the mad world outside had imposed upon him” (Barakāt 75). But she also foregrounds the bombed and ruined metropolis because the city further devastates the psyche. The narrator explains that poets create fictive narratives about the city because acknowledging its brutality would disturb the ego:

This hideous city,
this uniquely hideous city.
How can the poets sing of its beauty. This depravity.

They just don't want to get caught up in seeing it in its hideousness. To see it in its hideousness would take them back to their own hideousness, its vileness would taken them back to their own vileness and so they prefer to fabricate stories about it and to keep the stories going... (200)

In order to protect the ego from the trauma of the city, poets “fabricate stories” about it. Barakāt's protagonist shields his ego from the psychological trauma of the city by entertaining a story of the city. Khalil's story takes the form of a cherished ideal of the past. Khalil longs for “those days” (Barakāt 99) before the bombs, before sectarianism, and before he experienced the pain of adulthood. However, it is not simply the violence and destruction of the new city that frighten Khalil; it is the evanescence of the city. Khalil's fear of the destruction of the bombings—although very real—betrays an even more threatening fear, the destruction of *modernity*.

This is evidenced by Khalil's discomfort with the rapidity of cultural recycle. Like Baudelaire's speaker in *Le Cygne*, Khalil is particularly troubled by the ever-changing landscape of the city. He notes how quickly the face of the buildings and streets change, one day clean and erect and the next, blown to bits and fragments. He observes the ever-changing face of the buildings that post the portraits of the dead to inspire martyrs—“the headlong pace had become so swift that no sooner had the picture been up for the appropriate number of days for passers-by

to see than another picture came to cover it and to cover the one it was covering itself” (Barakāt 41). He regrets that his “beautiful, Mediterranean city has grown too much over the years [. . .] stretch[ing] and spread[ing] and [growing] more crowded” with buildings and apartments that have “[come] to resemble one another to a nightmarish extent” (16). Khalil is disturbed that his once beautiful city is now “splintered” (Barakāt 38). He mourns that “the places where [the children] used to play [are] becoming more and more piled up with rubble and rubbish” (Barakāt 44). Khalil's trauma at the sight of the modern city both inspires and is exacerbated by his nostalgia for an imagined past, a “past which, by necessity, is an innocent past” (97). Despite the urgency to recover the past (as he remembers it), Khalil finds that he is unable to restore his “beautiful, Mediterranean city;” that he cannot stop the bombs from dropping nor can he stop or slow down the destruction of modernity. Khalil's only recourse is to keep alive the myth, even though his melancholy ultimately results in his exile from the community. Thus, modernity not only severs him from the past, but also from society. Khalil loses touch with reality and estranges himself from his friends and neighbors; he is “cut off from the world” (96).

Canadian novelist Anne Michaels also explores the phenomenon of the ruined city and the individual's quest to overcome modernity's devastation in her 1996 novel, *Fugitive Pieces*. However, while Eliot, Lowry, and Barakāt suggest that ruins traumatize because they reinforce the failure of memory, Michaels suggest that ruins traumatize because they compel the subject to remember a past that the subject would prefer to forget. In *Fugitive Pieces*, the protagonist wanders around Toronto in order to recover memory, both personal and cultural. Jakob unearths the landscape for rubble and remains in order to unearth the fragments of his own genealogy and Jewish identity. Much like Eliot's London, Lowry's Quauhnhuac, and Barakāt's Lebanon, the

ruined city mirrors the ruined psyche; the ruined city is also the site of a violent collision with history.

Meredith Criglington notes the city's mimetic role in *Fugitive Pieces*, claiming that “Michaels presents derelict or disused sites as the outward manifestation of her protagonists' inner desolation. [. . .] Jakob, for instance, develops an affinity with those locations that echo [. . .] his own sense of loss” (8). The destroyed topography mirrors Jakob's fragmented sense of identity. But the ruins of the city do not simply reflect Jakob's psychological devastation; the rubble and debris traumatize him by shaking him from a state of cultural forgetting. As Criglington explains, the urban ruins which Jakob encounters “trigger a revolutionary awakening from the collective dream of fated historical progress” (6). In other words, the ruins compel the subject to acknowledge the violence and trauma of the past (in Jakob's case, the Holocaust and the persecution of his family) rather than to allow such artifacts to stay buried and hidden from cultural memory. When read as a cultural artifact, the city becomes a painful reminder of the violence and destruction of history as well as of the violence and destruction of forgetting. Attempting to bury or conceal one group's hegemony over another in the crevices of history only perpetuates oppression. Jakob unearths painful memories of his family's victimization at the hands of the Nazis, but he learns that he must excavate their stories lest they be erased by cultural amnesia, prompted by those that would prefer society forget the brutality of the past. (It is for this reason that Criglington declares remembering “a politically charged act” [6].) Thus, while Jakob is pained by memory, he *must* remember. It is only by coming to terms with the violent past that he is liberated from its grip and that he redeems the past from present society's oppression of it.

Because Michaels deploys the ruined modern city as a force that triggers necessary memory—both personal and cultural—it can be argued that her urban ruins are redemptive. While they trouble the ego, they also restore the subject's connection with the past (even if the subject would rather repress this past). In some ways, Eliot's urban wasteland is also redemptive. Eliot's wasteland disturbs the psyche by forcing the subject to confront the destruction of history and the incapacity of memory, but the wasteland offers fragments, fossils, and discarded objects that bear the imprint of history, recovering (fragments of) the past. They can be “shored together” to compose a redeeming image of modernity.¹⁰ Benjamin argues for the materiality of history, proposing that the past be approached archaeologically: “[h]e who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging” (*Reflections* 26). As Craig Owens emphasizes, “[f]or Benjamin, *interpretation is disinterment*” (84). Histories, memory—in fact all thought—are palimpsestic; only by delving into their layers can one restore meaning. By collecting history's scattered objects and remains, one can begin to re-assemble the past (although the past will never be restored to any kind of integrity, as its wholeness is a myth). Even if driven by a utopian desire to restore the myth, to revive a cherished, idealized past—a past that is produced by nostalgia rather than history—the re-assemblage of historical fragments is the only means by which one can come close to restoring the past because the past itself is fragmented. Bradley Stephens explains that Benjamin's critique annihilates the “myth” of the

¹⁰ Charles Martindale argues that Eliot's approach to history is “archaeological,” as the poet digs through the layers of rubble and artifacts in order to re-collect pieces of the past. Martindale explains that history has recessive layers of meaning, and the role of both the archaeologist and the poet is to make history present by excavating these layers and restoring the past. Anne Janowitz adds that in *The Waste Land*, the poet “attempts to arrange cultural fragments into a new coherence which may serve as a pattern for transcendence and immortality” (8) from the devastation of empire. Eliot's assemblage, thus, is not simply a mirror of the madness of modernity; it is an effort to resurrect history and culture, which have been fragmented by Western imperialism and decadence.

past while owning that the “force [of the myth] may be ever more resurgent in the fallout, ever able to recuperate its fragments and return to the space it once occupied” (157). Stephens's reading suggests that the fragment is more real than the whole from which it was discarded, an idea that echoes Benjamin's privileging of the part over the whole.

Trash/Waste as Abject and Artifact

Benjamin's reading of the historical fragment as a kind of dialectical image lends itself to the literary texts under discussion, in which images of trash and litter abound. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin treats everyday objects as cultural debris in order to promote a materialist historiography. History, Benjamin maintains, is unrecoverable, but it can be approached via its scattered material remains. The motif of garbage persists in these texts, thus invoking Benjamin's allegorical method. Trash, debris, and human waste litter the scenes of Eliot's, Lowry's, Barakāt's, and Michaels's texts, and such garbage serves as a kind of cultural artifact that aids the subject in reconstructing the ruins of the past. But, paradoxically, garbage also recalls the abject, since it is vile and disgusting and has been cast off from society. As Kristeva emphasizes, “corporeal waste, menstrual blood and excrement, [and] everything that is assimilated to them, from nail-parings to decay, represent [. . .] the objective frailty of the symbolic order” (*Powers* 70) because these phenomena recall the blood and fluid of the mother's womb, which constitutes the realm that pre-exists signification. The abject is waste—bodily or cultural—that must be cast aside in order to preserve the integrity of borders, re-establishing the boundary between the subject and the object. Signification (and thus, meaning) is predicated on this boundary, which separates the signifier (the subject) from that which is signified (the object). The abject is not gendered since it is neither subject nor object, however it does threaten

masculine prerogatives (signification, order). According to Kristeva, the abject disturbs identity and meaning precisely because it is “the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (*Powers of Horror* 4). In the symbolic order, the infant must signify the mother (expel her, render her as object) in order to establish an independent ego. Only by signifying the mother, the first object, does the infant assert identity. But problematically, the confrontation with the abject signals a crisis of identity, since the subject is incapable of registering the abject and incapable of expelling it. The abject is that which cannot be made to go away, which always exists haunting the subject and imperiling identity by dissolving limits. In fact, as Maud Ellmann explains, attempts to expel or “abject” the abject only further reproduce it:

Waste is what a culture casts away in order to determine what is not itself, and thus to establish its own limits. In the same way, the subject defines the limits of his body through the violent expulsion of its own excess: and ironically, this catharsis *institutes* the excremental. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur has pointed out that the social rituals of ‘burning, removing, chasing, throwing, spitting out, covering up, burying continuously *reinvent* the waste they exorcise’. (261)

The texts examined in this chapter demonstrate the recurrence of the abject in the excavation of buried ruins. The burial of ruins does not dispel ruins; to the contrary, what is buried tears at the psyche, eating away at its integrity, so that the subject is compelled to dig up fragments and piece them back together in a desperate attempt to restore wholeness. Michaels's protagonist, for instance, is haunted by family relics, and, therefore, he feels compelled to journey to the places of his youth to contextualize these relics and restore his personal past. As Jakob confesses, “I was born into absence. History had left a space already fetid with undergrowth, worms chewing soil abandoned by roots” (*Fugitive Pieces* 233). It is buried memories that compel Jakob to feel his lack. In the novel, lack is represented as ruins: “Destruction doesn't create a vacuum, it simply transforms presence into absence” (161). Michaels underscores that the integrity of the

ego is threatened by buried ruins, what culture/history attempts to expel or abject but cannot.

The integrity of the ego is also threatened by the visible signs of cultural decay, since cultural filth is registered by the psyche as individual filth: “the self is implicated in the degradation of the race, because the filth without insinuates defilement within” (Ellmann 260). Cultural waste disturbs the ego precisely because it, like the abject, upsets boundaries. Literally, ruins invade the parameters of life (trash litters the streets, corpses confront the living). Symbolically, ruins interfere with the culture's (and thus, the psyche's ideal) of purity and wholeness. The texts examined here deploy ruins to reinforce the atomizing impulse of modernity (modern civilization's urge to destroy and lay to waste), but by deploying ruins in the form of human and cultural waste—and thus recalling Kristeva's abject corpse—such texts more vividly recall that the crisis of modernity is a crisis of meaning. Ruins in the form of human and cultural waste upset the ego because they evoke the subject's own transience, but, more importantly, because they evade signification.

Modernity, too, evades signification, and this is what truly disturbs identity. Because modernity is unrepresentable (it is too fluid, too evanescent and self-consuming), the self cannot register the very phenomenon that circumscribes its existence. Further, modernity's destructive capacity presents a threat to the subject's physical existence. Thus, modernity, like the abject, imperils the body *and* the ego. The texts examined here all deploy the motif of waste (both human and cultural) to recall the abject, and thus, reinforce the narcissistic crisis triggered by modernity. In Eliot's, Barakāt's, and Michaels's narratives, however, cultural waste also saves the psyche, because such fragments can be re-contextualized and arranged into some kind of order. By digging through the layers, the subject can restore some sense of meaning to the madness of

modern civilization. Lowry's novel, however, offers less evidence that cultural debris is salvific.

In Eliot's *The Waste Land*, rubble takes many forms—"empty bottles, sandwich papers/Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes cigarette ends/Or other testimony of summer nights" (lines 177-9). But it is the numerous corpses in the poem that most vividly recall the abject. As Kristeva explains, the corpse is the most violent representation of the abject because, at least in psychoanalytic theory, it reminds the subject of the mother, which must be abjected in order to sustain the ego. Kristeva explains: "Refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live" (*Powers* 3). The threat of the abject is psychic death. Kristeva continues, "These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being" (3). Corpses remind us that we are nothing more than organic matter and waste—and this is troubling—but corpses also blur boundaries. Corpses blur the boundary between the material and the immaterial and, more threateningly, between the subject and the object. The corpse, in all its vile nature and defilement, may also be said to connote the mother and the blood and flesh associated with her body. Therefore, the subject must reject the corpse, must render the corpse as "abject" to permanently divide the corpse from the subject and protect the cleanliness, purity, and wholeness that the subject (in fantasy) represents. However, the corpse cannot be made to go away; it perpetually torments the subject. In *The Waste Land*, the speaker is haunted by the corpses, which seem to re-appear throughout the poem. The poem begins with "The Burial of the Dead," then the speaker enters a garden where a corpse has been planted, the rats' alley "[w]here the dead men lost their bones" (line 115), the Thames, where he hears "the rattle of bones" (line 186) and sees "[w]hite bodies naked [. . .] [a]nd bones" (lines 193-4), and the deep seas where

the gulls pick the bones of Phlebas. Maud Ellmann observes that in the poem, the dead perpetually trespass upon the space of the living. As Ellmann writes, “[i]t is impossible to keep [the dead] underground” citing that Stetson's garden has become “an ossuary” and pointing to the ‘[t]umbled bones’ [that] have overrun the city” (261). Importantly, Ellmann maintains, “*The Waste Land* does not fear the dead themselves so much as their invasion of the living; for it is the collapse of boundaries that centrally disturbs” (261-2). Here, Ellman echoes Kristeva, who explains that the corpse is “a border that has encroached upon everything” (*Powers* 4). Like Kristeva's subject, the speaker cannot wholly distinguish himself from the dead: “I was neither/Living nor dead” (lines 39-30). It is precisely because culture (and the individual) cannot expel the dead that the dead wield such power over the living. The corpse is vile and disgusting, but it frightens because it represents dissolving limits, exposing the fragility of the symbolic order. Throughout the poem, the speaker is perpetually haunted by the dead and, like Kristeva's subject, is drawn “toward the place where meaning collapses” (*Powers* 2). That “place,” that waste land, is modernity. The “stony rubbish” and detritus through which the speaker wades depict the chaos that is modern existence.

Ironically, however, the very garbage and defilement that the speaker must abject also promise him redemption. Bones (which appear five times throughout the poem) are not an accidental motif, since bones also figure as artifacts, archaeological treasures. By gathering the rubble and “shor[ing] [the ruins] against [his] fragments” (line 430), the speaker can transcend the ruins. Assuming the role of archaeologist and excavating the layers of debris, the speaker can make some sense of the madness that is the twentieth century. The optimism for restoration is betrayed in the lines that insist upon regeneration in ruin. For instance, the first lines of the poem

depict lilacs “breeding [. . .] out of the dead land” (lines 1-2). Just a stanza later, the speaker asks, “What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/Out of this stony rubbish” (lines 19-20)? Here, Eliot questions origins, suggesting that growth occurs *precisely* at the site of ruin. Modernity lays to waste, but from this waste civilization can rebuild.

Ultimately, Eliot's insistence on the organicity of ruins is important because it reflects his concept of the redemptive role of poetry and, more particularly, the redemptive role of language.¹¹ Eliot anticipates Kristeva's optimism for a new kind of poetic language that facilitates singular (rather than corporate) expression. In *The Revolution of Poetic Language*, Kristeva describes the expressive mode of the pre-oedipal semiotic, which both subverts and is contained within language, or the order of the law. The following chapters will more fully explore Eliot's and Kristeva's critiques of language, but it is worth foregrounding here that Eliot's interest in ruins is textual and not just thematic. In *The Waste Land*, fragmentation is an issue of form as well as a motif. Cultural debris reinforces textual debris, and the “shoring up of ruins” represents Eliot's poetic method, not just his approach to history. Charles Martindale observes that “the first part of the poem [. . .] concerns things buried deep, from the dull roots stirred by the spring of the opening to the corpse (whether literal or metaphorical) in Stetson's garden at the close. . . . Eliot's theory of poetic language is also in part an ‘archaeological’ one, in terms of recessive layers of meaning” (116). According to Eliot, the poet's task is not to create something new out of nothing but to re-create the art that has preceded him, to re-work and re-new the forms bestowed by the body of artists past. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” an essay written in 1919, three years before the publication of *The Waste Land*, Eliot argued that the

¹¹ Eliot writes that “the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary” but the poet's work is to “constantly amalgam[e] disparate experience” through language (“The Metaphysical Poets,” 64). Thus, language

poet “must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and [. . .] continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career” (116). The poet is but a vehicle, channeling the body of poetry that has already formed:

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him for contrast and comparison, among the dead [. . .] what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an idea order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new [. . .] the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. (115)

Eliot describes “the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written” (117). The poem derives from the fragments of poems past, and the poem influences the body of poetry that is propelled into the future. The “order” of which he speaks is an order that is constantly in a state of flux. Paradoxically, fluidity sustains: “for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be [. . .] altered” (115). Essentially, what preserves order is language, because language re-animates and is re-animated. It is the organicity of language (the ever changing meaning of words) that preserves the organicity of the universe.

The third chapter will more fully critique the agency of language, but it is important to observe here Eliot’s optimism in language/the ruin’s rejuvenative capacity.¹² In *The Waste Land*,

becomes a means of restoring wholeness and redeeming experience from its scattered and fragmentary form.

¹² MacFarland interprets Eliot’s concept of the poet’s role in the post-war era as follows: “[I]n any recovery poetry has a crucial role to play; great poetry can restore the past in a way better designed to withstand the depredations of time than any building” (122). Empires may disintegrate and crumble, but poetry endures forever. Language

ruins are organic—from “stony rubbish,” branches grow, lilacs breed “out of the dead” (line 2). Words, too, are organic, their meaning perpetually in a state of flux. Yet it is precisely the fluidity of words that preserves order. Thus, one might read the poem's images of cultural debris as evidence of rejuvenation, not just decay. The motif of cyclic life and renewal is perhaps best illustrated by the rat that figures throughout the poem. The rat is a scavenger animal that sustains itself from the remains discarded from other forms of life. By emphasizing the organicity of ruins, Eliot suggests that the evanescence of modernity, which tends to trouble the psyche, is, in fact, a guarantee of life. It is modernity's fluidity that renders it unrepresentable, but it is fluidity that sustains the universe.

In Barakāt's novel trash and human waste also connote the abject—and thus emphasize the trauma of modernity—while also suggesting, like Eliot, that there is regeneration in ruin. The streets of Beirut are filled with litter, “piles of rubbish and vegetables[. . .] little remnants that the hasty brooms and scant hosepipes had not picked up” (32). The streets are populated with rats and dogs, “so many that one might fear the city was stricken with rabies or what an excess of dogs might cause in the way of public health problems or plagues” (29-30). Trash and disease recall the abject, but not as vividly as the bodies of the dead. Khalil encounters a series of corpses, some strange and some familiar. In one scene, the narrator reflects on the phenomenon of the dead and the burial process:

[T]he corpse bears only a passing resemblance to its living owner, just enough to leave a crack through which doubt can creep in and out . . . they are so confused that they no longer call him by his name but saw ‘the corpse’ instead . . . so that speaking of the dead man comes to be in the neuter . . . they say it's been moved . . . it's arrived . . . it's been buried . . . it's risen [. . .] they avoid mentioning unpleasant things, they seem to say: it hasn't changed . . . it looks like sleep

breathes life into the ruins of history.

not death . . . the skin is still soft and pale . . . it doesn't smell foul, it smells like incense, like wild flowers . . . (57)

This passage evokes Kristeva's abject corpse, which likewise disturbs the ego because of its “passing resemblance” to the subject. The corpse is neither subject nor object; it is abject. As such, it evades signification. The abject is “[n]ot me. Not that. But not nothing, either” (*Powers* 2).

Although the subject does not recognize this ‘something’, it nevertheless gravely threatens the subject with the “weight of meaninglessness [. . .] which crushes” (*Powers* 2). If the subject “acknowledges it, [it] annihilates [the subject]” (2). The abject is an “unnameable otherness” (191). As Barakāt's narrator explains, the corpse loses its name and becomes “it.” Bearing “only a passing resemblance to its living owner” (Barakāt 56), the corpse is uncannily recognizable and yet unrecognizable. (The family are so confused that they no longer call him by his name but by ‘the corpse’ instead). Although the living cannot comprehend this thing, the living know that this form, this non-being, imperils the psyche. (“The abject has only one quality of the object: that of being opposed to the *I*” [*Powers* 1]). Thus, the living are compelled to dodge the truth, to “avoid mentioning unpleasant things,” “to say: it hasn't changed . . . it looks like sleep not death [. . .] it doesn't smell foul, it smells like incense” (Barakāt 57). In addition to the corpses that frequent Barakāt's text, the “images of the blood and urine and vomit and bandages with dried skin and severed limbs” (158) also recall the abject. Importantly, the loss of corporeal integrity reinforces the loss of psychological integrity, which Khalil experiences as a result of his subjection to the violence and destruction of modern civilization. Like Kristeva's subject, Khalil is made painfully aware of his fragmentation, finding himself “split open” (75). Further like Kristeva's subject, he finds that he cannot escape the thing which, “if [he]

acknowledge[s] it, annihilates [him]” (*Powers* 2). He is haunted even in his sleep: he suffers from “dreams which [. . .] shake him like a violent storm. They [. . .] batter him with their sharp little hatchets” (Barakāt 75).

Ultimately, the novel's evocation of Kristeva's abject reinforces the fact that modernity's impact on the psyche is as severe as separation from the mother. Khalil's separation from the past, from society, and from himself is emphasized by the scenes in which he, like the abject corpse, loses the integrity of his borders. The narrator describes several instances in which Khalil feels severed from his own body: “Khalil's body no longer went with him anywhere” (146); “He was completely awake but he knew that his body was outside him. In front of him. He did not see his body” (165). Modernity's fragmentation is also expressed when the narrator likens Khalil's relationship with the city to the traumatic relationship between a son and his mother:

He hates [the city] not as the son of a beautiful mother hates his mother, his mother who used to be beautiful and who belonged to the General. The son simmers his hatred long, over a low flame, until it is cooked. Then it is ready. [. . .] we are boys who play games about soldiers and thieves who were afflicted by having such a beautiful mother. But when we grow up we become leaders, we hate her and we crush her beauty. We also crush the beauty of her lips. And whenever we remember her beauty and sing praise to it we crush and mutilate her more. [. . .] Love and betrayal. You must be sick to be using words like these to speak of the city. (200-1)

In this passage, the city is likened to the mother, the figure that symbolically castrates the child (in the weaning process) and that now must be abjected by the adult in order to protect the ego. Just as the subject feels separated from the mother (whom he must now “crush and mutilate”), Khalil's is threatened by the modern city which he must annihilate. Khalil “love[s] and betray[s]” (201) the city the same way that the son loves but must betray his mother. If he does

not annihilate her, she will annihilate him. For Khalil, the only way to annihilate the city (he thinks) is to deny it—but it is modernity that ruins Khalil. Khalil denies the city by living nostalgically in the past—becoming a recluse in his solitary apartment where the pots and pans hang in the same place they have hung for a decade, where he can daydream about his childhood and his life before Naji died. Modernity is to blame for the “lack” that he feels. Khalil senses “a faint, distant suspicion that his great knowledge of [love] was lacking in some way . . . a pale and frail and small and distant lack . . . but a lack all the same” (177).

Yet despite its bleak characterization of modernity, the novel does seem to suggest that the modern subject can find a way out of the rubble and debris that is modern existence. The novel promotes, in agreement with Eliot, the idea that there is regeneration in ruin. In one scene, Khalil is in a taxi cab when the driver rolls up the windows to keep out the putrid smell of piles of garbage. Here, the narrator observes that garbage represents life:

The garbage is a sign of life. There is no garbage in the graveyard, it is clean, absolutely clean, forever. It does not move, it does not murmur with life except when the living fill it, when children go to play by the graves and leave their garbage there, from sandwich and sweet wrappers to empty jam jars or tissues and empty bottles. Garbage is what is left over from the lunch of the living and what it contained makes their bodies pulse and live. (Barakāt 172)

Barakāt suggests that the cultural discard ought to be read as an artifact of the living rather than the dead. Even though trash connotes rot and decay, trash is evidence of those that thrive. In Eliot's wasteland, the speaker makes meaning out of the garbage by de-contextualizing the artifacts and re-contextualizing them in the present. In other words, the garbage only makes sense once it becomes an object of the living. The recovery of ruins from the realm of the past by the re-assignment of meaning in the present may be said to be the essential task of allegory. According to Benjamin, allegory has the “capacity to rescue from historical oblivion that which

threatens to disappear” (Owens 68). Although the original meaning is never recovered, allegory redeems by re-appropriating meaning.

Yet in order for allegory to function, fragments must exist to be restored. The eighteenth century notion that rebuilding begins with ruins¹³ is articulated time and time again in the novel, as narrator observes that the bombings restore rational order to the city. For instance, the narrator observes, “The auspicious bombing returns primal time to you and restores the city's first coherence. Death is the only spur to the city, for it is death that gathers the city's many splinters and holds them to itself like iron filings” (Barakāt 138). Throughout the narrative, there are several passages that describe the peace and calm that follow bombing and devastation. The narrator describes Khalil's sense of serenity the day after an attack:

[A]s he heard the sound shards of glass being swept up that came from every direction in the clam street . . . a calm that seemed to come from a distant sky, from another world, the calm that descends upon the city after a battle . . . a submissive calm, as if a great vision has entered into the head of the city and emptied it of all it has passed through . . . even the dogs respectfully swallow their barking, drowning in deep astonishment . . . just the sound of shards of glass, from time to time, and some distant coughing . . . (10)

The narrator recounts a similar scene after another explosion:

[T]he street seemed to have healed over . . . the explosion had made a gap, a huge, empty hole. It sucked in things and people but, after a very short time and by virtue of its own strength, it blocked itself up again, the sewage found its level and flowed as usual.” (32)

In these passages, the narrative channels Romantic notions of the ruin, which suggest that ruin necessarily precedes re-birth. Although it is human-made bombs—and not ivy and the weathering of effects of nature—that collapse the edifice, only ruin clears the ground for

¹³ Eighteenth century poetics suggest that rejuvenation is predicated on ruination. Ruins clear the ground, restoring equilibrium in a culture that has grown too decadent. Man's rebirth begins with ruin. See Makarius and Ericksen.

rebuilding. Through the process of ruin and rejuvenation, the walls of the city “clean themselves by themselves [. . .] like a clever pedigree cat” (156). Importantly, though, the re-building that follows devastation is cultural as well as literal. The Romantics celebrated nature's erosion of man-made edifices because such ruins humbled a civilization that had grown too decadent.¹⁴ Likewise, Barakāt promotes the notion that ruins remind man of his futility and thus restore some sense of moral rightness to the universe. In the novel, the bombs inspire a sense of unity, as they draw the community together. During the air-raids, Khalil is astonished to witness the camaraderie of the workers who were confined at the newspaper office: “[b]rotherhood and humility were widespread. Grudges were forgotten” (37). And when he survives another attack while at home in his neighborhood, he observes “something like brotherliness... when they skulk in their houses, people feel the need to come out into the street” (74). The redemption that ruins promise, then, is not the restoration of a cherished past, as Khalil seems to think. Rather, Khalil's only connection to the past relies on his awareness of the connectedness of humankind. Ruins redeem the subject from modernity's destruction only by recovering a sense of humanity and brotherhood. Khalil seeks to confer his imagination of the past to the present, but his only real moments of clarity are achieved during the moments in which he acknowledges that his fellow men share his fears and anxieties and desires.

Cultural and human waste figure in Michael's *Fugitive Pieces* as well. Michaels recalls the abject through the motif of trash and debris and through the narrator's constant mentions of stink and rot (the “acid-steeped ground” (5), the “peat-sweating bog” (5), the “slime and jellied smells” (10) that arise from the landscape, for instance. Even more explicitly, the narrator identifies the marshy grounds of Biskupin, the excavation site, as the “[a]fterbirth of earth” (5).

14

Further, there is the narrative's archaeological theme, which reinforces the notion of things buried deep (burial represents attempts to expel). Michaels's various allusions to the abject reinforce the idea that psychological disturbance is prompted by the collapse of boundaries. In the narrative, the collapse of boundaries is represented by the extreme form of the abject, the corpse, as well. Like Eliot's dead, the dead in Michaels's narrative threaten the boundary that immunizes the living. The narrator reflects, "I know why we bury our dead and mark the place with stone, with the heaviest, most permanent thing we can think of: because the dead are everywhere but the ground" (8). The narrator also adds, "It's no metaphor to feel the influence of the dead in the world" (53). Throughout the narrative, the dead impose on the living. Memories of the dead—in particular, his sister Bella—haunt Jakob. It is precisely because he is unable to sever himself from the dead (from memories of Bella, Athos, and his slain family) that Jakob is made to feel his hollowness.

Nevertheless, despite recalling the abject, Michaels, like Eliot and Barakāt, reads rubble as a sign of a life. Evoking Eliot's lilacs that grow "out of the dead land" (line 2), Jakob observes an "urban field littered with broken furniture, cardboard boxes, soggy newspaper. The garbage gave way to wildflowers" (*Fugitive Pieces* 291). In the same scene, Jakob observes "jagged sidewalks, industrial fence, old wire and broken bottles, pinpoints of moonlight. Box gardens, clothing leaning over balconies, kitchen chairs left outside, the flood remains of a meal forgotten on a small table" (291) and takes note that such discard is "the debris of use, not abandonment" (291). In this scene, the rubble's currency underscores the currency of all cultural waste. Sharing Benjamin's regard for the historical fragment, Michaels celebrates rubble because it allows itself to be de-historicized and re-historicized.

Only allegory rescues objects from historical oblivion; past ruins would be lost and forgotten would they not allow the present to re-appropriate meaning. In Michaels's narrative, Jakob assigns meaning to the relics of the past, but this process still serves to redeem the past from the destruction of cultural amnesia. The allegorization of past ruins invokes an archaeological approach to history, an operation of unearthing and recomposing the ruined site. Michaels promotes an archaeological approach to history by deploying the motif of digging. The narrative begins with Jakob's memory of "a man kneeling in the acid-steeped ground [. . .] digging" (*Fugitive Pieces* 5). The scene is Biskupin, which is being excavated for relics.

The archaeological motif persists throughout the narrative, and this motif reinforces that meaning is engendered in the unearthing of cultural waste. Jakob reflects that "[h]uman memory is encoded in air currents and river sediment. Eskers of ash wait to be scooped up, lives reconstituted" (*Fugitive Pieces* 53). Similarly, the narrator explains that Athos "had a special affection for limestone—that crushed reef of memory, that living stone, organic history squeezed into massive mountain tombs" (32). These passages emphasize that the past is palimpsestic and that its meaning is only exposed in the gradual peeling of its layers in the present. Michaels's materialist historiography further advocates that the past be read via the material objects that have survived in the present. As Jakob declares, "All across Europe there's such buried treasure. A scrap of lace, a bowl. Ghetto diaries that have never been found" (40). In this novel, in which "garbage gives way to wildflowers," waste is treasure. Jakob is keenly aware that the only way to derive meaning from an estranged past is to gather its relics and to restore the debris. By narrativizing the past, Jakob redeems it (and his own story) from historical oblivion.

Garbage and waste dirty the scene of Lowry's novel as well, but there is less indication

that such cultural waste can redeem the individual. Quite the contrary, waste functions to reinforce modernity's permanent and irreversible castration of the ego. The consul wanders the city, which is full of “bottles of calvados dropped and broken, [. . .] garbage heaps” (*Under the Volcano* 303). The streets are littered with “dead matchboxes, lemon peel, cigarettes open like tortillas, the dead packages of them swarming in filth and spittle” (94). Human and animal waste more vividly recall the abject. Notably, the narrative takes place on the Day of the Dead, which recalls the “lifeless [. . .] indistinguishable from the symbolic” (*Powers* 109) about which Kristeva writes. The narrator observes numerous corpses: the wounded body of the Indian, blood flowing over his face; “three hundred head of cattle, dead, frozen stiff in the posture of the living” (*Under the Volcano* 218); the dead dog in the ravine, “nuzzling the refuse; white bones showed through the carcass” (243); the “blazing of ten million burning bodies” (391). Also, the consul's body gradually comes to resemble an abject corpse, as it deteriorates from the poison of alcohol. Adding to the sense of defilement that recalls Kristeva's abject are the foul smells and bodily fluids which the narrator frequently describes— the “rotting vegetation [. . .] the smell of decay” (334), the “smell of petrol and blood” near where a severed leg in army boot is found (258), a “shattered, evil-smelling chapel [. . .] splashed with urine, [. . .] slippery stones covered with excreta” (14). The images of bodily fluid and excrement expressly evoke Kristeva's abject, since Kristeva states that “what goes out of the body, out of its pores and openings, points to the infinitude of the body proper and gives rise to abjection” (*Powers* 108). According to Kristeva, “[F]ecal matter signifies [. . .] what never ceases to separate from a body in a state of permanent loss in order to become *autonomous, distinct* from the mixtures, alterations, and decay that run through it” (108). The body must excrete, must abject in order to remain clean and pure.

Nonetheless, the sight and smell of fluid and waste disturb the psyche because they connote the maternal, which must be abjected, and because they upset the symbolic order. Fluid and waste also suggest that the body is not pure and self-contained, but continually assaulted by alterity. Like the corpse, which “blur[s] between the inanimate and the inorganic” (109), bodily fluids and waste threaten the ego that cannot process such phenomena. Importantly, corporeal ruins in *Under the Volcano* instantiate the notion that ruins signal the collapse of cultural systems. The corpse destabilizes the boundary between the living and the dead and between the material and the immaterial. Likewise, the ruin destabilizes the boundary between presence and absence and between nature and culture; and modernity destabilizes the boundary between the past and the present. By deploying the motif of the corpse, Lowry analogizes ruins and modernity. Transitory and ambiguous, ruins and modernity infer the fragility of order, cultural and psychological. Ruins and modernity imperil systems of signification and the ego that is formed by such symbolic systems.

Lowry reiterates this association between ruins and modernity by describing, as Eliot does, a wasteland that is the product of modern civilization. The last lines of the novel, for instance, betray that ruin is the effect of society's moral collapse. When the consul meets his tragic end, he thinks not only of his own damnation but of universal damnation—he observes the volcano “was in eruption, yet no, it wasn't the volcano, the world itself was bursting, bursting into black spouts of villages catapulted into space, with himself falling through it all, through the inconceivable pandemonium of a million tanks, through the blazing of ten million burning bodies [. . .]” (*Under the Volcano* 391). In this passage, Joseph Longo reads the consul's indictment of humanity and his fear “of a completely demonic and chaotic universe there are no intimations of

immortality or of a transcendent order of justice, humanity, or love” (22). The narrator likewise suggests that humanity is damned, observing that [c]ountries, civilizations, empires, great hordes, perish for no reason at all, and their soul and meaning with them” (323). However, while modernity's collapse of moral society is an important theme in the novel, one that is reinforced by the motif of ruins, the theme of individual decay is also central to Lowry's novel. And ruins in the form of corpses and human waste reinforce such themes of individual fragmentation and loss. First, the individual is separated from the past. The consul loses his sanity because he cannot overcome an idealized myth of the past. He is estranged from a bygone era (even if this era only exists in his imagination), and his disillusionment only further fragments him. The consul is also disconnected from society. He rejects love and companionship, thereby exiling himself from the human community. And ultimately, his separation from society pains him on a personal level. He is tormented by his disconnection and the meaninglessness that accompanies his self-annihilation. Thus, Kristeva's theory enhances a reading of ruins in Lowry's novel by reinforcing that ruins are the product of fragmentation. The trauma of fragmentation from the maternal manifests itself in other forms of castration— from an idealized past, from society, and from the self. These forms of castration constitute the condition of modernity, according to Lowry's novel. And, unlike *The Waste Land*, this text betrays little hope for transcendence. Modernity is in ruins, and modernity ruins (by devastating the psyche of the subject that is made to feel its disconnection).

CHAPTER II: CORPOREAL RUINS, DISMEMBERMENT, AND RE-MEMBERMENT

Lowry likens the trauma of modern man's disconnection (from the past, from society, from himself) to the trauma of castration in order to emphasize just how severely modernity impacts the subject psychologically. As the previous chapter discussed, the threat of modernity is both literal and symbolic, imperiling the body and the ego; but it is modernity's symbolic threat that most severely disturbs identity. Modernity's ambiguity and evanescence recall the fragility of the symbolic order, thereby undermining the modern subject's state of identity. Interestingly, the analogy between modernity and symbolic castration is, perhaps, an especially appropriate one because, as David Ferris observes, “for the major thinkers of modernity its occurrence is thought in terms of a break or an interruption” (97). According to Benjamin, interruption is “a mode of thought” and while not synonymous with modernity, “interruption is the term through which modernity can be thought” (97). Historicism insists on continuity, but modernity exposes discontinuity by upsetting or *interrupting* a linear temporal sequence. Modernity is also, at times, associated with apocalyptic dimensions, since it ruptures a previous order and launches a new order out of the debris. For many artists, particularly left-wing artists, modernity is associated with revolution. Derrida also conceives of modernity as a kind of interruption, explicitly connecting modernity to the notion of breakage, or *brisure*:

The present can only present itself as such by relating back to itself; it can only aver itself by severing itself, only reach itself if it breaches itself, (com)plying with itself in the angle, along a break [*brisure*] (*brisure*: ‘crack’ and ‘joint’ created by a hinge in the work of a locksmith. *Litttré*); in the release of the latch or the

trigger. Presence is never present. The possibility—or the potency—of the present is but its own inner fold, its impossibility—or its impotence.
(*Dissemination* 289)

Like the ruin, the present is both enabled and disabled by a ‘crack’ or fissure. The present is only realized by fragmenting itself from itself in order to render a part of itself past; but by rendering itself a part of the past, the present ceases to be present (hence its “possibility” and “impossibility” at the same time). For Benjamin, as well, the ruin is the scene of interruption and the site of a semantic break. It is so because allegorical value has been appropriated to the ruin.

Makarius explains Benjamin's concept as follows:

For the melancholic, ‘everything’ is in a state of ruin because everything turns to allegory. By expressing something other than what is intended through the circumlocution of the image, allegory opens a rift with respect to meaning. This ‘fault,’ this fissure, corresponds to the melancholic's detachment—to a feeling of discontinuity with regard to reality, which, in consequence, appears as though ‘petrified.’ (194)

In other words, allegory “ruins” by exposing the break between the object or image and the totality inferred by allegory. (Although, at the same time, allegory, contrary to the symbol, enables meaning by exposing through the break the impossibility of totality.) As Benjamin declares, “All kinds of intimacy with objects is alien to the allegorical intention. To touch it means, for allegory, to rape it” (*Arcades* 423). Here, Benjamin emphasizes the violence of the allegorical process, which tears apart meaning by forcefully separating the signifier from the signified. Helga Guyer-Ryan expounds upon allegory's violent impulse to fragment by arguing that allegory is, in Benjamin's writing, “the scene in which the body [. . .] is dismembered” (507). Guyer-Ryan notes the chapter headings in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (“Allegorical Dismemberment”; “Dismemberment of Language”; and “The Corpse as Emblem” [511]) to

further associate allegory with a process of dislocation: the dislocation of the image or object from the meaning that it implies.

Incidentally, Derrida also invokes images of dismemberment to describe the ruin, which he also reads as the site of a fault between the signifier and the signified, and as such, as the site of a fissure of meaning. While Benjamin attributes ruin to allegory's appropriation of meaning, Derrida attributes ruin to the individual's incapacity to self-appropriate, or to access his own subjectivity. Derrida's draftsman blinds himself in the act of seeing himself, exchanging his perspective for the perspective of an outsider. The subject cannot recapture his image without assuming the perspective of a radical Other, thereby surrendering his own sight. Importantly, Derrida's blind draftsman emphasizes the failure of memory. Unable to restore the image, memory accounts for "what remains or returns as a specter from the moment one first looks at oneself and a figuration is eclipsed" (*Memoirs* 68). Like Benjamin's melancholic subject, Derrida's figure "sees its visibility being eaten away, it loses integrity" (68). Here, Derrida emphasizes that the fragmentation of the self results from the incapacity of memory to re-present the self in the present.

The texts examined in this chapter also insist upon the fragmentation, and, consequently, the trauma of memory, which, like modernity, fails to restore the past to totality. Memory and modernity are but fragments of a past that is irreparably fractured. Yet at the same time, memory gives the subject a sense of continuity, seeming to enable identity. John Rickard reiterates memory's role in his analysis of Joyce's texts. He explains that "[e]mpiricist philosophy has traditionally viewed memory as the primary guarantor of personal identity" (21); one's sense of self is established by the recollection of personal experiences. Hence, amnesia recalls the

subject's finitude. Borg also reiterates memory's centrality in the construction of a viable self:

A memory that works, that is put to any use whatsoever, is always in the service of subjective identity. It has permanence and continuity as its goals—specifically, the permanence and continuity of the subject's life-history. It follows that when we speak of memory's limits, of the point at which memory breaks down, we are always automatically referring to the finitude of the subject, and to an interval of time that falls beyond life. (102)

Memory's relation to the integrity and permanence of the self is a notion taken up by the literary texts discussed in this chapter. Joyce, Eliot, and Rushdie critique memory's role in the construction of modern man's personal (and national) identity. Their texts present memory as a force that fragments (dis-members) and brings together (re-members), suggesting—as Benjamin and Derrida do—that meaning is predicated on interruption (or *brisure*, as Derrida terms it.) Memory recalls the subject's limits, thereby exposing the instability of identity. However, memory is also a tool, argues Rickard, “use[d] to pull things together to ‘protect the crisis’ of identity.” Memory preserves the self by giving the subject access to his personal experiences, thereby accommodating the subject's nostalgic longing for unified experience. The texts examined in this chapter demonstrate that, much the same way the ruin enables and disables representation, memory both *enacts* and *protects against* a crisis of identity. Memory simultaneously fragments the self and “pull[s] things together” to preserve the self. To explore the conflict between the fragmentation and unity of memory, *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *Midnight's Children* deploy the motif of corporeal ruin or dismemberment. Dismemberment literally represents memory's dissolution of the self. At the same time, dismemberment connotes also re-memberment, or the process by which the self is coherently re-assembled by fragments of experience. The subject recollects in order to *re-collect* himself, to put himself back in one piece. Memory, then, is at the service of imagination, allowing the subject to entertain a notion

of integrity.¹⁵ Thus, memory and the ruin are further conjoined in that each invites creative re-appropriation, even—and especially—in the formation of meaning. (This theme plays out in Rushdie's novel, which explores history and the nation as fictive acts.) Yet importantly, the tension of memory's dismembering and remembering recalls the tension of the maternal, a force that Kristeva describes as “threatening and ethical” (Smith 23) since the mother, like memory, dismembers and re-members the self. Kristeva explains that the mother represents unity and totality within the pre-oedipal realm, but that she also facilitates the infant's introduction into the oedipal realm of the symbolic. Thus, she is responsible for the subject's castration. The subject's castration from the maternal continent is an identity-forming, and thus imperative, break into the patriarchal order of language. Yet the memory of the mother—that is, the memory of the original loss—perpetually haunts the subject, both promising and denying totality. Because memory necessarily implicates the maternal, Kristeva's theory illuminates a reading of dismemberment and re-memberment in the following literary texts. What joins the protagonists of Joyce, Eliot, and Rushdie is their mutual quest for identity. But, as Kristeva suggests, personal identity cannot be expressed so long as it implicates the mother and thus, pre-lingual experience. Kristeva's work, in particular *The Revolution of Poetic Language*, which this chapter engages, is concerned with “think[ing] the unthinkable” (Moi vi) and “speaking the unspeakable” (Smith). Hence, Kristeva's theory necessarily relates to the ruin, which, as Benjamin and Derrida emphasize, is concerned with representing the un-representable. In *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *Midnight's Children*, the motif of corporeal ruin (dismemberment) recalls the work of all three theorists, as

¹⁵ According to one critic, the psychological experience of dismemberment is largely informed by cultural fears and anxiety about the viability of the self. In her analysis of the stereotypes about persons with physical disabilities that prevail today, Rosemarie Garland-Thomsen argues that Americans live in a society that “emphatically denies physical vulnerability, contingency, and mortality. Modernity pressures us relentlessly toward standardizing bodies”

these texts engage questions of identity and exile, and relatedly, the establishment and transgression of boundaries that allow and disallow self-representation.

Dismemberment and Re-memberment in *Ulysses*

In *Ulysses*, dismemberment is a subtle motif, but one that lends itself to a deeper reading of Joyce's concepts of memory, identity, and the construction of a “whole” nation and of a “whole” self. In the first episode, Buck Mulligan holds up a cracked mirror for Stephen to see himself. Stephen denounces the gesture, backing away from the “cracked lookingglass of a servant” (5). This early scene reinforces Stephen's fragmentation, which is caused by disconnection from his dead mother, his rejection of Catholicism, or the Mother Church, and his dislocation from his mother country, Ireland, which, under the tyranny of the British Empire, has been deprived of a national identity. Stephen's fragmentation, in psychoanalytic terms, suggests castration from the maternal. Thus, it is no surprise that one recurring image of dismemberment is the *omphalos* (Greek for “navel”), which marks the original wound of maternal separation. The image of the *omphalos* appears in several episodes, and it is through this motif that Joyce articulates a theory of identity and the self's avowal and disavowal of maternal origin. But first, there is the image of dismemberment that is invoked by Bloom's talisman potato. In the Circe episode, Bloom reaches into the pocket of his trousers to assure himself that the shriveled and wrinkled potato, given to him by his mother, is still there. Psychoanalytically, the object represents the phallus. Bloom's worry that he has lost the potato expresses his fear of castration. Bloom experiences anxiety about separation from the maternal continent and about his own fertility (having lost a son). The implication of Bloom's castration is his inability to articulate his

(522), in large part, to assuage powerful societal fears about death.

identity without this relic of the mother. I will elaborate further on the impact of dismemberment and the construction of a personal identity, but primarily with regard to the *omphalos*, the form of dismemberment that most clearly symbolizes the original loss, the loss of the mother.

In her critique of ruins, Julia Hell argues that the ruin is what it is because it has lost its function while retaining “semantic potential” (6). The same can be said of dismemberment: the body part has lost its function while the void retains immense meaning. The *omphalos* is a literal and symbolic void, marking the actual wound from the detached umbilical cord and the symbolic wound from the detached mother. Kristeva comments on this void:

Then there is this other abyss that opens up between the body and what had been its inside: there is the abyss between the mother and the child. [. . .] the child, whether *he* or *she* is irremediably an other. To say that there are no sexual relationship constitutes a skimpy assertion when confronting the flash that bedazzles me when I confront the abyss between what was mine and is henceforth but irreparably alien. Trying to think through that abyss: staggering vertigo. No identity holds up. (*Stabat Mater*, trans. Toril Moi, 179)

The abyss between the mother and the infant she has expelled escapes comprehension, “[n]o identity holds up” in the space between the mother and what is now “an other.” There is only the subject (the mother) and the object (the other). By enacting subjectivity, the mother erects the boundaries that support the paternal realm of the symbolic. Hence, the mother is to blame for facilitating the infant's exile from the maternal realm, which she will do again even more forcibly when she introduces language. Paternal intervention and symbolic borders are necessary to the formation of identity, but the father (representative of the realm of signification) prevents the subject from achieving the wholeness experienced in the pre-lingual realm by insisting upon the system of the law. Hence, the subject is caught between realms, both needing and resenting the borders established within the symbolic. The subject occupies the abyss about which Kristeva

writes.

In *Ulysses*, the *omphalos* represents the establishment and transgression of boundaries, connoting simultaneously the integrity and the lack of integrity of corporeal borders. Commenting on Joyce's text, Maud Ellman argues that the navel is associated with "bodily rupture," explaining further how "the navel, in its dual role as separation and connection, could be compared to Derrida's conception of the 'brisure,' a term from carpentry denoting both a break and a junction" (5). The navel symbolizes the maternal bond as well as the breaking of that bond. Accordingly, Joyce presents the navel as a source of security and connectedness as well as a site of trauma and castration. As such, the navel also recalls Kristeva's concept of the *thetic*, or rupture. According to Kristeva, the formation of identity depends upon the subject's symbolic break with the maternal continent. The *thetic* marks a structured break in the signifying process, a break with the mother as the subject acquires language and thus passes into the realm of the symbolic. Kristeva echoes Derrida and Benjamin when she argues that it is through such a break that meaning is produced. Only by rupturing the bond with the mother can the subject access the subjectivity (otherness) upon which a notion of self depends. Thus, like Benjamin's rupture and Derrida's *brisure*, Kristeva's *thetic* is a troubling or traumatic but ultimately necessary break. In *Ulysses*, the navel literalizes Kristeva's notion of the *thetic*, as it marks the site of physical separation from the mother. Critiquing this motif, Ellman reminds readers that "the navel signifies the exile of the infant from its first home in the mother's body, which induces the hunger for home— nostalgia— that motivates odysseys ancient and modern" (4). Stephen's nostalgia manifests itself in the urge to restore a connection to the past, to recover the lost "wholeness" with the maternal (his actual mother and his mother country). Yet at the same time,

he is desperate to escape the maternal oppression. Stephen mourns his mother's death, but, as Brenda Oded explains, his “escape from the family, the Church and Ireland itself [. . .] is in effect an escape from the mother, the source of his being and, therefore, the source of his dilemma” (40). Stephen is preoccupied with the task of forming an identity and articulating this identity (to himself and to the world). To do this, he must abject his mother (kill her, in a sense, which he believes to have done, blaming himself for her death). Stephen declares that “[w]ombed in sin darkness [he was] [. . .] made not begotten,” thus affirming and denouncing his origin. Here, Stephen symbolically dismembers himself by de-originating himself. By radically inverting the Nicene Creed (which declares that Christ was “begotten not made” of nothing), Stephen disavows his mother (and father, for that matter) and suggests that he was made out of nothing. Yet he also avows his mother by acknowledging his origin in the womb. Stephen needs his mother, because he is compelled to define his origins. In order to identify who he is, Stephen must determine from where he comes. Gazing at his *omphalos*, he thinks of his own birth and begins to ponder all origins, thinking of the navel cord, the “strandentwining cable of all flesh,” that unites all humanity back to Eve, who was navel-less, and thus, mother-less. In order to establish his identity, especially his identity as an artist, he depends upon his mother, who is the bridge between nature and culture.

To understand Stephen's dilemma, it is useful to invoke Kristeva's representation of the maternal as a force that both disables and enables identity. As Anne-Marie Smith explains in her summation of Kristeva's *The Revolution of Poetic Language*, “[t]he mother is both threatening and ethical, since the child's capacity for separation depends on her footing in a world outside the maternal continent which is her secret” but since “[a]s soon as she is perceived as other and

separate by the infant, as soon as the *thetic* break between subject and object clears the way for the threshold of language, [. . .] the mother becomes a signifier” (23). According to Kristeva, Smith explains, “[i]t is the mother who for the child, and metaphorically for culture at large, facilitates, enacts and embodies the passage between the semiotic and symbolic modalities and the path to representation” (22). (By “semiotic,” Kristeva means the maternal or pre-oedipal identity, and by “symbolic,” the social or post-oedipal identity.) Stephen declares that he was “made not begotten [. . .] [b]y them, the man with my voice and my eyes and a ghostwoman with ashes on her breath” (*Ulysses* 26). Here, Stephen associates his birth and his mother's death. This passage betrays Stephen's guilt for his mother's death, but even more importantly, this passage suggests that life is predicated on death. Stephen's sense of responsibility for his mother's death (he refused to kneel down and pray with her on her deathbed) leads him to believe that his very being prompted her death. Symbolically, Stephen has killed his mother (or must kill his mother), since the subject's identity relies upon the death of the maternal. If Stephen is to establish an identity and represent himself within the social order, he must employ subjectivity, and this necessarily involves a revolt against the “other” (the mother) with whom he once enjoyed unity.

The *omphalos* literally represents the *thetic* or break with maternal, but in Joyce's text, dismemberment in general is associated with a negation of maternal origin, an attempt to forget (or perhaps, more severely to abject) the mother. In a critique of Derrida's reading of Lévi-Strauss, Lena Petrović explores the relationship between remembering and dismembering:

If ‘remembering’ has derived from and preserved the latent meaning of ‘remembering’ re-assembling the torn and scattered body parts, the verb ‘dismember’ may also have the reverse symbolic meaning of ‘to make forget’, ‘to mentally fragmentize’. The dismemberment of Orpheus may then be understood as an

outward projection of the violent interruption of his mourning for the past, his forgetting, his inner fragmentation, and Derrida's freeplay and all other poststructuralist endeavors to 'de-originate' the individual as the latest version of this ancient cultural crime. (94)

Importantly, Petrović emphasizes the relationship between dismembering and de-originating. In *Ulysses*, Stephen contemplates his dismemberment (the *omphalos*) in the same scene in which he attempts to forget his origins (declaring his was “made not begotten...” [26]). Stephen tries to enact his own dismemberment, but he is haunted by memories of his mother. The haunting of the maternal reinforces the fact that Stephen is incapable of signifying himself without regard to his (maternal) origin. He cannot dismember because he cannot de-originate. Kristeva argues that the subject's system of signification is never exclusively symbolic, but, as Smith explains, “necessarily marked by a debt to the other [semiotic] modality” (19). Any signification produced or recognized by the subject is indebted to the order of the mother. It follows, then, that identity—the utmost signification—is indebted to the mother. Stephen acknowledges that identity is debt: “I am another now and yet the same. A servant too. A server of a servant” (*Ulysses* 8). Stephen also playfully acknowledges an artistic debt to a poet, A.E., when he observes “A. E. I. O. U” (213). Importantly, debt can be likened to dismemberment, since both imply incompleteness. Debt and dismemberment also imply deferral, as the subject must defer to another for completeness. Like the geometric figure that Joyce so famously references in *The Sisters*, Stephen is a “gnomon,” a disambiguation that defers to an absent part to invoke totality. In geometry, the gnomon is formed by the removal of a piece (a parallelogram) from the corner a larger parallelogram. Importantly, the gnomon is characterized not by its own form, but by the form that is absent from a larger figure of the same shape. Like the gnomon, Stephen is dislocated piece. He must defer to another (the mother) to invoke wholeness of identity.

Kristeva would argue that both identities (personal and artistic) are obliged to the mother, since it is the mother who fosters the semiotic, instinctual drives that the artist strives to channel. Regardless, Stephen's deference recalls Derrida's notion of *différance*, which enables and disables textual meaning. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida explains that language is nothing more than an endless process of deferral. Words and signs never actually summon forth meaning, but only appeal to other words and signs, thereby “deferring” or postponing meaning or creating a surplus of meaning. Benjamin describes a similar process of endless deferral when he describes allegory's “excess of signification.” According to Benjamin, allegory's production of infinite fragments and images exposes the break between nature and signification, thereby destabilizing the reflexivity of representation by spinning ever outward into new layers of meaning. Yet importantly, it is allegory's ambiguities, invoked by the endless chain of meaning, that Benjamin celebrates. Incidentally, there is for Benjamin, “a connection between allegory and [. . .] dismemberment” (98). Dismemberment and allegory invoke an absent totality that, by owning fragmentation, enables representation. Thus, while Stephen cannot achieve a wholeness of self, he can *approach* wholeness by acknowledging his debts and affirming his voids.

Perhaps this explains why, in his quest for totality of self, Stephen is not tempted, as are other characters, by the promised unity and fulfillment of the Irish Nationalist Movement. Rather than portray the Irish Nationalism as a path to social stability, Joyce insinuates that the movement contributes to the decay of society and also of the individual within that society. It is no coincidence that the word “omphalos” comes up several times in the Telemachus episode, when Buck Mulligan and Stephen Dedalus reflect on the state of the Irish Nationalist movement. The association of the *omphalos* with Irish nationalism reinforces that just as the navel is the

center of the body, Ireland is, for Irish nationalists, the cultural center of the earth. First, Stephen reflects, “To ourselves...new paganism... omphalos” (*Ulysses* 6). Here, Stephen recalls the verses of an Irish Nationalist slogan (*Sinn Fein*), which begins “To Ourselves...”. Analyzing this passage, Weldon Thornton explains that “the immediate context [of the omphalos] suggests that the self-contemplating nationalists, in their desire for independence and their assumption of Ireland's great importance, are mistakenly turning in upon themselves, away from the larger European society” (15). In the same episode, Buck discusses the towers in which he and Stephen reside and states that, “Billy Pitt had them built . . . when the French were on the sea. But ours is the omphalos” (*Ulysses* 13). (William Pitt was the British Prime Minister who constructed the towers to prevent the French from assisting Irish rebels.) Then, in the Oxen of the Sun episode, Buck again associates the *omphalos* with nationalism when he proposes the creation of a “national fertilising farm to be named Omphalos” (265). By associating the Irish Nationalist movement with the navel, Joyce critiques the narcissism of hyper-patriotism. Thus, when Stephen rejects navel-gazing, he rejects the tendency of nationalistically-minded citizens to become too self-focused. This idea becomes clearer in the episode “Cyclops”: the mythical one-eyed monster evokes the blindness (another form of dismemberment) of the Citizen, whose narrow-mindedness and xenophobic ideas about Ireland inhibit him from seeing, as Bloom does, more than one side to an issue. Joyce associates dismemberment with nationalism to reinforce that while nationalism aims to repair a lost bond, or perhaps to create a bond where none exists, excessive patriotism only further dismembers or fragments the individual. This is so because the structured, masculine realm of a nation state upholds the symbolic order, an order that insists upon corporate identity and that imperils singularity and, in Stephen's case, artistic expression.

Art relates to the semiotic, as it aims to express non-verbal energies and pre-oedipal instincts. The symbolic allows no room for the semiotic because the chaos and fluidity of that latter modality undermine its rigidity and totalitarian order. Hence, Irish Nationalism imperils Stephen's identity as an artist.¹⁶

There is no question that *Ulysses* explores modern man's quest for identity. Modernity imperils man, both literally and symbolically. It signals the destruction of the body (of all bodies), but it also—and more importantly—disturbs identity. Modernity's ambiguity and evanescence destabilize the symbolic order upon which the modern subject's identity depends. In Joyce's novel, the quest for identity necessarily relates to nationalism, which is a collective quest for identity. Writing about Joyce's work, Rickard argues that there is “both a modern awareness of the instability of personal identity *and* a nostalgic longing for unified and purposive experience,” adding that “the forces of fragmentation and disruption at work in the novel do much to stimulate a reaction [. . .] that taps into the cultural unconscious to provide a holistic response, a suturing of these gaps in unity and identity” (21). Some critics have suggested that in the quest for such wholeness, the individual naturally embraces nationalism, as the invention of a common past provides the illusion of wholeness. Teresa Heffernan, for instance, explains that “[t]he mythic dimension of the nation provides a sense of continuity, destiny, and meaning that fills the void” (473). The fragmented individual seeks unity in culture, and nationalism establishes a sense of connection to the past, to place, and to one's fellow man. Under the oppression of British rule, the Irish have no connection to place. Stephen mourns that he is without a country, a place to call home. In this context, the motif of the *omphalos* perhaps

¹⁶ See Attridge (*Semicolonial Joyce*), Gillespie, and Nolan for further readings on Joyce's treatment of Irish Nationalism in *Ulysses* and other texts.

represents a longing for connection. But, as Joyce suggests, nationalism is violently destructive to the individual and to any form of artistic expression. Joyce suggests that while nationalism inspires unity, it is ultimately responsible for society's decay. Stephen muses about the *omphalos*, and his thoughts wander to the navel cord that trails back to Eve: "She had no navel. Gaze. Belly without blemish, bulging big, a buckler of taut vellum, no, whiteheaped corn, orient and immortal, standing from everlasting to everlasting. Womb of sin." Here, Stephen associates Irish nationalism with original sin, suggesting that both have permanently eroded humanity. Nationalism, Stephen believes, smothers the artist, and its totalitarian power has ruined Irish culture.

Stephen rejects the lure of unity promised by the Nationalist movement, but he still seeks wholeness. In order to re-member the self, one must *remember*, re-collecting the fragments of experience into a kind of order. Stephen relies on memory, a life-renewing force, to establish a continuity of self. Both Bloom and Dedalus acknowledge that identity is not fixed and constant. Recalling life with Molly, Bloom remarks, "I was happier then. Or was that I? Or am I now I" (*Ulysses* 110)? Stephen, too, contemplates self-permanence. In one scene, he observes a mole on his body and questions what is constant in ever-evolving forms:

As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies [. . .] from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and un-weave his image. And as the mole on my right breast is where it was when I was born, though all my body has been woven of new stuff time after time, so through the ghost of the unquiet father the image of the unliving son looks forth. (128)

Despite the ever-changing matter of the body, Stephen clings to what appears permanent—the mole. Further, recalling Hamlet (who calls his father "an old mole"), Stephen suggests that it is

only through the ghost that the son lives. It is only through spectral memory that existence is assured. Thus, Stephen tries to secure his self-identity via memory. “Molecules all change. I am other I now [. . .] But, I entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under everchanging forms” (125). Memory, Stephen believes, is the only guarantor of identity. Borg explains that “[t]he work of memory, in that scene, consists of re-collecting lost fragments of the self; of piecing the self together, and, finally, of infusing the remembered self with life.” According to Joyce, Borg adds, “[t]o remember is not simply to evoke the past, but to recuperate it to the order of the living presence. It is to cancel out death, death construed as sheer waste and loss of meaning, and thus to hold on to the idea of an original unity of the self” (101). In other words, meaning is, for Stephen, predicated on a notion of self, and such a notion of self is predicated on memory. Memory, then, is also a guarantor of meaning, since meaning is only realized in the present, in the re-remembering of the pieces of experience.

However, it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that memory is, for Dedalus and Bloom alike, a source of trauma. Stephen declares that history “is a nightmare from which [he is] trying to awake” (*Ulysses* 24). Indeed, his own personal history and memories of his mother seem to haunt him throughout adulthood. Likewise, Bloom is traumatized by the memories of his father's suicide and his son Rudy's death. Both of these characters react to the trauma of memory by trying to repress the past—“No use thinking of it any more” (49). How, then, does one confront the trauma of memory? And, moreover, how does one deploy memory as a resource in the construction of identity? Perhaps, Joyce suggests, by acknowledging memory as a creative act and by acknowledging the accessibility of cultural and historical memory. Rickard argues that a central question of *Ulysses* is memory's adaptability:

Does memory mummify of ‘mumoris’ [memorize] the past [. . .]—that is, store it away in an unchanging and unchangeable form that can be ‘dug up’ years later—or is memory a form of ‘mummery’ [. . .] masked, hidden, changeable, and subject to interpretation? Do we always rewrite the past to some extent when we remember? Is our access to the past limited to our personal experience, as the passivist tradition would have it, or are we capable of ‘remembering’ much more, drawing memories from the minds of others, even those who are dead, as some activist writers would argue? (11)

There is no question that Joyce's text engages these questions regarding memory and its relation to various forms of representation. Joyce's narrative method, which relies on intertextual memory (his texts refer to each other) and invokes and re-works fragments of literary tradition, suggests that memory is both subjective and inventive and that it is not limited to personal experience. What Joyce recognizes, and what Stephen Dedalus tragically does not, is that the past is ambiguous and therein lies its value. History is, according to Stephen, “a nightmare” (*Ulysses* 24); but for the artist, it is a myth that can be ever re-created. Stephen's dilemma as an artist is the burden of novelty; he is anxious to create something new. Yet Joyce is aware that every word in a text is second-hand, and only because a word has been used before does it make sense and have meaning. However, he creates something new and novel by reworking discourses and by putting his imprint on the form of art. Joyce's project, then, is one of creative re-appropriation. Because he revises literary discourses, he admits an indebtedness to the artists of the past (“A.E.I.O.U”). Bloom says, “Never know whose thoughts you're chewing” (112), which perhaps emphasizes the illusion of originality but which certainly suggests the organicity and recycling of discourse. Incidentally, Joyce's text, full as it is with citations and references to works of the canon, is a kind of dismembered body. As such, the narrative defers to what is absent as it unfolds. Meaning is produced in the collision of his fragmented text and the forms

that it invokes.

Broken Bones in *The Waste Land*

Much like Joyce's text, *The Waste Land* is also a dismembered body, comprised of parts and citations that evoke a whole. Eliot's poetic method of "shoring up" textual fragments epitomizes Benjamin's notion of allegory, which redeems objects from oblivion by re-imagining them, while also flaunting the break between the object and the totality invoked. Benjamin's celebration of objects and images is apparent in the *The Arcades Project*—also a dismembered text—in which he declares images "[his] primitive passion" and writes that "the original interest in allegory is not linguistic but optical" (334). Emphasizing the material fragment, Benjamin explores how history can be reconstructed by its literal scattered remains. As Guyer-Ryan explains, "[t]here is no remembrance (Er-‘innerung’) of things, but rather re-membrance (‘Er-innerung’) through things (519). Guyer-Ryan adds that personal identity relies on an allegorical process that sublimates the object. In *The Arcades Project*, "Benjamin [. . .] shows how the subject is formed in the construction of an imaginary cosmos by dealing with objects, spaces and sounds" (519). In *The Waste Land*, Eliot's speaker also enacts a kind of allegorical process, salvaging images and re-constructing the world by reassembling pieces and debris, in order to make sense of his own existence. By recovering past fragments, the subject restores a sense of unity to the past. Kristeva describes a similar process in *Renaissance*, by which elements of the pre-oedipal semiotic resurface in the oedipal symbolic, thereby restoring (if only for an instant) *fusion*, or the subject's unity with the maternal continent. Art, Kristeva argues, enables such "semiotization of the symbolic" (*Revolution*, trans. Margaret Waller, 79). In this context, Eliot's (and Benjamin's) process of sublimating objects recalls the sublimation of the original lost object—the mother.

Allegory, insists Guyer-Ryan, retains the power to rescue and redeem even the most abject of things: “objects normally categorized as rubbish can be elevated into positivity, and are thus ‘sublimated’ into [. . .] [a] value of distinction” (503). In Chapter I, I have described trash and rubble in *The Waste Land* as forms of the abject or as forms of artifact. Here, Guyer-Ryan insists that rubble becomes relic in the allegorical process, even though, she adds, restoring the abject constitutes a “breach in the symbolic order of a culture” (503). When the poem's speaker shores “fragments [. . .] against [his] ruins” (line 430), the speaker sublimates the debris to find order, ironically, at the expense of the system of signification that sustains order. Invoking Benjamin's allegorical method, Eliot portrays how allegory imperils the system of signification. The sublimation of objects—which allegory enacts—recalls the rescue of the mother, and the maternal continent of chaos and ambiguity gravely imperils the rational, ordered realm of the symbolic. In other words, allegory destabilizes the symbolic both by sublimating the abject—that which culture would permanently reject—and by, in the same act, exposing the realm of order to ambiguity. Allegory flaunts a break between the signifier and the signified, and obscurity resides within this break. Yet, allegory also creates a false promise of connection between the signifier and the signified, arresting the play of signifiers by relating it to a conventional signified. Thus, allegory also attests to the power of cultural convention. Benjamin claims that “[t]he commodity form emerges [. . .] as the social content of the allegorical form of perception. Form and content are united in the prostitute, as in their synthesis” (*Arcades* 335). Guyer-Ryan explains that for Benjamin, the prostitute represents modern culture's commodification, and “[t]he very existence of a pictorial space in which the female body is made the object of commodity—allegorization is itself a sign of patriarchal

power” (505). Eliot’s poem facilitates a kind of “space” not unlike what Guyer-Ryan describes here, since it invites allegorization. *The Waste Land* is a fragment full of fragments that beg to be “shored” (line 430) by readers. Its formal absences invite re-imagination, the process by which meaning is imposed on the object of the text. Thus, though the poem can be read as modern man’s quest to find meaning in the chaos that is modern civilization, the allegorical method invoked to appropriate meaning on the textual chaos affirms the power of patriarchal orderings.

Yet, while allegory enacts patriarchal re-imaginings, allegory also, as Benjamin emphasizes, sublimates lost objects, recovering what is perceived to be bygone. Because allegory assigns meaning while also rescuing and redeeming objects from the meaning imposed by the symbolic process (paradoxically, by *re-assigning* meaning), it violates the boundary that divides the maternal realm of the semiotic and the paternal realm of the symbolic. The negotiation of this boundary is, according to Kristeva, essential to the formation of the subject’s identity. Thus, Eliot’s poem, which is often read as the subject’s quest for identity in the modern world, invokes allegory both formally (as a textual fragment) and thematically. At the same time, *The Waste Land* reinforces through allegory that identity is a construction of both the semiotic and the symbolic modality, and not just of one modality or the other. Allegory suggests that meaning is a product of the signifying system and the modality that subverts the signifying system. Allegory can be likened to Derrida’s *brisure*, since it exposes a break and a “coming together” in which meaning is simultaneously produced and withheld. Connoting the maternal, allegory restores the lost object in a process of sublimation while also exposing a semantic break with the lost object. By virtue of its allowance and disallowance of representation, allegory is, according to Benjamin, a ruin. Much the same way, the mother at once allows and disallows the

formation of the ego. As explained in the last section, the mother initiates the infant's entry into the linguistic order of the symbolic, which establishes the independent ego. But this realm relies on a system of signification in which the self is always predicated on “otherness” and is thus irreducible. Hence, the mother both initiates and inhibits the subject's formation of identity; she is, as Kristeva writes, both threatening and ethical (*Revolution* 27). Eliot's allegorical method, his “shoring” of fragments, then, underscores both fragmentation from the mother and the sublimation of the mother in the threatening world of society as necessary acts in the formation of the self in the modern world. In the poem, form complements theme and vice versa, since allegorical meaning and the quest for identity are predicated on a break and a coming together.

The poem's speaker illustrates the subject's quest for identity and the unavoidable negotiation of the semiotic and the symbolic through the form and motif of fragmentation. The “poem as fragment” and the literal fragments (images of parts and debris) within the poem reinforce the subject's struggle to reconcile the conflicting modalities of the mother and the father. More specifically, the poem's various instances of dismemberment—which are both formal and thematic—reinforce the loss of origins and the dual imperative to permanently sever from and to reconnect with origins. Fragmentation (as form and motif) also betrays masculine anxiety about disorder. The poem itself is a fragment, full of fragments and parts that, some critics argue, resist unity. Eileen Wiznitzer, for instance, claims that the poem's many “gaps symbolize the refusal of *The Waste Land*, as text, to create meaning” (88). Tony Pinkney explains that “the ‘organic unity’ of the text is brazenly flouted, unitary notions of character slip, slide and perish, [and] the narrative point of view is busily unraveled into an unresolvable plurality of conflicting voices” (97). There are also the poem's allusions to other literary texts;

Eliot dismembers parts from other bodies of texts and haphazardly incorporates these dismembered parts within his own body. Importantly, the text's refusal of cohesion—its purposeful fragmentation—is a source of unease for readers. Jian-kuang Lin maintains that “[w]hile the reading process may be one of mastering or controlling, the reader may still feel anxious that something is beyond his/her control. It is an anxiety of hysterical dismemberment” (13). On the hermeneutic level, then, *The Waste Land* betrays the masculine desire for order and control. (Eliot himself hints to his desire for structure and stability when he praises Joyce's use of myth, “a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” [*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*].) The reading process privileges the impulse for structure, as the poem's fragments beg to be “shored” up. According to Guyer-Ryan, emptiness is “the starting point of differentiation” (501). Thus, the poem's spaces and voids not only reflect semiosis, they invite it. By imaginatively filling the voids and imposing order onto the text, readers enact the symbolic process. The re-appropriation of meaning, a function of the paternal realm, becomes an act of reading. This is why Wiznitzer claims that “*The Waste Land* reasserts the domination of male hegemonic culture, but does so under the guise of cultural collapse and disintegration” (90). Despite its suggestion that modern civilization (representative of the male hegemonic culture) is collapsing, the poem, through its fragments, facilitates the very process by which hegemony is sustained.

Ironically, the reader re-members the text by dismembering it. By re-appropriating meaning and order to the fragmented text (re-membering it), the reader de-originates (and thus, dismembers) the text. The reader's agency, as critics like Wiznitzer insist, reinforces the poem's facilitation of the symbolic process and thus, its privileging of the hegemonic order of things.

On the other hand, the reader's desire for unity—and not just order— might represent nostalgia for the lost wholeness experienced in the pre-oedipal realm. Accounting for its many citations to other texts, Ellman observes that Eliot's poem “hints that literature is nothing but a plague of echoes” (268). The literary echoes that manifest in Eliot's text recall the first echo (of the mother), which perpetually haunts the subject. The poem's speaker asks, “What is that sound high in the air/Murmur of maternal lamentation” (366-7)? The speaker cannot decipher the words of the mother's echo because the realm of the mother is pre-lingual. Nonetheless, the “murmur” is powerful, sounding amidst “Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air/Falling Towers” (lines 372-3). It is no coincidence that, in this scene, the speaker witnesses the collapse of civilization at the same that the speaker hears the echo of the mother. After all, the realm of the mother and the father cannot co-exist. In order to sustain itself, the symbolic order of society must permanently abject the mother. Yet in *The Waste Land*, various biblical and literary allusions suggest that a connection to origins, to “the roots that clutch” (line 19), must, for the sake of meaning, be repaired. These allusions, combined with Eliot's many footnotes, direct readers to originary sources that must be consulted, it seems, for the poem to be meaningful. Likewise, within the poem, the speaker must reconnect with history in order to interpret the present. For instance, the speaker comprehends the collapsing city and London Bridge, which is “falling down falling down falling down” (line 426), by recalling the collapse of empires past: “Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/Vienna London/Unreal” (lines 374-6). In one scene, the speaker asks, “You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you/remember/‘Nothing’” (lines 121-3)? Here, the speaker conflates knowledge and memory. Knowledge of the past becomes knowledge for the present. By emphasizing memory's centrality in the present, the poem reinforces that

meaning is predicated on origins. Identity, too, is predicated on origins. The ego is forever haunted by the void of the mother. Like the ghosts that haunt the speaker throughout the poem, the mother is a specter that the subject cannot evade. The poem further associates memory and the maternal echo by presenting memory as a source of pain and pleasure. In the first stanza, the speaker observes that April, “the cruelest month” (line 1), “mix[es] memory and desire” (line 3). Here, the speaker suggests that desire is tempered by memory, the unpleasant realities of the past. The speaker then recalls being “frightened” as a child while sledding with a cousin. Ellmann argues that poem is a full of painful remembrances. “In *Studies on Hysteria*,” explains Ellmann, “Freud and Breuer argue that ‘hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences’ (and by this definition, *The Waste Land* is the most hysterical of texts)” (259). The speaker even recalls instances of paralysis—“I could not/Speak, and my eyes failed, I was/neither Living nor dead, and I knew nothing” (lines 38-40). Because blindness and muteness are read as forms of dismemberment, one might read the speaker’s recollection as the memory of castration from the mother, the original act of trauma.

Nonetheless, memory is also presented as a source of pleasure, as the speaker continues to recall happy days spent with the “hyacinth girl” (line 36). By “mixing/Memory with desire” (lines 2-3), the poem associates memory with nostalgia for the mother and with the fantasy of return to the pre-verbal, maternal abyss. Memory soothes the ego because it sublimates the lost object and restores (albeit momentarily) the bond with the maternal continent. This association is reinforced by the poem’s experimentation with forms on nonverbal expression, such as alliterative music and rhythm, the “murmur of maternal lamentation” (line 367). Recall that Kristeva attributes music to the semiotic since it breaches coded discourse. *The Waste Land*

recreates a kind of rhythm, both by incorporating fragments of familiar songs and ballads and by imitating musical forms (for example, the repetition of chorus, such as “HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME”). Paul Chancellor describes the poem as “a dream in music” (21), and as such, the poem explores the possibilities of nonverbal expression. “What is that noise” (line 117)? The poem’s curious attention to sounds emphasizes the aural dimension of language and, thus, implicates the body in acts of signification. In this way, the poem anticipates Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic, which betrays the imprint of the body on language. The semiotic is “not an extension of the language system but transversal to and coextensive with it. It is through the semiotic that we can connect language as a formal system to something outside this, in the realm of the psycho-somatic, to a body and a bodily subject structuring and de-structuring identity” (Smith 18). *The Waste Land*’s incorporation of nursery rhymes (“London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down” (line 426) and word and sound play that resemble baby babble (“Da/Datta” [lines 400-1]; “Co co rico co co rico” [line 392]) also underscores the meaningfulness of infantile or pre-verbal expression. After all, the babble redeems. The thunder speaks, “DA DA DA”: “*Datta*” (give), “*Dayadhvam*” (be compassionate), and “*Damyata*” (have self-control) (Rainey 120), and these words offer the subject transcendence from cultural and moral collapse. The expression of the inexpressible—that is, the verbalization of the body—is possible, the poem insists. The memory of the mother manifests itself in the sublimation of the body through language.

Importantly, though, memory is both a source of pain and pleasure. It is like the mother, whom the subject desires but must abject in order to sustain the ego. In Eliot’s poem, abjection of the mother is represented as violence against the female body. A presumably female speaker

is raped or “und[one]” (line 294). The poem also alludes to Philomela, the nightingale from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that was transformed into a bird after she was brutally raped by Tereus. Then, there is Lil, who barely survives childbirth— “[s]he's had five already, and nearly died of young George” (line 160). Lil is almost killed giving birth, and this detail reinforces that the life of the subject (and the ego) necessitates the death of the mother. However, by acting as the liaison between the pre-oedipal and the post-oedipal realms, the mother initiates her own abjection. Because she introduces the infant to language, the mother facilitates the symbolic order. Or, even more simply, as Wiznitzer observes, women as childbearers are “directly responsible for the regeneration of the species and for the possibilities of cultural continuity” (91). Wiznitzer also adds that in *The Waste Land*, “Lil holds the biological powers necessary to the continuity of history and culture” (91). Thus, the poem reiterates the dilemma of the mother—she enables the ego (identity), but she must be symbolically killed in order for the subject to sustain the ego. And further, the void of the maternal causes the subject to forever feel castration and lack. As Kristeva emphasizes, “[a] mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division of language— and it has always been so” (*Stabat Mater*, trans. Moi, 178).

The Waste Land critiques the dilemma of modern man, who, in the quest for meaning, struggles to negotiate between a system of signification and a realm that pre-exists signification. The poem betrays nostalgia for the semiotic, and this is evidenced by the speaker's mourning of a society in decay. The speaker's reminiscence, “In the mountains, there you feel free” (line 17), expresses a longing for the orderlessness of the maternal realm. However, identity relies upon abjection, the violent rupture with the maternal continent. Importantly, the association of nature

with the mother (for whom the speaker yearns) also underscores the speaker's desire to return to a pre-technological society. Eliot's poem was written in the wake of the First World War, which witnessed the emergence of modern, techno-industrialized warfare (mustard gas, machine guns). The poem alludes to the violence of signification in the social order, but also to the violence of modern technology and industrialization, which, as some ecofeminists have argued, are linked. According to Carolyn Merchant, for instance, the modern world's destruction of nature and the environment is inextricably tied to the exploitation of women. Merchant observes a corresponding shift in modern attitudes about nature and women, which go from being traditionally conceived as nurturing mothers to being conceived as objects of subjugation. In modern times, Merchant argues, women and nature are understood as passive and at the mercy of masculine aggression.¹⁷ Yet, it is not only women that have been symbolically killed by technology and war. The poem suggests that all are subjected to the violence of the modern world and, more particularly, to the violence of signification, upon which modern society insists.

Still, despite the psychological devastation of modernity, the poem hints that the individual may prevail. Cleanth Brooks, Jr. analyzes one of the final passages in the poem in which the speaker reports that "London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down" (line 426) only to ask, "Shall I at least set my lands in order" (line 425)? According to Brooks, modern civilization is on the verge of collapse, but "the protagonist still has a private obligation to fulfill" (204). Despite the disintegration of society, Brooks suggests, there is hope for the individual. Yet does not the ego's existence rely upon the social order, in particular, upon the symbolic system of signification that upholds it? Can the ego exist outside of society, which establishes and sustains the ego? (Although, concurrently, society imperils the ego by forcing

¹⁷ See also Griffin and Hammond.

the subject to feel his fragmentation and thus, his lack.) Eliot's poem reinforces—both formally and thematically—this perpetual dilemma of the modern subject. Because the mother is both threatening and ethical, her maternal continent is to be feared and desired. Likewise, because the paternal realm of the symbolic enacts differentiation—the process by which the ego is formed and by which the subject is made to feel his lack—the paternal order, too, is to be feared and desired. Further, by annihilating nature, the paternal order destroys hopes of “feel[ing] free” (line 17) outside the law.

Within the poem, the simultaneous fear and desire for both the semiotic and the symbolic is articulated by characters that have been dismembered (literally and symbolically). Underlying the poem's structural form of dismemberment is the motif of broken bodies and severed parts. First, there is the “disembodied I” (Ellmann 259) that represents the speaker with no stable identity. In addition, there is the woman who is “undone” and whose body crumbles into a distorted figure: “My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart/Under my feet” (lines 296-7). The poem is strewn with body parts—wet hair, dirty ears, broken fingernails of dirty hands, wrinkled dugs, teeth, exploring hands, raised knees, and bones. The Fisher King has castrated himself, while the blind Tiresias is symbolically rendered impotent. The woman in childbirth also suggests dismemberment, since this image depicts the original act of dismembering, exile from the womb. Ultimately, the motif of dismemberment reinforces separation from the mother, which the poem, in agreement with Kristeva and Joyce, portrays as traumatic but necessary. In the poem, abjection is violently enacted against female bodies. Violence against the mother reinforces the violence of the hermeneutic process, which is what really concerns Eliot. Guyer-Ryan elaborates on the necessary semiosis (castration) that characterizes allegory and enables

meaning:

[T]he living body of the mother [does] not [disappear]. It is present in the act of violence— ‘déformation’ and ‘destruction’ as process, not result— which all signifying practices must repeat afresh if they intend to produce meaning. Semiosis is the ‘acting out’ of murder and castration within the sign. The more the signifier and the signified are torn apart to form hermetic constellations and hard edges, the deeper the essential abyss opens up between them which is only bridged by conventions. In this abyss, violence reveals itself as a strain on meaning. Through its violent, unmediated construction, allegory in the form of figurative speech or emblem is the allegory of each semiotic and hermeneutic act. For in Benjamin, an unmistakable semantics of violence plays around the figure of allegory. (507)

Meaning is the product of violence, since it is only engendered in the tearing apart of the signifier and the signified. Thus, all language is an act of violence since language also initiates and facilitates an endless process of differentiation, “deforming” and “destroying” the sign (the word). Recall Derrida's insistence that words and signs never achieve the point where they stand alone as signifiers. Rather, words and signs perpetually “defer” to other words and signs. Yet, Eliot's poem seeks to redeem words, as his speaker seeks transcendence from and through language. Eliot echoes Joyce by proposing the redemption of language (and the self) in the word made flesh. The individual can transcend language by imprinting the body on language. According to Kristeva, pre-verbal experience can be represented in sound, gesture, rhythm, tone, and other expressions of the body. These mediums transgress the boundaries of the symbolic by imposing the pre-lingual imaginary on the socio-cultural process: “In cracking the socio-symbolic order, splitting it open, changing vocabulary, syntax, the word itself, and releasing from beneath them the drives born by vocalic or kinetic differences, jouissance works its way into the social and symbolic” (*Revolution* 79-80). In fact, poetic writing in general gravely threatens the social hierarchy since it encourages an openness to imagination and to new modes of expression.

“[P]oetry,” affirms Kristeva, “shows us that language lends itself to the penetration of the socio-symbolic by jouissance” (*Revolution* 80). By breaching conventional rules of grammar and syntax, Eliot's poem undermines the established vernacular. However, the poem also mixes voices (male and female, young and old), reflects various languages, and incorporates song and music. Experimenting with these forms, Eliot's poetry further subverts the coded discourse and attempts to inscribe the semiotic in the symbolic. My next chapter will discuss Eliot's method to overcome the violence and oppression of language by finding new forms of representation that facilitate pre-lingual expression. Like Philomela, the nightingale that sings with no language, Eliot affirms the possibility of inscribing the imagination in totalitarian systems of signification. Ultimately, as Eliot proposes, modern man is only redeemed through a revolution of language; and, by imposing some chaos on the order, the modern subject finds order in the chaos.

“Wounded Creatures” and “Partial Beings” in *Midnight's Children*

S. P. Swain argues that *Midnight's Children* “documents the demented wanderings of a split self in quest of wholeness and an identity” (79). Rushdie's text, like Joyce's and Eliot's, concerns itself with the fragmentation—both literal and figurative—of the modern subject. The protagonist is “falling apart [. . .] crack[ing] all over like an old jug” (*Midnight's Children* 36), losing fingers and body parts here and there. *Midnight's Children* deploys the motif of dismemberment to reinforce the fracture of the psyche and the dislocation, decenteredness, and rootlessness of the subject that is displaced from and deprived of a homeland. Rusdhie's text recalls *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* since it, too, is a narrative about longing—for a past, for origins, and for wholeness. The novel explores the experience of the postcolonial, marginalized

“other,” and the role of memory in the effort to reclaim a personal and national past.¹⁸ Because the text critiques the stability of identity, the motif of dismemberment also recalls Derrida's *brisure* and Kristeva's *thetic*, both of which describe a break or fissure in which representation is allowed and disallowed.¹⁹ Critiquing the ruin, Derrida undermines the process of alterity, reinforcing the subject's need and incapacity to access his own subjection. His blind draftsman must but cannot self-appropriate; he cannot at once see himself and see himself seeing himself in order to draw his own hand. Similarly, Kristeva explains that the ego is formed by the *thetic* break with the maternal continent, but this very break imperils the ego because the subject forever feels the void of the mother. What conjoins Derrida's and Kristeva's analyses here is the impossibility of wholeness and self-representation. Rushdie's text, like most postcolonial narratives, also questions the integrity of boundaries that stabilize (and destabilize) identity. In postcolonial theory, the privileged subject erects boundaries in order to establish himself in relation to an objectified “other,” but because his identity relies on the marginalized other, the subject compromises his own centrality. Importantly, then, Rushdie deploys the motif of dismemberment, or the breakdown of corporeal borders, to reinforce the breakdown of the symbolic borders that allow and disallow self-representation. Like Derrida's draftsman, who “sees its visibility being eaten away” (*Memoirs* 68). Saleem, in his quest for wholeness, is troubled to recognize his own fragmentation and his disconnection from the past. Necessarily, then, Saleem relies on memory as a guarantor of self-continuity.

¹⁸ For further discussion of post-coloniality and the marginalization of post-colonial subjects, see *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, the first major theoretical text to address issues of post-colonial culture and literary representations (including Rushdie's) of these issues.

¹⁹ See Loomba for an analysis of postcolonial studies' links to feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, structuralism, and poststructuralism.

However, memory is, according to the text, a creative act. Saleem does not simply retell the past, he re-imagines it in order to exaggerate his own role in it. Emphasizing Saleem's creation (rather than relation) of India's past, Rushdie declares history and the nation a myth. But history and nation are, it seems to Saleem, necessary myths, guarantors of his own meaningfulness. Like Stephen Dedalus's, Saleem's biggest fear is an unimportant life. In a rare moment of honesty, the mostly unreliable narrator confesses, "I became afraid that everything was wrong—that my much trumpeted existence might turn out to be utterly useless, void and without the shred of a purpose" (*Midnight's Children* 180). Saleem clings to his imaginative version of things because such myths, he believes, make him whole—"I am so far gone, in my desperate need for meaning, that I am prepared to distort everything" (198). Saleem, again like Stephen, remembers to *re-member*. He re-imagines the past to re-collect fragments of experience into purposeful order. Yet the narrative contradicts Saleem's efforts, "[b]ecause a human being, inside himself, is anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous; all kinds of everywhichthing are jumbled up inside him" (236-7). Importantly, the narrative does not challenge the veracity of Saleem's fictive versions of the past. In fact, Rushdie argues that "[h]istory is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge" (*Imaginary Homelands* 25). Rather, the narrative challenges Saleem's fantasy of wholeness. Rushdie echoes Kristeva and Derrida when he declares unity a myth, a lost object like the mother or an object like the self-portrait, which is ruined from inception.

In *Midnight's Children*, fragmentation is an issue of form and theme. Much like Joyce's and Eliot's, Rushdie's narrative is itself a textual fragment in which fragmentation is also

thematically reinforced. The narrative is disjointed and discontinuous, as the fallible narrator haphazardly recounts his story. There are huge, gaping holes in his account, betraying Saleem's (willful) distortion of history. The theme of fragmentation is literally reinforced through characters who are cracking and breaking apart. Saleem loses his hair, then a finger, and then his nose. Also, he and all of the other Children of Midnight are castrated by the Prime Minister. There is also the "hole inside," his grandfather Aadam Aziz, "which had been created when he had been hit on the nose by a tussock" (*Midnight's Children* 23). Parvati the witch takes spikes in the neck, Sundari's face is slashed, and Jamila's voice is dissociated from her body. Padma is dismembered by the narrator, who only sees her in parts (legs). Aziz and his future wife Naseem are also dismembered, in a sense, because they, too, are only seen in segments. Naseem's father, Ghani (who is also dismembered, symbolically, by his blindness), stipulates that the doctor, Aziz, examine his sick daughter through a perforated sheet. As a result, Naseem and Aziz "learn to love [each other] in segments," and Saleem is "condemned to see [his] own life—its meaning, its structures—in fragments also" (119). Saleem's brokenness is suggested by other details as well. To start, he is born at the stroke of midnight on the day of India's independence. Hence, he is split in half between the old India and the new independent state. Saleem is also dismembered in the sense that he is, according to M. Keith Booker, "literally not himself." Saleem is out of body because he is "[s]ecretly switched at birth with the infant who grows up to become the sinister Major Shiva" (982).

There is no question that fragmentation is a central theme in Rushdie's narrative. Many critics contend that the textual and thematic emphasis of fragmentation reflects the fragmentation of India at the time of its independence. Saleem experiences India's external division from

Pakistan and internal division by religious conflict (between Muslims and Hindus) and by mixed reactions to decolonization. In the text, fragmentation of the body underscores fragmentation of the body politic. Saleem says to the reader, “Please believe that I am falling apart [. . .] I mean quite simply that I have begun to crack all over like an old jug” (*Midnight’s Children* 36). And when Saleem cracks, “the body politic began to crack” (245). Saleem believes that he is a physical manifestation of India, as his birth coincides with the “birth” of the nation. He explains, “I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country” (9). Saleem’s conflation of his own personal history with India’s history leads him to conclude that by guaranteeing his own wholeness, he can secure India’s integrity. Thus, he sets out to write his narrative in order to write India’s: “I shall have to write the future as I have written the past, to set it down with the absolute certainty of a prophet” (462). But while fragmentation, as a general theme, may be suggestive of India’s political and cultural division, dismemberment has more specific connotations. The loss of body parts connotes a loss of integrity that engenders deep anxiety. Saleem’s amputations suggest exile, dislocation, and loss, and these phenomena disturb identity. Just as the part is severed from the body, the colonial subject is severed from a homeland, and the deprivation of place troubles the psyche. Saleem’s geographical rootlessness is suggested by the fact that he is de-originated—his parents are not his biological mother and father. Throughout the narrative, Saleem bemoans his exile. He laments, “At every turn I am thwarted, a prophet in the wilderness [. . .] no matter how I try, the desert is my lot” (471). Like Stephen, Saleem is without a country to call his own: “Anyway [India] was not ‘my’ country or not then. Not my country, although I stayed in it—as a refugee, not citizen” (420). Importantly, geographical exile is symbolic of the marginalization of the

orientalized “other.” The yearning for physical place betrays a yearning for place within the social order. Yet in order to secure a place within the social order, the exiled must reclaim (or re-write) the past. In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie writes of the need of exiles, including writers like himself, to recover history:

[Exiles are] haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated in pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities of village, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (10)

In short, it is the longing for a past that haunts the subject in search of his own identity, but the past that the subject imagines is irrecoverable. It is, like a lost object, gone irretrievably and only salvaged in myth. Here, Rushdie betrays the fallacy of nostalgia, which he also shares. Echoing Benjamin on the ruins of history, Rushdie argues that the past is a creation of memory rather than a product of history. Like the ruin, the past invites creative re-appropriation because experience of it is always incomplete. Rushdie, like Benjamin, annihilates the “myth” of the past but acknowledges the “force [of the myth]” (Stephens 157). The force of the myth is the hunger for home and the yearning to restore origins, be they imagined origins, that haunt the psyche precisely because they cannot be accessed. The “fictions, [. . .] imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” about which Rushdie writes also recall Kristeva's notion of the maternal, the original lost object that the subject can never recover. Rushdie writes that “[the] present is foreign, and [. . .] the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time” (*Imaginary Homelands* 9). The past from which we derive is “home,” but out of reach. It is like the abject mother, whom the subject mourns but must abject in order to thrive in the paternal, symbolic

order. In order to resolve this conflict, the subject promotes into adulthood a “myth” of unity with the maternal continent, which is gone forever.

In Rushdie's narrative, the myth of unity is projected onto the mother—Mother India. It is imperative that India be restored to wholeness, since Saleem's own integrity is bound up in the integrity of the nation. (He sets out to write [fabricate] India's history in order to secure his own.) Nalini Natarajan observes that in an era of decolonization, woman's body becomes “a site for mythic unity in the face of fragmentation” (400). In other words, the female body reflects fantasies of wholeness and totality in the midst of cultural division and ruin. Natarajan observes that Aziz, fragmented by his loss of parts, is “reintegrated” over the female body. Aziz treats Naseem in parts and imagines her whole, and “[t]his coincides with his imagining a ‘whole’ Indian identity for himself, instead of his regional Kashmiri one” (400). There is, according to Natarajan, an important distinction between male and female fragmentation. Male dismembering signals crisis, indicating rupture; on the other hand, the representation of the female in parts invites the imagination of wholeness. But “[a]lthough she is a symbol for wholeness, her own integrity remains secondary” (401). Aziz sees his future bride “in segments” and imagines her whole in order to imagine his own wholeness. In this way, the woman, like the ruin, invites creative re-appropriation; and by enabling male re-imagination, she satisfies his psychic needs. Thus importantly, the integrity of the ego necessitates, first and foremost, feminine integrity. (Again, Saleem must restore the wholeness of “Mother India” in order to remember himself.) This happens because the mother initiates the original act of castration. Perhaps this is why Rushdie's novel emphasizes, as Neil Forsyth observes, “the importance of filial relationships [. . .] even in the book's title” (197). Forsyth affirms the novel's conflation of

the maternal and the national, citing also that Indira Gandhi is the “self-proclaimed mother and embodiment of the nation (as in the slogan ‘India is Indira and Indira is India’) (198). But ultimately, Rushdie's association of the nation and the mother reinforces the idea that the nation (that is, the notion of a unified state) is a myth. Like nostalgia for the lost object of the mother, the nation is a product of fantasy for wholeness.²⁰ Saleem admits to the “myth” of the independent state of India:

A nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom, catapulting us into a world which [. . .] was [. . .] quite imaginary; into a mythical land, a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will—except in a dream we all agreed to dream—it was a mass fantasy. (*Midnight's Children* 129-30)

Nevertheless, Saleem chooses to entertain the fantasy of a unified state, and thus, the fantasy of a unified self. Saleem's desire for wholeness may be symptomatic of a tradition of being decentered by colonization. The dilemma of the postcolonial subject is the longing for expression and the need to overcome language and the subjective discourse of the hierarchal order. India's fragmentation, Saleem believes, is to blame for his own division. Indeed, Saleem's “split self” is symptomatic of colonial culture. As colonized “other,” the colonial subject experiences a kind of “double consciousness,” seeing himself from his own internal perspective and from the perspective of the authorized, colonial subject. Saleem's negotiation between the first and third person underscores his negotiation of such conflicting perspectives. His switch between “I” and “he” also recalls Derrida's draftsman, who attempts to self-appropriate in order

²⁰ Motherhood and nationalism are further linked in the sense that motherhood serves the interests of nationalism, as many critics have pointed out. Rich explores how “[i]nstitutional motherhood revives and renews all other institutions” since the mother “exemplifies in one person religion, social conscience, and nationalism” (“The ‘Sacred Calling,’” 45). Lauren Berlant observes an even more practical association between motherhood and nationalism by pointing out that the mother is tasked with reproducing productive citizens; she is, quite literally, a vehicle for the production of national culture. See also McClintock for an analysis of gender, nationalism, and the family.

to draw himself but only discovers his self-portrait is always already ruined. Rushdie explains, “When your picture of yourself, your self-image breaks, you die” (*The Review* 247). Yet in order to access his own subjection, Saleem duplicates the process by which, as colonized object, has been othered. Thus, he only further “splits” himself. However, according to Julie Scanlon, there is a space within the discourse of the Empire for postcolonial expression. Scanlon analogizes “the postcolonial mimicry of the imperialist discourse” to the semiotic, which, paradoxically, both subverts and is contained within the symbolic. The symbolic is, explains Scanlon, “an underlying dimension of language where the abjected Other finds a voice to express itself, to emerge within the Law” (122). How, then, does the postcolonial subject find representation within the system that insists on singularity? Rushdie suggests that it is not by embracing wholeness (which is, after all, an ideal promoted by the order) but by embracing plurality and thus, destabilizing the totalitarian system of signification.

As Rushdie explains, “[i]nstead of being an insignificant dot in this multitude, Saleem Sanai actually contains the multitude. It is an aspect of him, rather than he an aspect of it” (*The Review* 247). The tragedy of the narrative is that Saleem fails to realize his plurality. According to Teresa Heffernan, “[t]he pressures of ‘unity’ lead Saleem to believe that he is in control of the world, that there is nothing beyond his knowledge and that there is no boundary he cannot cross.” Yet this belief, maintains Heffernan, “is defensive, ‘an instinct for self-preservation’ employed to protect himself against the flooding multitudes who threaten to annihilate him with their own unique visions” (474). Saleem fears ambiguity, although he knows that “a human being, inside himself, is anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous; all kinds of everywhichthing are jumbled up inside him and he is one person one minute and another the

next” (*Midnight’s Children* 236). This is why Saleem mourns, “O eternal opposition of inside and outside” (283). He knows himself to be a multitude, a “swallower of lives” (4), but he denies his pluralities because he believes that wholeness depends on singularity.

Ultimately, the instability of identity underscores the relativism of reality, which Rushdie affirms time and again. According to Neil Kortenaar, “Rushdie’s novel is a meditation on the textuality of history and, in particular, of that official history that constitutes the nation” (42). Rushdie, like Joyce, critiques the notion of history as something that can be objectively recorded. The narrative dismisses the possibility of the nation “having a stable identity and a single history” (41-2). This idea is reinforced through Saleem’s unreliable narration. Saleem’s distortion of India’s history underscores that remembering the past is a creative act, since all memory is inspired by the imagination. Saleem confesses to the reader that he suffers from amnesia. He bemoans, “look at me, I’m tearing myself apart, [. . .] cracking up, memory going, yes, memory plunging into chasms and being swallowed by the dark, only fragments remain, none of it makes sense any more” (*Midnight’s Children* 503)! Saleem relies on memory, he thinks, in order to salvage meaning and purpose in his life history. Yet in fact, he relies on memory to *create* meaning and purpose. The reader quickly ascertains that he purposely “forgets” details of the past that do not conform to his preferred version of things. For instance, Saleem intentionally misplaces Gandhi’s death and misremember the date of a historic election. At times, Saleem confesses to his manipulation of the truth—“To tell the truth, I lied about Shiva’s death” (443). Saleem is also prone to embellish details in order to exaggerate his importance in India’s history. To this, he also confesses: “I fell victim to the temptation of every autobiographer, to the illusion that since the past exists only in one’s memories and the words

which strive to vainly encapsulate them, it is possible to create past events imply by saying they occurred” (443). Despite his grandiose illusions of importance and centrality, Saleem is just a minute fragment of history. But importantly, by presenting memory as act of the imagination, Rushdie reinforces the idea that memory is deployed by the ego. Remembering becomes an act of *re-mem-bering*, of re-constituting the self.

Importantly, Rushdie does not dispute the subjectivity of the past or the failure of memory to represent the past in totality. Rather, recalling Benjamin, Rushdie celebrates “the partial nature of [. . .] memories, their fragmentation [that makes] them so evocative” (*Imaginary Homelands* 11-2). Just as Benjamin celebrates the part over the whole, Rushdie celebrates the *pieces* of experience, “the shards of memory [which] acquir[e] greater status, greater resonance, because they [are] *remains*” (12). Truth is, argues Rushdie, a matter of perspective, and wholeness an illusion: “[H]uman beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hate, people loved...” (12). He adds that “when the Indian writer who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost. But there is a paradox here. The broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed” (10-11). Benjamin rejoices in the allegory's admission of its incapacity to represent, spinning ever outward into new layers of signification. By owning its ambivalence, allegory enables representation. Similarly, Rushdie shatters the myth of subjectivity and deconstructs the opposition between self and other by promoting plurality and

multitude. After all, identity is “at once plural and partial” (15). At one point, Saleem admits, “I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the whole lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me” (*Midnight's Children* 4).

By promoting ambiguity (of reality and the self), *Midnight's Children* contradicts the phallogocentric resolution. Identity is not singular but multiple, and it is not stable, but ever changing. This is evidenced by Saleem's schizophrenic switch between past and present tense and between the first and third person and by his habit of contradicting himself. Reality, too, is subjective. The narrative undermines the symbolic order by flaunting ambiguity and sanctioning contradictoriness. Early in the narrative, Saleem recollects the childhood game of Snakes and Ladders, and reflects, “implicit in the game is the unchanging twoness of things...but I found, very early in my life, that the game lacked one crucial dimension, that of ambiguity... it is also possible to slither down a ladder and to climb to triumph on the venom of a snake” (*Midnight's Children* 161). The narrative challenges the symbolic system of signification by insisting on multiplicity. As one critic argues, “*Midnight's Children* is out to show that history does have meaning; in fact, history has *many* meanings” (Reder 240). Because it denies singularity, objectivity, and totality (of self, of reality) and instead celebrates ambiguity and arbitrariness, Rushdie's narrative champions Benjamin's allegorical ruin, which betrays the perpetual de-contextualization and re-contextualization of historical objects. *Midnight's Children* insists that meaning—reality, in fact—is a matter of perspective. Rushdie's novel also critiques the textuality of history, by presenting a comically unreliable narrator's attempt to document India's (and his own) story. Saleem cannot help but implicate himself centrally in India's narrative. In

Saleem's version of things, his past and India's past are so intertwined that even his birth coincides with the birth of the nation. The narrative emphasizes that the past is not some "whole" thing that can be recorded, but rather a fictive reconstruction. History is nothing more than an act of the imagination. Thus, Rushdie's theme of fragmentation recalls Benjamin's materialist historiography, which proposes that history is a myth assembled by the past's physical remains. Fragmented bodies reinforce the fragmentation of the past, of all reality, in fact.

In *Midnight's Children*, as well as in *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*, the motif of fragmentation also underscores the violent dismembering process enacted by signification. Benjamin critiques allegory's rupture of the signifier and the signified, reinforcing the semantic break in which meaning is both produced and inhibited. Derrida explores a similar phenomenon in his analysis of the ruined self portrait, as does Kristeva in her discussion of the *thetic* breach. Importantly, what links the critiques of all three theorists is the notion that meaning is engendered and denied in the break or fissure. After all, division enables signification, separating the subject from the object, the mother from the infant, the ego from the other. Ruins display this process of division by which meaning is invoked and denied. By virtue of their fragmentation, ruins invite an imagination of wholeness only to flaunt a lack of integrity. (This is why ruins are an especially appropriate trope for critique of modernity, which necessarily allegorizes—and thus, mythologizes—the past, rendering itself incapable of representation.) Because ruins rely on fragmentation in order to conjure an image of totality, ruins reinforce and undermine the very paradigms they structure. Corporeal ruins, dismembered parts, which *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *Midnight's Children* depict, even more particularly reinforce breakage as a traumatic but necessary act in the formation of identity, and thus, meaning.

Derrida, Benjamin, and Kristeva all critique the violence of signification, and it is precisely this shared aspect of their work that distinguishes ruins and modernity. Modernity must kill the past in order to render itself capable of representation. Although, importantly, modernity kills the past not simply by declaring it so but also by re-presenting it in the form of myth—modernity is predicated on a fabled past, and as such, it participates a violent process of re-presentation that is also self-effacing, in the sense that the present is always superseding itself. Modernity's ruin of the past anticipates its own ruin; negation is a necessary but ultimately damning act in the process of representation. Like modernity, which distinguishes itself by negating the past (albeit a fabled past), the subject distinguishes itself by radically externalizing—in a sense, killing—an “other.” (Kristeva calls this the abjection of the mother, whom the subject must “kill” in order to claim the ego.) However, problematically, the subject “kills” himself by enacting the process of differentiation, facilitating his own division. The question for Derrida, Benjamin, and Kristeva (and for the third chapter of this study) becomes, “how is it possible to transcend the ruins of representation?” Relatedly, how is signification possible, especially given a system of signification (language) that relies upon a process of differentiation that simultaneously allows and disallows meaning? How can the modern subject find expression within a system that insists upon fracture and division? How can language be used as a tool to overcome itself? Kristeva proposes that the breach of the symbolic system of signification is achieved by the semiotic, the modality of the pre-oedipal realm which both subverts and is contained within the order of the law. The semiotic is the body's imprint on language—it is the vocal and kinetic intonations and energies that trespass into speech. Music and verse are semiotic forms of expression, channeling pre-oedipal instincts that undermine the structured symbolic. In the next chapter, I will examine

the texts of *Ulysses* and Adrienne Rich's "Diving into the Wreck" and *The Dream of a Common Language* in order to explore the "ruins" of language and the possibilities of transcending the ruins through the word made flesh. These texts demonstrate that Joyce's motif of transubstantiation applies to poetic language, which transforms the flesh (pre-verbal instincts) into the word (language). Joyce and Rich's texts recall Kristeva's notion of the semiotic by exploring how coded discourse is adapted to sublimate the body.

CHAPTER III: LANGUAGE IN RUINS AND REVOLUTION OF/THROUGH LANGUAGE

Like modernity and ruins, language is marked by a paradox of creative destruction, by the simultaneous allowance and disallowance of meaning. Language enables meaning because it facilitates representation; objects are assigned meaning by words. Yet language also simultaneously denies objects meaning because words represent them. Words are not self-actualizing, they always defer to other words and, in doing so, never summon forth meaning. Thus, the words that denote objects never really attribute meaning to those objects but only name them. Language, a system of verbal signification, stabilizes and destabilizes itself (and, Kristeva adds, the subject within its realm) because it invokes a symbolic otherness. Benjamin and Derrida emphasize this contradictory dimension of language by which signification is made possible and impossible. Benjamin refutes the false relationship promised by the symbol. Symbols, like language, claim to consolidate signifiers and signifieds. Benjamin celebrates allegory precisely because allegory violently dismembers signifiers from signifieds. In allegory, “meaning falls away from things and words. Words become objects. Words and objects become refuse” (Guyer-Ryan 271). Allegorical meaning is appropriated meaning; thus, allegory exposes language for the arbitrary ruin that it is. Derrida also questions language's expressive capacity, observing that it is always haunted by loss, by absence of meaning. Problematically, language is expected to represent reality but, in fact, language most often only obscures and distorts.

According to Julia Hell, “Benjamin drew a parallel between the ruin in the realm of

things and allegory in the realm of thought, for both ruin and allegory speak of a disruption in the relationship between form and meaning. In a way, semiotics threatens to become a wasteland” (7). As the previous two chapters have emphasized, Derrida and Benjamin deploy the ruin to critique subjective modes of representation. Necessarily, then, Derrida’s and Benjamin’s analyses of ruins and modernity implicate language, as perhaps the most arbitrary system of signification. Importantly, ruins, modernity, and language are joined by their capacity and incapacity for representation; and ruins reinforce how modernity and language evoke a system of symbolic relations that ultimately undermines itself. I have explicated in the previous two chapters the paradox of the ruin, but it bears repeating that the ruin (whether Derrida’s narcissistic scene or Benjamin’s allegorical ruin) betrays fragmentation, exposing the break between the self and the other, the signifier and the signified; and it is this very fragmentation, break, or fissure that produces and precludes meaning. The process of violent division that Derrida and Benjamin describe in their respective discussions of alterity and allegory is epitomized by language. Language signifies via the word, but language simultaneously dismembers the word from the meaning it intends to infer, since the word is irreducible—under pressure of definition, the word invokes an endless chain of other words (signifiers), never actually settling the meaning.

Kristeva complicates Derrida’s and Benjamin’s reading of language in ruins by suggesting in *The Revolution of Poetic Language* that the fragmentation of language is, first and foremost, fragmentation of the maternal body: “[a] mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division in language—and it has always been so” (*Revolution*, trans. Moi 178). Language, or the law of the father, operates like an act of castration, separating the

signifier and the signified. As such, language always evokes the first act of castration, the infant's separation from the maternal continent. Thus, language is a traumatic (although necessary and unavoidable) act in the formation of subjectivity. As Kristeva writes, "this signifier/signified transformation, constitutive of language, is seen as being indebted to, induced and imposed by the social realm" (102). Importantly, language constitutes the order of society both because it is a cultural construction and because it invokes the process of symbolic differentiation that stabilizes (and destabilizes) the patriarchal order. However, instead of simply accepting this traditional function of language, Kristeva proposes a revolution of (and through) language. In *Revolution*, this is represented by the semiotic, a modality that transgresses the symbolic system of signification. Semiotic, poetic language articulates instinctual energies; it is language that bears the imprint of the body, being closer to the maternal. Because it verbalizes the nonverbal and names the unnamable, the semiotic disturbs the signified/signifier relationship that upholds the order of the symbolic.

Joyce's *Ulysses* and Rich's "Diving into the Wreck" and *The Dream of a Common Language* can be read through the work of Benjamin, Derrida, and Kristeva and their critique of the ruins of language. These literary texts acknowledge language's centrality in the realm of signification; but, concerned with the role of art and poetry, these texts also critique language's hostility to singularity and instinctual expression. Art and poetry sublimate emotive energies, giving expression to intuitions that language is incapable of expressing. Rich goes so far as to question verbal expression as an act of suicide, suggesting that writing the self erases it. Yet while Joyce and Rich expose the ruins of language, their texts also explore the possibility of transcending such ruins by subverting conventional syntactic forms. In particular, Joyce

experiments with language by inventing words, activating his prose with gesture (using italics to make verbs *act*) and toying with forms such as alliteration, punning, and onomatopoeia. Rich employs verse, as poetry is itself a breach of conventional syntax. Rich's poetry also trespasses the linguistic order by sublimating the inexpressible; her poems explore themes of pre-oedipal love for and unity with the maternal body. By violating traditional linguistic patterns, and, more particularly, by seeking to channel somatic energies, Joyce and Rich recall Kristeva's notion of the semiotic, the pre-verbal modality that both subverts and is contained within the order of language. The vocal and kinetic intonations that erupt into language betray the imprint of the body on the word, thereby consolidating the signifier and the signified. Importantly, as these texts suggest, it is only through such eruptions of the body that language can overcome itself, being able, as Kristeva writes, to name "the unnameable" (*Powers* trans. Smith 32) and allowing subjects to conquer language and reclaim it for experience.

Noise, Gesture, and Word: 'Weaving and Unweaving' Language in *Ulysses*

Joyce's narrative calls into question signification and the arbitrary "signs" of language. More specifically, Joyce questions language's capacity to fully represent the world. Anticipating Derrida, Joyce suggests that language obscures—rather than reveals—the phenomena that it names because words are self-referential rather than mimetic. Words are a culturally coded discourse rather than a transparent instrumental one, which is only legible to the trained reader. Joyce demonstrates language's cryptic nature by showing that words are often comprised of unfamiliar and unpronounceable arrangements of letters. For instance, the "dummymummy" in the "Circe" episode utters the sound "Bbbblllllbbblblodschbg" (*Ulysses* 475). Also, Bloom's cat murmurs, "[m]krgnao," although Bloom mimics the cat in response, "Miaow" (51). By

inventing words that are difficult, perhaps even impossible, to speak, Joyce suggests that verbal signification is not instinctual or natural, as we might suppose. As Derek Attridge observes, when “the normal phonological restrictions are breached, as in the climactic string of letters (‘Ppprrpffrrppff’), the resulting articulatory awkwardness helps draw attention to the sounds themselves, an effect which is equally dependent on the reader's prior familiarity with rules of graphology and phonology” (*Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference From the Renaissance to James Joyce* 138). Language is self-apparent, pointing to itself rather than outside of itself. Even onomatopoeic words that seem to mimic sounds depend upon the reader's familiarity with the units of the word (characters or letters) and the sounds to which these units refer. (I will discuss Joyce's complicated use of onomatopoeia more fully further below.) In *Ulysses*, Stephen is intuitively aware of the self-referential nature of language. As Murray McArthur observes, “[Stephen's] first duty as a writer is to explore the formal and material properties of the medium he must use, language. The fundamental unit of all forms of language, [. . .] is the sign, and, in ‘Proteus,’ Joyce executes through Stephen's interior monologue a rigorous anatomy of the properties and processes of the sign” (633). Stephen ponders that he must learn not to read things, but rather to read “the signatures of all things” (*Ulysses* 637). This scene recalls Benjamin's allegorical image, which “is only a signature, only the monogram of essence, not the essence itself in a mask” (*Origin* 214). Stephen senses that his perception of the world is obscured by language, a code of signs that inhibits him from seeing the world itself. He reflects: “Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes” (*Ulysses* 37). Stephen's observation that he thinks “through [his] eyes” suggests that signification is predicated on the visual, a claim that Derrida articulates as well, arguing that both speech and

writing depend upon the “gramm,” the visible trace or mark of inscription (*Of Grammatology* 9). According to Sheldon Brivic, Joyce's narrative anticipates Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between signifiers and signifieds and further, Lacan's and Derrida's claim that we do not have access directly to signifieds, but only to signifiers. According to Brivic, “[w]hat the protagonists of James Joyce's *Ulysses* perceive, in fiction as in fact, is a field not of things, but of words. Stephen Dedalus and Leopold and Molly Bloom are each focused on a tissue of signs, indirect linguistic indicators that suggest possible concealed realities” (737). Brivic adds that a veil of signs persists throughout the text and that this motif anticipates Derrida's analysis in *Dissemination* of the veil enacted by reading: “[t]he object of desire can no more be made visible than can reality behind the word-things that signify it” (737). Words, according to Derrida, obstruct the very things that writing seeks to convey. This happens because words are both synchronic and diachronic—they are referential in their immediate context but the context for words is always changing as they are read anew. Joyce demonstrates this point through his persistent use of puns. Take for, instance, the early scene in which Stephen and Mr. Deasy argue over history. Mr. Deasy claims that history is teleological, that “[a]ll history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God” (*Ulysses* 35). Backgrounded in this scene are boys playing field hockey on the schoolyard. Just as he listens to Mr. Deasy lecture on the “one great goal” that is God, Stephen hears a cheer resound from the schoolyard: “Horray! Ay! Whrrwhee” (3), which suggests that a goal has just been scored. In Stephen's mind, the goal about which Mr. Deasy speaks becomes confused with another kind of goal. Here, Joyce uses pun to hijack Mr. Deasy's argument and derail it, proving that reality, and, more importantly, language, are not one-tracked, but always spiraling out—like Benjamin's allegory—into new layers of meaning.

Although Joyce questions language's capacity to concretely represent the realm of objects or ideas, he also suggests that language can be appropriated to express the nonverbal; Joyce affirms that words can serve somatic impulses. He thus conceives of a language that transcends language, a language that is not simply referential but actually expressive. In *Ulysses*, Joyce experiments with the aural device of onomatopoeia as an attempt to overcome the referential nature of language by rendering language more imitative of the realm of sounds and senses. Joyce attempts to recreate in language the utterances of humans, animals, and objects. In addition to the cat that cries, “mrkrgrnao” (*Ulysses* 51), there is one that cries “Gurrhr” (51). There is also a hen that produces the sound, “Ga Ga Gara. Klook Klook Klook” (303) and a horse that emits the sound “Hohohohohohoh! Hohohohome” (508). Joyce also utilizes onomatopoeia to relate the sound of objects, such as newspaper presses (“Sllt” (114), trams (“Fff! Oo! Rrrpr. Kraa. Kraandl,” 280), pianos (“baraabum,” 491), bells (“barang,” 492), and buttons (“bip,” 476). Human bodily functions are also expressed in onomatopoeic form. Bloom hears Molly urinate in a chamber pot: “Diddleiddle addleaddle ooddleooddle” (271). There is also the “wavespeech” of Bloom emitting gas, “seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, ooo” (49), and the sound of Stephen's breath, “ooeeehah” (47).

In one scene, Stephen listens to a creaking door “asking to be shut” and muses that “[e]verything speaks in its own way” (*Ulysses* 114). By employing the linguistic device of onomatopoeia, Joyce seeks to represent the speech of things and recreate sounds. At the same time, Joyce is aware that onomatopoeia is far from pure self-expression. According to Attridge, Joyce flaunts the notion that “[t]here are conventions attached to the notion of onomatopoeia” as well (*Joyce's Noises* 474). Attridge explains that, “[a]lthough we tend to think in terms of sound

imitating sound, nonlexical onomatopoeia often has a visual component as well” (474). In order to appreciate onomatopoeia, the reader must know the sound it seeks to recreate. As Attridge argues, Joyce cleverly exploits this detail by beginning an episode with the sound of the tram, “frseeeeeeeffronnnng” (*Ulysses* 633) while withholding any clues or indications that would lead the reader to appropriate the sound: “Joyce does not leave us mystified for long, however: the verbalized thoughts that follow this strange irruption explain what it is doing here: ‘train somewhere whistling the strength those engines have in them like big giants’” (*Joyce's Noises* 474). In this scene, Joyce emphasizes that all verbal expression is context-specific. Even linguistic forms like onomatopoeia that seek to mimic the world of sound rely on the reader's familiarity with the sound or with the details of the context in which such sounds occur. Without such familiarity, the sounds invoked by associations of letters are meaningless. Thus, while Joyce experiments with language in order to render it more expressive, he simultaneously owns language's indeterminacy.

Still, Joyce uses onomatopoeia—among other forms—also to revolutionize language. This aspect is not acknowledged by all critics. Henry Staten, for example, undercuts onomatopoeia's transformative potential by pointing out that onomatopoeia is doomed to fail as a mode of representation since it is contained within the very system of signification that it seeks to subvert. As Staten explains, “Ideally, onomatopoeia should be the unmediated presentation of the form of the represented, but such a presentation would transcend the medium of language, without which onomatopoeia is impossible” (381). Staten goes on to argue that onomatopoeia epitomizes the ruin of mimetic form. Representation is impossible, because, like the ruin, imitation invokes an absent whole. In other words, imitation seeks to make present what is

absent but what must remain absent if representation is to replace it. The desire for mimetic expression, the “onomatopoeic fantasy,” as Staten calls it, betrays a nostalgia for presence that can never be restored. The tram that opens the Sirens episode cannot be invoked by the verbalization of its sound, “frseeeeeeeffronnng” (*Ulysses* 633). In fact, the act of mediating the tram (through language), dislocates it forever. Just as Derrida's draftsman “kills” himself by attempting to re-present himself in the present, the tram becomes nothing but a signature of its absence. Joyce deconstructs signs—language, more precisely—in order to show that “imitative form becomes indiscernible from deconstruction” (Staten 382). Like the ruin, language simultaneously promises and withholds meaning.

Perhaps, the image of Penelope's “weaving [and] unweaving” (*Ulysses* 491) reinforces the futility of representation, as composition and decomposition are simultaneous acts. Joyce anticipates Benjamin and Derrida by suggesting that signification ruins. Language obscures meaning, since words are self-referential. Joyce tries to imitate the world of sounds, but, problematically, in order to recreate textually the world of sounds, he resorts to letters and linguistic signs. After all, what is not recognizable is not meaningful. At times, Joyce even privileges written signs. Throughout *Ulysses*, Joyce uses homonyms to upset, as Derrida did, the binary of speech and writing. By noting that the French words *différence* (difference) and *différance* (differing) are only distinguishable in writing, being pronounced the same way, Derrida challenges the traditional, Platonic emphasis on speech over writing, which supposes that the former is closer to truth because it implies presence. All language, insists Derrida, signifies absence through deferral; and speech is no more accurate than writing; in fact, speech is less accurate and more erratic, in Derrida's description). Joyce anticipates Derrida when he

employs homonyms to emphasize the semantic ambiguity that speech engenders. To name a few instances, he writes of a “rose [that] rose slowly sank red rose” (*Ulysses* 275), “Ah, lure” is followed by “Alluring.” (243), and, in one episode, the words “blue,” “blew,” and “bloo” are intermixed. Yet in spite of these instances in which Joyce affirms the written word, the narrative, as a whole, undermines language as a reliable system of signification. Joyce attempts to adapt language to render it more imitative of the physical world, but he simultaneously flaunts the impossibility of signification. Because mimesis is impossible and a ruin, words fail to represent.

There are critics, however, who argue that words do not fail to *act* in Joyce's narrative. David Hayman contends that Joyce regards language as kinetic and that the writer explores “how gesture can be translated into words and how words approximate gesture” (213). More specifically, Hayman examines how Joyce uses italics to *gesture* with words. Joyce suggests that words *act* by “reinforc[ing] his descriptive prose with effects perceived subliminally by the reader” (218). By assigning agency to language, Joyce recalls J. L. Austin's concept of the performative utterance, which proposes that speech is active rather than passive. According to Austin, words do not passively express reality, but in fact, create and influence the world they are perceived to represent (*How to Do Things with Words*). Joyce's concept of activity as a dimension of language is articulated by Stephen, who ponders that gesture is a “universal language, rendering visible not the lay sense but the first entelechy, the structural rhythm” (*Ulysses* 403). Stephen's musing here is significant because it suggests that words are arbitrary and contextual—universal language derives not from coded discourse but from the body. Thus, while language might fail to express or mirror the world of things and ideas, it can be appropriated to enact somatic impulses. By animating language with gesture, Joyce reinforces

how discourse sublimates the body.

The notion that language sublimates processes of the body recalls Kristeva's concept of the semiotic. According to Kristeva, the semiotic expresses pre-oedipal (pre-verbal) impulses. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva writes that such “[s]ublimation is nothing else than the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal, which are in fact only a trans-nominal, a trans-objectal” (11). Paradoxically, then, the semiotic expresses what is inexpressible. The body leaves its imprint on language (the symbolic vehicle) through poetic language, which breaches grammar and syntax through word play, free associations, and experimentation with punctuation. The multivalency of signifiers in poetic language significantly threatens formal language. As Kristeva explains, “[i]t is poetic language that awakens our attention to this undecidable character of any so-called natural language, a feature that univocal, rational, scientific discourse tends to hide” (*Desire in Language* 135). Poetic language seeks to recover the sounds, rhythms, and images (remnants of the infant's experience in the maternal order). The characters of *Ulysses* play with words and sounds throughout the narrative, and passages such as the following epitomize Kristeva's notion that language can be appropriated to pre-oedipal expression:

His lips lipped and mouthed fleshless lips of air: mouth to her moomb. Oomb, allwombing tomb. His mouth moulded issuing breath, unspeached: ooeehah: roar of cataractic planets, globed, blazing, roaring wayawayawayawayaway. (*Ulysses* 47)

Because Joyce's text inscripts the female body, a number of French poststructuralist/feminist critics (including Kristeva) have considered Joyce as a possible model for what they call “écriture féminine” or women's fluid writing. In this passage, Stephen shares part of a poem that he has been composing in his head. The poem's onomatopoeia, alliteration, and experimentation with punctuation violate the formal, coded discourse of the paternal symbolic. Stephen's poem

breaches conventional syntax and disorients the system of signification, but it *activates* language by retrieving images of his mother (“allwombingtomb”) and the unity he once enjoyed with her body (“mouth to her moomb”). Importantly, Joyce here associates semantic ambiguity with the pre-objectal realm of the maternal. Through poetic language, Stephen accesses (if only for an instant) the mother. In a similar scene, he reflects on “*Amor matris*” (motherly love) and once again, semiotic jouissance erupts into his thought:

Amor matris, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction. Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son? (195-6)

Here, Stephen reminisces about the wholeness of the maternal realm, and the “only true thing in life,” motherly love. However, because recovering the mother—even in brief moments of jouissance—is a dangerous act, Stephen must reject her. Mark Morrisson argues that Stephen annihilates the mother by reverting to “formal intellectual language [which] serves as a defensive check on his thoughts as they lead toward the painful subject of his mother” (170). Stephen catches himself thinking of “*amor matris*,” *acting out* his reunion with the mother, and immediately tries to return his thoughts to the rational:

What the hell are you driving at?
I know. Shut up. Blast you. I have reasons. (196)

Morrisson points to another instance in which Stephen quickly checks his thoughts after they wander towards semiotic, poetic language. Stephen toys with the sounds of words:

Leftherhis
Secondbest
Leftherhis
Bestabed
Secabest
Leftabed. (*Ulysses* 192)

“He then draws himself short with a ‘Woa!’ and re-engages in John Eglinton's conversation about country-folk and peasant plays. The maternal semiotic creeping into his thought must be defended against, in order for Stephen's mind to avoid returning to the image of his mother that appears so frequently” (Morrisson 350). In the work of French feminists (Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous), the maternal semiotic is closely connected with linguistic experimentation (nonsense words, invented language).²¹ Thus, when Stephen plays with words (as he does in this passage), he betrays semiotic impulses that he immediately tries to overcome by returning to formal discourse. There is also the beach scene in “Proteus”—Stephen muses, “[b]elly without blemish, bulging big, a buckler of taut vellum” (*Ulysses* 32). But no sooner do these alliterative thoughts pass in his head than he deploys “the symbolic discourse of theology to deny his mother” (Morrisson 350), declaring that he was made not begotten. Moments of fusional bliss with the mother enact her symbolic return. Thus, language can be activated by the semiotic. However, Stephen must silence the mother (both his real and symbolic one) in order to ensure his own subjectivity. He must “mute [her] secret words” (*Ulysses* 10) if he is to assume his own place within the paternal order of language. As Marylu Hill observes, “[w]hat is particularly threatening to Stephen is his mother's ability to speak for herself, especially since language is his domain both as a writer and as a male” (4). Yet his singularity—especially as an artist—depends upon his ability to express the unconscious and all of its desires, the primary among them being fusion with the maternal body. Problematically, Stephen must repress and

²¹ “Écriture féminine” or “women's writing” is the inscription of the female body in language. Cixous first coined the term in her essay “The Laugh of Medusa,” in which she argues that language is a masculine domain that has exiled woman and her experience and that woman must assert herself and her experience by hijacking “phallogocentric” writing and appropriating it to express in words what is unthinkable. Kristeva and Irigaray are among other feminist literary theorists associated with *Écriture féminine*. See also Ettinger and Showalter.

sublimate the mother. His identity as an artist depends upon his negotiation of the pre-oedipal (pre-verbal) and the oedipal (verbal) realms. After all, while art subverts the formal discourse of the paternal symbolic, art can only sublimate what the paternal symbolic represses by working within its realm. Art is “the flow of jouissance into language” (*Revolution*, trans. Smith, 79), according to Kristeva, who insists that imaginative activity has a place in the symbolic:

Thus placed as a dialectical area between the symbolic system and the work of instinctual heterogeneity whose action puts this constantly under threat, art takes the place of the socio-symbolic law, at the same time that it exposes the possibility of its transgression: it articulates the instinctual economy of subjects while submitting them to a socially admissible code. (*Revolution* 17)

Art betrays the fragility of the law of the father by hijacking language with the body, by articulating somatic urges. According to critic Sarah Joseph, “[Stephen] is frustrated at not being able to give written expression to his artistic talents” (584). But more precisely, Stephen fails as an artist because he fails to appropriate language to express the impulses of the body. He is smothered by institutionalized discourse (of History, of the Church), but rather than sublimate instinctual drives, he represses the mother's semiotic eruption into his thoughts. Consequently, he is perpetually tormented by the image of his dying mother with “the faint odour of wetted ashes” (*Ulysses* 6) on her breath. Stephen is haunted by death and meaninglessness. He has killed the mother (his mirror and his object), but without the mother he cannot achieve any kind of meaningful expression. Unlike Joyce, Stephen fails to acknowledge language's capacity to enact trans-symbolic jouissance. Language—representation, in fact—is hostile to the semiotic, but representation, even of the semiotic, is necessary. Anxious to achieve artistic expression, Stephen must deploy language to sublimate his creative unconscious. After all, as Smith emphasizes, artistic expression defers to language and cannot be realized outside the very realm

that seeks to smother it:

It is clear that outside language or representation the semiotic is unavailable for comment and that non-verbal signifying systems such as music and painting, which might be thought of as exclusively semiotic, also have recourse to the symbolic coded structures in so far as they inscribe themselves in a cultural framework and we have to use language to talk about them. (19)

The sublimation of the semiotic necessarily implicates the symbolic, but reversely, the symbolic depends, for its vitality, upon the semiotic energies that undermine it. According to Smith, “language owes its vitality and capacity for renewal to [the] infiltration of subversive forces” (14). In order to thrive as a system of signification, language must sublimate even the ambiguous, instinctual energies that destabilize the relationship of the signifier and signified. Without the body to animate the word, language is dead. Joyce understands the agency of language—he reinforces this by *activating* his verbs—but also the fact that language must be animated by the impulses of the body. After all, it is the living, breathing subject that articulates the word. *Ulysses* underscores this paradox of language—that its intelligibility and organicity depend upon the body, the force of its creation and its ruin. The body animates language, but the body also betrays the failures of language by sublimating the energies that are anterior to verbal signification.

“Diving into the Wreck” of Language and Patriarchal Signification

Joyce’s *Ulysses* engages the ruins of language by emphasizing language’s hostility to singularity and somatic expression; the novel explores the ways in which language can be re-appropriated to express experience and reality. Adrienne Rich’s poetry—in particular, “Diving into the Wreck” (1973) and *The Dream of a Common Language* (1978)—is also concerned with

language's failure to represent experience and with the possibility of reclaiming language for experience. Rich echoes Joyce's (and Derrida's) critique of signification and the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified, but she primarily challenges language because it belongs to a male tradition and because, she insists, signification itself is inherently phallogocentric.

Recalling Eliot's wasteland, "Diving into the Wreck" explores the ruin that is modern experience. However, in Rich's poem, it is man (rather than war or modernity) that has caused the wreckage. Men have buried the truth about men and women, creating myths about men and women. The speaker of the poem must descend to the ruin and sort through the rubble and remains in order to decipher what is real—"the thing I came for:/the wreck and not the story of the wreck/the thing itself and not the myth" (lines 61-3). The speaker has knowledge of the myth ("having read the book of myths" (line 1) but wants to experience for herself rather than be told what it means to be female. The diver's task—to recover the truth "and not the story" (line 62)—is shared by the female poet, who is desperate to find the truth about female experience, which has long been silenced by the patriarchal tradition and its mode of representation. Luce Irigaray argues in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977) that "the feminine occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects" (86). For centuries, men have created and sustained myths about women, and they are able to do so through language. In Rich's poem "Cartographies of Silence," the speaker maintains that "[a] conversation begins/with a lie. And each/speaker of the so-called common language feels/the ice-floe split, the drift apart" (lines 1-4). Language is a mode of representation that relies on a false relationship between the signifier and the signified, between an authorized, signifying subject and an unauthorized, signified

object. According to Rich, woman's insignificance is determined by her lack of a signifying phallus. Rich describes woman's estrangement from culture and from the act of assigning meaning as "[t]he loneliness of the liar/living in the formal network of the lie" ("Cartographies," lines 21-2). Women live in a world in which only men enjoy the power to name—in "the book of myths," women's "names do not appear" ("Diving," lines 92, 94). Language tyrannizes women since words have been assigned their meaning by men and since the act of naming is itself a masculine prerogative. Derrida declares language a ruin because it endlessly defers; words defer to "other" words and these other words in turn defer to yet "other" words, and so on. Likewise, men establish themselves and their centrality by controlling the definition of a marginalized "other" (woman). But problematically, "[o]therness always remains and, to preserve intelligibility and meaning, must remain part of, enclosed within, conventional, 'educated' discourse. The discourse of the 'other' is never truly other" (Christine Van Boheemen 177). Or, as Michael Stanier puts it, "any portrayal as Other paradoxically excludes it from being Other" (320) since, after all, this "otherness" is established relationally. Thus, men, like Derrida's blind draftsman, are destabilized by the very existence of this "other" that they have estranged in order, ironically, to secure themselves and their centrality. Patriarchy, sustained by alterity, is symbolically a ruin. Yet, the myth of patriarchy, the "network of the lie" ("Cartographies," line 22) persists because women have not, like the speaker in "Diving," explored the wreck and reclaimed history (and language) for themselves.

Rich's diver illustrates the dilemma of language. Language estranges women, but, by rejecting language, females risk further marginalization. The diving speaker comes to explore the ruin, and she is "having to do this/not like Cousteau with his / assiduous team / aboard the

sun-flooded schooner / but here alone” (“Diving,” lines 8-12). She is an outcast from society because she has rejected culture’s “myth” about women and resolved to see the wreck for herself, to learn for herself what it means to be female. At the same time, she approaches the wreck wearing body armor and a mask. She cannot, despite her efforts, embrace an identity independent of the world that she seeks to escape. This is because of language enables her to make sense of wreck—“The words are maps” (line 54)—but also denies her singularity. Language—signification more broadly—enables the formation of identity, of a self (subject) that is distinguished from other selves. Further, language has been the only tool available to the female poet to articulate her identity. But language divides, separating words from things, signifiers from signifieds, men from women. Importantly, “Diving” begins and ends with the speaker equipped with a knife. She comes and leaves equipped with language, with the pain of division that language enacts. The image of cutting reinforces themes of division and fragmentation that recur throughout the poems of *The Dream of a Common Language* as well. In “Splittings,” for instance, the speaker begins, “My body opens” (line 1) and later states, “*I am the pain of division creator of divisions*” (line 17). This poem invokes the mother, who is the creator of the first division and who forever feels the pain of that division, which is the infant’s exile from the womb. Kristeva writes that “[i]t is not a question of giving birth in pain but of giving birth to pain, the child represents that pain which will hitherto occupy a permanent place” (*Stabat Mater*, trans. Smith, 31). The pain of division, felt by the mother and the infant, is the sense of divide between the signifier and the signified. Rich is a “woman who, born between her mother’s legs, has time after time and in different ways tried to return to her mother, to repossess her and be repossessed by her” (*Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*,

178). By reimagining a reunion with the mother's body, Rich reimagines pre-oedipal wholeness, the kind of wholeness desired by Derrida's draftsman and Kristeva's subject, in which signifiers are not separated from signifieds. Her desire "to repossess [the mother] and be repossessed by her" (*Of Woman*, 178) articulates the fantasy of a new language and a new reality not predicated on division. The speaker of another poem in *The Dream of a Common Language* reflects, "Conceived/of each other, conceived each other" ("Origin and History of Consciousness," lines 63-4), again expressing the wish to collapse the boundary between the mother and the infant, between the subject and the object, between the signifier and the signified.²²

Rich experiments with language in order to repair the division caused by patriarchal signification. By breaching conventional forms of syntax, constructing metaphors, articulating silence, and through other poetic methods, Rich calls into question patriarchal tradition. After all, men and language are linked by their insistence upon a signifier and a signified "other." According to Kristeva, "linguistic transgression demonstrates [. . .] that a revolution in poetic language points necessarily to a revolution in subjectivity" (Smith 19). Rich echoes Kristeva's demand for a poetic language that would subvert the hegemonic reality that language facilitates:

Poetry is, among other things, a criticism of language. In setting words together in new configurations, in the mere, immense shift from male to female pronouns, in the relationship between words created through echo, repetition, rhythm, it lets us hear and see our words in a new dimension. [. . .] Poetry is above all a concentration of the power of language, which is the power to our ultimate relation to everything in the universe. ("Power and Danger: Words of a Common Woman," 248)

This passage underscores that "[m]etaphor, poetry, and language create reality," according to Rich; and so, "poetry and metaphor are not merely playing with words but are vital to feminist

²² Themes of painful fragmentation, psychic and physical, persist throughout Rich's poetry. See Keyes, Rizza, and Showik.

existence [. . .] poetry, metaphor, and language must be used for survival, must be put to work as catalysts for action and change” (Janusz 296-7). Like Joyce, Rich acknowledges the agency of language and the possibility of transcending the ruins of language. This is evidenced by the speaker in “Diving,” who relies on language to make sense of the wreck: “The words are purposes/The words are maps” (“Diving,” lines 53-4). However, whereas Joyce adapts language to render it more expressive of the physical world, Rich adapts language to subvert the patriarchal tradition and to reclaim history for woman, who has long been left out of it. Incidentally, however, Rich’s method is similar to Joyce’s, since her poetry breaches conventional discourse in an effort to sublimate the body. Both Joyce and Rich attempt to reclaim language for experience, violating rules of syntax and form to expose language’s hostility to singularity and thus, its failure as a mode of expression. Stephen Dedalus and Rich’s female speaker are both subjects in revolt against traditional signifiers. The artist and the woman rebel against a fixed identity enforced by a patriarchal culture. Common language is, according to Joyce and Rich, an imperial structure that must be subverted. Yet, expression presupposes, for its intelligibility, familiarity with the very medium that the artist and woman must reject. Willard Spiegelman writes that Rich’s poetry is “concerned with the power of language to hide and distort. One’s whole life-as-translation necessitates an attempt, however arduous, to speak in the original tongue and to authenticate the true self. But how can the poet do this when language itself works against her?—her tools are the wrong ones” (374). Throughout her poetry, Rich emphasizes the failure of language. “Words/get thick with unmeaning” (“When We Dead Awaken,” lines 46-7) precisely because they fail to articulate woman’s experience. Further,

language is “mined with risks” for women (“Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson,” 166) because by using it they reinforce “the network of the lie” (“Cartographies,” line 22), the very system of signification that has so long oppressed them and that they must undermine. Yet, at the same time, Rich owns that language is the primary resource for expression that women have had available to them.²³

Rich knows that female subjectivity must develop from the negotiation between the conflicting discourses of nature (the body) and the social order (language). It is no coincidence that the speaker in “Diving” must probe into the elements for meaning, since nature is on woman’s side in her quest: “[T]he sea is not a question of power” (“Diving,” line 40). Yet Rich’s diving speaker descends with the primarily masculine “equipment” (line) of words. The female poet’s quandary is her need to reject and to work within the cultural system of signification. She must subvert language while also using it as a tool. This is also the essential task of Kristeva’s subject in *The Revolution of Poetic Language*, who must negotiate between the pre- and post-oedipal realms via the semiotic, the *chora*’s eruption into language. The parallels between Kristeva’s discussion of poetic language and Rich’s vision of poetry are striking. Both Kristeva and Rich reinforce that the subject/poet must reconcile the desire for corporate identity and the urge to express individuality. Kristeva writes that “[t]he subject's quest for identity [. . .], propelled by the desire to situate subjectivity, brings into play a never-ending struggle between the social—the arena in which one can speak and be heard-- and the need to speak one's singularity” (*Revolution* 24). Likewise, Rich acknowledges that participation in the social order

²³ Likewise, Cixous writes: “[W]e are born into language, and I cannot do otherwise than to find myself before words; we cannot get rid of them, they are there. We could change them, we could put signs in their place, but they would become just as closed, just as immobile and petrifying [. . .] would lay down the law to us. So there is nothing to be done, except to shake them. . . all the time” (*Extreme Fidelity* 15).

through language simultaneously imperils and sustains the self: “What kind of beast would turn its life into words? [. . .]—and yet, writing words like these, I’m also living.” (“Twenty-One Love Poems,” VII, lines 1-3). Kristeva and Rich also share a vision of a kind of linguistic utopia that renews not only language but also—and more importantly—subjectivity itself. In her 1972 essay, “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision,” Rich advances the possibility of transforming language and reclaiming it for women:

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name—and therefore live—afresh. (35)

Importantly, it is not simply *expression* of the self that is at stake in act of naming, it is the very self. Language “traps” women because men have hoarded the act of signification, and thus, defined women and circumscribed the female experience. However, by claiming “the very act of naming,” women can begin to live; they can imagine themselves afresh. Still, where and how does the woman begin “to see and name” (“When We Dead,” 35) when the process of signification is itself a patriarchal act? “Women are,” suggests Joanne Feit Diehl, “latecomers to a patriarchal world of images” (405); hence, “[i]n a culture where words are formed and assigned their dominant associations by men, women, in order to speak at all, must either subvert their own speech by using the patriarchal tongue or else seek for themselves experiences available only to women” (406). Rich authorizes women to speak by privileging the traditions and

experiences to which only women have knowledge and access—“what it means to be a daughter, the emotions of a lesbian relationship, the process of childbirth—experiences that [. . .] serve to free woman poets through their choice of subject from the history of patriarchal associations” (406). Rich purposefully insists upon the authority of female experience because only it will transform and expand subjectivity.

In a poem in *The Dream of a Common Language*, Rich articulates the power of female experience: “[T]wo women, eye to eye/ measuring each other’s spirit, each other’s/limitless desire,/a whole new poetry begins here./vision begins to happen in such a life” (“Transcendental Etude,” lines 145-9). In the same poem, Rich’s speaker reflects on “the truths [we] are salvaging from/the splitting-open of our lives” (lines 85-6). Men have permanently divided women—from their mothers, from their bodies, from themselves. Yet, by avowing the primacy of the female body and female experience, women can redeem themselves from the wreck of patriarchy. Recalling Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic, Rich tries to overcome language by restoring the maternal *through language*. Her poetry sublimates the body by trying to recapture images of the mother. In “Diving,” for instance, the speaker invokes the maternal realm through the motifs of submersion and immersion. The speaker descends a ladder to access an underwater, wordless realm: “I go down./Rung after rung and still/the oxygen immerses me” (lines 22-4). The wreck below the surface connotes the womb, where “you breathe differently down here” (line 51). Underwater, the diver accesses the pre-verbal realm in which she once enjoyed totality. The maternal continent pre-exists signification; hence, it is without division and boundaries. “[T]here is no one/to tell me when the ocean/will begin” (lines 30-2). The boundary between genders also collapses. The speaker becomes a “mermaid” (line 72) and a “merman” (line 73), declaring “I

am she: I am he” (line 77) and “We are, I am, you are” (line 87). Importantly, here, the poem analogizes gender division and verbal signification. Language, after all, facilitates and reinforces the segregation of men and women. Gendered pronouns reflect the dichotomy of the sexes, and words insist upon the differentiation between signifiers (men) and signifieds (women). So, by breaching verbal boundaries, the poem violates the cultural binary dividing the sexes. In the words of Spiegelman, Rich’s androgynous speaker “construct[s] a new idiom that breaks the bonds of gender and consequently the bondage of sexual exploitation” (383). By transgressing conventional syntax, females can access a place that has until now excluded them, a place where they, too, can see and name. Yet, they do not access this territory as females, but as humans. Only when the speaker assumes an androgynous body can he/she resurface and be redeemed. The poem’s conflation of gendered pronouns suggests that the speaker glimpses the truth about what it means to be male, what it means to be female, and most importantly, what it means to be human (“we”). By inhabiting each other’s realms first through language, men and women can transcend the ruins of gender and culture.

“Diving” traces the movement from singularity (“I”) to plurality (“we”), suggesting that human identity is collective and that self-definition is achieved by breaking down personal and cultural barriers and participating in the lives of others. According to Sabine Sielke, Rich’s poems “authorize new frontiers and attempt to map a location not yet marked by language” (151). However, it seems that more precisely her poems “authorize new frontiers” by “attempt[ing] to map a location not yet marked by language.” Diehl notes that “Rich uses physical space and the absence of punctuation [. . .] to loosen the deliberate syntactic connections between words and thus introduce ambiguities that disrupt normative forms.” (405) Here, Diehl

cites just one of Rich's many methods for reinforcing formally the theme of transgression. Rich violates grammatical conventions to violate social and symbolic conventions, more broadly. Another method by means of which Rich subverts the cultural order through language is her enactment of silence. In "Diving," the speaker (at this point in the poem a communal "we") "circle[s] silently/about the wreck" (lines 74-5), and "Cartographies of Silence" explores the function of silence as a communicative force. Knowing that the female poet risks echoing patriarchal discourse if she uses words, she often refuses to speak. However, silence is by no means a sign of surrender. Rich cautions us regarding silence: "Do not confuse it/with any kind of absence" (lines 36-7). Silence resists the singularity that words seek to attach to things; it signifies, but only its lack of a well-defined and single meaning. Silence refuses to participate in the false relation of words and objects. Instead, the unspoken reserves infinite possibilities of meaning. Another formal method that Rich employs to destabilize patriarchal discourse and to deny the singularity imposed by signification is metaphor. "Diving" can be read as a metaphor for lesbian sexual activity ("I go down" (line 22), "I stroke the beam of my lamp/slowly along the flank" (line 58) or as a metaphor for fusion with the maternal body. Both of these readings are plausible, given Rich's tendency to invoke images that escape patriarchal knowledge. Notably, metaphor functions thematically and formally to overturn male-dominated constructions. Metaphor in Rich's poetry invokes themes of female-only experience (but also androgynous experiences) that, therefore, undermine masculine attempts at signification. Metaphor also functions as a formal technique to "loosen the 'mind forg'd manacles' of phallogocentric reality" (Janusz 294-5) by obliterating the literal or symbolic relationship between words and ideas. Figurative language renders meaning abstract, and, according to Paul Ricoeur,

“through her use of metaphor Rich contributes to the opening up and discovery of a field of reality other than that which ordinary language lays bare” (148).

Implementing techniques involving syntactic breach, silence, and metaphor, Rich’s poetry enacts the revolution that Kristeva anticipates from poetic language. Rich’s poetry undermines symbolic relations by opening up language, and thus, the body and the self, to plurality and to productive meaning. Recalling Benjamin’s notion of allegory and its excess of signification, Rich promotes ambiguity as a source of truth. According to Benjamin, allegory redeems the object from historical oblivion by perpetually de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing it, by spinning ever outward into new layers of meaning. Echoing Benjamin, Rich celebrates ambiguity and rejects notions of singularity. Passages of multi-voicedness (“I am she: I am he--line 77; “We are, I am, you are”--line 87) emphasize that we are composite bodies and composite selves and that poetry’s transformative potential lies in its capacity to dismantle myths about gendered one-ness of self.

Rich has stated that she is “an instrument in the shape/ of a woman trying to translate pulsations/ into images for the relief of the body/ and the reconstruction of the mind” (lines 41-44). She, like Joyce, writes from the body in order to reassert the body as primary and, thus, to redeem the body (and the self) from the violence of signification. The speaker in “Diving” digs deep into the sea to find “the thing [. . .] and not the story” (lines 61-2). By attempting to recover “things” (more precisely, the mother’s body, which pre-exists signification) and not myths, Rich’s poetry and Joyce’s *Ulysses* reinforce Benjamin’s assertion that only by restoring the material can we begin to reanimate the ruin, and thus, meaning and truth. Benjamin and Derrida explore the notion that language—signification—ruins. Derrida’s draftsman ruins (kills)

himself by trying to access his own subjection, and Benjamin's allegory "ruins" by exposing the break between the object and the totality inferred by allegory. For Derrida and Benjamin, ruins represent, paradoxically, the impossibility of representation by emphasizing the break between signifiers and signifieds. Kristeva expands upon Derrida's and Benjamin's critique of the ruin of representation by emphasizing that division from the maternal body accounts for the permanent division of language and of the self that depends upon language (signification) in the formation of the ego. The subject mourns the loss of the mother in all acts of signification, since the division between signifiers and signifieds connotes separation from the maternal, the pre-verbal continent where the subject once enjoyed blissful undividedness. Like Joyce's protagonist who mourns his dead mother, Rich's speaker cries out for the woman that haunts her dreams, to be reunited with her and "to rock within her" ("Transcendental Etude," line 130). Rich's speaker also recalls Irigaray's subject, who grieves the loss of the mother that has initiated signification and, in the same act, her own death: "When the one of us comes into the world, the other goes underground. When the one carries life, the other dies. And what I wanted from you, Mother, was this: that in giving me life, you still remain alive" ("And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other," trans. Helene Vivienne Wenzel, 67). Yet sublimation of the mother is possible through the semiotic *chora*'s eruption into speech. It is this sublimation of the flesh through language that Rich's and Joyce's texts try to enact. Truth and meaning do not reside in words or the objects that they denote but in the somatic impulses that leave an imprint on language. By recovering the body and restoring its primacy, language can be transformed.

Yet, language, in its current state, is a ruin that promises—only to ultimately withhold—meaning. Ruins enable and disable meaning by virtue of the illusory totality that they invoke.

Language, likewise, allows and disallows meaning by virtue of a false relationship between words and things. Words, like ruins, are arbitrary and relational, having always to defer (to other words), never summoning forth meaning of their own. To expose the arbitrariness of words is to expose the break between signifiers and signifieds and, thus, to imperil meaning. It is also, as Rich emphasizes, to imperil patriarchal order itself, which insists upon signification and the necessary subjugation of (female) objects.

CHAPTER IV: RECYCLE AND REBIRTH FROM THE RUINS OF DISCOURSE

The fantasy of wholeness and the mourning of lost totality mark the poetics of the ruin. This is evidenced by early literary representations of the ruin, particularly the Gothic ruin, upon which were cast cultural anxieties of a sublime, dark, unknowable “other” that threatens the integrity of the authorized subject. For the Romantics, as well, the ruin was the site of mimetic melancholy. The Romantics beheld nature’s destruction and, although in awe, lamented the transience of cultural empire and the impermanence of their own body. Many twentieth century literary texts built upon Gothic and Romantic notions of the ruin’s mimetic capacity. In *The Waste Land*, *Under the Volcano*, *Fugitive Pieces*, and *The Stone of Laughter*, ruins mirror modern man, reflecting his fragmentation; but ruins also (simultaneously) fragment man by reflecting him. Eliot’s wanderer, for instance, sifts through the cultural debris, and he is ruined by what he sees. Confronting the wasteland, the speaker is paralyzed by the forces of history apparent in the ruin. Modernity is often connected with ruined fragments, and so it is no surprise that recent texts concerned with ruins and modernity (such as *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *Midnight’s Children*) literalize this notion through the motif of dismemberment. Fragmented bodies reinforce the loss of integrity that marks experience in the symbolic order, the realm of signification. Having been expelled from our mothers, we are all fractured beings. The mother will from the moment of birth on serve only as the signified object, the object of our longing and desire, reminding us of the division between ourselves and her continent. Connoting Kristeva’s abject corpse and Derrida’s blind (dismembered) draftsman, the theme of dismemberment that

persists in these texts betrays the violence and division that characterizes all acts of signification. Even allegory moves towards the fragment, tearing apart the object and the totality that the allegorical process itself invokes. Of course, language, the primary mode of signification, is necessarily a ruin, since it, too, fails to unify signifiers and signifieds. According to the writers and theorists I have examined, words invoke an endless chain of other words. They constantly defer meaning, never actually summoning it forth. Because language fails to consolidate words and objects, it accounts for the subject's pain in the symbolic order. The pain of division triggered by language recalls the pain of the first division, the exile from the maternal realm.

Yet despite their insistence on the ruins of history, modernity, language, the cultural order—perhaps even reality itself—several of these texts also cling, however obstinately, to the notion that it is possible to transcend the ruins and to re-member the self from the fragments of experience. Eliot, Joyce, and Rushdie emphasize the role of memory in the construction of identity and a “whole” self. Memory, like the ruin, invites creative re-appropriation, and its fragmentary form facilitates pluralities of meaning. *Midnight's Children*, in particular, celebrates the “fragmentariness” of memory, which allows for the creation (rather than the representation) of history. Saleem enacts Benjamin's allegorical method by exploiting the ambiguity of fragments, de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing bits of history and arranging them into his own mythic form. Arbitrariness of meaning, which Benjamin and Rusdhie foreground and celebrate, becomes an important theme for Joyce and Rich as well, as these two emphasize the arbitrariness of language in *Ulysses*, “Diving into the Wreck,” and *The Dream of a Common Language*. Joyce challenges the capacity of language to express the physical world, and Rich challenges language's capacity to articulate (female) experience, since discourse belongs

primarily to a male tradition of naming. Nonetheless, Joyce and Rich believe in the transformative power of language. Signification ruins, but by re-appropriating words to express the body, subjects can transgress the symbolic boundaries that deny expression of the mother, the source of all wholeness. Sharing Kristeva's vision for a linguistic utopia that collapses boundaries between subjects and objects, Joyce and Rich transgress syntactic forms in order to break through cultural codes to meaning. Further, their texts insist upon the possibility of reclaiming language for experience.

Importantly, a revolution in language would bring about a revolution in subjectivity itself. Rich dreams of a common language with the power to overcome the barriers of itself, a history of patriarchal division, by sublimating the mother's body, the origin of all truth but also by positing an androgynous or collective subject. Despite men's dominance of the rhetorical tradition, Rich is hopeful that she will, once again, return to the womb, perhaps the womb of language. The mother "sent us weeping/into that law" but "we remem her in our childbirth visions" ("Sibling Mysteries," lines 43-5). Perhaps we will only meet her in our dreams, in moments of fusional bliss, when the semiotic *chora* erupts in language. Though we may not be able to completely restore the fragments of reality, we can begin, according to Rich, the journey home. Rich conceives of a reality in which mothers and infants, subject and objects, men and women are reunited as one. Contradicting Derrida and Benjamin, Rich imagines a place where signification is not predicated on death. It is a place where signification no longer "ruins" because subjectivity is no longer exclusively a male prerogative; there are no female objects, no exclusively signifieds to fragment. Rather, this place facilitates a multivalence of signifiers, and the self is no longer disturbed by the pluralities that prevail.

Rich channels Romantic notions of the ruin by insisting that while ruins reinforce the violence and destruction of symbolic systems of signification, ruins also promise rebirth and rejuvenation. Ruins betray the arbitrariness—and thus, the fragility—of modernity and language as modes of representation. Yet, by flaunting the arbitrariness of representation, ruins invite new ways of conceiving of reality, even a reality that is anterior to ruin. As Benjamin emphasizes in his critique of allegory and as Derrida suggests in his critique of language, the pluralities of meaning that the ruin invokes both establish and undermine the ruin. Ruins fragment, but their fragments also beg to be shored up and restored, once again, to wholeness.

Ultimately, the paradox of the ruin—its creative destruction and its destructive creativity—reinforces the paradox of subjectivity, which simultaneously allows and disallows representation. The possibility of achieving representation without tyrannical forms of signification (such as conventional language) is perhaps only a fantasy. Yet, positively, perhaps the promise of the ruin is that it perpetually recycles forms of representation, always giving rise to new structures and new forms of representation and contradicting totalitarian notions of permanence. Derrida declares language a ruin, arguing that words obscure—rather than express—meaning, since words are referential and since the context for words is always changing. The organicity of language, which Derrida reads as a failure of language, perhaps belies its promise. Like the ruin, language is fluid and transient, ever-evolving, and opening itself up to new possibilities of meaning. Language is a ruin, but the ruin is redemptive. Similar to Benjamin's allegorical process, which redeems material objects from historical oblivion by de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing them, ruins redeem discourses and forms of representation by constructing them anew.

Importantly, psychoanalytic theory—the very method that I have used to explore the ruins of signification—is itself a ruin, which has been deconstructed, reworked and refashioned. Traditional psychoanalysis—like language—is phallogentric, presupposing a signifier and a signified, a (male) subject and a (female) object. Psychoanalysis decrees a self/other viewpoint, while also challenging the differential mode that organizes thought and language. The Lacanian mirror economy, which serves as one of the bases for psychoanalytic theory and, thus, for the methods applied in this study, is itself problematic because it reproduces the binary system that it attempts to critique. Psychoanalytic theory shares the paradox of creative destruction that marks the ruin. Just as language can be—and *is*—used to critique itself, psychoanalytic theory contributes to its own undoing, questioning its own validity and articulations. Under the pressure of feminist psychanalytic revisions, both in France and in the United States, the discourse has reversed some of its classic concepts, at once ruining and rejuvenating its ideas. Importantly, the implications of psychoanalytic theory’s own ruination are broad and far-reaching. Traditional psychoanalysis, which Cixous declares is simply “the story made to order for male privilege” (*Newly Born Woman* 81), most often reinforces the dualism of modern, masculine ways of thinking, which necessarily devalue and marginalize what is signified as other. So, while psychoanalytic theory may propose only to explain the construction of sexual identity, it also supports and facilitates the construction of sexual identities based on difference and lack (of the phallus). Problematically, according to the conventional framework of psychoanalytic theory, female objects can never have access to the signifying phallus, and so, they can never have agency and power.

However, the feminist direction in psychoanalytic theory revises the myths upon which

masculine social, cultural, and political relations are rooted by challenging the fundamentals of psycho-sexual development that reinforce gender inequality. Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray, for instance, demonstrate that psychoanalytic discourse can, like language, be appropriated to disrupt masculine signification and the power structures that correspond with it. Cixous writes that “words are our accomplices, our traitors, our allies. We have to make use of them, spy on them, we should be able to purify them” (“The Last Painting or the Portrait of God,” 127). Kristeva, likewise, discusses at length the possibilities of conquering language to enact change. The subversive forces of semiotic, instinctual energies infiltrate language, and words are debilitated by the pluralities that the body invokes. Much the same way, the unconscious (the maternal order), which androcentric psychoanalytic theory designates but does not express, can be tapped as a powerful resource to conquer the binary mode of relations that prevails in psychoanalytic discourse and, in parallel, in the social order. Yet in order to explore the unconscious, woman has first to dismiss what she has been told about it. Cixous writes, “*The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable*. It is still unexplored only because we've been made to believe that it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack” (“The Laugh of Medusa,” 884-5). The unconscious evades signification, existing outside the structural symbolic. Hence, it is difficult to express the unconscious without recourse to language. However, Cixous, Jane Gallop, and others in the feminist psychoanalytic direction, assert that the unconscious can be expressed by incorporating—rather than annihilating—the other through writing. Signification decrees the death of the other (the mother, the female body), since the subject only emerges in relation to this object. To allow the other to co-exist is to imperil signification, the social order,

and the male ego. By warning of the psychic ramifications of channeling the other, psychoanalytic theory protects masculine privilege. Yet, it is only by accommodating the other and the multifarious possibilities that it invokes that the psyche can destabilize the self/other dichotomy and women can finally access and express the female body, which has long been constructed by the male imaginary. By necessity, the other is anything but singular, as experienced by women individually and from one woman to another. According to Cixous, “you can't talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogeneous, classifiable into codes—any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another” (347). The pluralities channeled by the other do not threaten, but empower: “[w]omen's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible” (347).

Importantly, to accommodate the other is, necessarily, to accommodate the mother (the first other) and to accept the disruptions of self that the confrontation with the other (the mother) provokes. Rich writes that “the homesickness for a woman, for ourselves” (“Transcendental Etude,” line 123) is dangerous, but that vision depends upon our reunion with the female other: “Two women, eye to eye [. . .] a whole new poetry beginning here” (lines 145, 148). Women are, according to some critics, more equipped to withstand such disruptions of self because of their own capacity for motherhood.²⁴ As Cixous argues, “It is much harder for man to let the other come through him” (“Newly Born Woman,” 85), than for the woman, whose body “is the flesh that lets strangeness come though, defenseless being, without resistance, without batten” (“Coming to Writing,” 39).²⁵ By giving birth, a woman always and inevitably connects with the

²⁴ Kristeva writes, “By giving birth, the woman enters into contact with her mother; she becomes, she is her own mother; they are the same continuity differentiating itself” (*Desire in Language* 239).

²⁵ Yet, woman's passivity in labor is also read as a sign of motherhood (the institution)'s subjugation to masculine agendas. In *Of Woman Born*, Rich cautions against women's use of analgesia during labor, since it renders them

other. Rich writes that “[t]he mother of [a] laboring woman is, in any case, for better or worse, living or dead, a powerful ghost in the birth-chamber” (*Of Woman Born* 224). In giving birth to the other, a woman gives birth to herself—she becomes her own mother—because she breaks down the barrier between the self and the other. Yet importantly, the other that she bears is not like Derrida’s other in the mirror, which enables the self only to ruin it from the moment of the first gaze. This other does not threaten her identity because it is, like the mother’s body, anterior to signification. It does not signify and cannot be signified. Irigaray expresses the desire to co-exist with the mother/the other: “I would like us to play together at being the same and different. You/I exchanging selves endlessly and each staying herself. Living mirrors.” (“And the One Doesn’t Stir Without the Other,” 61). Like Stephen in *Ulysses* who declares, “I am another now and yet the same” (11), a woman who delivers the other (who becomes her mother) is only altered insofar as she is finally able to recognize herself and experience “birth without pangs, a body without blemish” (*Ulysses* 371).

Because women’s liberation from a devalued status as object and other necessarily entails a revolution in subjectivity—a revolution that upsets the symbolic order of relations that always, inevitably authorizes a subject in relation to an object—a woman in labor is a powerful, transformative figure; she reinforces women’s potential to collapse boundaries between subjects and objects, to re-write myths about female otherness, and, in so doing, to recover female objects from a history and culture that has for too long oppressed them. However, women need not actually give birth to become mothers. And men, too, can become nurturers of the other and of themselves by writing the body, breaking through syntax and form to express the myriad

passive and numb, their bodies (literally) in the hands of men. Rich also warns of obstetric pain medication’s potential to fragment the body from the mind, insisting that it is dangerous for women to become disconnected from

pulsations of experience. Recall that for Kristeva, both sexes share the capacity for semiotic expression, and Kristeva would emphasize the contribution of innovative male writers like Joyce and Beckett to a germinative semiotic. To nurture the other is also to allow what is different and foreign to exist without appropriating it to authorize one's self. It is to confront what is dangerous and unknowable without designating (ruining) it. The capacity to "let the other come through" (*The Newly Born Woman* 85) is the power to sublimate the unconscious, the pre-objectal imaginary, which language and order necessarily refute. Interestingly, it is androcentric psychoanalytic theory that identifies this realm, but that also fails to express it, since, again, it defers to language to do so. Even though psychoanalysis cannot represent what is unrepresentable, doing so would also be contrary to the interests of a system that is rooted in a binary framework and that protects male privilege. Importantly, women's potential to create a space for the other further problematizes traditional psychoanalytic theory by contradicting the Freudian notion of penis envy, which maintains that childbirth is motivated by the female's desire to compensate for her lack of a penis.²⁶ By giving birth to the other, allowing the other to co-exist, a woman undermines the system of signification that privileges the phallus and marginalizes the other in the first place.

Freud depicts the unconscious as a kind of ruined landscape ("The Aetiology of Hysteria," 97-8), and this analogy serves to reinforce the incapacity for representation of the unconscious. Yet psychoanalytic theory is also a ruin, since it is marked by a paradoxical capacity and incapacity for representation, which, as I have argued, really distinguish the ruin.

their pain, whether psychic or physical (184-5).

²⁶ In "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinctions Between the Sexes," Freud argues that a young girl initially struggles with the inferiority of the clitoris, but soon "gives up her wish for a penis and puts in place of it a wish for a child: and *with that purpose in view* she takes her father as a love-object" (376).

Like modernity, language, and other relational modes of representation, psychoanalytic theory is productive even—and especially—when it undermines itself, questioning and re-positing its central concepts. Derrida declares that the ruin is a self-portrait, emphasizing that mimesis allows and disallows the self to emerge. Much the same way, the mirror economy at the core of psychoanalytic theory enables and ruins it from within. Conventional psychoanalytic theory is a symbolic system of signification (based on difference and lack), and like Benjamin's allegory and Derrida's draftsman, it distorts and fragments everything material in the very act of designating what cannot be designated. Yet, psychoanalytic theory, like language, has evolved as a mode of representation. The feminist revision has found ways for the discourse to express what has long been repressed (the other). What is strange and foreign, no doubt, disrupts the status quo, but writing the other opens up new possibilities of discourse that advance (rather than impair) meaning. Meaning is advanced because it is multiplied, overflowing like the desires that the body writes. Writing should always proclaim this "unique empire" (the body) because it "knows unheard-of songs [. . .] burst[ing] with forms much more beautiful" ("The Laugh of the Medusa," 876) than the myths that have prevailed.

Importantly, Cixous, Kristeva, Irigaray, and others of the feminist psychoanalytic direction show that by acknowledging the structure and framework (and thus, the limitations) of psychoanalytic theory, it can still be used as a resource with and against itself. By wrecking old partitions and codes and positing new discourses and forms of expression, psychoanalytic theory has reinvented experience. Because of its capacity for ruin and rejuvenation, it should not be discarded but rather utilized in the endeavor to find new ways to see and name even that which can be neither seen nor named. The expression of the inexpressible, which is the goal of

psychoanalytic theory and the function of the ruin, is the only means by which we can live free in a realm outside the law. This realm may be real or imagined—we can be sure that it is distorted by the very words and theories we invoke to describe it—but it is something that we must continue to imagine, as long as it pulls us closer towards a place where those long silenced begin to speak, where we can all “begin to see and name—and therefore live—afresh” (“When We Dead,” 35).

Works Cited

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffins, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Attridge, Derek. "Joyce's Noises." *Oral Tradition* 24.2 (2009): 471-84.
- Attridge, Derek. *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Attridge, Derek. *Semicolonial Joyce*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Austen, J. L. *How to do Things with Words*. Ed. J. O. Urmson. Oxford: Clarendon, 1962.
- Barakāt, Hodá. *The Stone of Laughter*. Northampton: Interlink, 2006.
- Baudelaire, Charles. "Le Cygne." *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/148262/Le-Cygne>>. Accessed 12 Mar. 2011.
- Beasley-Murray, Jon. "Vilcashuamán: Telling Stories in Ruin." *Ruins of Modernity*. Ed. Julia Hell & Andreas Schönle. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 212-31.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge: Belknap, 1999.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: NLB, 1977.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken Books, 1986.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*. Ed. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2003. 277-79.
- Berlant, Lauren. "America, 'Fat,' The Fetus." *Boundary* 21.3 (1994): 145-95.
- Booker, M. Keith. "Beauty and the Beast: Dualism as Despotism in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie." *English Literary History* 57.4 (1990): 977-97.

- Borg, Ruben. *The Measureless Time of Joyce, Deleuze and Derrida*. New York: Continuum, 2007.
- Brooks, Jr., Cleanth. "The Waste Land: An Analysis." *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North. New York: Norton, 2001. 185-210.
- Brown, Bill. *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*. Chicago: U Chicago P, 2003.
- Calinescu, Matei. *The Five Faces of Modernity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1987.
- Chancellor, Paul. "The Music of *The Waste Land*." *Comparative Literature Studies* 6.1 (1969): 21-32.
- Cixous, Hélène. "Coming to Writing." "*Coming to Writing*" and *Other Essays*. Trans. Sarah Cornell, et al. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992. 1-58.
- Cixous, Hélène. "Extreme Fidelity." Trans. Anne Liddle and Susan Sellers. *Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Hélène Cixous*. Ed. Susan Sellers. New York: Open University, 1998.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God." "*Coming to Writing*" and *Other Essays*. Trans. Sarah Cornell, et al. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992. 104-31.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1.4 (1976): 875-93.
- Cixous, Hélène. *The Newly Born Woman*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1987.
- Cook, Eleanor. "T. S. Eliot and the Carthaginian Peace." *ELH* 46 (1979): 347-48.
- Criglington, Meredith. "Urban Undressing: Walter Benjamin's 'Thinking-in-Images' and Anne Michaels's Erotic Archaeology of Memory." *Canadian Literature* 188 (2006): 86-102.
- DeCoste, Damon Marcel. "'Do You Remember Tomorrow?': Modernism and Its Second War in Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 44.3 (1998): 767-91.
- De Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1983.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U Chicago P, 1981.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*. Trans. Pascale-

- Anne Brault and Michael Nass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1974.
- Diehl, Joanne Feit. "'Cartographies of Silence': Rich's 'Common Language' and the Woman Poet." *Feminist Studies* 6.3 (1980): 530-46.
- Eliot, T.S. "The Metaphysical Poets." *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*. Ed. Frank Kermode. Orlando: Harcourt, 1975. 59-67.
- Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North. New York: Norton, 2001. 114-19.
- Eliot, T.S. "Ulysses, Order, and Myth." *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North. New York: Norton, 2001. 128-30.
- Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land, Prufrock and Other Poems*. New York: Dover, 1993.
- Ellmann, Maud. "A Sphinx Without a Secret." *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North. New York: Norton, 2001. 258-75.
- Enjuto-Rangel, Cecilia. *Cities in Ruins: The Politics of Modern Poetics*. West Lafayette: Purdue, 2010.
- Ericksen, Anne. "The Murmur of Ruins: A Cultural History." *Journal of European Ethnology* 36.1 (2006): 5-20.
- Ettinger, Bracha. *The Matrixial Borderspace: Essays 1994-1999*. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2006.
- Ferris, David, Ed. *Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Forsyth, Neil, and Martine Hennard. "'Mr. Mustapha Aziz and Fly': Defamiliarization of 'Family' in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*." *SPELL* 9 (1996): 197-206.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The Aetiology of Hysteria." *The Freud Reader*. Ed. Peter Gay. New York: Norton, 1989. 46-111.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes." *The Freud Reader*. Ed. Peter Gay. New York: Norton, 1989. 670-78.
- Garland-Thomsen, Rosemarie. "Disability and Representation." *PMLA*. 120.2 (2005): 522-27.

- Gillespie, Michael Patrick. *James Joyce and the Fabrication of an Irish Identity*. New York: Rodopi, 2001.
- Ginsberg, Robert. *The Aesthetics of Ruins*. New York: Rodopi, 2004.
- Goldstein, Laurence. *Ruins and Empire: The Evolution of a Theme in Augustan and Romantic Literature*. Pittsburgh: U Pittsburgh P, 1977.
- Griffin, Susan. *A Chorus of Stones: The Private Life of War*. Norwell: Anchor, 1993.
- Guyer-Ryan, Helga. "Effects of Abjection in the Texts of Walter Benjamin." *MLN* 107.3 (1992): 499-521.
- Hammond, Debora. *The Science of Synthesis: Exploring the Social Implications of General Systems Theory*. Denver: UP of Colorado, 2003.
- Harries, Elizabeth. *The Unfinished Manner: Essays on the Fragment in the Later Eighteenth Century*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1994.
- Heffernan, Teresa. "Apocalyptic Narratives: The Nation in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*." *Twentieth Century Literature*. 46.4 (2000) 470-91.
- Hegel, Georg W. F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. London: Oxford UP, 1977.
- Hell, Julia. "Imperial Ruin Gazers, or Why Did Scipio Weep?" *Ruins of Modernity*. Ed. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 169-92.
- Hill, Marylu. "'Amor Matris': Mother and Self in the Telemachiad Episode of *Ulysses*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 39.3 (1993): 329-44.
- Hoyem, Andrew. "About *The Waste Land* and the Arion Press Edition." *Arion*. Web. 20 March 2011. <<http://www.arionpress.com/catalog/more/079essay.htm>>
- Irigaray, Luce. "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other." Trans. Hélène Vivienne Wenzel. *Signs* 7.1 (1981): 60-67.
- Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.
- Janowitz, Anne. *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the Natural Landscape*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Janusz, Sharon. "Feminism and Metaphor: Friend, Foe, Force?" *Metaphor & Symbolic Activity*. 9.4 (1994): 289-300.

- Joseph, Sarah. "Anthropomorphism and Other Figures of Speech in James Joyce's *Ulysses*." *Modern Language Review* 99. 3 (2004): 584-94.
- Kenner, Hugh. "The Urban Apocalypse." *Eliot in His Time*, ed. A. Walton Litz. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973. 23-49.
- Keyes, Claire. *The Aesthetics of Power: The Poetry of Adrienne Rich*. Athens: U Georgia P, 1986.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Léon. S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1993.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Stabat Mater." *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Trans. Léon. S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. 160-86.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power." *Écrits: A Selection*. Ed. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton: 1966. 215-70.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Écrits: A Selection*. Ed. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton: 1966. 3-9.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Object Relation and the Intersubjective Relation." *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 1: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. John Forrester. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. 209-19.
- Levenson, Michael. "Does *The Waste Land* Have a Politics?" *Modernism/Modernity* 6.3 (1999): 1-13.
- Lin, Jian-kuang. "Hysteria, Women, and Male Desire: Sexual Politics in T. S. Eliot's 'Hysteria' and *The Waste Land*." *Intergrams* 2.1 (2000): 1-17.
- Longo, Joseph. "*Under the Volcano*: Geoffrey Firmin's Tragic Epiphany." *Notre Dame English Journal*. 12.1 (1979): 15-25.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Lowry, Malcolm. *Under the Volcano*. New York: Harper & Row, 1947.

- MacCaulay, Rose. *Pleasure of Ruins*. New York: Walker and Company, 1953.
- MacFarland, Thomas. *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981.
- Makarius, Michel. *Ruins*. , 2004.
- Markson, David. *Malcolm Lowry's Volcano: Myth, Symbol, Meaning*. New York: Times Books, 1978.
- McArthur, Murray. "'Signs on a White Field': Semiotics and Forgery in the 'Proteus' Chapter of Ulysses." *English Literary History* 53.3 (1986): 633-52.
- McClintock, Anne. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family." *Feminist Review* 44 (1993): 61-80.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: HarperCollins, 1980.
- Michaels, Anne. *Fugitive Pieces*. New York: Random House, 1996.
- Morrisson, Mark. "Stephen Dedalus and the Ghost of the Mother." *Modern Fiction Studies* 39.2 (1993): 345-68.
- Natarajan, Nalini. "Women, Nation and Narration in *Midnight's Children*." *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. Ed. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick. New York: Routledge, 1999. 399-409.
- Nolan, Emer. *Joyce and Nationalism*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Presner, Todd Samuel. "Hegel's Philosophy of World History via Sebald's Imaginary of Ruins: A Contrapuntal Critique of the 'New Space' of Modernity." *Ruins of Modernity*. Ed. Julia Hell & Andreas Schönle. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 193-211.
- Reder, Michael. "Rewriting History and Identity: The Reinvention of Myth, Epic, and Allegory in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*." *Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie*. Ed. M. Keith Booker. New York: G. K. Hall & Company, 1999. 225-49.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Diving into the Wreck*. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Rich, Adrienne. *The Dream of a Common Language*. New York: Norton, 1978.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born*. New York: Norton, 1976.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Power and Danger. Words of a Common Woman." *On Lies, Secrets, and*

- Silences*. New York: Norton, 1979. 247-58.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson." *On Lies, Secrets, and Silences*. New York: Norton, 1979. 157-84.
- Rickard, John. *Joyce's Book of Memory: The Mnemotechnic of "Ulysses."* Durham: Duke UP, 1999.
- Rodriguez-Hernandez, Raúl. *Mexico's Ruins: Juan Garcia Ponce and the Writing of Modernity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2007.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. New York: Penguin, 1992.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. 1981. New York: Penguin, 2000.
- Oded, Brenda. "The Maternal Ghost in Joyce." *Modern Language Studies* 15.4 (1985): 40-47.
- Owen, Craig. "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism." *October* 12 (1980): 67-86.
- Petrović, Lena. "Remembering and Dismembering: Derrida's Reading of Levi-Strauss." *Linguistics and Literature* 3.1 (2004): 87-96.
- Pinkney, Tony. *Women in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot: A Psychoanalytic Approach*. London: Macmillan, 1984.
- Rizza, Michael James. "The 'Split' in Aunt Jennifer's Tigers." *Explicator* 67.1 (2008) 63-66.
- Shelly, Percy Bysshe. "Ozymandias of Egypt." *The Poems of Shelley: 1817-1819*. Ed. Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews. London: Longman, 2000. 310-11.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness." *Writing and Sexual Difference*. Ed. Elizabeth Abel. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982. 9-35.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Writing and Sexual Difference." *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (1981): 179-205.
- Sielke, Sabine. *Fashioning the Female Subject: The Intertextual Networking of Dickinson, Moore, and Rich*. Michigan: U of Michigan P, 1997.
- Slowik, Mary. "The Friction of the Mind: The Early Poetry of Adrienne Rich." *The Massachusetts Review* 25.1 (1984): 142-60.
- Smith, Anne-Marie. *Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable*. London: Pluto, 1998.

- Speigelman, Willard. "Driving to the Limits of the City of Words': The Poetry of Adrienne Rich." *Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose*. New York: Norton, 1993. 369-96.
- Stanier, Michael. "'The Void Awaits Surely All Them that Weave the Wind': 'Penelope' and 'Sirens' in *Ulysses*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 41.3 (1995): 319-31.
- Staten, Henry. "The Decomposing Form of Joyce's *Ulysses*." *PMLA* 112.3 (1997) 380-92.
- Stephens, Bradley. "Reading Walter Benjamin's Concept of the Ruin in Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*." *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 61.2 (2007): 155-66.
- Tiedemann, Rolf. "Dialectics at a Standstill: Approaches to The *Passagen-Werk*." *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Reflections*. Trans. Gary Smith and André Lefebvre. Cambridge: MIT, 1988. 261-91.
- Thormählen, Marianne. "The City in the Waste Land." *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North. New York: Norton, 2001. 235-40.
- Van Boheemen, Christine. "The Language of Flow: Joyce's Dispossession of the Feminine in *Ulysses*." *Joyce, Modernity, and Its Mediation*. Ed. Christine van Boheemen. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989. 63-77.
- Witznitzer, Eileen. "Legends of Lil: The Repressed Thematic Center of *The Waste Land*." *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13.1-2 (1986): 87-102.
- Woodward, Christopher. *In Ruins: A Journey Through History, Art, and Literature*. New York: Vintage, 2003.